**SCORING NOTES**

Prompt:

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| Evaluate the extent to which the Declaration of Independence marked a turning point in American history, analyzing what changed and what stayed the same from the period immediately before the declaration to the period immediately following it.  |

This question allows test takers to determine what “immediately” means in this context and to define the chronological beginning and end points of their essays accordingly. The evidence and information in the essay should be accurate and reflective of the time period focused on by the test taker.

**Thesis**

An acceptable thesis would evaluate the extent to which the Declaration of Independence was a turning point, indicating the extent of change OR continuity.

Note: Explicitly indicating the extent of change implies the extent of continuity and vice versa. Possible thesis statements emphasizing change could include the following.

•The Declaration of Independence marked a decisive break between the American colonies and Great Britain; once it was signed, there was no going back.

•Note: The break could be described as political or ideological or both. Possible thesis statements emphasizing continuity could include the following.

The Declaration of Independence was an important political gesture, but it did not create a truly independent United States. The United States was not truly independent until it created a national government and won a hard-fought war with Great Britain years later.

**Support for Argument**

Possible evidence that could be used includes the following.

•Roles of Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, John Hancock, and other founders of the United States

* •Events leading up to the Declaration of Independence: Stamp Act, Boston Massacre, Boston Tea Party, Olive Branch Petition, outbreak of hostilities at Lexington and Concord, Thomas Paine’s *Common Sense*
* •Roles of George Washington and the Continental Army
* •Battles of Saratoga, Yorktown
* •Articles of Confederation
* •1783 Treaty of Paris
* •Levels of support for and against independence in the colonies (Patriots and Loyalists)
* •State constitutions modeled after the Declaration
* •Support for American independence by other European powers such as France
* •Constitution not drafted and ratified until the late 1780s
* •Terms of independence from Great Britain remained contested through 1815
* **Application of Historical Thinking Skills**
* •Essays earn points by using the evidence offered in support of their argument to analyze the extent to which the circumstances of the Declaration of Independence were different from OR (1 point) AND (2 points) similar to developments that preceded and/or followed, providing specific examples to illustrate the analysis.
* •Examples could include but are not limited to the following.
	+ Discussion of colonists’ attitudes toward the British Empire before and after the  Declaration
	+ Discussion of military situation before and after the Declaration
	+ Discussion of political structures in North America before and after the Declaration
	+ Discussion of ideas about equality before and after the Declaration
	+ Discussion of ideas about independence before and after the Declaration
	+ Discussion of importance of the Declaration as an ideological model after it was signed.
	+ **Synthesis**
	+ Essays can earn the synthesis point by crafting a persuasive and coherent essay. This can be accomplished by providing a conclusion that extends or modifies the analysis in the essay, by introducing another category of historical analysis, or by making a connection to another historical period or context.
	+ Examples could include but are not limited to the following.
* •Explicitly calling out the social, cultural, gender, or racial elements of a largely political and intellectual story.
* •Concretely and explicitly linking the Declaration of Independence to earlier influences such as the English Magna Carta & English Bill of Rights, or European Enlightenment.
* •Concretely and explicitly calling out the influence of the Declaration of Independence on other revolutionary movements such as those in France and Haiti.