**Analysis activity 4.1: Document comparison**

The Olive Branch Petition was produced by the Second Continental Congress on 5 July 1775. This is how the document begins:

*To the King’s Most Excellent Majesty.*

*Most Gracious Sovereign: We, your Majesty’s faithful subjects of the Colonies of New-Hampshire, Massachusetts-Bay, Rhode-Island and Providence Plantations, Connecticut, New-York, New-Jersey, Pennsylvania, the Counties of Newcastle, Kent, and Sussex, on Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, and South Carolina, in behalf of ourselves and the inhabitants of these Colonies, who have deputed us to represent them in General Congress, entreat your Majesty’s gracious attention to this our humble petition.*

*The union between our Mother Country and these Colonies, and the energy of mild and just Government, produced benefits so remarkably important, and afforded such an assurance of their permanency and increase, that the wonder and envy of other nations were excited, while they beheld Great Britain rising to a power the most extraordinary the world had ever known …*

The Olive Branch Petition reached London on 14 August 1775. George III’s reply to the colonists, the Declaration of Rebellion, was issued on the 23rd of August.

*Whereas many of our subjects in divers parts of our Colonies and Plantations in North America, misled by dangerous and ill designing men, and forgetting the allegiance which they owe to the power that has protected and supported them; after various disorderly acts committed in disturbance of the publick peace, to the obstruction of lawful commerce, and to the oppression of our loyal subjects carrying on the same; have at length proceeded to open and avowed rebellion, by arraying themselves in a hostile manner, to withstand the execution of the law, and traitorously preparing, ordering and levying war against us …*

*… we do accordingly strictly charge and command all our Officers, as well civil as military, and all others our obedient and loyal subjects, to use their utmost endeavors to withstand and suppress such rebellion, and to disclose and make known all treasons and traitorous conspiracies which they shall know to be against us, our crown and dignity.*

If Congress’ Olive Branch Petition of 5 July 1775 sent a mixed message to the King, the document issued a day later on 6 July explaining the formation of the Continental Army, *Declaration of the Causes and Necessity of Taking Up Arms*, had a much clearer message. This document was also written by John Dickinson, with drafts by Thomas Jefferson:

*… Our forefathers, inhabitants of the Island of Great Britain, left their native land, to seek on these shores a residence for civil and religious freedom.*

*… they effected settlements in the distant and inhospitable wilds of America, then filled with numerous and warlike nations of barbarians. Societies or Governments, vested with perfect Legislatures, were formed under Charters from the Crown, and a harmonious intercourse was established between the Colonies and the Kingdom from which they derived their origin.*

*… We fight not for glory or for conquest. We exhibit to mankind the remarkable spectacle of a people attacked by unprovoked enemies, without any imputation or even suspicion of offence. They boast of their privileges and civilization, and yet proffer no milder conditions than servitude or death.*

*In our own native land, in defence of the freedom that is our birth-right, and which we ever enjoyed till the late violation of it; for the protection of our property, acquired solely by the honest industry of our forefathers and ourselves, against violence actually offered, we have taken up arms. We shall lay them down when hostilities shall cease on the part of the aggressors, and all danger of their being renewed shall be removed, and not before.*

1. Understanding the language of 18th-century documents requires practice. Describe the language of the Olive Branch Petition. Provide examples.

1. Why do you think Congress directed the Olive Branch Petition directly to the King and not to the British Prime Minister or Parliament?

1. How would you describe the response of George III? Where does he lay blame for the revolutionary situation that had developed in America by July 1775? Which significant events and individuals does he refer to? Provide example quotes from the text.

1. Who do you think the *Declaration of the Causes and Necessity of Taking Up Arms* is addressed to?

1. What reasons does Congress give to explain the need to take up arms against the British? Will the Continental Army be a colonial version of a ‘standing army’? Why/why not?

1. To whom does the term ‘barbarians’ refer? How do you explain this perspective?