Declaration of Independence Reading Guide

Answer the following questions for the given sections of the Declaration of Independence. Feel free to use dictionaries and other text resources to make sense of this important document. Please write in complete sentences.

Read Section 1: The Preamble (the first paragraph)

1. What does “preamble” mean? Look up the definition and write it in the space provided.

2. Most people thought that the colonies would lose the Revolutionary War. England was the strongest nation in the world at the time. What might have motivated the colonists to write the Preamble as they did?

Read Section 2: The Declaration of Rights (“We hold these truths…submitted to a candid world.”)

3. What rights does Jefferson say “all men” have? How are these rights protected?

4. Why do the colonists have the right to declare their independence from England, according to Jefferson?

Read Section 3: The List of Complaints (“He has refused his assent…of all ages, sexes and conditions.”)

5. There are 27 separate grievances or complaints the colonists point to as reasons to separate from England. Pick the four you think are the most important. For each one, summarize the main point and explain, in complete sentences, why that complaint is so important to the colonists.

Complaint 1:
Complaint 2:

Complaint 3:

Complaint 4:

6. The act of repeating a certain phrase is called parallelism. In the reading, Jefferson repeats the phrase “He has” or “He is” many times. Why does he do that?

Read Section 4: The Declaration of Independence (“In every state of these oppressions…”)

7. How did the colonists show they had been reasonable while the English had been unreasonable?

8. What is the process the colonists followed before finally declaring independence? (There are five things the colonists did.)

1. 

2. 

3. 

4. 

5. 

9. The language in a document such as this must be powerful and memorable. Do you think the language in the Declaration of Independence is memorable and powerful? Use passages from the document to support your opinion.