

W h a t w a s t h e

American Revolution?



EXPLORING AMERICA'S HISTORY THROUGH COMPELLING QUESTIONS



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What was the

American Revolution?

EXPLORING AMERICA'S HISTORY THROUGH COMPELLING QUESTIONS

SUPPORTING QUESTIONS

- 1 WHO WON THE SEVEN YEARS WAR?
- 2 HOW DID THE COLONISTS STOP BEING BRITISH AND START BEING AMERICAN?
- 3 WHY DO GOVERNMENTS HAVE POWER?
- 4 CAN POWERFUL NATIONS MAINTAIN CONTROL OF DISTANT TERRITORY?

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What was the

American Revolution?

Wars are relatively easy to define. They begin with opening shots, include battles and skirmishes, sometimes guerrilla action, and often some sort of peace deal to end the conflict. Wars sometimes drag on for years, but it is not hard for a historian to put a start date and an end date to a war. Traditionally, the War for Independence, or Revolutionary War, is said to have begun at Lexington on April 19, 1775 and ended with General Washington's victory over Lord Cornwallis at Yorktown on October 17, 1781. There was, of course, violence between Americans and British troops before 1775, and two years passed after Yorktown before the final treaty was signed, but the War for Independence is a distinct and definable historical event.

Much harder to define, however, is the American Revolution. Revolutions are changes that cannot be undone, and in this case we are talking about a change in American thinking. As far as the end of the Seven Years War in 1763, the inhabitants of the Thirteen Colonies thought of themselves as British, but by the mid-1780s, they were American.

Certainly the war itself was part of this shift, but it began well before the shooting started. What made so many people change their thinking? What changed? Who led the cause, and who resisted? And what did this revolution mean to different people in the colonies-turned-country?

What do you think? What was the American Revolution?

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F I R S T Q U E S T I O N WHO WON THE SEVEN YEARS WAR?

What was the

*American
Revolution?*

INTRODUCTION

Historian Fred Anderson wrote a history of the Seven Years War and entitled his work, "The War that Made America." This is an interesting thesis given that the war ended in 1763, 13 years before the Declaration of Independence was signed. And yet, it is worth taking a look at the conflict with a critical eye since Anderson's claims are not without merit. Although the conflict itself was not about independence, the consequences of the war certainly helped push American colonists into conflict with their mother country.

In terms of the legal end of the war, Britain won and the French surrendered, but the Treaty of Paris was on paper, and reality in America was quite different. British colonists, French Catholics who found themselves in the British Empire and millions of Native Americans all had participated in the conflict, and had to adjust to the shifting realities the war had brought on.

The war also created new heroes, among them a young George Washington.

So who won the war? Was it the British and their American colonists? Or perhaps the Empire won but the colonists lost out. Did the French Empire lose while the French colonists in Canada came out ahead? And what of the Native Americans?

This is what you will need to think about. Who won the Seven Years War?

1 WHO WON THE SEVEN YEARS WAR?

NEW FRANCE

About the same time John Smith and the Jamestown settlers were setting up camp in Virginia, France was building permanent settlements of their own. **Samuel de Champlain** led a group of French colonists through the mouth of the St. Lawrence River to found Quebec in 1608. The fur trade led fortune seekers deeper and deeper into North America. French Jesuit missionaries boldly penetrated the wilderness in the hopes of converting Native Americans to Catholicism. By 1700, France had laid claim to an expanse of territory that ranged from Newfoundland in the Northeast, down across the Great Lakes through the Ohio Valley, southward along the Mississippi River to the Gulf of Mexico, and as far west as the Rocky Mountains.

There were profound differences between the British colonies and **New France**. The English colonies, though much smaller in area, dwarfed the French colonies in population. Louis XIV was a devout Catholic and tolerated no other faiths within the French Empire. French **Huguenots**, the dominant religious minority, therefore found no haven in New France. Land was less of an issue in France than England, so French peasants had less economic incentive to leave. The French Crown was far more interested in its holdings in the Far East and the sugar islands of the Caribbean, so the French monarchs did little to sponsor emigration to North America.



Samuel de Champlain: French explorer who founded Quebec.

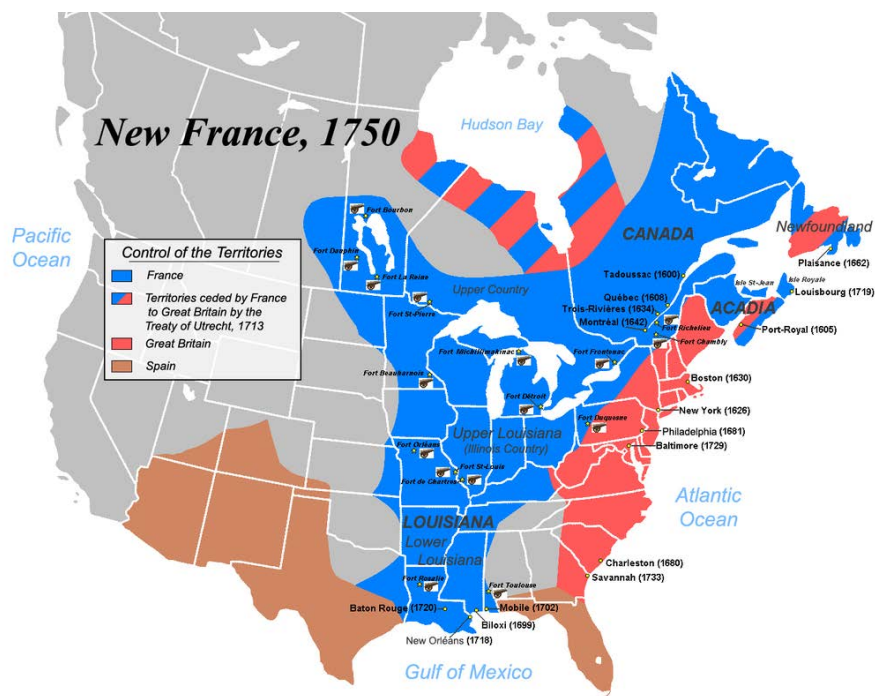


New France: The French colonies in America extending from the St. Lawrence River area in modern Quebec province of Canada, to the Great Lakes Region, and down the Mississippi River to Louisiana.



Huguenots: French Protestants

Secondary Source: Map
Colonial North America.



Unlike the English colonies where self-rule had been pursued immediately, the people of New France had no such privileges. There were no elected assemblies. Decisions were made by local magistrates on behalf of the French king. Trial by jury did not exist, nor did a free press. The French citizenry depended directly on the Crown for guidance. The English colonists depended on themselves.

In the end, despite huge claims to North American lands, the French would be overwhelmed by more numerous, self-directed subjects of Britain.

1 WHO WON THE SEVEN YEARS WAR?

CONFLICT IN OHIO

The war between the French and British that we now know as the Seven Years War, or sometimes as the French and Indian War, was perhaps the first world war, as it was a clash between Britain and France that raged on many continents. The conflict began, however in the **Ohio Valley**.

The war was fought primarily along the frontiers separating New France from the British colonies. The region at the heart of the dispute was known as Ohio, but it was much larger than the state that presently bears that name. It encompassed roughly the present-day states of Ohio, eastern Indiana, western Pennsylvania, and northwestern West Virginia.

In the 1800s, the area north of the Ohio River had been occupied by the Algonquian-speaking Shawnee. Around 1660, during a conflict known as the Beaver Wars, the Iroquois seized control of the Ohio Country, driving out the Shawnee and conquering and absorbing the Erie tribe. The Ohio Country remained largely uninhabited for decades and was used primarily for hunting by the Iroquois.

In the 1720s, a number of American Indian groups began to migrate to the Ohio Country. By 1724, Delaware Indians had established the village of Kittanning on the Allegheny River in present-day western Pennsylvania. They migrated because of the expansion of European colonial settlement into their lands in eastern Pennsylvania. With them came those Shawnee who had settled in the East. Other bands of the scattered Shawnee tribe also began to return to Ohio. A number of Seneca and Iroquois also migrated to the Ohio Country, moving away from the French and British imperial rivalries south of Lake Ontario.

Ohio was claimed by both Great Britain and France, and both colonial powers sent merchants into the area to trade. It was considered central to both countries' ambitions of further expansion and development in North America. At the same time, the Iroquois claimed the region by right of conquest. The rivalry between the two European nations, the Iroquois, and the Ohio natives for control of the region played an important part of the outbreak of the Seven Years War in the 1750s.

THE ALBANY CONGRESS

In 1754, the British government asked colonial representatives to meet in Albany, New York, to develop a treaty with Native Americans and plan the defense of the colonies against France. Exceeding these limited objectives, the assembly adopted a plan developed by Benjamin Franklin for a unified government of the colonies led by a central executive and a council of delegates.

The plan was submitted as a recommendation by the **Albany Congress**, but it was rejected by the legislatures of the individual colonies, as it would remove some of their existing powers. The plan was also rejected by the Colonial Office in London. Many in the British government, already wary of some of the strong-willed colonial assemblies, disliked the idea of consolidating additional power into the hands of the colonists. Instead, they preferred that the colonists' focus remain on the forthcoming military campaign against the French and their Native American allies.

Although rejected by both the English and individual colonial governments, the Albany Plan became a useful guide for Americans who wanted to chart a path toward independence.



Ohio Valley: The region around the Ohio River including most of the modern states of Ohio, Kentucky, Indiana, West Virginia and (western) Pennsylvania



Albany Congress: A gathering of colonial leaders in 1754 to plan coordinated defense against Native American and French attack during the Seven Years War. Some delegates, especially Benjamin Franklin, argued for a unified government for all 13 colonies, but this plan was rejected.

1 WHO WON THE SEVEN YEARS WAR?



Primary Source: Editorial Cartoon

Benjamin Franklin's famous illustration encouraging colonial unity at the Albany Congress.

GEORGE WASHINGTON AND THE OUTBREAK OF WAR

Few figures loom as large in American history as **George Washington**. His powerful leadership, unflagging determination, and boundless patriotism would be essential to the winning of the Revolutionary War in the 1770s, the creation of the United States Constitution 1780s, and the establishment of a new government as the nation's first president in the 1790s. His influence in history, however, begins much earlier.

As time has passed, Washington's legend has grown. Honesty — he could not tell a lie, we are told. Strength — he could throw a coin across the Potomac, the legend declares. Humility — he was offered an American crown, but turned it down in the name of democracy. Time may have made great myths out of small truths, but the contributions this one man made to the creation of the American nation cannot be denied.

George Washington was born in Virginia in 1732 to a wealthy plantation owner. Of all the subjects he studied, he loved math the most. This prompted young George to apprentice as a **surveyor** of Virginia lands in his youth. Washington walked miles and miles through his home state surveying land. In the process, he learned about the natural environment and developed a deep passion for his native Virginia.

The Seven Years War began in May 1754. Twenty-two-year-old George Washington led a group of militiamen over the mountains to dislodge the French from a position they occupied on land the Virginians believed was their own.

Washington gave the command to fire on French soldiers near present-day Uniontown, Pennsylvania. His decision proved foolhardy, as the French and their Native American allies far outnumbered the Virginians and forced George Washington to retreat. They rushed to assemble a makeshift fort, which they quite appropriately named **Fort Necessity**. In the end, though, Washington and his men had no choice but to surrender.

George Washington: Virginia planter, surveyor, officer in the Seven Years War, leader of the Continental Army in the Revolution, President of the Constitutional Congress and First President of the United States.

Surveyor: A person who measures land to define official boundaries

Fort Necessity: Makeshift fort build by Washington's men after defeat by the French and Native Americans. The French build Fort Duquesne in its place and it is now the site of the city of Pittsburg.

1 WHO WON THE SEVEN YEARS WAR?

The next year, the Britain dispatched General **Edward Braddock** to the colonies to take **Fort Duquesne**, the French garrison at the critical point where the Allegany and Monongahela Rivers join to form the Ohio.

The French, aided by Potawatomi, Ottawa, Shawnee, and Delaware warriors, ambushed the 1,500 British soldiers and Virginia militia before they reached the fort. The attack sent panic through the British force, and hundreds of British soldiers and militiamen died, including General Braddock. The young George Washington again led a retreat back to over the mountains out of Ohio.

The campaign of 1755 proved to be a disaster for the British. In fact, the only British victory that year was the capture of Nova Scotia on the Atlantic coast of Canada. In 1756 and 1757, Britain suffered further defeats with the fall of Fort Oswego and Fort William Henry along the border between Quebec and New York.

THE TIDE TURNS

The war began to turn in favor of the British in 1758, due in large part to the efforts of **William Pitt**, a popular Member of Parliament. Pitt pledged huge sums of money and resources to defeating the hated Catholic French, and Great Britain spent part of the money on bounties paid to new young recruits in the colonies, helping invigorate the British forces. In 1758, the Iroquois, Delaware, and Shawnee signed the Treaty of Easton, aligning themselves with the British in return for contested land in western Pennsylvania and Virginia. Between 1758 and 1760, the British military successfully penetrated the heart of New France, with Quebec falling in 1759 and **Montreal finally falling in September 1760**. The French empire in North America began to crumble.

Washington returned to Fort Duquesne, this time in triumph. The British burnt the fort to the ground and founded **Fort Pitt**, named after the man they believed led the British to success. The fort grew as a settlement, in large part due to its location at the confluence of three important rivers, and is now the modern city of Pittsburgh.



Edward Braddock: British general who led the failed attack on Fort Duquesne. He died in the battle.



Fort Duquesne: French fort built at the junction of the Monongahela and Allegany Rivers where they meet to form the Ohio River.



William Pitt: British member of parliament who led Britain to victory in the Seven Years War.



Fall of Montreal: Conclusive battle of the Seven Years War in America. General Wolfe's daring attack successfully surprised the defenses of the Marquis de Montcalm at the Plains of Abraham.



Fort Pitt: British name given to the captured French Fort Duquesne. It is now the site of Pittsburgh.

Secondary Source: Painting

The Death of General Wolfe is a well-known 1770 painting by Anglo-American artist Benjamin West. It depicts the Battle of Quebec, also known as the Battle of the Plains of Abraham, on September 13, 1759. This was a pivotal event in the Seven Years' War and decided the fate of France's colonies.

1 WHO WON THE SEVEN YEARS WAR?

THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE WAR

After the fall of Quebec and Montreal, the war in America was effectively over. The British and the British Americans could enjoy the fruits of victory. Signed in 1763, the **Treaty of Paris** that formally ended the conflict was harsh for the French. All French territory on the mainland of North America was surrendered to Britain. The British received Quebec and the Ohio Valley. The port of New Orleans and the Louisiana Territory west of the Mississippi were ceded to Spain for their efforts as a British ally.

It should have been a time to revel in the spoils of war. Instead, the victory that temporarily brought American colonists close to their British cousins would help tear them apart.

The experience of the Seven Years War did end up bringing the British and the Americans closer together. British troops looked down their noses at the colonials. They regarded the Americans as crude, lacking culture. The pious New Englanders found the British **redcoats** to be profane. New Englanders did not like taking orders. There was considerable resistance to helping the British at all until Pitt promised to reimburse the colonists. American **smugglers** continued to trade with the French and Spanish enemies throughout the war. There was considerable tension indeed.

The American colonists did feel closer to each other. Some of the intercolonial rivalry was broken down in the face of a common enemy. The first signs of a common national identity were seen when settlers from all thirteen colonies lay down their lives together in battle. Likewise, the joy of victory was an American triumph. All could share in the pride of success. In many ways, the Seven Years War was a coming of age for the English colonies. They had over a century of established history. They had a flourishing economy. The Americans proved they could work together to defeat a common foe. Before long, they would do so again.

For France, the military defeat and the financial burden of the war weakened the monarchy and contributed to the advent of the French Revolution in 1789. For many Native American populations, the elimination of French power in North America meant the disappearance of a strong ally and counterweight to British expansion, which over the following decades would lead to their ultimate dispossession.

Although the Spanish takeover of the Louisiana territory had only modest repercussions, the British takeover of Spanish Florida resulted in the westward migration of tribes that did not want to do business with the British and a rise in tensions between the Choctaw and the Creek, historic enemies whose divisions the British at times exploited. The change of control in Florida also prompted most of its Spanish Catholic population to leave.

In addition to vastly increasing Britain's land in North America, the Seven Years' War changed economic, political, and social relations between Britain and its colonies. It plunged Britain into debt, nearly doubling the national debt. The Crown, seeking sources of revenue to pay off the debt, chose to impose new taxes on its colonies. These taxes were met with increasingly stiff resistance, until troops were called in to ensure that representatives of the Crown could safely perform their duties of collecting taxes. Over the years, dissatisfaction over the high taxes would steadily rise among the colonists until eventually culminating in the American Revolutionary War.



Treaty of Paris of 1763: Treaty that ended the Seven Years War. France gave all of its mainland North American territory to Britain including Canada and all the lands between the Appalachian Mountains and the Mississippi River.



Redcoats: Nickname for British soldiers.



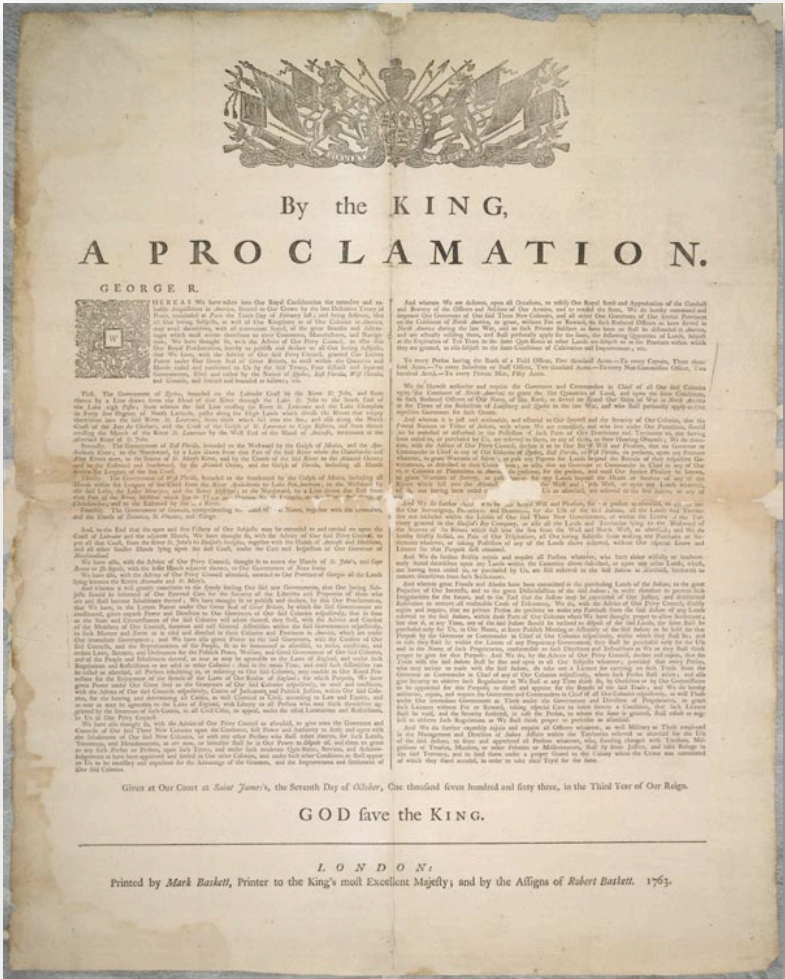
Smugglers: People who illegally imported or exported products. In the colonial era this was done to avoid paying import duties and mercantilist laws.

1 WHO WON THE SEVEN YEARS WAR?

France returned to the North American stage in 1778 to support American colonists against Great Britain in the Revolutionary War. For France, the military defeat and the financial burden of the Seven Years' War weakened the monarchy and eventually contributed to the advent of the French Revolution in 1789.

Primary Source: Government Document

A copy of the Proclamation of 1763 from the Canadian Archives.



THE PROCLAMATION OF 1763

From the perspective of the story of the United States, the most important result of the Seven Years War was the Proclamation of 1763.

The Treaty of Paris granted Britain a great deal of valuable North American land, especially the Ohio Territory, but the new land also gave rise to a plethora of problems. Despite the acquisition of Ohio, land that the American colonists had longed to take possession of, the British government tried to discourage American colonists from moving west. The British already had difficulty administering the settled areas east of the Appalachians. Americans moving west would stretch British administrative resources thin.

1 WHO WON THE SEVEN YEARS WAR?

The Native Americans, who had allied themselves with the French during the Seven Years' War, continued to fight after the peace had been reached. Moreover, just because the French government had legally yielded its territory to Britain did not mean the Ohio Valley's French inhabitants would readily give up their claims to land or trade routes. Scattered pockets of French settlers made the British fearful of another prolonged conflict. The war had dragged on long enough, and the British public was weary of footing the bill. The last thing the British government wanted were hordes of American colonists crossing the Appalachians fueling French and Native American resentment.

British fears were realized when Native Americans rose up in a coordinated effort to expel British settlers and troops from area around the Great Lakes. Led by Ottawa Chief Pontiac, the uprising, sometimes called Pontiac's Rebellion, lasted for two years and resulted in the loss of thousands of lives. The Native Americans even laid siege to Fort Pitt, albeit unsuccessfully.

The solution to the problem of the cost of administering their empire, and also to avoiding mounting conflicts with the Native American inhabitants of Ohio seemed simple. The Royal **Proclamation of 1763** was issued, which declared the boundaries of settlement for inhabitants of the 13 colonies to be the spine of the Appalachian Mountains.

For the American colonists, the Proclamation was an insult. The colonies had already begun to set their sights on expanding their western boundaries. Why restrict their appetites to expand? Surely, this was be a plot to keep the American colonists under the imperial thumb and east of the mountains, where they could be watched.

Consequently, the law was observed with the same reverence the colonists reserved for the mercantile laws. Scores of wagons headed westward. The British could not possibly enforce their decree and the Proclamation of 1763 merely became part of the long list of events in which the intent and actions of one side was misunderstood or disregarded by the other.

CONCLUSION

So, the British armies won on the battlefield, so it can easily be said that the British Empire won the war. The English colonists in America participated in the war, so they were technically on the winning side, but the outcome of the war, especially the Proclamation of 1763 was not a positive outcome from their perspective. Then again, the Americans ignored the Proclamation so perhaps it was their government, and not the colonists, who lost?

And what about the Native Americans? Did any of them win? And the French colonists, now part of the British Empire, but protected from the English-speaking Protestants of the 13 colonies by the Proclamation line?

What do you think? Who won the Seven Years War?



Proclamation of 1763: Royal order which forbade American colonists from moving over the Appalachian Mountains. It was passed in order to avoid conflict with Native Americans but was widely ignored.

1 WHO WON THE SEVEN YEARS WAR?

SUMMARY

New France was the French empire's territory in North America. It stretched from what is now Canada, down through the Great Lakes region, through the Ohio River Valley and extended down the Mississippi River to Louisiana and the port city of New Orleans. Unlike the British colonies along the Atlantic Coast, very few French colonists actually lived in New France. Mostly, the French were fur trappers, trading with Native Americans for beaver furs.

The primary point of conflict between the French and British in America was the Ohio River area. American settlers from Virginia wanted to cross over the Appalachian Mountains into what is now Kentucky and western Pennsylvania, but were opposed by Native Americans who did not want to lose their land and their French allies.

The Albany Congress was the first time leaders from many colonies gathered to talk about their mutual concerns. Ben Franklin proposed that they coordinate defense against the French and Native Americans, but it turned out to be too early for the colonies to work together and the plan was rejected.

George Washington played a part in the start of the Seven Years War. He led a group of Virginia militiamen across the Appalachian Mountains and fought with French troops. They were defeated. Later, Washington joined a larger force from the British army to return to what is now the city of Pittsburgh to fight the French. Again the British and Americans were defeated and Washington had to lead the retreat when the British general was killed.

The Seven Years War was a global struggle between Great Britain and France. In North America, most of the fighting took place in upstate New York along the border between the British Colonies and French Canada. In the end, the British won in North America by capturing Montreal and won the global war as well.

The Treaty of Paris 1763 that concluded the war gave Britain all of the French territory in North America including Canada and the lands west of the Appalachian Mountains as far as the Mississippi River.

After the war, American settlers wanted to cross the mountains into newly won territory in the Ohio River Valley. The British government did not want to have to provide military protection for these settlers against Native American attack and issued the Proclamation of 1763 banning such settlement. This made Americans who had fought in the war angry and proved to be the starting point for disagreements that led to American independence.



LOCATIONS

New France: The French colonies in America extending from the St. Lawrence River area in modern Quebec province of Canada, to the Great Lakes Region, and down the Mississippi River to Louisiana.

Ohio Valley: The region around the Ohio River including most of the modern states of Ohio, Kentucky, Indiana, West Virginia and (western) Pennsylvania

Fort Necessity: Makeshift fort build by Washington's men after defeat by the French and Native Americans. The French build Fort Duquesne in its place and it is now the site of the city of Pittsburg.

Fort Duquesne: French fort built at the junction of the Monongahela and Allegany Rivers where they meet to form the Ohio River.

Fort Pitt: British name given to the captured French Fort Duquesne. It is now the site of Pittsburg.



TREATIES & LAWS

Treaty of Paris of 1763: Treaty that ended the Seven Years War. France gave all of its mainland North American territory to Britain including Canada and all the lands between the Appalachian Mountains and the Mississippi River.

Proclamation of 1763: Royal order which forbade American colonists from moving over the Appalachian Mountains. It was passed in order to avoid conflict with Native Americans but was widely ignored



EVENTS

Albany Congress: A gathering of colonial leaders in 1754 to plan coordinated defense against Native American and French attack during the Seven Years War. Some delegates, especially Benjamin Franklin, argued for a unified government for all 13 colonies, but this plan was rejected.

Fall of Montreal: Conclusive battle of the Seven Years War in America. General Wolfe's daring attack successfully surprised the defenses of the Marquis de Montcalm at the Plains of Abraham.



PEOPLE AND GROUPS

Samuel de Champlain: French explorer who founded Quebec.

Huguenots: French Protestants

George Washington: Virginia planter, surveyor, officer in the Seven Years War, leader of the Continental Army in the Revolution, President of the Constitutional Congress and First President of the United States.

Surveyor: A person who measures land to define official boundaries

Edward Braddock: British general who led the failed attack on Fort Duquesne. He died in the battle.

William Pitt: British member of parliament who led Britain to victory in the Seven Years War.

Redcoats: Nickname for British soldiers.

Smugglers: People who illegally imported or exported products. In the colonial era this was done to avoid paying import duties and mercantilist laws.

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S E C O N D Q U E S T I O N

HOW DID THE COLONISTS STOP BEING BRITISH AND START BEING AMERICAN?

What was the

*American
Revolution?*

INTRODUCTION

Moving locations does not change identity. Simply moving to a new state will not dramatically change who you are – your beliefs, values, and sense of self. This was true of the British colonists who left their homeland to cross the Atlantic and live in America. They did not suddenly become American. They were British, or perhaps they thought of themselves as English, Scottish, Irish or German. But regardless of the precise place they left behind, they certainly did not suddenly start thinking like Americans immediately.

So, when did they stop being British and start being American? And why did this shift happen? What made tens of thousands of people give up old ways of thinking about their identity and adopt a new sense of self? What life changing events could possibly have happened to turn British colonists, loyal to their King and Country, into patriotic rebels willing to fight and die to create a new nation? How did Americans start being American?

THE ENLIGHTENMENT

The **Age of Reason**, as it was called, was spreading rapidly across Europe. In the late 17th century, scientists like Isaac Newton and writers like **John Locke** were challenging the old order. Newton's laws of gravity and motion described the world in terms of natural laws beyond any spiritual force. In the wake of political turmoil in England, Locke asserted the right of a people to change a government that did not protect natural rights of life, liberty and property. People were beginning to doubt the existence of a God who could predestine human beings to eternal damnation and empower a tyrant for a king.

In America, intellectuals were also reading the works of the **Enlightenment** thinkers. On their side of the Atlantic, new ideas about liberty and progress had a chance to flourish without the shackles of Old Europe. Religious leaders began to change their old dogmatic positions. They began to emphasize the similarities between the Anglican Church and the Puritan Congregationalists rather than the differences. Even **Cotton Mather**, the Massachusetts minister who wrote and spoke so convincingly about the existence of witches advocated science to immunize citizens against smallpox.

Harvard ministers became so liberal that Yale College was founded in New Haven in 1707 in an attempt to retain old Calvinist ideas. This attempt failed and the entire faculty except one converted to the Church of England in 1722. By the end of the century, many New England ministers would become Unitarians, doubting even the divinity of Christ.

New ideas shaped political attitudes as well. John Locke defended the displacement of a monarch who would not protect the lives, liberties, and property of the English people. The French philosopher **Jean-Jacques Rousseau** stated that society should be ruled by the "general will" of the people and another Frenchman, Baron de **Montesquieu** declared that power should not be concentrated in the hands of any one individual. He recommended separating power among executive, legislative, judicial branches of government.

American intellectuals absorbed these ideas and the writings of Benjamin Franklin made them accessible to the general public. The delegates who declared independence from Britain used many of these arguments and the entire opening of the Declaration of Independence, written by Thomas Jefferson, is an application of John Locke's ideas. The opening line of the United States Constitution – "We the People" – reflects Enlightenment principles as well

The old way of life was represented by superstition, an angry God, and absolute submission to authority. The thinkers of the Age of Reason ushered in a new way of thinking. This new way championed the accomplishments of humankind. Individuals did not have to accept despair. Science and reason could bring happiness and progress. Kings did not rule by divine right. They had an obligation to their subjects. Europeans pondered the implications for nearly a century, but it was Americans who first put them into practice.



Age of Reason: Nickname for the Enlightenment, characterized by an increased interest in science, new ideas about government and power, and a focus on order inspired by Classical Greece and Rome.



John Locke: Enlightenment philosopher. His belief that humans are born with certain rights (he wrote "Life, Liberty and Property") inspired Thomas Jefferson and other American revolutionaries.



Enlightenment: Time period in Europe and America in the 1700s characterized by an increased interest in science, new ideas about government and power, and a focus on order inspired by Classical Greece and Rome



Cotton Mather: Massachusetts minister who advocated for scientific advancement, including immunization.



Jean-Jacques Rousseau: French Enlightenment philosopher who argued that the common people should rule through elections.



Montesquieu: French Enlightenment philosopher who believed power should be separated between different branches of government instead of concentrated (as was the case of the kings of Europe).

**Secondary Source: Statue**

A statue of Jean-Jacques Rousseau with the philosopher seated holding his pen contrasts with the usual statues of generals upon horseback with swords.

THE TRIAL OF JOHN PETER ZENGER

No democracy has existed in the modern world without the existence of a free press. Newspapers and pamphlets allow for the exchange of ideas and for the voicing of dissent. When a corrupt government holds power, the press becomes a critical weapon. It organizes opposition and can help revolutionary ideas spread. The trial of **John Peter Zenger**, a New York printer, was an important step toward codifying this most precious freedom for American colonists.

John Peter Zenger was a German immigrant who printed a publication called *The New York Weekly Journal*. This publication harshly pointed out the actions of the corrupt royal governor, William S. Cosby. It accused the government of rigging elections and allowing the French enemy to explore New York harbor. It accused the governor of an assortment of crimes and basically labeled him an idiot. Although Zenger merely printed the articles, he was hauled into jail. The authors were anonymous, and Zenger would not name them.

In 1733, Zenger was accused of **libel**, a legal term whose meaning is quite different for us today than it was for him. In his day it was libel when you published information that was opposed to the government. Truth or falsity were irrelevant.



John Peter Zenger: New York printer who was put on trial for libel. He successfully argued that telling the truth was not libel. His case was an important step toward freedom of the press in America.



Libel: Knowingly telling a lie about someone to harm them.

He never denied printing the pieces. The judge therefore felt that the verdict was never in question. Something very surprising happened, however.

The first jury was packed with individuals on Cosby's payroll. Throughout this process, Zenger's wife Anna kept the presses rolling. Her reports resulted in replacing Cosby's jury with a true jury of Zenger's peers.

When the trial began and Zenger's new attorney began his defense, a stir fluttered through the courtroom. The most famous lawyer in the colonies, Andrew Hamilton of Philadelphia, stepped up to defend Zenger. Hamilton admitted that Zenger printed the charges and demanded the prosecution to prove them false. In a stirring appeal to the jury, Hamilton pleaded for his new client's release. "It is not the cause of one poor printer," he claimed, "but the cause of liberty." The judge ordered the jury to convict Zenger if they believed he printed the stories. But the jury returned in less than ten minutes with a verdict of not guilty.

Cheers filled the courtroom and spread throughout the countryside. Zenger and Hamilton were hailed as heroes. Although true freedom of the press was not known until the ratification of the First Amendment in 1791, newspaper publishers felt freer to print their honest views. As the American Revolution approached, this freedom would be vital.

A TRADITION OF REBELLION

The American colonies had known violent rebellion long before the Revolutionary War.

Each of the original thirteen colonies had experienced violent uprisings. Americans had shown themselves more than willing to take up arms to defend a cause held dear. This tradition of rebellion characterized the American spirit throughout its early history.

One of the earliest large-scale insurrections was **Bacon's Rebellion**. In 1676, **Nathaniel Bacon** led a group of disgruntled citizens from the western part of Virginia eastward in search of justice. They felt their interests were not represented by Virginia's colonial legislature and the royal governor. They felt **Governor Berkeley** had done nothing to protect them from Native American raids. These frontier Virginians felt excluded from the riches of the eastern seaboard. It was a conflict that was fueled by frustrations about class and economic power rather than ideas of liberty or independence.

Over a thousand of Bacon's followers entered Jamestown and burned the capital city. Governor Berkeley fled until reinforcements could organize. The rebels pillaged and plundered the countryside until Berkeley's forces crushed them. Over twenty rebels were hanged, but fear of further rebellion was struck into the hearts of the members of the wealthy Virginia planting class.

Similar uprisings took place all along the colonial backwoods. From 1765 to 1767 outlaws roamed the landscape holding local farmers at their mercy. A band of vigilantes known as **Regulators** took the law into their own hands and pushed the outlaws away. The Regulators then turned their wrath on local hunters who raised a force to fight back. Near civil war conditions prevailed until the government finally agreed to institute a circuit court judicial system. A similar movement broke out in North Carolina the following decade.



Bacon's Rebellion: Revolt in 1676 of poor Virginians against the colonial leadership led by Nathaniel Bacon. They felt that the royal governor was not providing protection from Native American attack and generally mistrusted the elites of the colony.



Nathaniel Bacon: Leader of Bacon's Rebellion.



Governor Berkeley: Royal governor who was eventually suppressed Bacon's Rebellion.



Regulators: Poor farmers in rural North Carolina who fought against the colonial government. Like Bacon's Rebellion, they focused on perceived and real injustices at the hands of the wealthy.



Secondary Source: Painting

Howard Pyles representation of Nathaniel Bacon and his followers burning Jamestown.

Land riots took place in many colonies, but in New York they were particularly violent. Tenants of the wealthy land aristocrats demanded relief from high rents. When the courts ruled in favor of the land barons in 1766, the angry farmers took up arms. The governor had to bring in the army to quell the disturbance.

In Pennsylvania, a group of Scots-Irish settlers called the **Paxton Boys** marched on Philadelphia in 1764 to protest the Quakers' friendly Native American policy. The Paxtons lived in Pennsylvania's hinterland and wanted both Native American land and protection from raids on their homes. It was, after all, the height of Pontiac's Rebellion and the Proclamation of 1763 had been issued just a year before. A delegation, led by Benjamin Franklin met with the Paxton Boys to hear their grievances and order was restored, but just before the Paxtons attacked the city of Philadelphia itself.

American colonists had proven themselves experienced rebels. Whenever they felt their rights were jeopardized, they seemed willing to take up arms. Economic exploitation, lack of political representation and unfair taxation, were among the causes that led to these clashes.



Paxton Boys: A group of Scots-Irish settlers in Pennsylvania who threatened to attack Philadelphia. Like the followers of Bacon or the Regulators, they were unhappy that the elites of the colony were not providing protection from Native American attack.

SMUGGLING

It is a mistake to ignore the larger motivations that drove British policies in the 1760s and 1770s since it unfairly paints the men of Parliament as cruel, and uninterested in the needs of their American subjects. While this may be partly true, as there were certainly prejudices that colored their actions, most of the decisions from London are better understood when looking at the British Empire as a whole. After all, the British had an empire to run.

The prevailing economic philosophy of seventeenth and eighteenth century empires was **mercantilism**. In this system, colonies existed to enrich the mother country. Restrictions were placed on what the colonies could manufacture, whose ships they could use, and most importantly, with whom they could trade.

British merchants wanted American colonists to buy British goods, not French, Spanish, or Dutch products. In theory, Americans would pay **duties** on imported goods to discourage this practice. Smuggling is the way the colonists ignored these restrictions.

Distance and the size of the British Empire worked against British priorities. Before 1763, the British followed a policy known as **salutary neglect**. They passed laws regulating colonial trade, but they knew they could not easily enforce them. It cost four times as much to use the British navy to collect duties as the value of the duties themselves.

Colonists, particularly in New England, thought nothing of ignoring these laws. Ships from the colonies often loaded their holds with illegal goods from the French, Dutch, and Spanish West Indies. British customs officials earned a modest salary from the Crown but soon found their pockets stuffed with bribe money from colonial shippers. Usually, the bribes far exceeded whatever pay the officials received. In other words, it paid more to turn a blind eye, than to actually enforce the laws. When smugglers were caught, they were usually freed by sympathetic American juries. Smuggling became commonplace and the British estimated that over £700,000 per year were brought into the American colonies illegally.

As 1776 approached, the tradition of smuggling became vital to the Revolutionary cause. What had started as an economic strategy led to wholesale disregard for British law, particularly in the harbors of New England. American shippers became quite skilled at avoiding the British navy, a practice they used extensively in the Revolutionary War. The British government began to try offenders in admiralty courts, which had no juries, but attempts to crack down merely brought further rebellion.

THE STAMP ACT

After the Seven Years War, the British government was faced with a financial crisis. To finance the war, they had borrowed heavily, and the loans were coming due. The Americans, who had clearly benefitted from the outcome of the Treaty of Paris, should help pay. After all, the Crown had paid to protect them from the French.

The British point of view is not difficult to grasp. The Seven Years' War had been terribly costly. The taxes asked of the American colonists were lower than those asked of mainland English citizens. The revenue raised from taxing the colonies was used to pay for their own defense. Moreover, the funds received from American



Mercantilism: An economic system in which colonies were only allowed to trade with the mother country.



Duties: Taxes paid on imported products.



Salutary Neglect: A British policy of not enforcing laws in the American colonies before 1763.

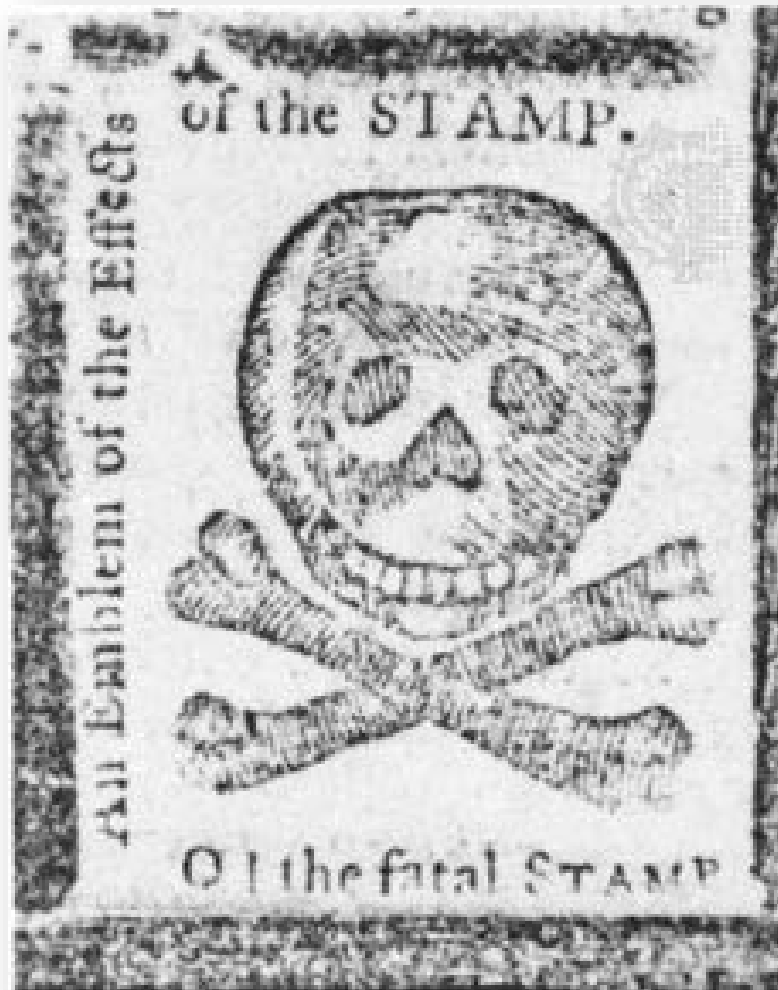
2 HOW DID THE COLONISTS STOP BEING BRITISH AND START BEING AMERICAN?

colonists barely covered one-third of the cost of maintaining British troops in the 13 colonies.

So, after over a century and a half of permitting relative self-rule under the policy of salutary neglect, in addition to restricting westward movement, Britain began exercising direct influence over colonial life in the form of taxation.

The Americans, however, saw things through a different lens. What was the purpose of maintaining British garrisons in the colonies now that the French threat was gone? Americans were unhappy about contributing to the maintenance of troops they felt were there only to watch them.

True, those in England paid more in taxes, but Americans paid much more in sweat. All the land that was cleared, the Native Americans who were fought, and the relatives who died building colonies that enhanced the British Empire made further taxation seem insulting.



Primary Source: Editorial Cartoon

After the Stamp Act was passed, colonial newspapers published this cartoon depicting the new law as death for the colonies.

2 HOW DID THE COLONISTS STOP BEING BRITISH AND START BEING AMERICAN?

In addition to emotional appeals, the colonists began to make a political argument, as well. Democratic traditions in England dated back hundreds of years in British history. As far back as 1215 with the signing of the **Magna Carta**, English citizens had made it clear that taxes were an acceptable way for their government to raise money, but only with the consent of the people through the form of elected representatives. The colonists had no representation in the British Parliament, and as such they argued, their rights as Englishmen were being denied.

Furthermore, Americans themselves had a long tradition of representative government. The Mayflower Compact, signed before the Pilgrims even debarked in Plymouth granted voting rights to each male church member. The Virginia planters and the ruling class of the southern colonies had long exercised self-rule in the form of the annual meetings of a House of Burgesses.

When Parliament passed the **Stamp Act** in March 1765, things changed. It was the first direct tax on the American colonies. Every legal document had to be written on specially stamped paper, showing proof of payment. Deeds, wills, marriage licenses — contracts of any sort — were not recognized as legal in a court of law unless they were prepared on this paper. In addition, newspaper, dice, and playing cards also had to bear proof of tax payment. American activists sprang into action.

Taxation in this manner and the **Quartering Act**, which required the American colonies to provide food and shelter for British troops, were soundly thrashed in colonial assemblies. From Patrick Henry in Virginia to James Otis in Massachusetts, Americans voiced their protest. For the first time since the Albany Congress met in 1754, representatives from nine of the colonial governments meet to address a common grievance. Although the **Stamp Act Congress** and the formal protest the colonies signed afterward did little to affect change in London, the simple act of meeting and attempting to act jointly was an important step toward unity.

What made a difference, and brought about an end to the Stamp Act, was direct action. Colonists initiated widespread boycotts of British goods. Radical groups harassed tax collectors and published the names of those who did not comply with the boycotts. The pressure on Parliament by business-starved British merchants was too great to bear and the Stamp Act was repealed the following year. The crisis was over, but the uneasy peace did not last long.

THE SONS AND DAUGHTERS OF LIBERTY

They were the ones who were not afraid. They knew instinctively that talk and politics alone would not bring an end to British tyranny. They were willing to resort to extralegal means if necessary to end this series of injustices. They were American patriots — northern and southern, young and old, male and female. They were the Sons and Daughters of Liberty.

Like other secret clubs at the time, the **Sons of Liberty**. They had secret code words, medals, and symbols. Originally formed in response to the Stamp Act, their activities were far more than ceremonial. It was the Sons of Liberty who ransacked houses of British officials. Threats and intimidation were their weapons against tax collectors, causing many to flee town. Images of unpopular figures might be hanged and burned in effigy on the town's liberty tree. Offenders might be covered in **warm tar and blanketed in a coat of feathers**.



Magna Carta: Agreement signed in 1215 between the King of England and the nobles limiting the power of the monarchy.



Stamp Act: 1765 law that established a tax on printed material.



Quartering Act: 1765 law that required colonist to allow British troops to live and eat in their private homes.



Stamp Act Congress: Meeting of colonial leaders in 1754 to seek solutions to the problems caused by the Stamp Act.



Sons of Liberty: A group of American patriots (all men) who promoted independence.



Tar and Feathering: A form of torture in which a person covered in hot tar and feathers. It was painful and potentially deadly. It was used by some Patriots on British customs officers.

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Another important function of the Sons of Liberty was correspondence. These clubs were formed up and down the colonial seaboard and often tried to coordinate their activities. This private band of societies provided an intercolonial network that would help forge unity. It should come as no surprise that the members of the Sons of Liberty and the delegates to the various Congresses were at times one and the same.



Primary Source: Editorial Cartoon

The Bostonians Paying the Excise-Man, a British cartoon from 1774. It depicts the tarring and feathering of Boston Commissioner of Customs John Malcolm. This was the second time that Malcolm had been tarred and feathered.

The **Daughters of Liberty** performed equally important functions. Once boycotts of British goods became widespread, there was a natural textile shortage. Mass spinning bees were organized in various colonial cities to make homespun substitutes. Since women often purchased consumer goods for the home, the Daughters of Liberty became instrumental in upholding the boycott, particularly after passage of the tax on tea. The most zealous Daughters of Liberty refused to

 **Daughters of Liberty:** Groups of colonial women who promoted independence, especially by participating in boycotts of British goods.

accept gentleman callers for themselves or their daughters who were not sympathetic to the patriot cause.

Of course, the winners write the history books. Had the American Revolution failed, the Sons and Daughters of Liberty would no doubt be regarded as a band of thugs, or at the very least, outspoken troublemakers. History will be on their sides, however, since these individuals risked their lives and reputations to fight against tyranny.

COMMITTEES OF CORRESPONDENCE

American patriots of the 1770s did not have modern means of communication at their disposal. To spread the power of the written word from town to town and colony to colony, **Committees of Correspondence** were established.

The first such committee was organized by none other than Bostonian Samuel Adams. Adams enabled the entire Massachusetts citizenry to have access to patriot ideas. Adams knew that the residents of the seacoast towns were better informed than those of the interior because of frequent visits from travelling ships, so he and other patriots urged the establishment of correspondence committees in rural inland towns as well.

The Committees of Correspondence were bold enough to use the British postal service as the means of communication. For the most part, the pen was their weapon of choice, but revolutionary sentiment did at times take other forms. For example, the Committee of Correspondence in Boston gave its blessing on the raiding of the Dartmouth and the destruction of its cargo that is now known as the Boston Tea Party.

Any successful national organization must begin locally. Coordinated actions do not materialize out of thin air and without the work of thousands of local patriots, north and south, urban and rural, there can be no unified result. The Committees of Correspondence became the building blocks on which national unity was built.

As the revolution drew nearer, the committees became the spine of colonial interaction. The Virginia House of Burgesses followed Adams' lead and established a Committee of Correspondence as a standing committee in 1773. Before the tea crisis had passed, each colony had a central committee designed to coordinate discussion with the other twelve colonies. In effect, these Committees of Correspondence were the seedlings of a new American government and the forebears to the First and Second Continental Congresses.

THE BOSTON PATRIOTS

The American Revolution was not simply a series of impersonal events. Men and women made fateful, often difficult decisions that led to independence. Although patriots could be found in all of the 13 colonies, nowhere were they more numerous than in the city of Boston.

Perhaps the prevalence of shipping in Boston made New Englanders especially resent the restrictions on trade. Maybe its legacy of religious quarrels with the Church of England made Bostonians more rebellious, or its long history of town meetings and self-rule may have led New Englanders to be more wary of royal authority.



Committees of Correspondence:

Groups of Patriots throughout the colonies who passed pro-independence messages.

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Perhaps a combination of these and other factors led the city of Boston to be the leading voice against British authority. It was no coincidence that both the Boston Massacre and the Boston Tea Party happened in the same city. Furthermore, fierce patriots such as Samuel Adams, John Adams, John Hancock, and Paul Revere were all Bostonians.

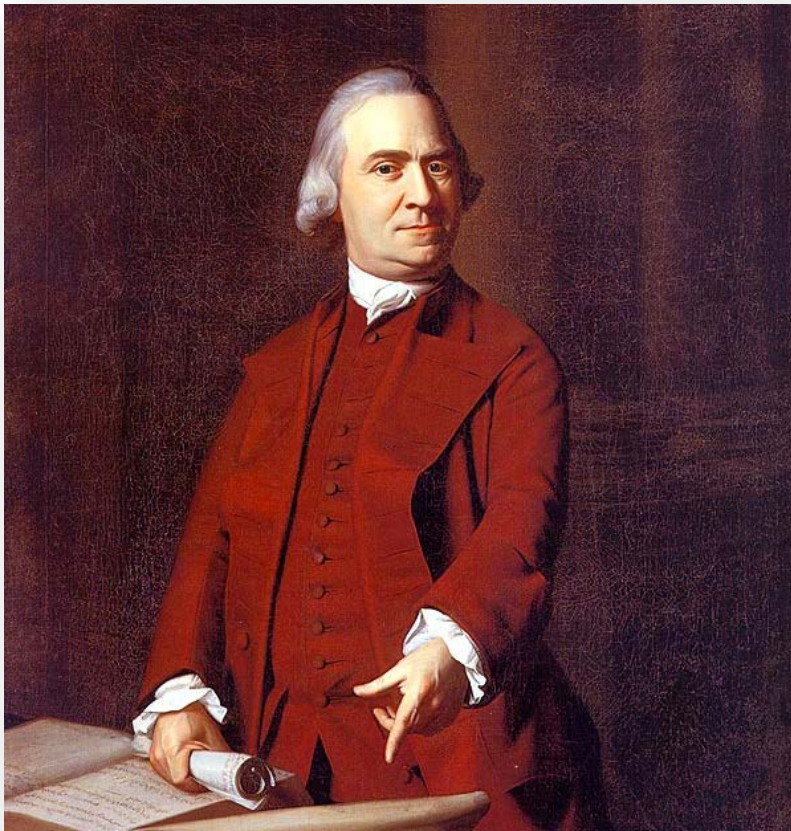
Samuel Adams was perhaps the fieriest supporter of American liberty in the 13 colonies. His mind drew a sharp distinction between the evils of the British Empire and simple American life. Rather unsuccessful in a series of pursuits prior to the Revolution, Adams found his calling in organizing and rabble-rousing. He served as an active member of the Sons of Liberty and the creator of the first significant committee of correspondence. His skills as a political organizer drove the colonies toward declaring independence. As the Revolution approached, the cries for Adams' head grew louder and louder in the streets of London.



Samuel Adams: Patriot from Boston who organized the Boston Tea Party. He was known for his skillful political organizing and ability to provoke a response through direct action.

Primary Source: Painting

Samuel Adams, painted in 1772 by J. S. Copley



John Adams, Samuel's second cousin, was no less a patriot. His early fame as a defense attorney for the British soldiers in the trial that followed the Boston Massacre cannot be taken in isolation. He provided the wording of the resistance message sent to George III that was adopted by the First Continental Congress. John and Samuel Adams represented the radical wing of the Second Continental Congress that demanded a taking up of arms against Britain. John Adams was also a member of the committee of five who drafted the Declaration of Independence.



John Adams: Patriot from Boston. He was the primary promoter of independence at the Continental Congress and became the second president.

John Hancock, the man with the famous signature was also a Bostonian. Hancock earned the early ire of British officials as a major smuggler. Hancock and Samuel Adams were the two agitators whose arrest was ordered by General Gage after the battles at Lexington and Concord. As a man of great wealth, he had much to lose by resisting Britain. Nevertheless, he did not bend.

Paul Revere did not come from the same social class as the Adams or Hancock Families. As a silversmith, he was a man of humbler means, but his attitudes toward Britain were anything but humble. His famous midnight ride that warned of the advancing British troops was only one of his revolutionary actions. He was also an illustrator, whose image of the Boston Massacre became iconic. His engravings were used by patriots throughout the colonies as anti-British propaganda.

These were but a handful of Bostonians who became the thorn in the British side. Their brave actions encouraged American patriotism throughout the 13 colonies. As the American Revolution was dawning, the Boston patriots led the way.

THE TOWNSHEND ACTS

Nervous tension best describes the relationship between the American colonies and England in the aftermath of the Stamp Act. Several issues remained unresolved. First, Parliament had absolutely no desire to see colonial leaders feeling empowered. To make clear the point that it was Parliament in London, not the colonists who wielded power, after repealing the Stamp Act, they issued the **Declaratory Act**.


This act proclaimed Parliament's ability "to bind the colonies in all cases whatsoever." The message was clear: under no circumstances did Parliament abandon in principle its right to legislate for the 13 colonies.


On the American side of the Atlantic, leaders were optimistic about the repeal of the Stamp Act but found the suggestions of the Declaratory Act threatening. Most American statesmen had drawn a clear line between legislation and taxation. In 1766, the notion of Parliamentary supremacy over the law was questioned only by a radical few, but the ability to tax without representation was another matter. The Declaratory Act made no such distinction. "All cases whatsoever" could surely mean the power to tax. Many assemblymen waited anxiously for the issue to resurface.


Sure enough, the truce did not last long. Back in London, Charles Townshend persuaded the House of Commons to once again tax the Americans, this time through an import tax on such items as glass, paper, lead, and tea.

Townshend had ulterior motives, however. The revenue from these duties would now be used to pay the salaries of colonial governors. This was not an insignificant change. Traditionally, the legislatures of the colonies held the authority to pay the governors. It was not uncommon for a governor's salary to be withheld if the legislature became dissatisfied with any particular decision. The legislature could, in effect, blackmail the royal governor into submission. Once Townshend removed this important leverage, the governors would be freer to oppose the assemblies.

Townshend went further by appointing an American Board of Customs Commissioners. This body would be stationed in the colonies to enforce compliance with tax policy. Customs officials received bonuses for every convicted smuggler, so

 **John Hancock:** Boston Patriot. He was the chairman of the Continental Congress and his signature is the first, and largest at the bottom of the Declaration of Independence.

 **Paul Revere:** Boston Patriot and silversmith. His engraving of the Boston Massacre helped promote the cause for independence. He also helped warn minutemen in surrounding towns of the approaching British troops on the morning of the Battles of Lexington and Concord.

 **Declaratory Act:** British law passed in 1776 after the repeal of the Stamp Act. It asserted Parliament's right to make laws for the Colonies.

there were obvious incentives to capture Americans. Given that violators were tried in juryless admiralty courts, there was a high chance of conviction.

Townshend also pressed the Americans by suspending the New York legislature for failing to provide adequate supplies for the British troops stationed there. Another showdown appeared imminent.

Reactions in the colonies were similar to those during the Stamp Act Crisis. Once again nonimportation was implemented. Extralegal activities such as harassing tax collectors and merchants who violated the boycotts were common. The colonial assemblies sprung into action.

In a **Circular Letter** to the other colonies, the Massachusetts legislature recommended collective action against the British Parliament. Penned by Samuel Adams in 1768, it voiced opposition to **taxation without representation**. In response, Lord Hillsborough, Parliament's minister on American affairs, warned colonial legislatures to treat the Circular Letter with contempt and threatened dissolution to any legislative body that adhered to Massachusetts' plea.

His words fell on deaf ears as legislative assemblies throughout the colonies, including New York, Rhode Island, and New Jersey, rose to the occasion and accepted the petition set forth by Samuel Adams and Massachusetts. By a vote of 92 to 17, the Massachusetts lawmakers refused to back down and the legislature was duly dissolved.

THE BOSTON MASSACRE

The showdown between the British and the Americans was not simply a war of words. Blood was shed over this clash of ideals. Although large-scale fighting between Americans and British soldiers did not begin until 1775, the 1770 **Boston Massacre** gave each side a taste of what was to come.

No colony was thrilled with the Townshend duties, but nowhere was there greater resentment than in Boston. British officials there feared for their lives. When attempts were made to seize two of John Hancock's trading vessels, Boston was ready to riot. Lord Hillsborough finally ordered four regiments of regular troops to be moved to Boston in order to demonstrate Parliament's authority.

When the redcoats marched boldly through the town streets on October 1, the only resistance seen was on the facial expressions of the townspeople. The people of Boston had decided to show restraint. The other 12 colonies watched the Boston proceedings with great interest. Perhaps their fears about British tyranny were true. Moderates found it difficult to argue that the Crown was not interested in stripping away American civil liberties by having a standing army stationed in Boston. Throughout the occupation, sentiment shifted further and further away from the London government.

Throughout the winter, resentment mounted and on March 5, 1770, the violence erupted. A mob of approximately 60 angry townspeople descended upon the redcoats guarding the customs house. When reinforcements were called, the crowd became more unruly, hurling rocks and snowballs.



Circular Letter: Open letter to the King and Parliament started by the Massachusetts legislature and approved by other colonial legislatures. In it the colonial leaders voiced opposition to taxation without representation.



No Taxation Without Representation: Idea that the government should not levy taxes unless the people who must pay those taxes have the opportunity to elect members of that government.



Boston Massacre: Riot in 1770 between Boston citizens and British troops. It was exploited by Patriots to enflame anti-British sentiment.

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HOW DID THE COLONISTS STOP BEING BRITISH AND START BEING AMERICAN?

In the heat of the confusing melee, the British fired without Captain Thomas Preston's command. Imperial bullets took the lives of five men, including **Crispus Attucks**, a former slave. Others were injured.



Crispus Attucks: Former slave who was killed at the Boston Massacre

Primary Source: Engraving

Paul Revere's engraving of the Boston Massacre was probably not accurate, but was widely circulated and inflamed colonial sentiment.



In the trial that followed, Captain Preston and four of his men were cleared of all charges. Two others were convicted of manslaughter, but were sentenced to a mere branding of the thumb. The lawyer who represented the British soldiers was none other than patriot John Adams.

At the same time Preston's men drew blood in Boston, the Parliament in London decided once again to concede on the issue of taxation. All the Townshend duties were repealed save one, the tax on tea. The Massachusetts legislature was reconvened. Despite calls by some to continue the tea boycott until all taxes were repealed, most American colonists ended their boycott.

Nonimportation may have ended, but the events in Boston between 1768 and 1770 were not forgotten. Legal squabbles were one thing, but bloodshed was another. Americans learned an important lesson from their experience: the British would use

force when necessary to keep the Americans obedient. If it could happen in Boston, where would it happen next?

TEA

The partial repeal of the Townshend Acts did not bring the same reaction in the American colonies as the repeal of the Stamp Act. Too much had already happened. Not only had the Crown attempted to tax the colonies on several occasions, but two taxes were still being collected, one on sugar and one on tea.

Military occupation and bloodshed, whether intentional or not, is not easily forgotten. Although importation had largely been resumed, problems of customs officers continued. One ill-fated customs ship, the *Gaspee*, was burnt to ashes by angry Rhode Islanders when the unfortunate vessel ran aground.

Tensions were mounting on both sides. It would take time for wounds to heal, but by this time, events were happening too fast for a chance to cool off.

The circumstances that led to the protest we call the Boston Tea Party originated far from America. The British East India Company was on the brink of financial collapse. Lord North hatched a scheme to deal simultaneously with the important, but ailing corporation and the problem of taxing the colonies.

He decided to grant the British East India Company a trading monopoly with the American colonies. A tax on tea would be maintained, but the company would actually be able to sell its tea for a lower price. A monopoly doesn't allow for competition. As such the British East India Company could lower its prices.

The colonists, Lord North hoped, would be happy to receive cheaper tea and willing to pay the tax. This would have the dual result of saving the tea company and securing compliance from Americans on the tax issue. It was a brilliant plan. There was, of course, one major flaw in his thinking. The colonists saw through this thinly veiled plan to encourage tax payment. Furthermore, they wondered how long the monopoly would keep prices low.

Activists were busy again, advocating boycott. Many went further. British ships carrying the controversial cargo were met with threats of violence in virtually all colonial ports. This was usually sufficient to convince the ships to turn around. In Annapolis, citizens burned a ship and the tea it carried. Boston, of course, reacted in a similarly extreme fashion.

In Massachusetts, Governor Thomas Hutchinson allowed three ships carrying tea to enter Boston Harbor. Before the tax could be collected, Bostonians took action. On a cold December night, radical townspeople stormed the ships and **tossed 342 chests of tea into the water**. Disguised as Native Americans, the offenders could not be identified, but no one doubted that Sam Adams and John Hancock were behind the protest.

The damage in modern American dollars exceeded three quarters of a million dollars. Not a single British East India Company chest of tea bound for the 13 colonies reached its destination. Not a single American colonist had a cup of that tea. Only the fish in Boston Harbor had that pleasure.



Boston Tea Party: Protest by Boston Patriots led by Samuel Adams in which a cargo of tea was destroyed. It resulted in the closing of Boston Harbor.

THE INTOLERABLE ACTS

Someone was going to pay. Parliament was utterly fed up with colonial antics. The British could tolerate strongly worded letters or trade boycotts. They could put up with defiant legislatures and harassed customs officials to an extent. But they saw the destruction of 342 chests of tea belonging to the British East India Company as wanton destruction of property by Boston thugs who did not have the courage to admit responsibility.

The British called their responsive measures to the Boston Tea Party the **Coercive Acts**. Boston Harbor was closed to trade until the owners of the tea were compensated. Only food and firewood were permitted into the port. Town meetings were banned, and the authority of the royal governor was increased.

To add insult to injury, General Gage, the British commander of North American forces, was appointed governor of Massachusetts. British troops and officials would now be tried outside Massachusetts for crimes of murder. Greater freedom was granted to British officers who wished to house their soldiers in private dwellings.

Parliament seemed to have a penchant for bad timing in these years. Right after passing the Coercive Acts, it passed the **Quebec Act**, a law that recognized the Roman Catholic Church as the established church in Quebec. An appointed council, rather than an elected body, would make the major decisions for the colony. The boundary of Quebec was extended into the Ohio Valley, land that the American colonists thought should belong to them.

In the wake of the passage of the Quebec Act, rage spread through the 13 colonies. With this one act, the British Crown granted land to the French-speaking Québécois. The extension of tolerance to Catholics was viewed as a hostile act by predominantly Protestant America.

Democracy took another blow with the establishment of direct rule in Quebec. Although the British made no connection between the Coercive Acts and the Quebec Act, they were seen on the American mainland as malicious and collectively called the **Intolerable Acts**.

Throughout the colonies, the message was clear: what could happen in Massachusetts could happen anywhere. The British had gone too far. Supplies were sent to beleaguered Massachusetts from the other twelve colonies. For the first time since the Stamp Act crisis, an intercolonial conference was called.

It was under these tense circumstances that the First Continental Congress convened in Philadelphia on September 5, 1774.

LEXINGTON AND CONCORD

Tensions continued to rise throughout the colonies, and especially in New England, after the Boston Tea Party and the meeting of the First Continental Congress. In an effort to restore law and order in Boston, the British dispatched General Thomas Gage to the New England seaport. He arrived in Boston in May of 1774, accompanied by several regiments of British troops, as the new royal governor of the Province of Massachusetts. As in 1768, the British occupied the town.

Massachusetts delegates met in a provincial Congress and published the **Suffolk Resolves**, which officially rejected the Coercive Acts and called for the raising of



Coercive Acts: Laws passed in 1774 closing Boston Harbor as punishment for the Boston Tea Party.



Quebec Act: Law passed by Parliament in 1774 that recognized the Catholic Church in Quebec and extended the boundary of Quebec into the Ohio Territory. The English colonists felt that the land should belong to them and were mostly Protestant so they were angered by the official recognition of the Catholic Church.



Intolerable Acts: American nickname for the Coercive and Quebec Acts.



Suffolk Resolves: Statements passed by the Massachusetts legislature in 1774 in opposition to the Intolerable Acts. They called for the raising of colonial militias and marked the beginning of official American government outside of the government recognized by the British.

colonial militias to take military action if needed. The Suffolk Resolves marked the point in which the elected representatives of the people of Massachusetts began legally disregarding the government in London and actively planning for the overthrow of the royal government in Massachusetts.

Both the British and the rebels in New England began to prepare for conflict by turning their attention to supplies of weapons and gunpowder. General Gage stationed 3,500 troops in Boston, and from there he ordered periodic raids on towns where guns and gunpowder were stockpiled, hoping to impose law and order by seizing them. As Boston became the headquarters of British military operations, many residents fled the city.

Gage's actions led to the formation of local militias made up of local farmers and townsmen. Many of these **minutemen**, so called since they were said to be ready to fight on a minute's notice, were veterans of the Seven Years War. In one instance, General Gage seized munitions in Cambridge and Charlestown, but when he arrived to do the same in Salem, his troops were met by a large crowd of minutemen and had to leave empty-handed. In New Hampshire, minutemen took over Fort William and Mary and confiscated weapons and cannons. Throughout late 1774 and into 1775, tensions in New England continued to mount as the region readied for war.

Open war between the British government and their American colonists commenced on April 19, 1775. British General Thomas Gage, the military governor and commander-in-chief, received instructions on April 14, 1775, from Secretary of State William Legge to disarm the rebels and imprison the rebellion's leaders.



Minutemen: American militiamen, mostly farmers and craftsmen, who would be ready to fight in a minute. They were the Americans who fought at the Battles of Lexington, Concord and Bunker Hill.

Secondary Source: Painting

Grant Wood's depiction of Paul Revere's ride. Painted in 1931, Wood captures the drama of the event as seen from the perspective of many years later.



General Gage knew that a powder magazine was stored in Concord, Massachusetts, and he ordered troops to seize these munitions. Instructions from London called for the arrest of rebel leaders Samuel Adams and John Hancock.

2 HOW DID THE COLONISTS STOP BEING BRITISH AND START BEING AMERICAN?

On the night of April 18, 1775, General Gage sent 700 men to seize the munitions at Concord. Hoping for secrecy, his troops left Boston under cover of darkness, but riders from Boston sped out ahead of the army to let the militias know of the approaching redcoats.

Paul Revere was one of these riders, but a British patrol captured him and he never finished his ride. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow memorialized Revere in his 1860 poem, "**Paul Revere's Ride**," incorrectly implying that he made it all the way to Concord. Despite his capture, his fellow riders successfully spread the alarm.

When the British troops entered **Lexington** on the morning of April 19, they found about 80 minutemen formed up on the village common. Many years later, one of the minutemen recalled that their captain at the Green that morning, John Parker ordered his men: "Stand your ground. Don't fire unless fired upon, but if they mean to have a war, let it begin here." Shots were exchanged, eight minutemen were killed, the outnumbered colonial militia dispersed, and the British marched on to Concord.

At **Concord**, the troops searched for military supplies but found little as the colonists, having received warnings that such an expedition might happen, had taken steps to hide many of the supplies. During the search, there was a confrontation at the **North Bridge**. A small company of British troops fired on a much larger column of colonial militia, which returned fire and this time the outcome was different. The outnumbered British retreated and turned back toward Boston. Several thousand militiamen had gathered along the road and a running fight ensued. The British detachment suffered heavily before reaching Charlestown.



Over 4,000 militiamen took part in the skirmishes with British soldiers. Seventy-three British soldiers and 49 patriots died during the British retreat to Boston. The famous confrontation is the basis for Ralph Waldo Emerson's 1836 poem "Concord



Paul Revere's Ride: Poem written in 1860 by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow memorializing Paul Revere's ride to warn colonists of the British attack on Concord.



Battle of Lexington: First battle of the Revolutionary War fought on April 19, 1775. British troops killed eight American minutemen.



Battle of Concord: Second battle of the Revolutionary War fought on April 19, 1775. The British army was stopped and chased back to Boston.



North Bridge: The bridge into Concord where American minutemen stopped the advance of the British troops. It marked the turning point in the Battles of Lexington and Concord on April 19, 1775.

Secondary Source: Reconstruction

The rebuilt Old North Bridge which the British troops needed to cross to enter Concord. There they were turned back by the minutemen.

Hymn,” which begins with the description of the “**shot heard round the world.**” Although propagandists on both sides pointed fingers, it remains unclear who fired that shot.

The following morning, Gage awoke to find Boston besieged by a huge colonial militia army numbering 20,000, which had gathered from all around New England. The Revolutionary War had begun, and the militia army grew as surrounding colonies sent men and supplies. The Continental Congress adopted and sponsored these men forming the beginnings of the Continental Army.

CONCLUSION

Certainly, the American colonists had plenty to be upset about when it came to their relationship with their mother country. Aside from a dislike of taxes, which is common in all nations, Enlightenment ideas about the relationship between the government and the governed drove a wedge between the colonists and the Crown. A lack of representation in Parliament, as well as British distaste for the colonial penchant for self-rule made both sides feel as if the other lacked appropriate respect.

In addition, basic economics caused problems. American smuggling, long a tradition, and British desire to enforce what they felt were reasonable laws clashed in both hearts and minds as well as on wharfs and streets.

The challenges that no one, on either side of the Atlantic, found mutually acceptable solutions for during the 1760s and 1770s led in the end to open war between British regulars and colonial militias.

What was it that made the Americans American? Was it a shift in ideas? Perceived disrespect? The presence of an occupying army? Taxes? Destruction of property? Punishing laws? Actual shooting in Lexington and Concord?

What do you think? How did the colonists become American?



Shot Heard 'Round the World:
Nickname for the opening battles of the American Revolution, so called because they inspired other Revolutionaries around the world.

2 HOW DID THE COLONISTS STOP BEING BRITISH AND START BEING AMERICAN?



SUMMARY

In the years before American independence, an intellectual movement called the Enlightenment swept Europe and America. Philosophers proposed new ideas about government, including questioning the right of kings to rule and suggesting that all humans were born with basic rights. Many of these ideas were later used to justify the Declaration of Independence and formed the basis for the American system of government.

The Trial of Peter Zenger set an important precedent in America regarding the freedom of the press.

Americans had a long tradition of rebelling against governments they felt were unjust. Rebellions had taken place in Pennsylvania, Virginia and North Carolina during the colonial period. Americans also had a long history of ignoring laws they did not like. Smuggling to avoid paying tariffs or to avoid mercantilist laws was commonplace. For many years, British officials had not enforced trade laws in America since enforcement cost more than the potential tariff revenue the government might receive.

After the Seven Years War, the British government needed money and decided to start taxing the American colonists. This was not well received in America. A series of laws passed by the British Parliament were protested in the colonies. Most importantly, Americans believed that it was not fair to tax them without allowing them representation in Parliament.

American patriots organized groups such as the Sons and Daughters of Liberty and Committees of Correspondence to organize protests, boycotts and to share revolutionary ideas. They served as an important first step toward national government by setting and enforcing policy.

The Revolution started in Boston, Massachusetts. This is where the most dramatic protests happened, such as the Boston Massacre and Boston Tea Party. The British closed the port of Boston and Boston area patriots formed militias to prepare for war. The fighting itself started when British troops tried to capture a stockpile of weapons in the town of Concord a few miles from Boston.

The first battles of the American Revolution in April 1775 are called the Shot Heard 'Round the World because they inspired other revolutionary movements, such as those in Haiti and France.



PEOPLE AND GROUPS

John Locke: Enlightenment philosopher. His belief that humans are born with certain rights (he wrote “Life, Liberty and Property”) inspired Thomas Jefferson and other American revolutionaries.

Cotton Mather: Massachusetts minister who advocated for scientific advancement, including immunization.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau: French Enlightenment philosopher who argued that the common people should rule through elections.

Montesquieu: French Enlightenment philosopher who believed power should be separated between different branches of government instead of concentrated (as was the case of the kings of Europe).

John Peter Zenger: New York printer who was put on trial for libel. He successfully argued that telling the truth was not libel. His case was an important step toward freedom of the press in America.

Nathaniel Bacon: Leader of Bacon’s Rebellion.

Governor Berkeley: Royal governor who was eventually suppressed Bacon’s Rebellion.

Regulators: Poor farmers in rural North Carolina who fought against the colonial government. Like Bacon’s Rebellion, they focused on perceived and real injustices at the hands of the wealthy.

Paxton Boys: A group of Scots-Irish settlers in Pennsylvania who threatened to attack Philadelphia. Like the followers of Bacon or the Regulators, they were unhappy that the elites of the colony were not providing protection from Native American attack.

Sons of Liberty: A group of American patriots (all men) who promoted independence.

Daughters of Liberty: Groups of colonial women who promoted independence, especially by participating in boycotts of British goods.

Committees of Correspondence: Groups of Patriots throughout the colonies who passed pro-independence messages.

Samuel Adams: Patriot from Boston who organized the Boston Tea Party. He was known for his skillful political organizing and ability to provoke a response through direct action.

John Adams: Patriot from Boston. He was the primary promoter of independence at the Continental Congress and became the second president.

John Hancock: Boston Patriot. He was the chairman of the Continental Congress and his signature is the first, and largest at the bottom of the Declaration of Independence.

Paul Revere: Boston Patriot and silversmith. His engraving of the Boston Massacre helped promote the cause for independence. He also helped warn minutemen in surrounding towns of the approaching British troops on the morning of the Battles of Lexington and Concord.

Crispus Attucks: Former slave who was killed at the Boston Massacre

Minutemen: American militiamen, mostly farmers and craftsmen, who would be ready to fight in a minute. They were the Americans who fought at the Battles of Lexington, Concord and Bunker Hill.



KEY CONCEPTS

Libel: Knowingly telling a lie about someone to harm them.

Mercantilism: An economic system in which colonies were only allowed to trade with the mother country.

Duties: Taxes paid on imported products.

Salutary Neglect: A British policy of not enforcing laws in the American colonies before 1763.

Tar and Feathering: A form of torture in which a person covered in hot tar and feathers. It was painful and potentially deadly. It was used by some Patriots on British customs officers.

No Taxation Without Representation: Idea that the government should not levy taxes unless the people who must pay those taxes have the opportunity to elect members of that government.



DOCUMENTS

Circular Letter: Open letter to the King and Parliament started by the Massachusetts legislature and approved by other colonial legislatures. In it the colonial leaders voiced opposition to taxation without representation.

Paul Revere’s Ride: Poem written in 1860 by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow memorializing Paul Revere’s ride to warn colonists of the British attack on Concord.



LOCATIONS

North Bridge: The bridge into Concord where American minutemen stopped the advance of the British troops. It marked the turning point in the Battles of Lexington and Concord on April 19, 1775.



LAWS & RESOLUTIONS

Magna Carta: Agreement signed in 1215 between the King of England and the nobles limiting the power of the monarchy.

Stamp Act: 1765 law that established a tax on printed material.

Quartering Act: 1765 law that required colonist to allow British troops to live and eat in their private homes.

Declaratory Act: British law passed in 1776 after the repeal of the Stamp Act. It asserted Parliament’s right to make laws for the Colonies.

Coercive Acts: Laws passed in 1774 closing Boston Harbor as punishment for the Boston Tea Party.

Quebec Act: Law passed by Parliament in 1774 that recognized the Catholic Church in Quebec and extended the boundary of Quebec into the Ohio Territory. The English colonists felt that the land should belong to them and were mostly Protestant so they were angered by the official recognition of the Catholic Church.

Intolerable Act: American nickname for the Coercive and Quebec Acts.

Suffolk Resolves: Statements passed by the Massachusetts legislature in 1774 in opposition to the Intolerable Acts. They called for the raising of colonial militias and marked the beginning of official American government outside of the government recognized by the British.



EVENTS

Age of Reason: Nickname for the Enlightenment, characterized by an increased interest in science, new ideas about government and power, and a focus on order inspired by Classical Greece and Rome.

Enlightenment: Time period in Europe and America in the 1700s characterized by an increased interest in science, new ideas about government and power, and a focus on order inspired by Classical Greece and Rome

Bacon’s Rebellion: Revolt in 1676 of poor Virginians against the colonial leadership led by Nathaniel Bacon. They felt that the royal governor was not providing protection from Native American attack and generally mistrusted the elites of the colony.

Stamp Act Congress: Meeting of colonial leaders in 1754 to seek solutions to the problems caused by the Stamp Act.

Boston Massacre: Riot in 1770 between Boston citizens and British troops. It was exploited by Patriots to enflame anti-British sentiment.

Boston Tea Party: Protest by Boston Patriots led by Samuel Adams in which a cargo of tea was destroyed. It resulted in the closing of Boston Harbor.

Battle of Lexington: First battle of the Revolutionary War fought on April 19, 1775. British troops killed eight American minutemen.

Battle of Concord: Second battle of the Revolutionary War fought on April 19, 1775. The British army was stopped and chased back to Boston.

Shot Heard 'Round the World: Nickname for the opening battles of the American Revolution, so called because they inspired other Revolutionaries around the world.

3

T H I R D Q U E S T I O N W H Y D O G O V E R N M E N T S H A V E P O W E R ?

What was the

*American
Revolution?*

INTRODUCTION

As children, everyone learns about government. We teach young students the names presidents and how to pledge allegiance to their flag. As we grow, we learn more about the precise nature of our system. We learn about different branches of government and how that system has changed over time. Once we are adults, we participate in that system by voting, serving on juries, and paying taxes.

However, did you ever stop to consider why our government has authority over our lives? In some places and times governments derived their power from god. In Europe this was called divine right. In ancient Egypt, the pharaoh was a god himself. But our system has no such foundation. God does not select our presidents, legislators or judges. And this fact reveals a great deal about our beliefs about power and society, or perhaps more accurately, it reveals a great deal about the beliefs of the leaders of the colonies in 1776.

Where does government's power come from?

3 WHY DO GOVERNMENTS HAVE POWER?

THE FIRST CONTINENTAL CONGRESS

Americans were fed up. The Intolerable Acts were more than the colonies could stand.

In the summer that followed Parliament's attempt to punish Boston, sentiment for the patriot cause increased dramatically. The printing presses at the Committees of Correspondence were churning out volumes and the message of resistance spread across the colonies.

It had been nearly ten years since the Stamp Act Congress had assembled and there was agreement that this new quandary warranted another intercolonial meeting. Thus, in September 1774, the **First Continental Congress** convened at Carpenter's Hall in Philadelphia.

This time participation was better. Only Georgia withheld a delegation. Sam and John Adams from Massachusetts were present, as was John Dickinson from Pennsylvania. Virginia selected Richard Henry Lee, George Washington, and Patrick Henry.

In the end, the voices of compromise carried the day. Rather than calling for independence, the First Continental Congress passed a **Declaration and Resolves**, which called for a boycott of British goods to take effect in December 1774. It requested that local Committees of Safety enforce the boycott and regulate local prices for goods. These resolutions adopted by the Congress did not endorse any legal power of Parliament to regulate trade, but consented, nonetheless, to the operation of acts for that purpose.

The delegates at the First Continental Congress did not outright reject the right of the king to make laws for the colonies, but did draft a **petition to the king** requesting the repeal of the Intolerable Acts.

Benjamin Franklin carried the petition to England and on January 19, 1775, the petition was presented to the House of Commons by Lord North, and was also presented to the House of Lords the following day. Unfortunately it arrived mixed among letters, official reports and other messages from the colonies and Parliament gave it little attention. Likewise, the King never gave the Colonies a formal reply to their petition.

A plan introduced by Joseph Galloway of Pennsylvania proposed an imperial union with Britain. Under this program, all acts of Parliament would have to be approved by an American assembly to take effect. Such an arrangement, if accepted by London, might have postponed revolution. But the delegations voted against it by a single vote.

One decision by the Congress, often overlooked in importance, was its decision to reconvene in May 1775 if their grievances were not addressed. This was a major step in creating an ongoing intercolonial decision making body.

When Parliament and the King ignored the Congress, the colonial leaders reconvened the next May, but by this time boycotts were no longer a major issue. The Second Continental Congress, however, would grapple with the spilling of blood at Lexington and Concord.



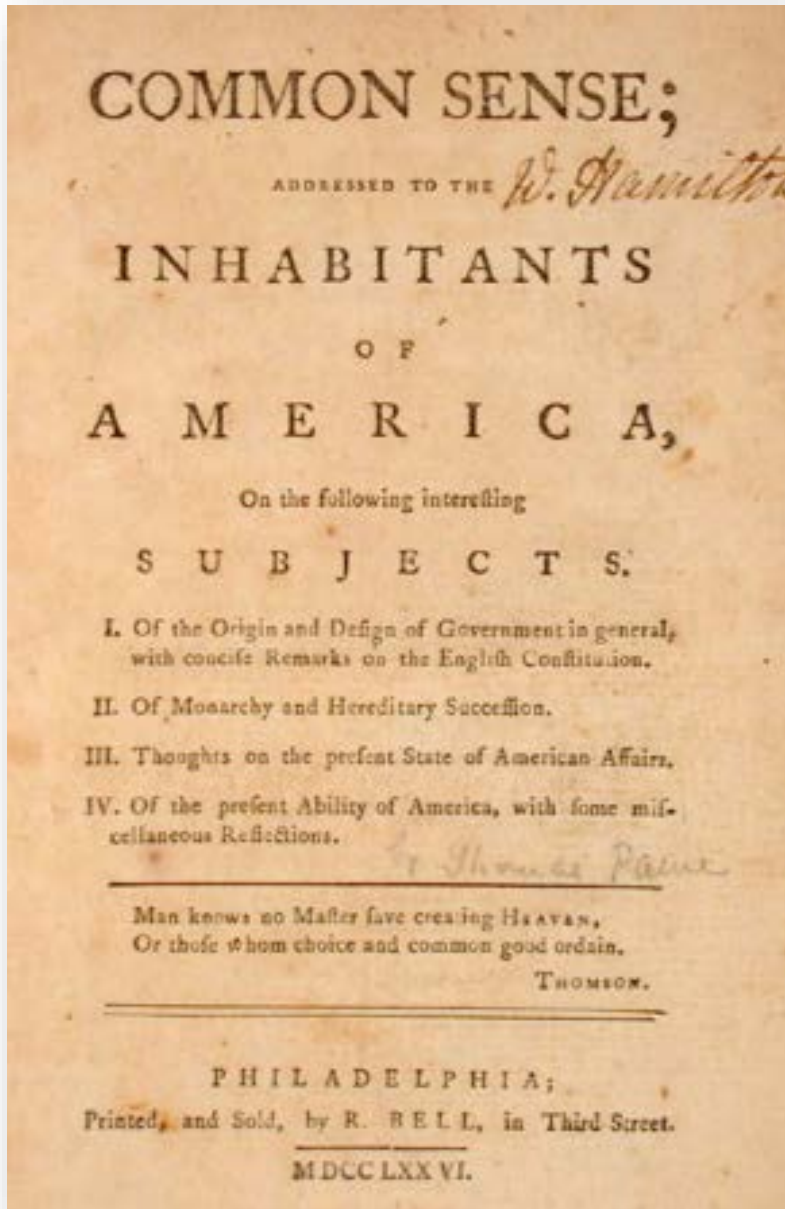
First Continental Congress: Meeting of leaders from the colonies in 1774. Prompted by the Stamp Act, they passed the Declaration of Resolves and initiated a boycott of British goods. They also sent the Petition to the King.



Declaration and Resolves: Resolution passed in 1774 by the First Continental Congress calling for a boycott of British goods.



Petition to the King: Letter to the King and Parliament passed by the First Continental Congress in 1774 asking for repeal of the Intolerable Acts.



Primary Source: Book

A copy of Thomas Paine's *Common Sense*, published in 1776. The Roman numeral date is at the bottom: MDCCCLXXVI.

THOMAS PAINE'S COMMON SENSE

Americans did not break ties with Britain easily.

Despite all the hardships, the majority of colonists had been reared since birth to believe that England was to be loved and its monarch revered.

Change is scary, and the well-informed colonists knew about the harsh manner the British employed with Irish rebels.

3 WHY DO GOVERNMENTS HAVE POWER?

A revolution could bring mob rule, and no one, not even the potential mob, wanted that.

Furthermore, despite taxes, times were good. The average American was better off in 1776 than the average Briton.

Yet there were the terrible injustices the colonists could not forget. Americans were not all in agreement about what course of action to take, but arguments for independence were growing. **Thomas Paine**, who arrived in America only a year before the war began, would provide the extra push.

Paine's book, **Common Sense**, was an instant best-seller. Published in January 1776 in Philadelphia, nearly 120,000 copies were in circulation by April. Paine's brilliant arguments were straightforward. He argued for two main points. First, the colonies should be independent from England and second, the new nation should be democratic republic with elected leaders.



Thomas Paine: Author of *Common Sense*, a pamphlet that convinced many Americans to support independence.



Common Sense: Pamphlet authored by Thomas Paine in 1776 that convinced many Americans to support independence.

Primary Source: Painting

King George III, painted by Johann Zoffany in 1771



Paine avoided flowery prose. He wrote in the language of the people, often quoting the Bible in his arguments. Most people in America had a working knowledge of the Bible, so his arguments rang true. Paine was not religious, but he knew his readers were. King George was “the Pharaoh of England” and “the Royal Brute of Great Britain.” His ideas touched a nerve in the American countryside.

3 WHY DO GOVERNMENTS HAVE POWER?

Beside attacks on George III, he called for the establishment of a republic. Even patriot leaders like Thomas Jefferson and John Adams condemned Paine as an extremist on the issue of a post-independence government. Still, Common Sense advanced the patriot cause. It made no difference to the readers that Paine was a new arrival to America. Published anonymously, many readers attributed it to John Adams, although he denied involvement.

In the end, his ideas were indeed common sense for most Americans. Why should tiny England rule the vastness of a continent? How can colonists expect to gain foreign support while still professing loyalty to the British king? How much longer should Americans stand for the repeated abuses of the Crown? As the summer of 1776 drew near, many of Paine's readers turned toward the cause of independence.

THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

For the first few months after war broke out at Lexington and Concord, the Patriots carried on their struggle in an ad-hoc and uncoordinated manner. They had seized arsenals, driven out royal officials, and besieged the British army in the city of Boston. On June 14, 1775, the **Second Continental Congress** voted to create the Continental Army out of the militia units around Boston and appointed **George Washington** of Virginia as commanding general.

On July 6, 1775, Congress approved a **Declaration of Causes** outlining the rationale and necessity for taking up arms in the Thirteen Colonies and two days later they extended the **Olive Branch Petition** to the British Crown as a final attempt at reconciliation, however, it was received too late to do any good.

Although the Second Continental Congress had no explicit legal authority to govern, the delegates assumed all the functions of a national government such as appointing ambassadors, signing treaties, raising armies, appointing generals, borrowing money, issuing paper money and disbursing funds. However, a lack of legal authority limited the Congress's ability to take action. Although the delegates were moving towards declaring independence, many delegates lacked the authority from their home governments to take such a drastic action.

Advocates of independence moved to have reluctant colonial governments revise instructions to their delegations, or even replace those governments which would not authorize independence. On May 10, 1776, Congress passed a resolution recommending that any colony with a government that was not inclined toward independence should form one that was. On May 15, they adopted a more radical preamble to this resolution, drafted by John Adams, which advised throwing off oaths of allegiance and suppressing the authority of the Crown in any colonial government that still derived its authority from the Crown.

That same day, the Virginia Convention instructed its delegation in Philadelphia to propose a resolution that called for a declaration of independence, the formation of foreign alliances, and a confederation of the states. The resolution of independence was delayed for several weeks, as advocates of independence consolidated support in their home governments but on June 7, 1776, **Richard Henry Lee** offered a resolution before the Congress declaring the colonies independent. He also urged Congress to resolve "to take the most effectual measures for forming foreign Alliances" and to prepare a plan of confederation for the newly independent states.



Second Continental Congress: Meeting of colonial leaders in 1775 and 1776. They declared independence.



George Washington: Virginia planter, surveyor, officer in the Seven Years War, leader of the Continental Army in the Revolution, President of the Constitutional Congress and First President of the United States.



Declaration of Causes: 1775 declaration passed by the Second Continental Congress explaining why the colonies were fighting against the British government. It did not declare independence.



Olive Branch Petition: Final attempt by the Second Continental Congress in 1775 to find a peaceful resolution to problems between the colonies and the British government. It was ignored by both Parliament and the King.



Richard Henry Lee: Virginia delegate to the Second Continental Congress who proposed the resolution to declare independence.

3 WHY DO GOVERNMENTS HAVE POWER?

Lee argued that independence was the only way to ensure a foreign alliance, since no European monarchs would deal with America if they remained Britain's colonies.

The delegates recognized the necessity of proving their credibility, especially to potential European allies, so before formally adopted the resolution of independence, Congress creating three overlapping committees to draft the Declaration, a Model Treaty, and the Articles of Confederation to outline the form of government that would guide the new nation.

The committee appointed to draft the declaration, consisting of John Adams of Massachusetts, Benjamin Franklin of Pennsylvania, **Thomas Jefferson** of Virginia, Robert R. Livingston of New York, and Roger Sherman of Connecticut. The committee left no minutes, so there is some uncertainty about how the drafting process proceeded and contradictory accounts were written many years later by Jefferson and Adams. What is certain is that the committee discussed the general outline which the document should follow and decided that Jefferson would write the first draft.

The committee in general, and Jefferson in particular, thought that Adams should write the document, but Adams persuaded the committee to choose Jefferson and promised to consult with him personally. The committee presented Jefferson's draft to the full Congress on June 28, 1776. At that point, the title of the document was "A Declaration by the Representatives of the United States of America, in General Congress assembled."

After a long day of speeches on July 1, each colony cast a single vote, as was the custom of the Congress. The delegation for each colony numbered from two to seven members, and each delegation voted amongst themselves to determine the colony's vote. Pennsylvania and South Carolina voted against declaring independence. The New York delegation abstained, lacking permission to vote for independence. Delaware cast no vote because the delegation was split between Thomas McKean who voted yes and George Read who voted no. The remaining nine delegations voted in favor of independence. Edward Rutledge of South Carolina was opposed to Lee's resolution for independence, and moved that a final vote be postponed until the following day in order to give time unanimous consent.

On July 2, South Carolina reversed its position and voted for independence. In the Pennsylvania delegation, Dickinson and Robert Morris abstained, allowing the delegation to vote three-to-two in favor of independence. The tie in the Delaware delegation was broken by the timely arrival of Caesar Rodney, who, rode 70 miles during the night through a thunderstorm to Philadelphia and arrived in time to vote for independence. The New York delegation abstained once again since they were still not authorized to vote for independence, although they were allowed to do so a week later by the New York Provincial Congress. The resolution of independence had been adopted with twelve affirmative votes and one abstention. With this, the colonies had officially severed political ties with Great Britain.



Thomas Jefferson: Author of the Declaration of Independence and later third president.

Secondary Source: Engraving

Delaware chose to feature Caesar Rodney riding to vote for independence on their quarter in 1999.

3 WHY DO GOVERNMENTS HAVE POWER?

John Adams predicted in a famous letter, written to his wife on the following day, that July 2 would become a great American holiday. He wrote, "I am apt to believe that [Independence Day] will be celebrated, by succeeding Generations, as the great anniversary Festival. It ought to be commemorated, as the Day of Deliverance by solemn Acts of Devotion to God Almighty. It ought to be solemnized with Pomp and Parade, with shews, Games, Sports, Guns, Bells, Bonfires and Illuminations from one End of this Continent to the other from this Time forward forever more." He did not foresee that Americans would instead celebrate Independence Day on the date when the announcement of that act was finalized.

After voting in favor of the resolution of independence, Congress turned its attention to the committee's draft of the declaration. Over the next two days of debate, they made a few changes in wording and deleted nearly a fourth of the text and, on **July 4, 1776**, the wording of the **Declaration of Independence** was approved and sent to the printer for publication.



WHAT THE FOUNDING FATHERS SAID

The Declaration of Independence, despite being shortened by Congress, is quite long. It opens by stating why the delegates believed a written declaration was necessary. They wrote, "**When in the Course of human events**, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation."

Then, the Declaration continues to its **preamble**, containing perhaps the most famous phrases in American history. The preamble justified their rebellion. Dense with Enlightenment ideas, it claims that revolution is justified when government harms natural rights. Jefferson's words, inspired by John Locke, are familiar to most Americans even today.



July 4, 1776: America's independence day.



Declaration of Independence: Statement passed by the Second Continental Congress on July 4, 1776 officially stating that the United States was independent from Britain.

Secondary Source: Painting

This famous depiction of the Declaration of Independence is a 12-by-18-foot work by American John Trumbull. Trumbull painted many of the figures in the picture from life, and visited Independence Hall to depict the chamber where the Second Continental Congress met. It hangs in the rotunda of the United States Capitol Building in Washington, DC.



When in the Course of human events...: Opening words of the Declaration of Independence.



Preamble to the Declaration of Independence: Paragraphs of the Declaration of Independence that contains the lines "all men are created equal" and "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."

3 WHY DO GOVERNMENTS HAVE POWER?

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness.”

The Declaration goes on to itemize the various injustices the delegates believed showed the way their government had violated their natural rights. Among the long list are closing trade, quartering troops, imposing taxes without representation, and eliminating jury trials.

THE SIGNATURES


The first and most famous signature on the engrossed copy was that of **John Hancock**, President of the Continental Congress. When asked why he signed his name so large, it is said that he replied, “So King George III could read it without his glasses.” Two future presidents, Thomas Jefferson and John Adams, and a father and great-grandfather of two other presidents, Benjamin Harrison, signed their names. Edward Rutledge, age 26, was the youngest signer. Benjamin Franklin was the oldest at age 70. Altogether, fifty-six men penned their names. If the American effort was successful, they would be hailed as heroes. If it failed, they would be hanged as traitors. Benjamin Franklin drove home to point in his usual way, giving posterity a quote to remember, quipping, “We must, indeed, all hang together or, most assuredly, we shall all hang separately.”



CONCLUSION

Thomas Jefferson and the delegates to the Second Continental Congress that declared American independence were strongly influenced by the writers and philosophers of the Enlightenment. The Declaration of Independence they signed is one of the world’s best encapsulations of the ideas of the Age of Reason, and in laying out their justification for revolution, they explained what they believed is the proper source for any government’s authority.

What do you think? Why do governments have power?

 **John Hancock:** Boston Patriot who served as President of the Second Continental Congress and was the first signer of the Declaration of Independence. His signature is much larger than the others and is now famous.

Primary Source: Signature

John Hancock’s signature as it appears at the bottom of the Declaration of Independence. It was so large and now so famous, that if someone asks for your John Hancock, they are asking for your signature.

3 WHY DO GOVERNMENTS HAVE POWER?

SUMMARY

Leaders from the colonies gathered in Philadelphia in 1774 at the First Continental Congress to try to find ways to negotiate with the British government and solve their growing problems. They wrote a petition to the King and resolved to meet again. Their petition was ignored by both Parliament and the King.

Thomas Paine wrote a bestselling book making the case for independence entitled *Common Sense*. He used enlightenment ideas to explain why the British government had no moral authority over the colonies.

When colonial leaders met in 1776 at the Second Continental Congress, fighting had already begun in Boston. This time, the delegates voted to declare independence. They appointed a committee to write a document explaining their justification for this bold move. Ben Franklin, John Adams and Thomas Jefferson all served on the committee. Jefferson wrote most of the document.

The Declaration of Independence included some of the most important ideas about the meaning of the United States. In it, they Founding Fathers declared that “all men are created equal.”

John Hancock was the president of the Second Continental Congress and signed it first. Washington did not sign the document. He had been appointed to lead the Continental Army.



DOCUMENTS

Declaration and Resolves: Resolution passed in 1774 by the First Continental Congress calling for a boycott of British goods.

Petition to the King: Letter to the King and Parliament passed by the First Continental Congress in 1774 asking for repeal of the Intolerable Acts.

Common Sense: Pamphlet authored by Thomas Paine in 1776 that convinced many Americans to support independence.

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EVENTS

First Continental Congress: Meeting of leaders from the colonies in 1774. Prompted by the Stamp Act, they passed the Declaration of Resolves and initiated a boycott of British goods. They also sent the Petition to the King.

Second Continental Congress: Meeting of colonial leaders in 1775 and 1776. They declared independence.

July 4, 1776: America’s Independence Day.

4

F O U R T H Q U E S T I O N CAN POWERFUL NATIONS MAINTAIN CONTROL OVER DISTANT TERRITORY?



INTRODUCTION

How could the Americans ever hope defeat the mighty British Empire in a military conflict? Americans faced seemingly impossible obstacles. When the guns fired at Lexington and Concord in 1775, there was not yet even a Continental Army. Those battles were fought by local militias. Except for a handful who had fought in the Seven Years War, few Americans had any military experience, and there was no method of training, supplying, or paying an army.

Moreover, a majority of Americans opposed the war in 1775. Many historians believe only about a third of all Americans supported a war against the British at that time. Further, the Colonies had a poor track record of working together.

All of these facts beg the question: how did the Americans ever win the war? (Which we know they did, of course, since we are not British citizens.) That is a relatively easy question to answer, as you will see. A series of factors came together at the right moments to make American independence possible.

A much more interesting question, and one that is more relevant today, is to consider the ability of powerful nations to rule distant lands. In the case of the American Revolution, Great Britain was at the height of its power and was trying to maintain control of its American colonies across the Atlantic. In modern times, the United States is the world's most powerful nation and we have attempted to manage the affairs of distant nations such as Iraq and Afghanistan. We know that those endeavors were difficult and only partially successful.

What can the American Revolution tell us about this question? What do you think? Can powerful nations maintain control of distant territory?

4 CAN POWERFUL NATIONS MAINTAIN CONTROL OVER DISTANT TERRITORY?

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

The British seemed unbeatable. During the previous 100 years, the British had enjoyed triumph after triumph over powerful nations such as France or Spain. At first glance, the odds were clearly against the Americans. A closer look provides insight into how the underdogs emerged victorious.

Britain's military was the best in the world. Their soldiers were well equipped, well disciplined, well paid, and well fed. The British navy dominated the seas. Funds were much more easily raised by the Empire than by the Continental Congress. Some of those funds were used to hire **Hessian** mercenaries from Germany who Britain hired to supplement their own army.

The Americans had tremendous difficulty raising enough funds to purchase basic supplies for their troops, including shoes and blankets. The British had a winning tradition. Around one in five Americans openly favored the Crown, with about half of the population hoping to avoid the conflict altogether. Most Native American tribes sided with Britain, who promised protection of tribal lands.

On the other hand, the Americans had many intangible advantages.

The British fought a war far from home. Military orders, troops, and supplies sometimes took months to reach their destinations. The British had an extremely difficult objective. They had to persuade the Americans to give up their claims of independence. As long as the war continued, the colonists' claim continued to gain validity. The geographic vastness of the colonies proved a hindrance to the British effort. Despite occupying every major city, the British remained at a disadvantage.

American military and political leaders were inexperienced, but proved surprisingly competent.

The war was expensive and the British population debated its necessity. In Parliament, there were many American sympathizers. Finally, the alliance with the French gave Americans courage and a tangible threat that tipped the scales in America's favor.

Americans were fighting for their rights, their independence and their liberty. This cause is much more just than waging a war to deny independence. In other words, Britain had to win, but the Americans simply had to not lose.

PATRIOTS, LOYALISTS, AND FENCE-SITTERS

It is impossible to know the exact number of American colonists who favored or opposed independence. For years, it was widely believed that one third favored the Revolution, one third opposed it and one third were undecided. This stems from an estimate made by John Adams in his personal writings in 1815. Historians have since concluded that Adams was referring to American attitudes toward the French Revolution, not ours.

The current thought is that about 20 percent of the colonists were **Loyalists**, those whose remained loyal to England and King George. The Loyalists were also known as **Tories**. Another small group in terms of percentage were the dedicated **Patriots**, for whom there was no alternative but independence.



Hessian: German soldiers hired by the British to fight in the Revolutionary War. They were especially despised by the Patriots.



Loyalists: Americans who opposed independence. They were also called Tories.

4 CAN POWERFUL NATIONS MAINTAIN CONTROL OVER DISTANT TERRITORY?

Often overlooked are the fence-sitters who made up the largest group. With so many Americans undecided, the war became in great measure a battle to win popular support. If the Patriots could succeed in selling their ideas of revolution to the public, then popular support might follow and the British would be doomed. Even with military victory, it would have been impossible for the Crown to regain the allegiance of the people. Revolution would merely flare up at a later date.



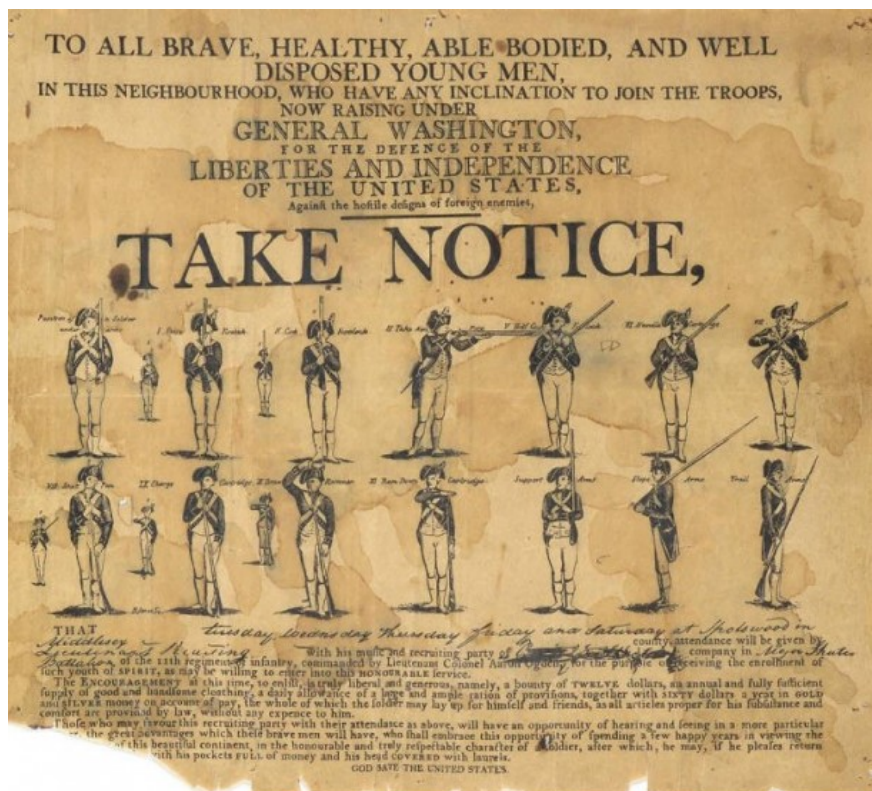
Tories: Americans who opposed independence. They were also called Loyalists.



Patriots: Americans who supported independence.

Primary Source: Newspaper Advertisement

A notice that appeared in a Connecticut newspaper calling for recruits to join the newly formed Continental Army under Washington's command.



The British understood the need to attract American popular support for the parent country, as well. Some colonists who were not persuaded by the political struggle joined the British for personal gain or military glory. Some joined out of loyalty to the Crown. They still believed themselves loyal British citizens. There were also many American farmers willing to sell their goods to the British for profit.

In the end, however, the Patriots won the war of propaganda and were far more successful attracting support. Committees of Correspondence persuaded many fence-sitters to join the patriot cause. Writings such as Thomas Paine's "Common Sense" stirred a new American nationalism.

Patriots subjected Loyalists to public humiliation and violence. Many Loyalists found their property vandalized, looted, and burned. The Patriots controlled public discourse. Publicly proclaiming sympathy for Britain was dangerous.

Families were sometimes divided over the revolution. Benjamin Franklin's son, William, a Loyalist governor of New Jersey, supported the British effort during the war.

In the end, many Loyalists simply left America. About 80,000 of them fled to Canada or Britain during or just after the war. Because Loyalists were often wealthy,

educated, older, and Anglican, the American social fabric was altered by their departure. American history brands them as traitors, but most were just trying to maintain the lifestyles to which they had become accustomed.

THE HOME FRONT

Most Americans did not actively participate in the revolution. During the war years, those Americans not involved in warfare were doing their best just trying to survive. Farmers continued to grow food, artisans continued to practice their trades, and merchants attempted to maintain their businesses. Despite efforts to carry on as usual, the entire social landscape was changing.

War disrupts economies and brings tremendous population dislocations. Woe came to families or farmers who found themselves in the way of advancing armies. Despite stringent warnings against such behavior from officers on both sides, farms and homes were often plundered. Soldiers took grain, livestock, or whatever goods they needed.

If citizens were thought to be colluding with the American military, their homes might be burned. At times, the homes of revolutionary firebrands or officers were set afire by a vindictive British army.

As the British entered major cities such as Boston, Philadelphia, and New York, many people fled to the countryside, looking for food and work. Traditional markets were disrupted. Farmers who one week sold their wares to their usual American customers might the next week be selling to an occupying British army.



Secondary Source: Illustration

An image of a colonial Patriot woman taking care of her home and children, while also spinning thread to make homespun so that she would not have to purchase cloth from England.

4 CAN POWERFUL NATIONS MAINTAIN CONTROL OVER DISTANT TERRITORY?

The British blockaded American ports caused widespread unemployment. Almost anyone dependent on the foreign market, from shippers to merchants, was out of work. Both armies were sometimes followed by men and women willing to work in any way for a hot meal.

Some farmers and merchants hoped to profit from increased prices due to scarcity. Many sold their wares to the British army. Violence sometimes came in the wake of rising prices, and the Continental Congress tried to enact regulations to counter inflation throughout the Colonies. Despite their efforts, the Colonial economy was in shambles.



Secondary Source: Illustration

Molly Pitcher taking the place of her fallen husband at the Battle of Monmouth. Perhaps based on a composite of the deeds of numerous women, the story of Molly Pitcher was probably mostly based on the Mary Ludwig Hays, who was one of the women who carried pitchers of water to soldiers during battle.

The war had important impacts for women. Women stepped forth to fill holes left by fighting Continental soldiers. Women needed to perform tasks formerly reserved for their husbands, such as farming or running businesses.

These new and independent women of the house also had to stand up for themselves when confronted by both American and British armies. When militias appealed to the public for uniforms and food, **homespun** garments and farm crops came from patriotic women. And when British armies and soldiers appeared at homes being occupied by women, they did not always find a friendly face.



Homespun: Cloth and clothing made at home by American women during the Revolution. Making this was considered the patriotic duty of women who supported the boycott of British products.

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Some colonial women served as spies for Washington's army, passing valuable information about troop locations and movements. Many men would have returned to bankruptcy after the war had it not been for the efforts of their spouses.

Wars are not merely fought on the battlefield. Even in the 18th century, successful campaigns were the hallmark of a concerted effort. By 1783, the entire American population seemed battle weary, from the foot soldier to the farmer's wife. Their sacrifices helped secure freedoms for the generations that would follow.

EARLY BATTLES

The early stages of war, in 1775, can be best described as British military victories and American moral triumphs. The British routed the minutemen at Lexington, but the relentless colonists unleashed brutal sniper fire on the British returning to Boston from Concord.

In June 1775, the colonists failed to prevail at **Bunker Hill**, in Charlestown across the Charles River from Boston, but inflicted heavy casualties on a vastly superior military force. A year later, in 1776, Washington narrowly escaped when the British occupied New York City.

Washington led his army to a surprise victory the day after Christmas when he led his troops **across the Delaware River** in the middle of the night to ambush Hessians at Trenton, New Jersey. While the victory lifted the spirits of Patriots, it did not significantly impact the strength of the main British force.

Regardless, by 1777 the British occupied Philadelphia, the seat of the Continental Congress, and sent that body into hiding. The British also controlled New York City and pretty much had their way in the waters along the Eastern Seaboard. In fact, there was no Continental Navy to speak of at this time. Meanwhile, the British began mounting a southward attack from Canada into upstate New York. This threatened to cut New England off from the rest of the Colonies.



Bunker Hill: Battle in June of 1775 across the Charles River from Boston between Patriots and British troops.

It was a British tactical victory, but Americans were able to inflict high casualties on the much larger British force.



Crossing the Delaware: Famous attack led by George Washington in 1776 against Hessian troops in Trenton, New Jersey. It was a surprise attack and an important victory for the fledgling American army.

Secondary Source: Painting

A painting by the German-American artist Emanuel Leutze. It commemorates General George Washington during his famous crossing of the Delaware River on the night of December 25–26, 1776. The original was part of the collection at the Kunsthalle in Bremen, Germany, and was destroyed in a bombing raid in 1942, during World War II. Leutze painted two more versions, one of which is now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. The other was in the West Wing reception area of the White House in Washington, D.C. Painted in 1851, it is famous, but not historically accurate.

THE BATTLE OF SARATOGA

The **Battle of Saratoga** was the turning point of the Revolutionary War. The scope of the victory is made clear by a few key facts: On October 17, 1777, 5,895 British and Hessian troops surrendered their arms. General John Burgoyne had lost 86% of the expeditionary force he had led triumphantly into New York from Canada in the early summer.

The **divide-and-conquer strategy** that Burgoyne presented to British ministers in London was to invade America from Canada by advancing down the Hudson Valley to Albany. There, he would be joined by other British troops under the command of Sir William Howe. Howe would be bringing his troops north from New Jersey and New York City.

Burgoyne believed that this bold stroke would not only isolate New England from the other American colonies, but achieve command of the Hudson River and demoralize Americans and would-be allies such as the French.

In June 1777, Burgoyne's army of over 7,000 men departed from St. Johns on Lake Champlain, bound for Fort Ticonderoga, at the southern end of the lake. Half of his army were British troops and the other half were hired Hessians.

As the army proceeded southward, Burgoyne drafted and had his men distribute a proclamation that, among other things, included the statement "I have but to give stretch to the Indian forces under my direction, and they amount to thousands," which implied that Britain's enemies would suffer attacks from Native Americans allied to the British. More than any other act during the campaign, this threat and subsequent widely reported atrocities such as the scalping of Jane McCrea stiffened the resolve of the Americans to do whatever it took to assure that the threat did not become reality.

The American forces at Fort Ticonderoga recognized that once the British set up artillery on high ground near the fort, Ticonderoga would be indefensible. A retreat from the Fort was ordered, and the Americans floated troops, cannon, and supplies across Lake Champlain to Mount Independence.

Burgoyne continued his march towards Albany, but miles to the south a disturbing event occurred. Sir William Howe decided to attack the Rebel capital at Philadelphia rather than deploying his army to meet up with Burgoyne and cut off New England from the other Colonies. Meanwhile, as Burgoyne marched south, his supply lines from Canada were becoming longer and less reliable.

It was a tragic miscalculation on the part of the British.

In early August, word came that a substantial supply depot at Bennington, Vermont, was alleged to be lightly guarded, and Burgoyne dispatched German troops to take the depot and return with the supplies. Stiff resistance was encountered, however, and American general John Stark surrounded and captured almost 500 German soldiers. One observer reported Bennington as "the compleatest Victory gain'd this War."

Burgoyne realized, too late, that the Loyalists who were supposed to have come to his aid by the hundreds had not appeared, and that his Native American allies were also undependable.



Battle of Saratoga: Turning point battle of the Revolutionary War in 1777. After the Americans showed that they were able to defeat the British on the battlefield, the French agreed to support the American cause.



British Strategy: British plan to divide the colonies with a pincer action. Burgoyne would lead his troops south from Canada and Howe would lead his troops north from New York. The plan failed when Howe stopped to attack Philadelphia and Burgoyne was defeated at Saratoga.

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American general Schuyler proceeded to burn supplies and crops in front of Burgoyne's advancing army so that the British were forced to rely on their ever-longer and more and more unreliable supply line to Canada rather than being able to feed themselves on food they gathered from farms as they travelled. On the American side, General **Horatio Gates** arrived in New York to take command of the American forces.

By mid-September, with the fall weather reminding Burgoyne that he could not winter where he was and needed to proceed rapidly toward Albany, the British army crossed the Hudson River and headed for Saratoga. On September 19, the two forces met at Freeman's Farm north of Albany. While the British ended the battle as "masters of the field," they sustained heavy losses.

In late September and during the first week of October 1777, Gate's American army was positioned between Burgoyne's army and Albany. On October 7, Burgoyne took the offensive. The armies met south of the town of Saratoga, and Burgoyne's army was broken. 86% of Burgoyne's command was captured.

The victory gave new life to the American cause at a critical time. Americans had just suffered a major setback the Battle of the Brandywine along with news of the fall of Philadelphia to the British. One American soldier declared, "It was a glorious sight to see the haughty Brittons march out & surrender their arms to an army which but a little before they despised and called paltroons."

The American victory at Saratoga was important for two reasons. First, it prevented the British from dividing the colonies. Because Burgoyne failed at Saratoga and Howe stopped his northern advance, the New England colonies and the middle and southern colonies remained in contact..

Second, the success at Saratoga gave France the confidence in the American cause to enter the war as an American ally. Later American successes owed a great deal to French aid in the form of financial and military assistance.



Horatio Gates: American general at Saratoga.



Secondary Source: Painting

An artist's rendition of General Washington praying while at Valley Forge. Uncommon for his times, Washington, exhibited religious toleration, while he attended services of different denominations, and suppressed anti-Catholic celebrations in the Army. Washington permitted Jews, Muslims, Christians of any denomination, and atheists to work at Mount Vernon. While president he gave speeches on religious toleration. Washington was educated in and adhered to the Anglican-Episcopal church, while he believed in the fundamental doctrines of Christianity, with no indifference to other forms of Christianity.

VALLEY FORGE

American spirits reached a low point during the harsh winter of 1777-78. British troops had marched triumphantly into Philadelphia the previous autumn. Philadelphia was the largest city in the Colonies and the seat of political power. The Continental Congress had flee west, first to Lancaster then to York.

Washington's army spent the summer of 1777 fighting a string of losing battles. The Americans harassed the British army in skirmishes and minor battles for much of the fighting season. In the fall, the Americans showed pluck at the Battle of Brandywine in September and the Battle of Germantown in October. Yet the Americans were unable to keep the British out of Philadelphia.

In December, Washington marched his tired, beaten, hungry and sick army to **Valley Forge**, Pennsylvania, a town about 20 miles northwest of British-occupied Philadelphia. From Valley Forge, Washington could keep an eye on General Howe's British army ensconced in Philadelphia.

At Valley Forge, there were shortages of everything from food to clothing to medicine. Washington's men were sick from disease, hunger, and exposure. The Continental Army camped in crude log cabins and endured cold conditions while the Redcoats warmed themselves in colonial homes. The Patriots went hungry while the British soldiers ate well.

General Washington was upset that local farmers were hoarding much-needed food waiting to earn higher profits in the spring. Some farmers even secreted grain into Philadelphia to feed the British army, who paid in gold or silver. With each passing night came more desertions. Washington grew privately disgusted at the lack of commitment of his so-called patriot fighters.

Then there was the grumbling of some in Congress and among some of Washington's own officers. Washington's leadership skills were openly questioned. Many said General Horatio Gates was better-suited to leading the army. After all, hadn't he scored a major victory in October at the battle of Saratoga. Within the environment of cold, deprivation, and rebellion, how long could Washington and his army endure?

Terms of enlistment were ending for many soldiers in Washington's army and many chose to go home rather than suffer through the winter, not knowing if they would have any better chance of success on the battlefield the coming summer. The General wondered if he would even have an army left when the spring thaw finally arrived.

Help came in the form of a Prussian volunteer, **Baron von Steuben**. The military leader was aghast at the lack of American discipline. At Washington's urging he trained the Continental Army, Prussian-style. The troops slowly became more professional. Among the soldiers who remained, confidence grew.

Over the course of the winter, the weather improved somewhat. Food trickled in from the surrounding countryside. Many wives of soldiers spent time at Valley Forge over the winter. Washington was able to quash those who questioned his leadership abilities.



Valley Forge: Location in Pennsylvania of the Continental Army's encampment during the winter of 1777-78. There was enormous suffering due to the cold, lack of food, medicine and clothing. Many American troops left but those that stayed formed a strong fighting force.



Baron von Steuben: Prussian (German) officer who came to America and helped train the Continental Army.

4 CAN POWERFUL NATIONS MAINTAIN CONTROL OVER DISTANT TERRITORY?

The Continental Army had arrived at Valley Forge in the fall of 1777 with about 12,000 men in its ranks. Death claimed approximately a quarter of them before spring arrived. Another thousand did not reenlist or deserted. However, the army that remained was stronger. They were fewer, but more disciplined. They were weary, but firmly resolved.

The next year, 1778, brought greater fortune to the American cause. While Washington froze at Valley Forge, Benjamin Franklin was busy securing the French alliance. The course of the war in the coming years would be different indeed.

BENEDICT ARNOLD

Benedict Arnold is best remembered as a traitor; an American patriot who spied for the British during the American Revolution. But there is more to his story than this sad event.

Arnold was a fierce patriot during the Stamp Act crisis and the early years of the American Revolution. During the battles of Lexington and Concord, Arnold worked with Ethan Allen to capture Fort Ticonderoga and was named a colonel.

As a member of George Washington's Continental Army, he led a failed attack on Quebec, but was nonetheless named brigadier general in 1776.

His next big moment came at the Battle of Saratoga. Here, Benedict Arnold was instrumental in stopping the advance of the British and in obtaining the surrender of British General John Burgoyne. During the Battle of Freeman's Farm, Arnold's leg was severely wounded when pinned beneath his horse.

Over the next two years, Benedict Arnold remained a patriot, but was upset and embittered at what he felt was a lack of his recognition and contribution to the war. In 1778, following British evacuation of Philadelphia, George Washington appointed Arnold military commander of the city.

This is where the story gets interesting.

In Philadelphia, Benedict Arnold was introduced to and fell in love with Margaret "Peggy" Shippen, a young, well-to-do loyalist who was half his age. Ms. Shippen had previously courted **John André**, a British spy who had been in Philadelphia during the occupation as the adjutant to the British commander in chief, Sir Henry Clinton. It is believed that Peggy introduced Arnold to André.

Meanwhile, Benedict Arnold's reputation while in Philadelphia was beginning to tarnish. He was accused of using public wagons for private profit and of being friendly to Loyalists. Faced with a court-martial for corruption, he resigned his post on March 19, 1779.

Following his resignation, Arnold began a correspondence with John André, now chief of British intelligence services. But Arnold had also maintained his close relationship with George Washington and still had access to important information. Over the next few months Benedict Arnold continued his talks with André and agreed to hand over key information to the British. Specifically, Arnold offered to hand over the most strategic fortress in America, **West Point**, a fort on the Hudson River that prevented the British from travelling freely between New York City and Canada.



Benedict Arnold: American general who helped win the Battle of Saratoga. Later he became a traitor and tried to turn over the fort at West Point to the British.

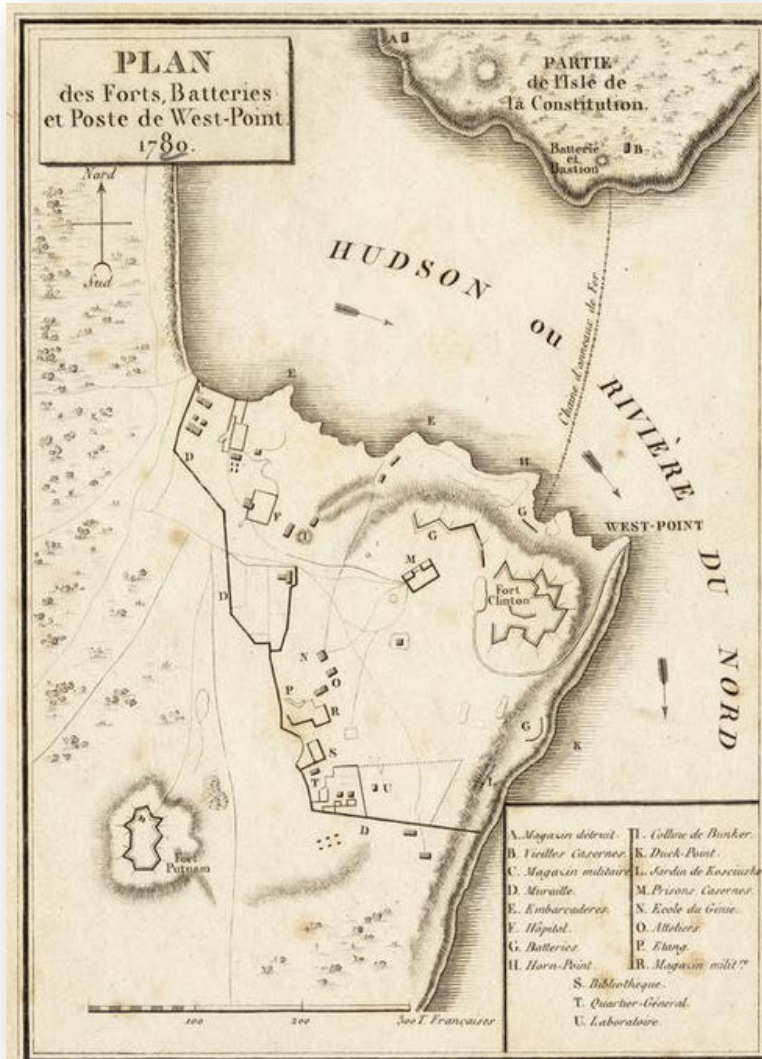


John André: British spy who was captured and hung by the Americans.



West Point: Fort in New York along the Hudson River. It was a strategic defense preventing the British from dividing the colonies. Benedict Arnold tried to turn over the fort, but his plan failed.

4 CAN POWERFUL NATIONS MAINTAIN CONTROL OVER DISTANT TERRITORY?



Primary Source: Map

A map of the fortifications at West Point along the Hudson River. The chain stretching across the river to prevent the passage of ships is clearly visible.

Arnold and André finally met in person, and Arnold handed over information to the British spy. But, unfortunately for both men, André was caught and Arnold's letter was found. George Washington, was heartbroken over the news of his friend's treachery.

While Benedict Arnold escaped to British-occupied New York, where he was protected from punishment. John André was less lucky. He was captured by American forces and executed for spying.

Benedict Arnold was named brigadier general by the British government and sent on raids to Virginia. Following Cornwallis's surrender at Yorktown in 1781, Arnold and his family sailed to Britain with his family. He died in London in 1801.

THE FRENCH ALLIANCE

Nowhere was the victory at Saratoga more noted than in France, which had been tentative in its efforts to assist the Americans. France's interest in the American fight for independence stemmed from France's humiliating defeat during the Seven Years War at the hands of its ancient enemy, England.

As early as 1774, Charles Gravier, comte de Vergennes, the French foreign minister, sent secret emissaries to explore the American colonists' commitment to independence. In the spring of 1776, Congress dispatched Silas Deane to France as a secret commercial agent to see if he could make arrangements for the purchase of military supplies on terms of credit. Deane also made inquiries into possible French political and even military assistance.

The Continental Congress's official diplomatic mission to Europe, led by none other than Benjamin Franklin, arrived in Paris in the fall of 1776, but did not make much headway. At the time, the patriot cause looked like it had little chance of success. Nonetheless, Franklin was the toast of the town. Always popular with women, he wore coonskin caps and traditional backcountry American clothing to court, making himself a bit pop icon in the French capital. His personality proved to be important not just in securing a declaration of independence in America, but also in securing French support during the war.

Watchful waiting by French diplomacy came to an end when the news of the surrender of Burgoyne's army at Saratoga reached Paris on December 4, 1777. The American victory caused a reversal of British policy toward the Americans.

Lord North's government immediately prepared to send to the America a mission with an offer of peace on the basis of home rule within the Empire — something that the Colonies would have been only too glad to accept in 1775.

This diplomatic move became known to Vergennes, and he was alarmed that a peace between the parent country and the American rebels might be a real possibility. Two Franco-American treaties were rapidly concluded. The first was a treaty of amity and commerce, which bestowed most-favored nation trading privileges and contained cooperative maritime provisions.

The second was a **treaty of "conditional and defensive alliance."** It provided, among other things, that in case war should break out between France and Great Britain as a result of the first treaty, France and America should fight the war together, and neither would make a peace or truce with the enemy without the formal consent of the other. Nor would they "lay down their arms until the Independence of the united states shall have been formally or tacitly assured by the Treaty or Treaties that shall terminate the War."

The American war continued, as France desired. France and Britain drifted into hostilities without a declaration of war when their fleets off Ushant off the northwest coast of France on June 17, 1778. A French expeditionary force arrived in the United States in 1780. The French alliance proved to be decisive for the cause of American independence.



French Alliance: Agreement between France and the United States brokered by Benjamin Franklin. As a result, the French supported the Americans, especially with their navy, and helped defeat the British at Yorktown.

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YORKTOWN


The outlook for General Washington and the Americans never looked better. Although the American military was still enduring losses in 1780, the French were making a difference. The French navy had disrupted the British blockade. French commanders such as Gilbert du Motier, **Marquis de Lafayette** and Jean-Baptiste Donatien de Vimeur, comte de **Rochambeau** earned the respect and admiration of the American troops.


Although, the British occupied much of the South, they still had not been able to mobilize the local Loyalists. Grumbling in England grew louder over the war's expense and duration. The morale of Washington's men was improving. The war was by no means over, but the general had reason to be optimistic.


The year 1781 found a large squadron of British troops led by **Lord Cornwallis** at **Yorktown**, Virginia. Cornwallis hoped to keep his men in the Chesapeake town until fresh supplies and reinforcements could arrive from Britain. The French and the Americans conspired to capture the British before that could happen.


A French naval unit led by Admiral de Grasse headed north from the West Indies. Washington's army was stationed near New York City at the time. Along with a French unit from Rhode Island, Washington's troops marched over 300 miles south toward Yorktown. Along the way, he staged fake military maneuvers to keep the British off guard.

When Washington reached Virginia, Americans led by Lafayette joined in the siege. The French navy kept the British out of Chesapeake Bay until Cornwallis was forced to surrender his entire unit of nearly 8,000 troops on October 19, 1781.

 **Marquis de Lafayette:** French officer who came to support the Continental Army. He became a good friend of George Washington.

 **Rochambeau:** French officer who, along with Lafayette, came to support the Continental Army.

 **Lord Cornwallis:** British general who surrendered at Yorktown.

 **Yorktown:** Final battle of the Revolutionary War. George Washington was able to prevent a land escape and the French fleet prevented British army from evacuating. Cornwallis was forced to surrender.

**Secondary Source: Painting**

The Surrender of Lord Cornwallis by John Trumbull. The painting was completed in 1820, and hangs in the rotunda of the United States Capitol in Washington, DC. The painting depicts the surrender of British Lieutenant General Charles, Earl Cornwallis at Yorktown, Virginia on October 19, 1781, ending the Siege of Yorktown. On the right are American officers beneath the Stars and Stripes; among them are the Marquis de Lafayette and Colonel Jonathan Trumbull, the brother of the painter. General Washington, riding a brown horse, stayed in the background because Cornwallis himself was not present for the surrender. The Comte de Rochambeau is on the left center on a brown horse.

THE TREATY OF PARIS

Despite the American victory, the British military continued to fight, but the Battle of Yorktown turned the British public against the war. The following March, a new Parliament was elected which favored peace and negotiations began in earnest.

Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, and John Jay met with the British in Paris and in the **Treaty of Paris of 1783** the British agreed to recognize American independence as far west as the Mississippi River. Americans agreed to honor debts owed to British merchants from before the war and to stop persecuting British Loyalists.

CONCLUSION

We know that the David and Goliath story of the Revolutionary War turned out in the Americans' favor, but that was not at all certain at the outset. The minutemen who fired the first shots at Lexington, and the Founding Fathers who put their names to the Declaration of Independence a year later, were taking an enormous risk.

Britain, too, was taking a risk. They were balancing the benefits of having colonies as part of their empire against the cost of maintaining that relationship. Give the level of American hostility, or at least apathy, toward British rule, it is a wonder that the King and Parliament ever thought they would be able to bring the Americans happily back into the fold.

Perhaps we can learn something from our own experience. Perhaps military and economic might are not the only factors that matter. What do you think? Can powerful nations maintain control of distant territories?

Treaty of Paris of 1783: Agreement between Britain and the United States that ended the Revolutionary War. Britain recognized American independence and gave the United States all the territory west to the Mississippi River.

SUMMARY

The British and Americans started the War for Independence with distinct strengths and weaknesses. The British were a powerful nation with the world's largest army and navy. The Americans knew the territory and were fighting a war for a cause. The British had to win. The Americans simply had to not lose and last long enough for the British to tire of the fight.

About 1/3 of Americans were patriots. About 1/3 were loyalists. Another 1/3 had no particular preference. After the war, many loyalists were treated badly, lost their property and moved to Canada.

The economy and the lives of citizens were interrupted by the conflict. Homes were burned and farms plundered. The British blockaded American ports.

Women supported the war by making clothing and by providing support services to the Continental Army, most famously as spies. They also took over the running of farms and businesses while their husbands were in the army.

The battles of the War for Independence were mostly victories for the British. In the early years of the war the Americans managed to resist and survive without complete destruction, which served as a moral victory and encouraged perseverance.

The British wanted to split the Southern Colonies from New England by controlling the Hudson River Valley in New York. This did not go well as the Americans defeated the British at Saratoga, the turning point of the war. The victory at Saratoga prevented the British from capturing all of New York and also convinced the French to join the war in support of the Americans.

George Washington's army spent the Winter of 1777 at Valley Forge where they learned tactics from European noblemen who came to help the Americans.

Benedict Arnold became America's first great villain by trying to turn over the fort at West Point to the British. His plot was uncovered and he fled.

The French provided critical support at the end of the war by blocking the British escape from Yorktown with their warships. Washington's army forced the British to surrender.

The Treaty of Paris of 1783 concluded the war. Britain recognized American independence and gave the United States all territory south of Canada and west as far as the Mississippi River.



PEOPLE AND GROUPS

Hessian: German soldiers hired by the British to fight in the Revolutionary War. They were especially despised by the Patriots.

Loyalists: Americans who opposed independence. They were also called Tories.

Tories: Americans who opposed independence. They were also called Loyalists.

Patriots: Americans who supported independence.

Horatio Gates: American general at Saratoga.

Baron von Steuben: Prussian (German) officer who came to American and helped train the Continental Army.

Benedict Arnold: American general who helped win the Battle of Saratoga. Later he became a traitor and tried to turn over the fort at West Point to the British.

John André: British spy who was captured and hung by the Americans.

Marquis de Lafayette: French officer who came to support the Continental Army. He became a good friend of George Washington.

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Lord Cornwallis: British general who surrendered at Yorktown.



EVENTS

Bunker Hill: Battle in June of 1775 across the Charles River from Boston between Patriots and British troops. It was a British tactical victory, but Americans were able to inflict high casualties on the much larger British force.

Crossing the Delaware: Famous attack led by George Washington in 1776 against Hessian troops in Trenton, New Jersey. It was a surprise attack and an important victory for the fledgling American army.

Battle of Saratoga: Turning point battle of the Revolutionary War in 1777. After the Americans showed that they were able to defeat the British on the battlefield, the French agreed to support the American cause.

Yorktown: Final battle of the Revolutionary War. George Washington was able to prevent a land escape and the French fleet prevented British army from evacuating. Cornwallis was forced to surrender.



LOCATIONS

Valley Forge: Location in Pennsylvania of the Continental Army's encampment during the winter of 1777-78. There was enormous suffering due to the cold, lack of food, medicine and clothing. Many American troops left but those that stayed formed a strong fighting force.

West Point: Fort in New York along the Hudson River. It was a strategic defense preventing the British from dividing the colonies. Benedict Arnold tried to turn over the fort, but his plan failed.



KEY CONCEPTS

Homespun: Cloth and clothing made at home by American women during the Revolution. Making this was considered the patriotic duty of women who supported the boycott of British products.

British Strategy: British plan to divide the colonies with a pincer action. Burgoyne would lead his troops south from Canada and Howe would lead his troops north from New York. The plan failed when Howe stopped to attack Philadelphia and Burgoyne was defeated at Saratoga.

French Alliance: Agreement between France and the United States brokered by Benjamin Franklin. As a result, the French supported the Americans, especially with their navy, and helped defeat the British at Yorktown.



TREATIES, LAWS & POLICIES

Treaty of Paris of 1783: Agreement between Britain and the United States that ended the Revolutionary War. Britain recognized American independence and gave the United States all the territory west to the Mississippi River.

What was the

American Revolution?

So it was that the Seven Years War, a conflict between imperial Britain and France, kicked off a decade of mistrust, miscommunication, and misunderstanding between Britain and her American colonies. Some of the problems might have been resolved, but perhaps American independence was inevitable.

The war was long and trying, and with the support of France, the Continental Army succeeding in defeating the occupying British force.

But the War for Independence and the Revolution are different. The War was fought on the battlefield, the Revolution in the minds of men and women. So, what was the Revolution? What did it mean, and for whom?

What do you think? What was the American Revolution?



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