

Teacher Page: Resource Sheet #10

Source: Thomas Jefferson, in an omitted portion of the draft of the Declaration of Independence

Thomas Jefferson, The Writings of Thomas Jefferson: Being His Autobiography, Correspondence, Reports, Messages, Addresses, and other Writings, Official and Private
(Washington, D.C.: Taylor & Maury, 1853-1854).

Note: In some of the first drafts of the Declaration, Thomas Jefferson included Britain's support and continuance of slavery as one of the many grievances the colonies had against them. The delegations of South Carolina and Georgia objected to the passage condemning slavery so it was omitted from the final draft.

Document Analysis:

1. Who is Jefferson referring to in this document when using the term "He?"
King George III
2. What event is he describing when referring to transportation?
The Middle Passage---the transporting of slaves from West Africa to British colonies in the Caribbean, South America, Central America and the thirteen "American" colonies.
3. What evidence does Jefferson provide that makes slaves seem powerless?
"...violating the most sacred right of life and liberty in the persons of a distant people who never offended him, captivating and carrying them into slavery..."
4. Who does Jefferson blame for the slave business in colonial America and what evidence does he cite?
The King. "He has waged cruel war against human nature itself, violating the most sacred right of life and liberty in the persons of a distant people."
5. How does this document help to answer the question, "Where Did Thomas Jefferson Stand on the Issue of Slavery?"
This source document directly places the blame for slavery on King George III. Whether Jefferson used this argument to strengthen the cause of independence or he was sincere about the cause of abolition is debatable. Many historians insist that Jefferson attempted to use the slavery passages to deflect blame away from colonists themselves.