

DEAR GEORGE...

The Declaration of

Independence was sort of

a "break up" letter. The

Colonies were breaking

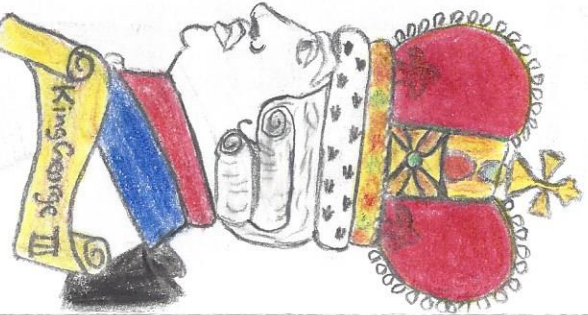
up with Great Britain.

They could have started

the letter with, "It's not

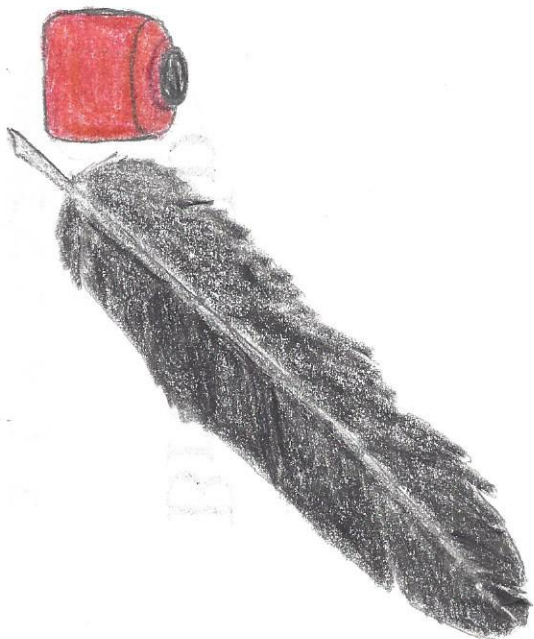
me; it's you." One might

ask why this happened...



The Break Up





The Declaration of Independence

was a written statement of separation from Britain.

- Written by Thomas Jefferson
- Signed July 4, 1776
- In Philadelphia, PA
- Can now be found in The National Archives Building in Washington, DC

The Colonists had been upset with Britain taxing them and wanting to use the money to keep soldiers in the Colonies. Plus, the Colonies had no voice when it came to whether or not to tax them. Things like The Stamp Act (1766) and the Tea Act (1773) eventually led to the revolt called the Boston Tea Party (1774). In response to this, Britain made things worse for the Colonists like blocking the harbors and saying that the Colonists had to let British soldiers live in their homes whether they wanted them there or not. Eventually, the individual colonies started putting militias together and on April 19, 1775, the first shot of the American Revolution was fired. The Colonists saw this as them defending themselves as British citizens, but King George III saw it as a colonial revolt. The Colonists did not want war and tried to negotiate with Parliament for their rights, but instead Britain sent German mercenaries to help fight against the Colonists. In January of 1776 Thomas Paine published his book, Common Sense which was passed around the colonies and helped convince the people that independence from Britain was the only answer. As a result, the colonies began writing Constitutions of their own and Thomas Jefferson and some other men began writing The Declaration of Independence. On July 4, 1776 the declaration was ready and was adopted by 12 colonies. This was 442 days after the American Revolution had begun.

The declaration would eventually be signed by 56 men and the 13th colony eventually approved of it as well. The largest signature (so that King George III would be sure to see it) was by John Hancock who was also the president of the Continental Congress. Two future Presidents of the United States also signed the document: John Adams and Thomas Jefferson. This was a very brave thing to do especially considering the fact that there was a price on Hancock's head and others as traitors. This was viewed as treason by the king. Several signers were captured and tortured to death, many had their homes burned, some had sons die in the war, and several others fought and died themselves. The American Revolution would last about 5 years in all and it would not be until 1883 with the signing of the Treaty of Paris that "America" would officially be free.

