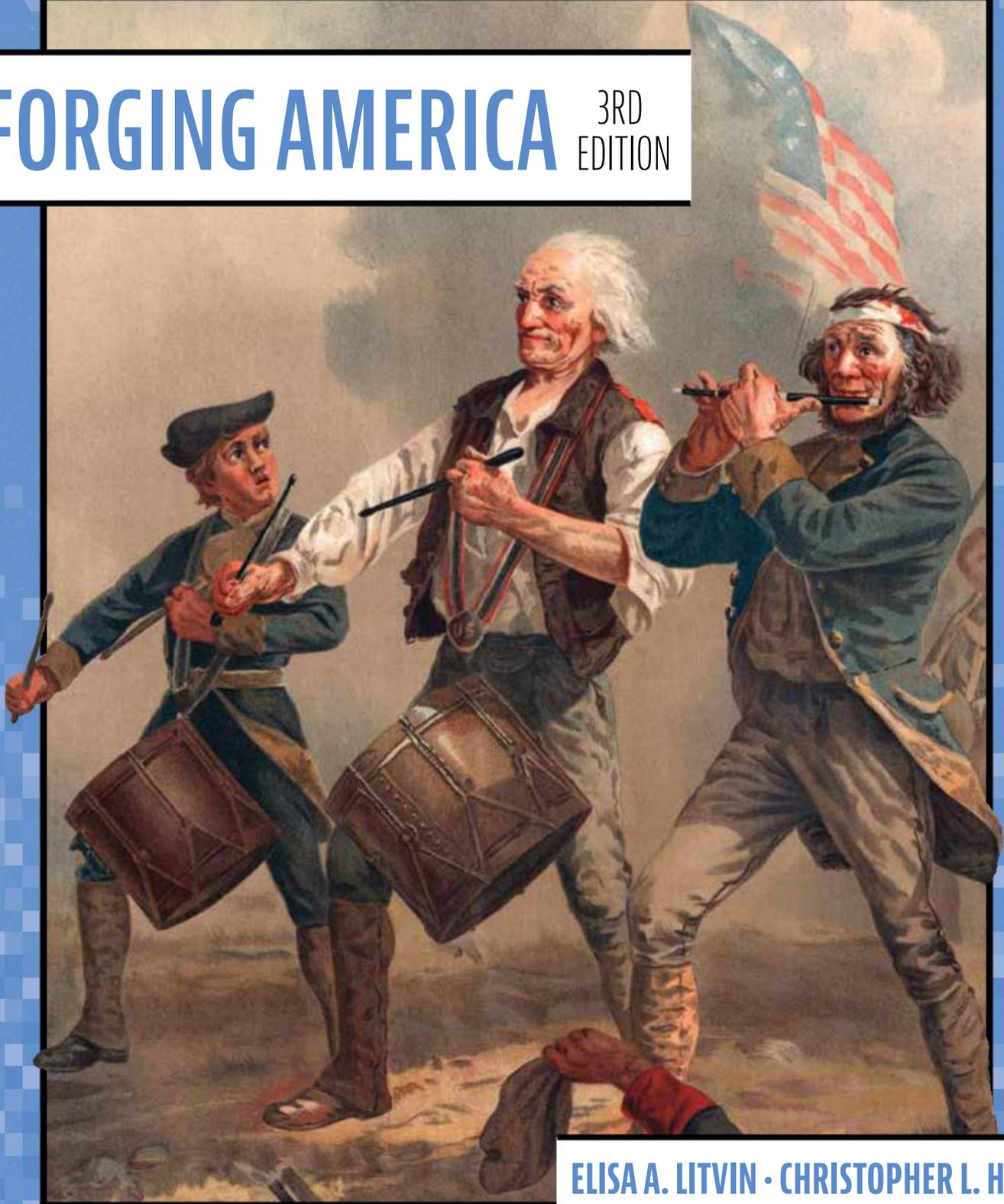


REVOLUTIONS

FORGING AMERICA

3RD
EDITION



ELISA A. LITVIN • CHRISTOPHER L. HART
DEBORAH ERIKSON • LAUREN PERFECT

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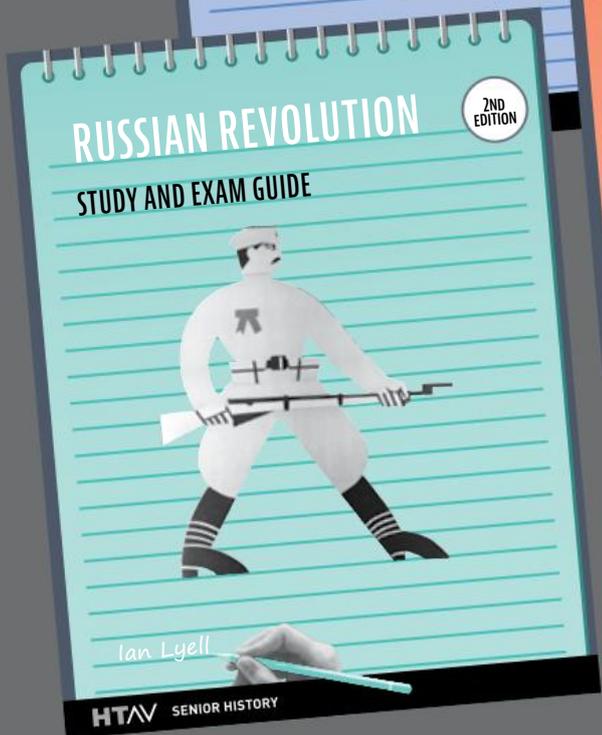
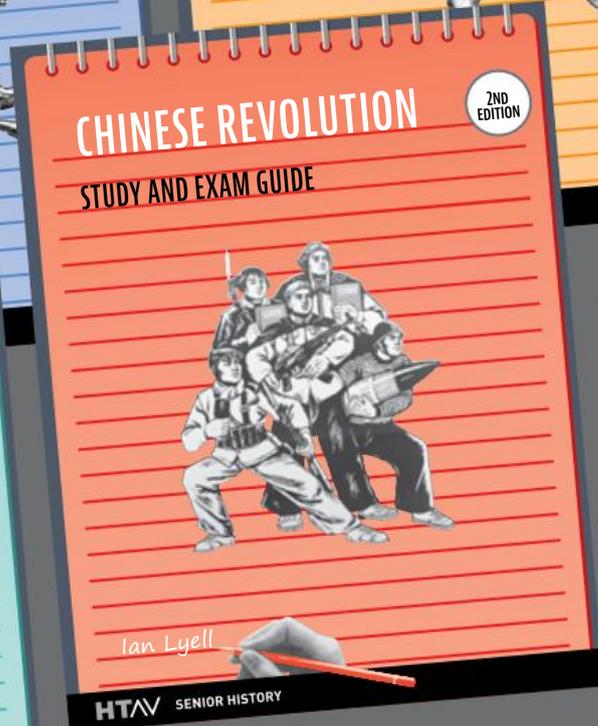
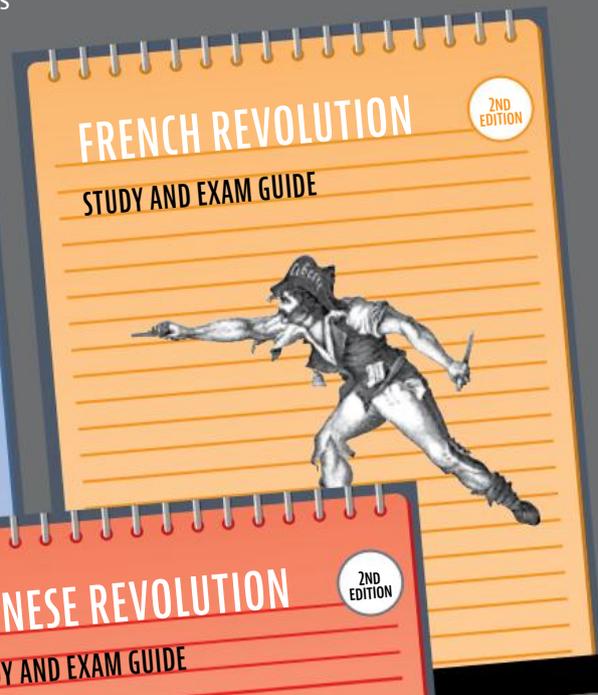
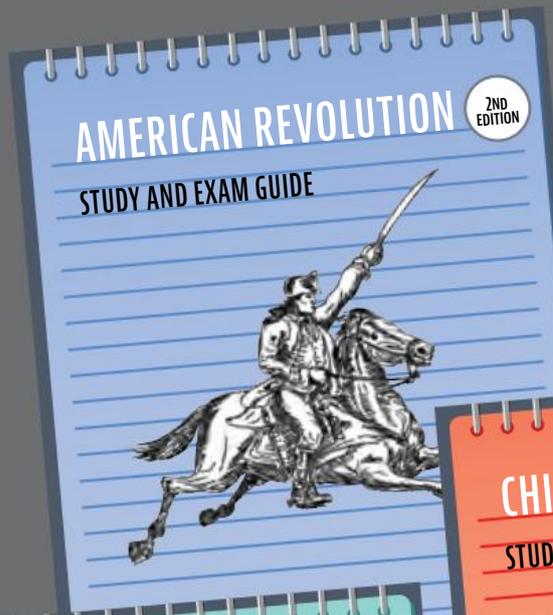
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- tips for writing a high-scoring response
- annotated exemplars for different question types
- sample exam with sample responses



REVISION TOOLS

- revision checklists
- timelines
- quizzes

KEY KNOWLEDGE

- tables and diagrams summarising key information
- key quotes (primary sources and historical interpretations)
- key individuals, movements and ideas
- content mapped to the VCE Study Design

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HTAV

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REVOLUTIONS—AN INTRODUCTION

A study of revolutions is important because it allows us to look at how critical moments in history alter the function of nations and their societies, and the lives of generations of people. They allow us to examine issues of power—who has it and who doesn't—and to explore what happens when there is a radical shift in power.

STUDYING REVOLUTIONS

The study of Revolutions is based on the understanding that revolutions 'represent a great rupture in time and are a major turning point in the collapse and destruction of an existing political order which results in extensive change to society.'¹ Often revolutions involve a transfer of power from the oppressor to the oppressed, from the privileged to the less privileged. In some instances, a revolution is a response to hierarchical authority and its inequalities, while in others a revolution can be a response to colonial oppression.

Typically, revolutions are driven by strong ideological beliefs about how society should operate. Central to these beliefs are ideas about equality and control, and how a government should balance these. It is important to note that while revolutions are considered primarily political events, there are also significant economic, social and cultural factors that need to be considered. In the context of Revolutions, these are examined through the lens of key historical thinking concepts.

¹ VCAA, VCE History Study Design 2022–2026.

WHAT IS A REVOLUTION?

The term 'revolution' is used widely and often loosely. Consider for example, how advertisers frequently refer to products as 'revolutionary' to generate a sense of something being special or beneficial or even necessary. Understanding what a revolution is—and what it is not—is crucial in a study of Revolutions. This is no easy feat as sometimes the term 'revolution' is used by different people to mean different things. This is evident when we consider the differences between a revolution and other forms of conflict such as a rebellion, a revolt or a coup, and the ways in which these terms are sometimes randomly assigned to different events.

THE CAUSES OF REVOLUTION

The causes of revolution are often complex and overlapping. It can be useful to consider the long-term and short-term **causes**, and the **triggers**, of revolution. If you consider the metaphor of a revolution as a fire, the descriptions to the right outline the role of each of these.

The path towards revolution is never a smooth one. Rarely do you see revolutionary tension steadily rise; rather it ebbs and flows as those in power attempt to put an end to discontent (through a combination of repression and reform). This results in periods of escalation and de-escalation of revolutionary beliefs and action. Identifying a series of crisis points in the lead up to revolution can help you more clearly see this process.

Of course, one of the challenges in a study of Revolutions is to evaluate the various factors that cause revolution. How are these factors related? Are some factors more significant than others? To what extent? Does this change over time? Why?

THE CONSEQUENCES OF REVOLUTION

Seizing power is only one of the hurdles a revolutionary party or movement faces. All too often, the threat of further revolution or counter-revolution drives the new government's decisions and actions. Revolutionary ideals may be compromised. Arguably, the consequences of revolution can be unintended—this study asks you to identify the intended and unintended effects of revolution and evaluate how these impacted different groups of people at the time. You should compare the perspectives of people within and between groups and evaluate the positive and negative consequences of living in the 'new society'.

CHANGE AND CONTINUITY

Ultimately, the concepts of cause and consequence are used to understand not just the dynamics of a revolution but also to analyse the extent to which revolution resulted in change. The rhetoric of revolutionary leaders, parties and movements is often utopian—they promise a better life with greater freedom, less hierarchical control and more equality—but do they deliver? Sometimes the new regime ends up every bit (or even more) repressive than the regime it supplanted.

In comparing the political, economic and social dimensions of life in the 'old' and 'new' societies, this course of study invites an appraisal of the changes and continuities a revolution brought to society. What changes were evident? Were they positive or negative? What stayed the same (continued)? Why? Did life change for all groups in society or just for some? How do we know?

LONG-TERM CAUSES

The sources of fuel needed to stage a revolution are long-held political, economic, social and cultural structures, often based on issues of equality and control. These act to interrupt the status quo—much like chopping down a tree interrupts the ecology of a forest system.



SHORT-TERM CAUSES

Unresolved and growing over time, these structures generate grievances and resentments that metaphorically become the fuel for the revolutionary fire.



TRIGGERS

The spark that ignites a revolution can be planned or unplanned; it can be an **event** or the actions, or inactions, of an **individual** or a group. Regardless, the trigger often galvanises revolutionary **movements** into action. Sometimes that action involves a mass-movement, whilst at others it offers an opportunity that smaller groups can utilise to seize power.



SIGNIFICANCE

As you examine the causes and consequences of revolution, and the resultant changes and continuities, *Revolutions* also asks you to evaluate the relative significance of these. Were some movements, ideas, individuals and events more significant than others? Why/Why not? When assessing significance, consider:

Scale	How many people did it affect?
Duration	How long did it last?
Profundity (how profound something is)	What intensity of change did it produce? Deep impact or surface-level change?

PERSPECTIVES AND INTERPRETATIONS

Significance is a relative term. One must always ask—significant to whom? In answering this, consideration must be given to:

- the **perspectives** and experiences of different groups of people at the time. Were certain movements, ideas, individuals and events seen as more significant by certain groups? Why/why not?
- the **interpretations** of others (often historians) after the time. Have views of significance changed? Why/why not?

*Ultimately, the complexities and moral dilemmas found in the study of revolutions makes for rewarding analysis and evaluation. As a student of *Revolutions* it is your job to grapple with these concepts and construct your own evidence-based historical arguments.*

written by Catherine Hart

SECTION A

CAUSES OF REVOLUTION

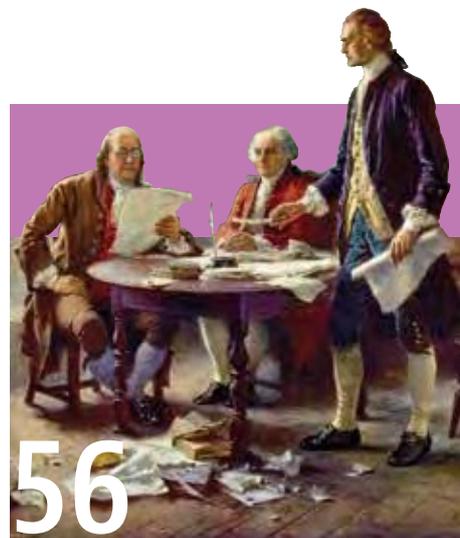
- What were the significant **causes** of revolution?
- How did the actions of **popular movements** and particular **individuals** contribute to triggering a revolution?
- To what extent did **social tensions** and **ideological conflicts** contribute to the outbreak of revolution?¹

¹ Extract from the VCE History Revolutions Study Design (2022–2026) © VCAA, reproduced by permission.



'If this be treason, make the most of it!'

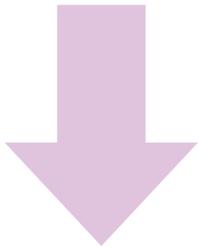
Patrick Henry on opposing the Stamp Act



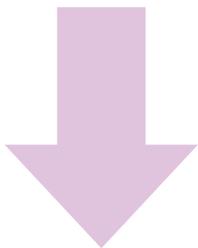
Number of men who signed the Declaration of Independence

THE 'BOSTON TEA PARTY'

(41,730 KG)
340
CHESTS



AMOUNT OF
TEA
DESTROYED



WORTH £9659
equivalent to
AUD\$2.2m today

*'Liberty, once
lost, is lost
forever.'*



John Adams,
letter to
Abigail Adams,
17 July 1775

*'The cause of
America is in a
great measure
the cause of all
mankind.'*

Thomas Paine,
Common Sense

BATTLE OF BUNKER HILL

**2000
BRITISH
SOLDIERS**

**1054 KILLED
OR WOUNDED**

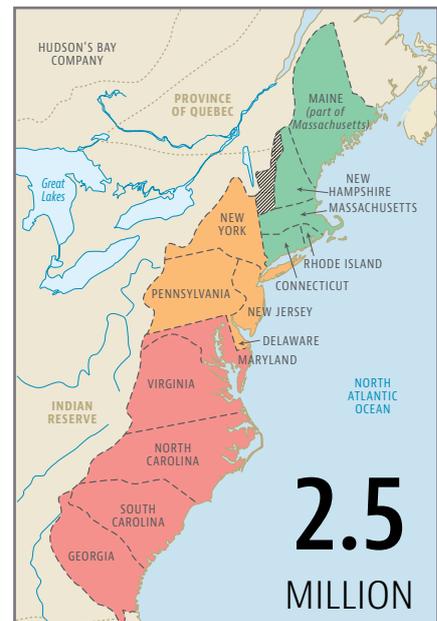


**400 KILLED
OR WOUNDED**

**3200
AMERICAN
SOLDIERS**

DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

*'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.'*



Estimated population of the 13 colonies in 1776

TIMELINE

PRE-1754



1607

14 MAY 1607

English settlers land on a swampy strip of land in Jamestown and establish the first lasting British outpost in North America. Seventeen years later it becomes the colony of Virginia

1620

9 NOVEMBER 1620

Puritan settlers calling themselves 'Pilgrims' land their ship *Mayflower* at Plymouth, Massachusetts. On arrival they sign the 'Mayflower Compact', agreeing to set up a local government



1688

NOVEMBER 1688

The outbreak of King William's War, a nine-year conflict between England and France, fought in both Europe and North America. It would be the first of five Anglo-French wars over the next 100 years

1733

17 MAY 1733

Westminster passes the Molasses Act to protect British sugar plantations in the West Indies. A heavy duty is added to any sugar or molasses purchased from the French or Dutch

1740s

1740s

The peak of both the European Enlightenment (a source of revolutionary ideas), and the Great Awakening (a renewal and transformation of American religion)



—28 May 1754
Start of French and Indian War

—7 October 1763
Royal Proclamation

—5 April 1764
Sugar Act

—1 September 1764
Currency Act

—22 March 1765
Stamp Act

—24 March 1765
Quartering Act

KEY EVENT
1754

28 MAY 1754

Colonel George Washington of the Virginia militia attacks a French force in Pennsylvania, starting the French and Indian War

19 JUNE–11 JULY 1754

Delegates from seven of the thirteen colonies meet in Albany, New York, to discuss the growing crisis. They adopt Benjamin Franklin's plan to unify the colonies, but it is rejected by both the king and the state assemblies

1760

25 OCTOBER 1760

George III becomes king of England. The population of the thirteen colonies passes 2 million people

1763

10 FEBRUARY 1763

The Treaty of Paris ends the French and Indian War. Britain takes control of French Canada and the western territories. Despite a debt in excess of £122 million, Westminster decides that a standing army of 10,000 men should stay in America to protect against native unrest

7 MAY 1763

The first attack of Pontiac's Rebellion, a series of raids against British forts and settlements by a coalition of native tribes

KEY EVENT

7 OCTOBER 1763

King George III issues a Royal Proclamation prohibiting settlement or further land claims west of the Appalachian Mountains

DECEMBER 1763

Fearing government inaction, 'Paxton Boys' slaughter three settlements of peaceful natives in western Pennsylvania

KEY EVENT

5 APRIL 1764

British Parliament passes the Sugar Act

1764

JUNE 1764

Massachusetts convenes a committee to circulate information about the Sugar Act. Other colonies follow suit

KEY EVENT

1 SEPTEMBER 1764

London passes the Currency Act, taking control of the colonial currency system

DECEMBER 1764

Petitions and private letters protesting the Sugar Act arrive in London from the American colonies

1765

2 FEBRUARY 1765

With colonial defence set to cost £200,000 per year, Prime Minister George Grenville plans to extract £78,000 from the colonies. He meets with Benjamin Franklin to discuss methods of raising revenue from America with minimal unrest

KEY EVENT

22 MARCH 1765

British Parliament passes the Stamp Act to raise revenue from American colonies. It also passes a Quartering Act, requiring colonial assemblies to organise and supply accommodation for troops

KEY EVENT

24 MARCH 1765

British Parliament passes the Quartering Act



- **May 1765**
Stamp Act protests
- **7-25 October 1765**
Stamp Act Congress
- **18 March 1766**
Stamp Act repealed
- **15 June-2 July 1767**
Townshend duties



KEY EVENT

1765
(continued)

29-30 MAY 1765

Virginia assembly convenes to discuss the Stamp Act. Patrick Henry leads an opposition motion, the Stamp Act Resolves. Weeks later, protests against the Stamp Act begin in the streets of Boston and New York City

14 AUGUST 1765

An effigy of royal official Andrew Oliver is hung by a noose from a Boston tree (the 'Liberty Tree')

26 AUGUST 1765

The home of unpopular lieutenant-governor Thomas Hutchinson is raided, looted and vandalised by an angry mob

KEY EVENT

7-25 OCTOBER 1765

Delegates from nine colonies attend a Stamp Act Congress in New York, issuing a Declaration of Rights and Grievances

DECEMBER 1765

Groups in Boston begin referring to themselves as Sons of Liberty

DECEMBER 1765

The Stamp Act comes under attack within the British Parliament

KEY EVENT

1766

18 MARCH 1766

British Parliament formally repeals the Stamp Act after weeks of hot debate

On the same day, it passes the Declaratory Act, stating that it has legislative power over the colonies 'in all cases whatsoever'

APRIL 1766

News of the repeal of the Stamp Act reaches the American colonies, prompting celebrations and easing of trade boycotts

KEY EVENT

1767

15 JUNE-2 JULY 1767

Westminster passes a series of customs charges, called the 'Townshend duties', on goods imported to America from Britain

1768

11 FEBRUARY 1768

Boston radical Samuel Adams issues a 'circular letter' encouraging the colonies to unite and resist the Townshend duties

9 JUNE 1768

Armed British ships seize *Liberty*, a ship owned by John Hancock and suspected of smuggling wine and other goods

28 SEPTEMBER 1768

Two regiments of British soldiers arrive in Boston to keep order

1769

10 MARCH 1769

Town meetings in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, vote to join the boycott of British goods

1770

19 JANUARY 1770

'The Battle of Golden Hill': street fighting breaks out between British soldiers and New York Sons of Liberty, with several people seriously injured



- 5 March 1770
Boston Massacre
- 20 November 1772
Committee of Correspondence formed
- 16 December 1773
Boston Tea Party
- 31 March 1774
The first Coercive Act (Boston Port Act)
- 20 May 1774
Two more Coercive Acts
- 2 June 1774
Quartering Act revised

KEY EVENT

1770
(continued)

5 MARCH 1770

The 'Boston Massacre': five colonial civilians are killed after a skirmish with British soldiers in downtown Boston

24–29 OCTOBER 1770

Trial of British Captain Preston over the events of the Boston Massacre. Preston is acquitted

27 NOVEMBER–4 DECEMBER 1770

Trial of the eight British soldiers involved in the events of the Boston Massacre. All soldiers are found not guilty of murder, but two are found guilty of manslaughter

1772

KEY EVENT

9 JUNE 1772

The British customs ship *Gaspee* runs ashore on Rhode Island, where it is boarded by locals and burned to the waterline

20 NOVEMBER 1772

A Boston town meeting, led by Samuel Adams, decides to form a twenty-one-man Committee of Correspondence

1773

12 MARCH 1773

The Virginian Assembly sets up its own eleven-man Committee of Correspondence; four other colonies follow suit

10 MAY 1773

London passes the Tea Act, permitting the British East India Company to sell surplus tea directly to American retailers

SEPTEMBER 1773

Opposition to the Tea Act grows in the colonies, particularly in Boston and New York City

28 NOVEMBER–15 DECEMBER 1773

Three tea-laden British ships arriving in Boston Harbor are prevented from offloading their cargo

KEY EVENT

16 DECEMBER 1773

The Boston Tea Party: a small band raids the three ships and tips 342 crates of tea into Boston Harbor

KEY EVENT

1774

31 MARCH 1774

The first Coercive Act, the Boston Port Act, closes Boston Harbor until the cost of the damaged tea has been repaid

KEY EVENT

20 MAY 1774

Westminster passes a further two Coercive Acts: the Massachusetts Government Act and the Administration of Justice Act

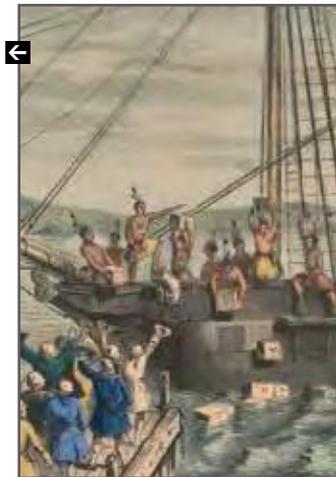
KEY EVENT

2 JUNE 1774

British Parliament passes a revised form of the Quartering Act, empowering governors to house troops in vacant buildings

22 JUNE 1774

Royal assent is given to the Quebec Act, intended to secure the loyalty of French-Canadians, but it stirs up anti-Catholic sentiment in America



17 June 1775
Battle of Bunker Hill

10 May 1775
Second Continental Congress

19 April 1775
Battles of Lexington and Concord

5 September-24 October 1774
First Continental Congress

1 September 1774
Colony's weapons and gunpowder store seized



KEY EVENT
1774
(continued)

1 SEPTEMBER 1774

General Thomas Gage, new military governor of Massachusetts, seizes the colony's store of weapons and gunpowder

KEY EVENT

5 SEPTEMBER-24 OCTOBER 1774

The First Continental Congress meets to consider the consequences of the Coercive Acts and decide on a course of action. It drafts the Articles of Confederation and pledges to meet in a year's time

1775

9 FEBRUARY 1775

British Parliament declares Massachusetts to be in a state of rebellion

23 MARCH 1775

Patrick Henry delivers an anti-British speech: 'Give me liberty or give me death!'

KEY EVENT

19 APRIL 1775

Colonial militiamen skirmish with British troops at Lexington and Concord, with more than 120 men killed

KEY EVENT

10 MAY 1775

The Second Continental Congress convenes, on the same day that American forces capture British outpost Fort Ticonderoga

KEY EVENT

17 JUNE 1775

The Battle of Bunker Hill, Massachusetts: a costly victory for the British

19 JUNE 1775

Continental Congress appoints George Washington of Virginia as commander-in-chief of the newly formed Continental Army

5 JULY 1775

Continental Congress passes the 'olive branch petition', a last attempt to reconcile and make peace with England

6 JULY 1775

Continental Congress issues the Declaration on the Causes and Necessities for Taking up Arms, a document justifying defensive war

13 OCTOBER 1775

Continental Congress passes legislation for the equipping of two cruisers and establishment of a Marine Committee, setting up what will become the Continental Navy

29 NOVEMBER 1775

Continental Congress sets up the Committee of Secret Correspondence to seek out foreign pacts and alliances

23 DECEMBER 1775

King George III issues a proclamation declaring the American colonies closed and off-limits to all trade and commerce

1776

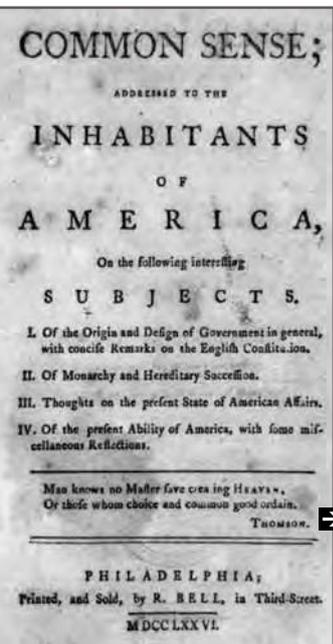
5 JANUARY 1776

The New Hampshire assembly drafts and passes a state Constitution, the first American state to do so

KEY EVENT

10 JANUARY 1776

Thomas Paine publishes *Common Sense*, which begins to circulate around the American colonies



4 July 1776
Declaration of Independence9 January 1776
Thomas Paine's
Common Sense
published1776
(continued)**26 MARCH 1776**

South Carolina passes a state Constitution

12 APRIL 1776

North Carolina authorises its delegates to Congress to vote for independence from Britain, the first colony to do so

2 MAY 1776

King Louis XVI of France pledges \$1 million in arms and munitions to the Americans

29 JUNE 1776

A British flotilla of thirty warships, 300 supply ships and 40,000 men arrives in New York

2 JULY 1776

New Jersey passes a state Constitution

4 JULY 1776

The Declaration of Independence is drafted by Jefferson, then edited and adopted by the Second Continental Congress

KEY EVENT

COLONISING AMERICA

(PRE-1754)



Source 1.01 An aerial view of Jamestown, Virginia, 17th century. Jamestown was the first permanent British settlement in North America.

CHAPTER 1

*‘The Great Being ... gave us this land,
but the white people seem to want to
drive us from it.’*

—Attakullakulla, Cherokee elder, 1769

The story of the United States began in Europe, with competition among *imperial* powers to colonise the great landmass of North America. Native American peoples had lived on the land for thousands of years and developed complex societies and economies. But the explorers, farmers, merchants and speculators who sailed west from Europe to plant their flags arrived in a land they knew little about.

By the late 1600s, England, France, Spain and the Netherlands had claimed their own pieces of North America, largely ignoring the rights of the Native American peoples. These land claims led to territorial competition and nationalist tensions—and it seemed as if the ‘new world’ might become a mirror of the old, divided Europe. By the early 1700s, England’s colonies had grown along the east coast of North America and were looking to spread west.

imperial connected with an empire

KEY EVENTS

—Approx. 15,000–20,000 BCE

Indigenous people begin settling North America from Asia

—May 1607

English settlers land in Jamestown and establish the first enduring British outpost in North America. (Seventeen years later it becomes the colony of Virginia.)

—November 1620

Puritan settlers—who call themselves Pilgrims—arrive at Plymouth, Massachusetts, on the Mayflower. They sign the Mayflower Compact, an agreement to set up a local government

—1641

Slavery is legalised in Massachusetts

KEY QUESTIONS

- What were the competing imperial interests of European countries in North America?
- How did Native Americans respond to European colonisation?
- To what extent did the differences in early colonial experiences influence views of Great Britain?



THE 'UNCHARTED' WORLD

Henry VII, King of England (5 March 1496): 'Be it known ... that we give and grant, for us and our heirs, to our well-beloved John Cabot, ... full and free authority, ... to find, discover and investigate whatsoever islands, countries, regions or provinces of heathens and infidels, in whatsoever part of the world placed, which before this time were unknown to all Christians.'

THE LAND

The North American continent is a vast landmass with great diversity in terrain, climate, natural resources, plants and animals. It is bordered by the Atlantic Ocean to the east, the Pacific to the west, the Gulf of Mexico to the south and the Arctic Ocean to the north. It covers an area of 25,000,000 square kilometres, and is the third-largest continent on Earth (after Asia and Africa). North America today is dominated by three countries: the United States, Canada and Mexico. However, there are twenty other North American independent states, including numerous island nations in the Caribbean and several Central American countries. These countries are today home to more than 600 million people.

The modern-day United States began in the easternmost third of the continent, between the Atlantic coast and the Mississippi River. The landscape of this area varies widely, from broad flat plains, rolling hills and temperate forests in the north to coastal swamps and flatlands in the south. A long mountain range called the Appalachians runs in a north-east direction for 2400 kilometres, a few hundred kilometres inland from the Atlantic coast. West of the Appalachians are the Mississippi and Ohio river valleys, with large areas of fertile land suitable for farming. The region's climate changes dramatically from north to south: the north is temperate and mild but with bitterly cold winters and heavy snowfalls, while southern regions enjoy warm, sub-tropical weather with high humidity, storms and cyclones.

The eastern half of the continent was rich with natural resources—and this made it attractive to colonisers. It was scattered with forests, almost ready-made for construction and shipbuilding. The Atlantic coastline was brimming with fish, as were inland lakes, rivers and waterways. Bison, bear, deer, rabbit and opossum were plentiful and would be hunted extensively for their meat and skins. Beaver and mink were prized for their fur, which fetched good prices on the European market.

However, the most precious commodity in North America was land. Despite the hundreds of **Native American** groups who inhabited the land, Europeans considered the continent theirs to seize, settle and colonise. The only thing that disappointed early English explorers was the lack of valuable metals such as gold and silver.

ACTIVITY

CAUSE AND CONSEQUENCE —ANNOTATED MAP

Investigate the settlement of one of the thirteen British colonies, and consider how landscape, climate and natural resources shaped its economic development. Show your findings on an infographic or annotated map.

Native Americans term used when describing indigenous peoples of the United States as a whole. If discussing a particular tribe, their specific name should be used

➔ The Mississippi River.

DID YOU KNOW?

The Mississippi is the second-longest river in North America. Its name is derived from the Algonquin *Misi-ziibi*, meaning 'great river'.



THE NATIVE AMERICANS

North America was not an empty land. Indigenous people began settling North America from Asia approximately 14,000 years ago. By the mid-1700s, there were hundreds of language groups scattered across the North American continent. Each group contained many tribes, sub-tribes and settlements. Many Native Americans lived in the east, in or near the areas colonised by the British. The powerful Six Nations of the Iroquois Confederacy (the Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, Seneca and Tuscarora groups) lived in the area south of Lake Erie and Lake Ontario, close to the **colony** of New York. They, along with the Cherokee Nation, were the most powerful native peoples encountered by the English. Other notable tribes near the English colonies included the Miami, Shawnee, Delaware, Powhatan and Creeks. Further north, along and beyond the Canadian border, were the Algonquin, Huron and Odawa nations.

The Iroquois Confederacy and the Cherokee Nation were the two most powerful forces in the area of eastern North America, which would become the Thirteen Colonies.

The Iroquois Confederacy controlled the area on both sides of Lake Ontario and Lake Erie south into the Appalachian range to Cherokee country. Unlike Europeans, the Iroquois and Cherokee did not have strictly defined territorial borders, and they shared claims to land in what is now West Virginia and Kentucky. The people of the Iroquois Confederacy also lived in towns—each town had approximately 200 people. Estimates of the total Iroquois population vary, but is believed they numbered about 15,000 people in 1700.

The Cherokee Nation controlled 160,000 square kilometres of land south of the Ohio River from the Appalachian Mountains to the coastal fringe. They lived in sixty-four towns and had a total population of approximately 30,000 people in 1730.¹

Most eastern Native Americans, whether large confederations or small tribes, lived in settled towns or villages and farmed maize, beans and squash as their primary foods. They also hunted and fished. They had trading networks that extended throughout the region. They fought territorial battles at various times—and European colonisers took advantage of these rivalries. When European colonisers landed in North America, they could see the land was already occupied.

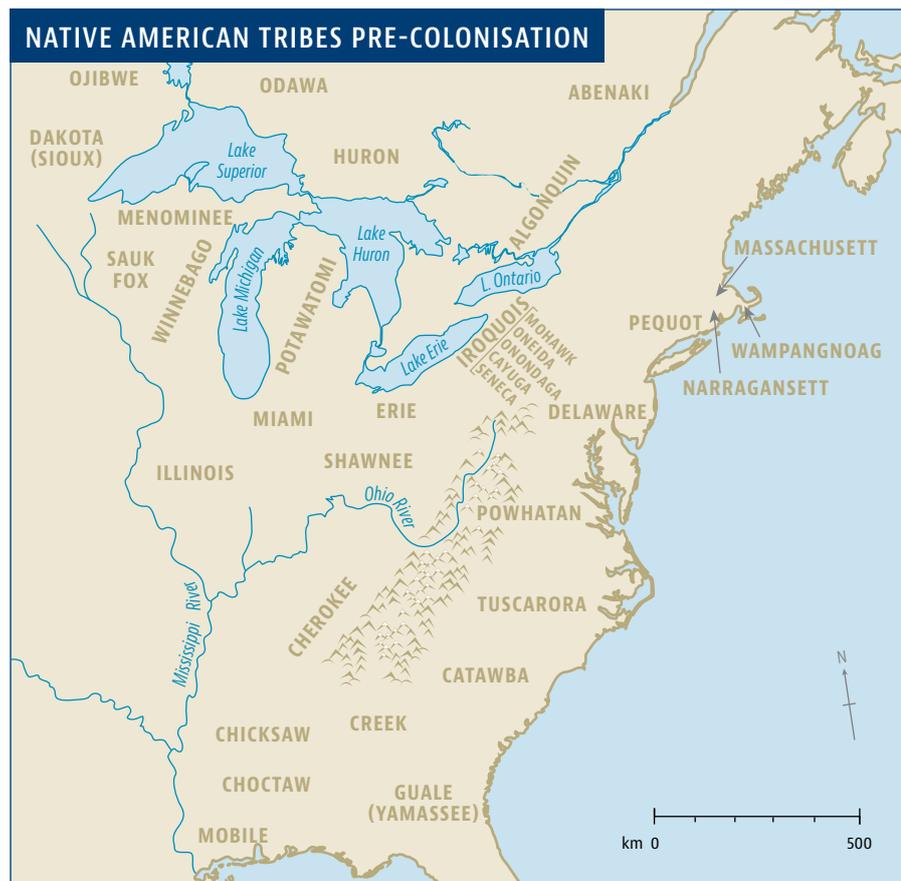
Relationships between Native Americans and colonisers were variable—and much depended on the attitudes of individual leaders on both sides. In many areas, European settlers traded with and were helped by native tribes. The early colonists of Jamestown (in Virginia) and Plymouth (in Massachusetts) would have starved during their first winters if it had not been for the



↑ **Source 1.02** *Painting of Joseph Brant/Thayendanegea (1742–1807)* by Charles Willson Peale, about 1797.

colony a foreign territory claimed or seized by an imperial power for settlement or economic exploitation

↓ **Source 1.03**



frontier a border area, usually the outermost fringe of settlement—the ‘edge of civilisation’

DID YOU KNOW?

At the time of the American Revolution, the world’s largest empire was the Spanish empire. Today more than 500 million people speak Spanish—a legacy of this imperial dominance.

conquistadors Spanish word meaning ‘conqueror’; used to describe Spanish explorers, soldiers and sailors who invaded and occupied parts of South America between the 1400s and 1800s

assimilated to become a part of a group of people, taking on their language and customs

charter company a group of people given a licence from a king or queen to form a company for exploration or trade

joint stock company a group of people who put in money for a share of ownership (stock) to form a company, usually for exploration or trade

aristocracy a system of government or social hierarchy marked by the existence of a wealthy and powerful elite. From the Greek *aristokratia* meaning ‘rule of the best’

Powhatan and Wampanoag people, respectively. Some conflict between native peoples and colonisers was inevitable. Many Europeans, such as Jamestown’s John Smith, ignored native land claims, and considered that the ‘Indians’ should be driven from farmable land. Some tribes chose to retaliate against **frontier** colonists.

THE FIRST EUROPEANS

John Smith (1624): ‘And here in Florida, Virginia, New-England, and Canada, is more land than all the people in Christendom can manure, and yet more to spare than all the natives of those Countries can use and cultivate.’

Britain was not the first European power to lay claim to North America—nor was it the most dominant power when the revolution began to unfold in the mid-1700s.

Almost the entire western half of the continent—and most of Florida—was occupied by Spain. France occupied the fertile areas immediately to the north and the west of the British colonies. These possessions, referred to as New France, stretched from the Appalachian Mountains in the east to the Mississippi River in the west; from Quebec (in present-day Canada) in the north to New Orleans in the south. The British colonies were small in comparison, confined to a narrow strip along the east coast.

The first British colonists to arrive in America were in search of gold. Their hopes were based on stories about Spanish **conquistadors** finding fabulous golden cities in South America, and rumours of El Dorado—the fabled city of treasures. Between 1585 and 1587 there were several attempts to establish English settlements in present-day Virginia and North Carolina—notably that of British explorer Sir Walter Raleigh. These early efforts at colonisation failed miserably—the settlements were either abandoned or vanished without trace. More than a hundred men, women and children disappeared mysteriously from Raleigh’s settlement at Roanoke Island, North Carolina. It is believed that they either **assimilated** into local tribes or were wiped out by disease or starvation.

THE BRITISH PRESENCE EXPANDS

The success of later colonies at Jamestown (Virginia) and Plymouth (Massachusetts) provided encouragement for further settlement—as did several other factors.

- Shipbuilding techniques and the seaworthiness of ships improved throughout the 1600s, as did mapping and navigation methods. This made journeys across the Atlantic Ocean faster, safer and more reliable.
- **Charter** and **joint stock companies** in England set up enticing schemes to recruit settlers and colonise slabs of the New World in the hope of making a profit.
- Britain’s growing population and shortage of land made resettlement in America an attractive option for the industrious poor, the bold middle class and the younger sons of the **aristocracy**.

Over the next century, another eleven colonies were settled or acquired by British interests. In some cases land was taken by force from colonists of other European powers—for example, New York was a Dutch colony called New Netherland before it was captured by the English in 1667. The area later known as Pennsylvania was given by British king Charles II to William Penn to pay off a debt owed to Penn’s father. New Hampshire was settled by British fishermen, while the tiny colony of Rhode Island

was founded by Roger Williams, a religious *radical* who had been expelled from Massachusetts. The southernmost colonies of Georgia, North Carolina and South Carolina were settled, in part, to provide a buffer against French and Spanish colonies to the south and south-west.

radical a group, individual or idea that is considered extreme, unsettling or dangerous for its time

By 1733, thirteen separate colonies had been established as British possessions—these colonies would later become the first states in the newly formed United States. The colonies were considered to exist in three regions:

- New England: Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Connecticut and Rhode Island
- Middle Colonies: New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Delaware
- Southern Colonies: Virginia, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia.

These groupings had no political structure or administration, and each colony was governed independently.



↑ Replica houses of Plymouth colony at Plymouth Plantation, an open-air museum in Plymouth, Massachusetts.



← Source 1.04

DID YOU KNOW?

Another factor that led to the settlement of North America was the European law of primogeniture, which meant that the eldest son inherited the whole family estate, leaving any younger children without land. Many of the settlers in the southern US colonies were the younger sons of English aristocrats who had been left without land.



ACTIVITY

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 In your own words, explain how Native Americans organised themselves socially and politically.
- 2 In what ways did the different Native American groups react to European exploration and colonisation?
- 3 Why did people from Britain decide to move to the new colonies in North America?

A DIVERSE COLONIAL SOCIETY KEY DEVELOPMENT

Gary B. Nash: 'Any attempt to portray the colonies as unified and homogeneous would be misguided.'

The English colonies grew quickly in their first one hundred years. In 1650 there were barely 50,000 people living in the British colonies. By 1750 this number had increased to almost 1.2 million. This massive population boom continued through the eighteenth century—even as the revolution raged and a smallpox epidemic killed people by the thousands. The population doubled roughly every generation. The increase in population was due to:

- a mass influx of immigrants
- higher birth rates in the colonies than in Europe
- lower childhood death rates in the colonies than in Europe.

By the late 1700s, more than 20 per cent of children in Britain died, compared to just 14 per cent in Massachusetts. The colonies had better public hygiene, fresher food and fewer fatal epidemics. Although childbirth remained a frequent cause of death, American families still had, on average, seven or eight surviving children.

On average, American colonists enjoyed greater wealth, better nutrition and higher standards of living than their counterparts in Europe, mainly because of the availability of land. The economist Joseph Massie, writing in the mid-1700s, speculated that most British land was possessed by 310 'great families' who owned between 100,000 and 200,000 acres each.² Around 40 per cent of Americans were farmers who owned their own small farms—a contrast with Europe, where most were **tenant farmers** paying high land rents.

Modern historian Allan Kulikoff notes that in the late 1600s in Essex **County**, Massachusetts, 'half the men owned land before they were 30, as did 95 per cent of the men over [the age of] 36'. He also suggests that land ownership in Pennsylvania was 'nearly universal' and that six-sevenths (about 85 per cent) of the men in Connecticut were also landowners.³

However, good farmland near the coasts was limited. By the early 1700s, there were clear signs that the supply of cheap farmland was drying up. Land **speculation** by wealthier American colonists, natural population increases and the flood of immigrants all added to demand, forcing up the prices of available land. This bred new tensions and created pressure to open up the 'unsettled' territory that lay west of the Appalachian Mountains.

DID YOU KNOW?

Population growth was much faster in the British colonies during the 1700s than in New France and the Spanish empire. This was mainly because English companies advertised the benefits and advantages of emigrating to the colonies.

tenant farmers farmers who rent their land from large landowners, often paying the rent in a share of their crops

county an area of local government administration within a colony

speculation claiming or acquiring large tracts of land, in order to subdivide and sell the land for profit later

THE THIRTEEN BRITISH COLONIES

(In order of founding)

VIRGINIA

Founded: 1607, by London Company
 Charter: 1606 (*corporate*) 1624 (*royal*)
 Population (1750): 231,000
 Economy: plantation farming, tobacco, wheat, corn, cotton

MASSACHUSETTS

Founded: 1620, by English Puritans
 Charter: 1629 (*corporate*) 1691 (*royal*)
 Population (1750): 188,000
 Economy: fishing, corn, livestock, timber, shipbuilding, shipping

NEW HAMPSHIRE

Founded: 1631, by English fishermen
 Charter: 1679 (*royal*)
 Population (1750): 27,500
 Economy: fishing, potatoes, textiles, shipbuilding

MARYLAND

Founded: 1634, by English settlers
 Charter: 1632 (*proprietary*)
 Population (1750): 141,100
 Economy: farming, dye production (indigo), shipbuilding, ironworks

CONNECTICUT

Founded: 1636, by religious dissidents
 Charter: 1662 (*royal*)
 Population (1750): 111,300
 Economy: wheat, corn, fishing.

RHODE ISLAND

Founded: 1638, settled by religious dissidents
 Charter: 1663 (*royal*)
 Population (1750): 33,200
 Economy: livestock, dairy production, fishing, timber

NEW JERSEY

Founded: 1664, seized from the Dutch
 Charter: 1664 (*proprietary*) 1702 (*royal*)
 Population (1750): 71,400
 Economy: timber, ironworks

NEW YORK

Founded: 1664, seized from the Dutch
 Charter: 1685 (*royal*)
 Population (1750): 76,700
 Economy: farming, dye production (indigo), shipbuilding, ironworks

SOUTH CAROLINA

Founded: 1670, by English settlers from Barbados
 Charter: 1729 (*royal*)
 Population (1750): 64,000
 Economy: plantation farming, dye production (indigo), rice, tobacco, cotton

PENNSYLVANIA

Founded: 1681, by William Penn
 Charter: 1681 (*royal*)
 Population (1750): 119,700
 Economy: farming, textiles, papermaking, timber, shipbuilding

DELAWARE

Founded: 1682, seized from the Dutch
 Charter: 1701 (*proprietary*)
 Population (1750): 28,700
 Economy: fishing, timber



THE THIRTEEN COLONIES

↑ Source 1.05

NORTH CAROLINA

Founded: 1710, after separation from South Carolina
 Charter: 1729 (*royal*)
 Population (1750): 73,000
 Economy: plantation farming, dye production (indigo), rice, tobacco, cotton

GEORGIA

Founded: 1732, by a London expedition
 Charter: 1752 (*royal*)
 Population (1750): 5200
 Economy: plantation farming, dye production (indigo), rice, sugar, cotton

charter a document granted to an individual, company or colonial assembly by an imperial power, allowing it to make decisions on behalf of the government

corporate a colony owned by a company through a grant of charter

royal established by a king or queen, or operating on their behalf

proprietary a colony owned by an individual through a grant of a charter

COLONY POPULATIONS, 1650–1770

YEAR:	1650	1700	1740	1750	1770
Massachusetts	15,600	55,900	151,600	188,000	235,300
New York	4100	19,100	63,700	76,700	162,900
Pennsylvania	0	18,000	85,600	119,700	240,100
Virginia	18,700	58,600	180,400	231,000	447,000
South Carolina	0	5,700	45,000	64,000	124,200
Georgia	0	0	2000	5200	23,400
All colonies	50,400	250,900	905,600	1170,800	2,148,100

➔ **Source 1.06** Bureau of the Census, 'Demography of the American Colonies' (US Department of Commerce, 1998).

ACTIVITY

CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

Using Source 1.06 and your own knowledge, respond to the following:

- 1 Which colonies had the fastest-growing populations? Investigate and note down possible explanations for this.
- 2 Suggest reasons why growth rates were comparatively slow in South Carolina and Georgia.
- 3 Find out the current population of Australia. If the Australian population was to grow over the next twenty years at the same rate as the American colonies grew between 1750 and 1770, what would our population be? What problems and pressures might this create?

THE POWERFUL COLONIAL ELITES

American colonial society, like that of Europe, was based upon structures, hierarchies and standard behaviours. People were expected to live, work, dress and behave in set ways. There was a clear distinction, particularly in rural areas, between:

- gentlemen—men with wealth, particularly inherited wealth
- commoners—those who worked for a living.

The wealthy landowners (called 'the gentry') owned large tracts of the best land, wore the finest imported clothing and occupied the best pews in the local church. They participated in government at town level—as *aldermen* or *selectmen*—and, in many cases, in the *legislative assembly* of their colony. Politics was the domain of wealthy men, who considered themselves the only class with the intelligence, civility and moderation for political thought and debate. Members of the gentry expected that commoners would recognise them as their superiors and address them as 'sire', 'mister' or other terms of respect.

aldermen members of a town's lawmaking body

selectmen a board of officials elected in towns in the New England colonies to enforce the law

legislative assembly a group of men elected to make the laws for the colony

While an American commoner might be English, Scottish, Scotch-Irish or German, most of the colonial elite were of English heritage. They viewed themselves as British, proud citizens of England, and loyal **subjects** of His Majesty. They revelled both in



British culture and the glory of the British Empire. Their homes were filled with fine furniture by Chippendale and Hepplewhite, as might be found in a London home, along with pottery by Wedgwood or Royal Worcester, and books by notable British authors and poets. They ordered the finest fabrics and garments from the mills of Manchester and the tailors of London. If they were wealthy (and courageous), they visited the 'mother country' regularly, while many sent their children to be educated at British schools such as Rugby and Eton.

subjects individuals who are under the authority of and ruled by a king

← A Chippendale chair. Chippendale was a famous English furniture maker. His furniture was considered the finest in England, and he published pattern books for others to follow.

THE AMERICAN FARMER

Agriculture was the dominant business in British America, so most of the colonists were farmers or farm labourers. Most lived in small villages of between 100 and 500 people—although there were a few larger towns.

The average American farmer rarely travelled far from his hometown. Bad weather, muddy tracks, unreliable transport made travel slow, difficult and dangerous, so it was only people in border regions who ever left their own colony. The lack of movement between villages helped to build stable and strong communities—but it also bred inward-looking views and cautious attitudes to outsiders. There were few schools and most education was completed at home. Despite this, colonial Americans were generally more literate than their European counterparts. Modern historian Kenneth Lockridge researched literacy rates in New England, and concluded that 85–90 per cent of white adult males in the late 1700s could read.⁴



However, the availability of farmable land in many colonies began to dry up by the mid-1700s, and the promise of a farmer's paradise in America became elusive. Land prices began to rise and independent farming became more expensive. Many rural economies began to transform, as those unable to acquire farmland either moved west in search of new land or took on paid work. Modern historian Daniel Vickers, in *Farmers & Fishermen: Work in Essex County* suggests that by the late 1700s, the colonial economies of New England were ripe for industrialisation and manufacturing growth. Other historians argue that the coming revolution—or, more precisely, the mobilisation required to win the Revolutionary War—was a more important stimulus for establishing a manufacturing economy rather than a farming economy.

↑ **Source 1.07** George Washington on his farm, painted about 1853. In the background, Washington's slaves are harvesting grain.

DID YOU KNOW?

A young Matt Damon quotes from Vickers' *Farmers & Fisherman* in the 1997 movie *Good Will Hunting*.

ACTIVITY

CAUSE AND CONSEQUENCE

As a class, discuss how high literacy rates in the American colonies might have influenced debates over politics and philosophy.

WOMEN

Most women in colonial America worked inside the home. Women supported their husbands, raised children and ran households. They were not considered equal to men and had few legal rights. There were few opportunities for formal education—apart from some privately run academies and finishing schools in the larger cities that specialised in deportment, elocution, household management and the fine arts. The common view—based largely on religious ideas about the roles of men and women—was that women were the weaker sex, incapable of willpower or reasoning and more easily tempted into sin.

DID YOU KNOW?

In 1750, nineteen-year-old Martha Dandridge married Daniel Custis, a wealthy Virginia planter. After Custis died in 1757, Martha married another Virginian, George Washington, who then inherited Custis' entire estate.

The daughters of farming families were expected to marry by their late teens. Many marriages were arranged for family or financial reasons rather than for love, and in some places approval from the bride's father was a legal requirement. Once married, a woman became an extension of her husband: she took his name and was expected to follow his orders, and she surrendered her property to his ownership and could not start divorce action.

Women could not:

- sign contracts
- testify in court
- enter taverns, public buildings or most town meetings
- vote in elections.

Colonial America was a deeply religious society that cherished 'family' as the basis of social stability. As a result, motherhood was celebrated as an honourable and sacred vocation. However, motherhood was also a dangerous vocation, as the mother or the child—or both—often died in childbirth. One revolutionary-era grave in Vermont contains the bodies of a forty-year-old mother and her thirteen infants.

It was possible for independent-minded single women to take up paid employment. The most common jobs were as domestic servants, cooks, seamstresses and teachers. However, it was not out of the question for women to run hospitals, orphanages, boarding houses and stores. Some historians have unearthed examples of colonial women managing businesses and running taverns—and even printing and publishing

Source 1.08 A woman spinning wool in a colonial kitchen.



newspapers.⁵ The slow shift from a farming society to a wage-based economy in the latter half of the 1700s created opportunities for capable women, just as it did for men.

Some individual colonial women prospered in their male-dominated world. One example is Sybilla Masters of Pennsylvania. In the early 1700s, Masters watched Native American women hand-grinding corn to produce grits—a thick, corn-based porridge that was widely eaten in the colonies. Eager to find a less labour-intensive method, Masters drew up plans for a hammer-driven mill that could grind large amounts of cornmeal. She also invented a new technique for weaving hats, using straw and palmetto leaves. In 1712 Masters travelled to London alone and spent three years there trying to obtain patents for her inventions. The patents were eventually granted—but not to Sybilla. The patents listed her husband Thomas Masters as the inventor, as women were not permitted to obtain patents.

RELIGION: THE COLONIAL LIFEblood

Religion was a powerful element in colonial society. Many of the European settlers who crossed the Atlantic Ocean did so in search of religious freedom, so religious values and structures loomed large in the New World. Several colonies—including Massachusetts, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Maryland—were settled explicitly as ‘plantations of religion’. The more pious settlers saw America as a haven for religious **liberty** and an opportunity to create a new society in God’s image, free of the corruption and immorality of Europe. In a sermon given to Pilgrims crossing to Massachusetts in 1630, John Winthrop described their new home as ‘a city upon a hill’ and told the Pilgrims that ‘the eyes of all people are upon us’.⁶

Almost all Americans were Protestant Christians. American Protestantism had been shaped and re-energised by a wave of religious reform that began in the 1730s, called the Great Awakening. It led to new forms of worship replacing old rituals and ceremonies. Preaching in American churches, once dull and threatening, began to change. A new wave of preachers delivered emphatic and passionate sermons. Worshippers were no longer quiet and passive followers. They were encouraged to participate in their faith by discussing and debating, studying the Bible, actively worshipping and praying at home. This energetic, independent and questioning spirit may well have contributed to the revolutionary sentiment that began to unfold in the 1760s.

The grand ideal of ‘religious tolerance’ was often preached—but not always practised. The existence of many different churches with conflicting views made tolerance a difficult principle to uphold. American Protestantism included an array of churches: Anglicans, Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Baptists, Lutherans, Dutch Reformed, Mennonites, Amish and various Brethren groups. The Quakers (or Society of Friends) had sprung from English **Puritanism** but lacked its rigid **fundamentalism**. They established a foothold in America through William Penn, the founder of Pennsylvania. The Anglican Church (Church of England) was large and influential, particularly in New York and New England, and maintained close links with both the church and state in Britain. Documents from the seventeenth and eighteenth century reveal tensions, bickering and conflict between these Protestant churches as they competed for parishioners and dominance in settled areas. It was common for one church to launch a **rhetorical** attack on the leadership, religious doctrine and practices of another.

But if Protestant Americans were suspicious of each other, then they were downright fearful of Catholicism—often to the extent of hatred. Modern historian Arthur Schlesinger called Catholicism ‘the deepest-held bias in the history of the American people’.⁷

Anti-Catholic sentiment was common, and Catholics were often **marginalised** or considered insignificant. Most colonies had charters and laws that banned Catholics from holding public office—and even from voting—while Catholic services, religious texts and robes were outlawed in some areas. The colonial press routinely ridiculed and criticised Catholics as ‘Papists’ under the direct control of the Pope in Rome.

By contrast, more tolerance was shown to America’s small Jewish population, even though the first national census in 1790 counted just 3000 Jews. Although they were sometimes shunned and disregarded, Jews generally enjoyed better treatment in America than in Europe. Colonies such as Rhode Island and New York allowed Jews to settle, build synagogues and participate in commercial life and local government.

liberty broadly interpreted as meaning ‘freedom’, in the eighteenth century it referred to freedom from government control or interference in one’s life

Puritanism a strict form of Christianity practised in Britain and the north-east colonies of America
fundamentalism a movement or attitude requiring strict and literal following of a set of basic beliefs

rhetorical using writing or speaking as a way of persuading

marginalised make a group of people less important

➔ **Source 1.09** *Pilgrims Going to Church* by George Henry Boughton, 1867.



➔ **Source 1.10** Jon Butler, *New World Faiths: Religion in Colonial America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 135.

Jon Butler, *New World Faiths*

Before the revolution, religion reinforced popular arguments about the need for virtue and morality in society and politics. In politics this was called Whiggism, because it overlapped the rhetoric of England's eighteenth-century Whig political party. Several important political tracts distributed in the colonies supported this view ... A wide variety of colonial clergymen reinforced Whig political ideas. Throughout the eighteenth century, the public discussion of virtue and morality came most often from the clergymen. Laymen and clergymen alike assumed that political liberty depended on having a virtuous public. The ministers emphasised virtue, responsibility and the importance of moral choices. In doing so, they created important standards that colonists used to criticise English actions in the 1760s and 1770s.

➔ **Source 1.11** Thomas Fleming, *Liberty! The American Revolution* (New York: Viking, 1997).

Thomas Fleming, *Liberty! The American Revolution*

Recent research into American ethnic origins have led historians to revise the conventional picture of the colonists as English. Only 60.9% of colonial Americans came from England. Another 14.3% were Scots and Scotch-Irish from Northern Ireland, 8.7% were German, 5.8% were Dutch, 3.7% were southern Irish, and 6.6% miscellaneous.

Religion was also more diverse than is usually thought. America boasted thousands of churches: 749 were Congregational churches, 485 Presbyterian, 457 Baptist, 406 Anglican, 328 Dutch or German Reformed, 240 Lutheran and 56 Catholic. There were also 200 Quaker meetinghouses and five synagogues. Hostility between religious denominations was common. Catholics were tolerated only in Maryland and Pennsylvania; Quakers were not welcome in most of New England; Presbyterians regarded Anglicans as a threat to their religious freedom because they feared the importation of English bishops and a push towards a central state religion.

The impression that on the eve of the revolution most Americans were poor is incorrect. Each of the thirteen colonies had a highly stratified, class-conscious society but it lacked the impoverished lower levels of Europe. In the northern colonies the richest ten per cent of free colonists owned 45 per cent of the wealth; in the southern colonies it was 75 per cent. Yet around 40 per cent of American colonists were yeoman [independent] farmers; while the cities and larger towns had a thriving middle class of artisans, shopkeepers, tavern owners and merchants who earned in excess of 300 pounds a year. A skilled worker might have made between 45 and 90 pounds per year; schoolteachers received a paltry 30 pounds per year.

Americans as a whole enjoyed the highest per capita income and one of the best standards of living in the Western world. They were also lightly taxed, paying less than half the taxes due in England.

ACTIVITY**HISTORICAL SOURCES**

Using Source 1.10 and your own knowledge, respond to the following:

- 1 In your own words, explain Butler's view of the connections between religion and politics.
- 2 According to Butler, what did many American clergymen do that contributed to the coming revolution?
- 3 What is meant by 'Whig political ideas'? Find out about the Whigs in Britain and explain why they were relevant to the American Revolution.

DATA ANALYSIS

Using Source 1.11 and your own knowledge, respond to the following in a small group:

- 1 Present the statistics on the ethnic and religious make-up of American colonial society as a graph, table or infographic.
- 2 Discuss possible reasons for the significant difference in the distribution of wealth in the northern and southern colonies.
- 3 Identify three aspects of colonial American society that contributed to revolutionary sentiment against Britain, as suggested by the data.

FORCED LABOUR: SLAVES AND INDENTURED SERVANTS

The European slave trade emerged in the mid-1400s when Portuguese ships were searching western Africa for gold and spices. They did not find gold or spices, but found out from Arab slave-traders that there were big profits to be made through the demand for human labour. African slaves trickled into the American colonies not long after European settlement. Within fifty years the institution of *slavery* became a vital part of American economics—particularly in the southern colonies. Slaves became the property of their 'owners' after Virginia endorsed the practice in the early 1600s.

The experience of slavery was horrendous. Most transported slaves came from the west coast of Africa, where they were 'purchased' in large groups from African or Arab slave-traders or sometimes netted and herded onto ships by Europeans. Captives then endured the sea route across the Atlantic Ocean, known as the Middle Passage. Captains of slave ships crammed their cargo of slaves below decks, chained together leg-to-leg with scarcely enough room to lie down. Depending on the weather and the skill of the captain, the voyage could take between six weeks and six months. When the ship arrived in the colonies, the slaves were herded onto auction platforms where they were bought and sold like cattle. Once they had been sold they could be worked and whipped, kept and moved, married and bred as their 'owners' saw fit.

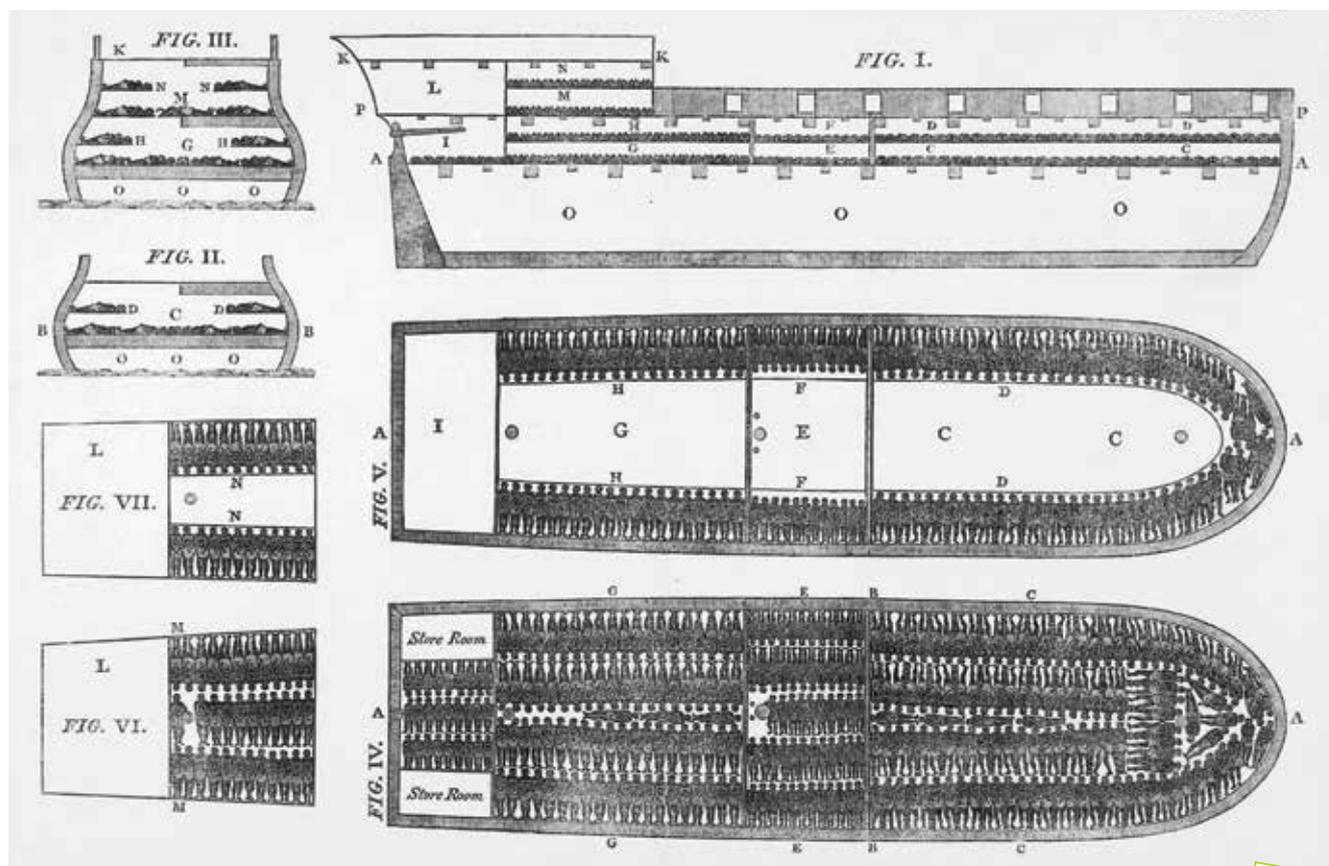
The economic demand for slaves was because growing crops such as cotton and tobacco was extremely labour-intensive. The southern colonies found it hard to attract free settlers because they were remote and had a difficult climate, so plantation owners came to rely on slavery. The slave population grew quickly as the trade continued, and as female slaves gave birth. Slavery had a profound impact on the social structure and culture of the southern colonies—and English colonists in the area lived in constant fear of a slave uprising.

slavery the practice of kidnapping human beings and forcing them to work without payment. 'Chattel slaves' were considered the personal property of their masters

indentured labour a system where people were bound by contract to work for a set number of years without payment

A lesser-known form of colonial slavery was **indentured labour** or ‘debt bondage’, which was a period of unpaid labour imposed upon free English men and women who were unable to pay their debts. Defaulting debtors would be arrested, detained and ‘sold’ to companies that drew up an indenture (or contract) containing a minimum amount of labour. The indentured person then worked for this set period—usually four to seven years—after which they were released.

Bonded workers received no salary—only food, clothing and shelter. Indenture contracts and the people bound by them could be bought and sold as property; their masters could treat them as brutally as they treated African slaves. Modern historian Richard Hofstadter suggests that more than half the European immigrants to the British colonies in America in the 1600s and 1700s arrived under some form of indenture.⁸ Also transported to America by the British between 1610 and 1763 were more than 50,000 convicts; some of them were criminals, but others were political prisoners or captured rebels from Scotland and Ireland.



Source 1.12 A 1788 plan of the slave-ship *Brookes*, showing how it carried 454 slaves chained together.

ACTIVITY

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 Why did so many people move from England to the colonies?
- 2 What were the roles for women in colonial society?
- 3 Why was religion so important to colonial life?
- 4 Why did slavery develop in the British colonies?
- 5 What was the difference between a slave and an indentured servant?

THE DEVELOPMENT OF SLAVERY IN AMERICA: TIMELINE

—1619

Twenty African slaves are landed and sold in Jamestown, Virginia.

—1641

Massachusetts legalises slavery, the first of the thirteen colonies to do so. Other colonies follow suit over the next three decades, including Connecticut, Maryland, New York and New Jersey.

—1703

Rhode Island decrees that Native Americans and African Americans cannot walk about after dusk without a pass.

—1705

The Virginia Slave Code restricts the rights and movements of slaves. The code determines that slaves are property, and that any master who kills a slave during corporal punishment is exempt from trial.

—1712

New York forbids free African Americans and mulattos (people of mixed race) from owning property or real estate.

—1715

Maryland declares that any slave entering the colony must remain a slave for life.

—1733

Elihu Coleman, a Quaker minister, publishes an essay describing slavery as an 'anti-Christian practice'.

—1740

Following a slave uprising, South Carolina passes the harshest slave laws of the 1700s, decreeing that slaves are not to be permitted to learn to read and write English, to earn money or to assemble in groups.



↑ **Source 1.13** A handbill advertising a slave auction in Charleston, South Carolina, 1769.

↓ **Source 1.14** *Landing of Negroes at Jamestown from a Dutch Man-of-War 1619* by Howard Pyle, 1917.



COLONIAL POLITICS

House of Burgesses resolution (March 1660): ‘... the supreme power of the government of this country [Virginia] ... until such a command and commission come out of England as shall be by the Assembly adjudged lawful.’

BRITISH GOVERNMENT: AN OVERVIEW

Disputes over politics and political philosophy are a key theme in the American Revolution, so some background about eighteenth-century British Government and its relationship with the American colonies is needed.

Britain was a constitutional **monarchy**. Its head of state was a king or queen, although the monarch’s power was controlled by a parliament of two chambers. There was separation of powers, so that the monarch, the aristocratic House of Lords and the elected House of Commons were largely unable to act without each other’s approval—this minimised the risk of one leader seizing power, which is known as **tyranny**. The British prime minister, appointed by the monarch from within the parliament, selected other Members of Parliament (MPs) to form a cabinet of ministers. The House of Commons was dissolved and reformed at general elections, held on average every six years. The British system had **representation**, rule of law and **democracy**, so Britons hailed it as one of the freest and most democratic systems of government in the world.

monarchy a system of government in which a single figure, usually part of a hereditary dynasty, rules as head of government and state

tyranny excessive power, or the abuse of power

representation process where citizens vote for a deputy to act for them in shaping legislation and government policy

democracy a political system where the people participate in decision-making, either directly or through their elected representatives

➔ **Source 1.15** *The House of Commons in Session* by Peter Tillemans, 1709.

DID YOU KNOW?

In the twenty years between the end of the French and Indian War (1763) and the end of the American Revolutionary War (1783), Britain had nine different prime ministers. The longest-serving prime minister was the Tory Lord North (1770–1782).

ACTIVITY

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

As a group, offer reasons why members of the British middle class in the mid-1700s might have taken pride in Britain and the British Empire.



However, the British system of government was not perfect, and by modern standards it was not democratic. The composition of the House of Commons was decided by general election—but the right to participate in general elections was enjoyed by a tiny minority of Britons. In rural counties, a resident had to own land worth at least forty shillings before he had the right to vote. This was known as a **property qualification**.

In city boroughs, certain people had no right to vote, no matter how rich they were: people of colour, Catholics, indentured servants, customs officials and tax officials.

Historian Kirstin Olsen suggests that as few as 7 per cent of adult males and 3 per cent of adult women had the right to vote in eighteenth-century Britain.⁹ It was not until the 1832 Reform Act that the right to vote (known as suffrage) increased dramatically—but even after this, only 700,000 men out of a population of 14 million people were eligible to vote, while women were prohibited from voting altogether.

In addition to the limited number of people allowed to vote (known as a **franchise**), voting was done in public by a show of hands—which meant that voters could be influenced or intimidated. Powerful aristocrats, landlords or employers could bribe or threaten their employees or tenants to cast their vote a certain way. Some seats in the British Parliament were referred to as ‘pocket boroughs’ or ‘rotten boroughs’, because they were elected by very small numbers of voters that were controlled by the landowner. There were at least two members of the House of Commons who were elected to parliament by fewer than ten votes. William Pitt the Younger, a future prime minister, first entered the Commons as the representative for the ‘rotten borough’ of Old Sarum, which had just seven voters. By contrast, Manchester—a fast-growing industrial city with a population of 60,000 people—was not allocated a representative in British Parliament until the mid-1800s.

In the modern-day **Westminster system**, most parliamentarians belong to a well organised political party. The party with a lower-house majority forms the government.

However, the British Parliament of the eighteenth century did not have organised parties, and members were inclined to act, speak and behave independently. With no parties or obvious majority, it was left to the monarch to select a suitable member of parliament and ‘invite’ him to become prime minister and form a council of ministers (known as **cabinet**). British policies were formulated by this cabinet and passed to the monarch, who gave his assent. The success of any prime minister and cabinet depended on how much support they had in parliament. British Government in the latter half of the 1700s was affected by division and instability—which led to uncertainty, arguing, disruption and frequent changes of ministry.

COLONIAL GOVERNMENTS

In America, each of the thirteen colonies had its own **provincial** government, modelled to some degree on the British political system. Each had its own charter—a document signed by the king authorising it to form a local government in his name—that gave them instructions and political legitimacy. The highest internal authority was the royal **governor**, whose role was to represent the king, uphold his laws and carry out his policies. Each colony had a local **legislature** or **assembly**, responsible for formulating and passing internal laws and overseeing the colony’s income and spending. The members of these legislatures were elected by property-owning residents in each colony, usually on an annual basis. The governor, as the king’s representative, possessed the authority to override the colonial assembly. This sometimes led to

property qualification a measure to determine who was entitled to vote in general elections; it was decided by property ownership or the amount of tax paid

franchise people allowed to vote by law

Westminster system the British system of government; it is called the Westminster system after the Palace of Westminster, where parliament meets

provincial regional or local
governor a person appointed to manage colonial government on behalf of the monarch; the highest authority in the colony

legislature a body of individuals elected or appointed to pass laws, e.g. British Parliament, American colonial assemblies

assembly a group of individuals that gather to make decisions and pass laws

revenue money collected by governments in the form of taxes or duties

➔ **Source 1.16** Alvin Rabushka, 'The Colonial Roots of American Taxation, 1607–1700,' in *Policy Review* (August–September 2002), www.hoover.org/research/colonial-roots-american-taxation-1607-1700

DID YOU KNOW?

The town meeting was an important political institution in colonial America. Towns in New England held several meetings a year and they were open to all free white people. Women could usually attend, but were generally discouraged from speaking and voting.

militia a group of civilians who drill and train in preparation for conflicts and emergencies

resolves a set of resolutions or determinations to follow a particular course of action, usually made by a committee or assembly

resolutions formal proposals that are usually voted on at a meeting

social hierarchy a structure with several classes, distinguished by their wealth, social status and behaviour

tension, dispute or a stalemate—a situation where neither party is able to make a move. However, the colonial assemblies could usually influence the governor—mainly because they had control of **revenue**.

Alvin Rabushka: The colonial roots of American taxation

During most of the 17th century, the [Virginia] governor's salary and expenses depended on annual votes of the legislature. Seeking a source of revenue independent of the legislature, in 1680 the governor threatened to increase quitrents [land taxes] and enforce their collection. In exchange for withdrawing his threat, the legislature granted him a permanent export duty of two shillings per hogshead of tobacco, in place of the previous annual allowances. While this duty was largely evaded by tobacco exporters, it provided enough revenue for his annual salary and executive expenses. Other colonial legislatures, such as Massachusetts and New York, never accorded their governors permanent sources of revenue, giving their taxpayers greater control over their executives. In most cases, colonial governors had more in common with their subjects and their growing prosperity than with a distant English government. Many 17th century colonial governors were already more American than English.

Each colony was made up of several counties, which were units of local government modelled on the English system. By the 1760s Massachusetts had fourteen counties, including Suffolk County, which contained the city of Boston. Each county had its own county seat: a large town containing a meeting hall, a county court and some form of organised **militia**. Moderate-sized towns had regular meetings and elected a board of selectmen or aldermen (effectively a town council). It was not uncommon for these men to also sit in the colonial legislature—many leading revolutionaries were involved at both levels of government. One of the striking features about the American Revolution is that town meetings and county boards met, discussed the issues of the day and drafted **resolves** or affirmations of their rights. Histories such as Pauline Maier's *American Scripture* have located, interpreted and pieced together these local **resolutions**, and discovered that the growth of revolutionary sentiment was more widespread than was previously thought.

POLITICAL TENSIONS

Despite its apparent order and rigid **social hierarchy**, colonial American society had its share of tensions. These included:

- churches against other churches
- colonies against neighbouring colonies
- colonists against colonial politicians
- northerners against southerners
- rich against poor
- rural areas against cities.

Tensions were even greater for colonists who lived on the western frontier, which was the very edge of the British Empire. The dangers of the frontier, and the colonists' distance and disconnection from colonial cities meant that they made their own decisions and became very independent. They often disregarded the colonial government, which they saw as doing very little other than regulating land claims and collecting taxes. Occasionally this anti-government sentiment boiled over into uprising and rebellion. This shows that people in some parts of colonial America had a defiant and independent spirit long before the revolution. This defiant and independent spirit can be seen in the many minor colonial rebellions that broke out before the American War of Independence (outlined on page 27).

COLONIAL REBELLIONS

Bacon's Rebellion, 1676

Nathaniel Bacon led a 500-strong mob against the Virginian governor, looted his home and burned the colonial capital, Jamestown, to the ground. What was Bacon rebelling about? He did not like the governor's tolerant policies towards Native Americans, particularly his refusal to grant Bacon permission to drive neighbouring tribes off farmable land.

The Maryland Restoration, 1689

Maryland was the only British colony in which Catholicism was tolerated and where Catholics held most positions of power. This was a situation that outraged the growing Protestant population. The restoration of a Protestant king to the British throne inspired John Coode to lead an army of 700 men, overthrow the colonial government and burn Maryland's Catholic churches.

The Stono River Rebellion, 1739

A group of eighty slaves raged through South Carolina, murdering twenty whites and burning seven plantations. Their aim was to march to Spanish Florida, where escaped British slaves were given their freedom. A white militia met with the mob near the Stono River. Half the slaves were killed in the battle that followed; the other half were decapitated and their heads put on display as a warning to others.

The New York Plot, 1741

A series of fires broke out in New York City during March and April 1741, including a serious blaze in the governor's residence. It was discovered that a group of slaves and indentured whites, who were angered by a winter of food and fuel shortages, had conspired to destroy the city by arson. Several of the alleged conspirators were captured and executed.

The 'Paxton Boys', 1763-1764

In the wake of the French and Indian War, a group of vigilante settlers in central Pennsylvania despaired that the colonial government was incapable of defending them from further attacks by natives. They formed a militia and embarked on a killing spree, slaughtering several members of the peaceful Conestoga tribe.



↑ Source 1.17 Bacon's Rebellion, 1676.

The Pennsylvania 'Black Boys', 1763-1769

A small group of Pennsylvania farmers conducted a series of raids on British and colonial supply wagons. The Black Boys—so called because they carried out their attacks with blackened faces—were angered by the restoration of trade with native tribes that they had fought against during the French and Indian War.

The 'Regulators', 1764-1771

In North Carolina, public fury over corrupt sheriffs and tax collectors led to calls for government accountability and the fair distribution of revenue. A group of residents calling themselves the Regulators harassed officials, closed courts and ruled isolated areas, before their defeat at Alamance in 1771.

ACTIVITY

CAUSE AND CONSEQUENCE—PRESENTATION

In a small group, research a colonial rebellion or slave uprising that occurred in the American colonies between the early 1600s and mid-1700s. Identify the causes and context of the rebellion. For example, who was involved? What were their grievances? What sparked the rebellion? What were the consequences? Share your findings with your classmates.

In the 1960s, the focus of historians changed again. Bernard Bailyn rediscovered the documents of revolutionary leaders and examined their themes and rhetoric. Gordon S. Wood and Edward Countryman wrote a form of social history, while Joan Hoff-Wilson and Pauline Maier examined colonial women and the role they played in shaping society.

More recently, Alan Taylor and other historians have put the American colonial experience in a wider context of empire-building by European countries throughout the world in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Modern historians view what happened in British North America as more conservative politically and socially than previous historians considered it to be.

Gordon S. Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*

In our enthusiasm to contrast the 'traditional' society of the mother country with the 'modernity' of the colonies, we have often overlooked how dominantly British and traditional the colonists' culture was; indeed, in some respects colonial society was more traditional than that of the mother country. Most colonial leaders in the mid-eighteenth century thought of themselves not as Americans but as Britons. They read much of the same literature, the same law books, the same history, as their brethren at home, and they drew most of their conceptions of society and their values from their reading. Whatever sense of unity the disparate colonies of North America possessed, it came from their common tie to the British crown and their membership of the British empire. Most colonists knew more about events in London than they did about occurrences in neighbouring colonies. They were provincials living on the edges of the pan-British world, and all the more British for that. Their little colonial capitals resembled, as one touring British officer remarked of Williamsburg, nothing so much as 'a good Country Town in England.' Philadelphia seemed only a smaller version of Bristol. Most English visitors in fact tended to describe the colonists simply as country cousins—more boorish, more populist, more egalitarian perhaps, with too much ... religious nonconformity—but still Englishmen, not essentially different from the inhabitants of Yorkshire or Norwich or the rest of rural and small-town provincial England.

← **Source 1.18** Gordon S. Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991), 12.

ACTIVITY

HISTORICAL INTERPRETATIONS

Using Source 1.18 and your own knowledge, respond to the following:

- 1 How does Wood suggest that British culture and values were dominant in the American colonies?
- 2 According to Wood, what were the differences in the ways that Americans and British people interacted with each other?
- 3 To what extent do you agree with Wood that the American colonies were 'British'? Find evidence from two or more other historians to support your case.
- 4 Find out more about Wood's view of colonial America. What evidence can you find about his view of the revolution and whether or not he believes in American exceptionalism? (American exceptionalism is the idea that America is unique and groundbreaking—that everything America does is new.)

IN SEARCH OF UNITY

Benjamin Franklin (1754): 'Union of the colonies is absolutely necessary for their preservation.'

Travel between the American colonies was rare. Most people described themselves as British subjects, or as Virginians, Carolinians, New Yorkers and so on. Few used the term 'American', which referred to something from the continent, not to a people or national mindset. Few colonists knew much about other colonies or the people in them, other than rumour, suspicion and stereotype. For example, Southerners considered New Englanders to be crafty business people but stiff, conservative and weighed down by Puritanism. Northerners thought Southerners were poorly educated, decadent and made idle by their many slaves. Attitudes to foreigners were even worse—particularly towards the French.

There was an attempt in the mid-1700s to foster unity between the thirteen colonies. In 1754 delegates from seven colonies attended the Albany **Congress** in New York, mainly to discuss defence measures if there was conflict with France. Benjamin Franklin of Pennsylvania tabled a plan for a quasi-national government, consisting of colonial delegates overseen by a representative of the British king (see Chapter 2). The congress passed a modified version of Franklin's proposal—called the Albany Plan—but it was later rejected by all seven of the colonial assemblies and was never sent to England for endorsement. The quest for unity would instead become a challenge for Americans of the next generation.

Congress a formal meeting between representatives of different states

➔ **Source 1.19** *The Albany Congress, 1754* by Allyn Cox. This is a scene from a mural in the US Capitol Building, Washington.



ACTIVITY

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 Why did colonial governors tend to agree with the wishes of the local assembly?
- 2 Why might the legislatures of Massachusetts and New York have refused to provide a permanent source of revenue for their governors?
- 3 Elected legislatures are still responsible for managing revenue and determining governmental salaries in the United States and Australia. What are the advantages and disadvantages of such systems?
- 4 Why were tensions greater for colonists living on the western frontier?
- 5 Why would colonial unity have been difficult to achieve by 1754?

KEY SUMMARY POINTS

- Colonisation of North America happened because European empires wanted land and resources.
- The main countries with colonies in North America were France, Spain and Great Britain.
- The thirteen British colonies developed as farming communities, with only a few big cities.
- The British Government saw the colonies as a source of raw materials and a market for finished goods.
- The British Government allowed the colonies to govern themselves, as long as trade was strong, and this led colonial governments to start thinking independently.

ACTIVITY

CONSTRUCTING AN ARGUMENT—EXTENDED RESPONSE

Write a 250–350-word extended response on one of the topics below. Your response should include a clear contention, arguments supported by relevant evidence and a clear conclusion.

- Explain how the thirteen colonies were still 'British' by the mid-1750s.
- Explain how the colonies were becoming 'American' by the mid-1750s.
- Explain how the American colonies changed between colonisation and the mid-1750s.
- Explain the significance of religion in the American colonies.



THE FRENCH AND INDIAN WAR

(1754–1763)



Source 2.01 *The Death of General Wolfe* by Benjamin West, 1770. This painting commemorates the 1759 Battle of Quebec. General Wolfe died just as the British won the battle.

CHAPTER 2

*‘A volley fired by a young Virginian
in the backwoods of America set the
world on fire.’*

—Horace Walpole

The French and Indian War erupted in 1754, sparked by tensions between Britain and France as they competed for territory and resources on the North American continent. The two empires had long competed for the rich territory west and north-west of the Appalachians, an area filled with waterways, fisheries, beaver runs and abundant game. Having the French at their border was a source of tension for residents of the British colonies.

The war lasted nine years in North America, and involved thousands of British and French troops. British colonial militias fought alongside the British regular army. Several Native American tribes also fought, choosing to ally themselves with either the British or the French for their own strategic reasons.

The French and Indian War was known in Europe as the Seven Years' War, and it ended with a clear victory for the British. The 1763 *Treaty* of Paris handed the territories of New France over to Great Britain—which meant all land east of the Mississippi River, as well as the eastern half of modern-day Canada.

KEY QUESTIONS

- How did the actions of significant individuals such as George Washington influence the course of the French and Indian War?
- How did the outbreak of the French and Indian War lead to colonial ideas about unity?
- To what extent did the French and Indian War lay the foundation for the American Revolution?

Treaty a document written and signed in negotiation between two or more warring parties; used to finalise the terms for peace, territorial ownership, agreed borders, access to waterways, etc.



TIMELINE OF FRENCH AND INDIAN WAR

1749

MAY 1749

King George II grants land to the Ohio Company

1753

APRIL 1753

French attack colonists' fort and rename it Fort Duquesne

DECEMBER 1753

George Washington delivers ultimatum to French. French refuse to leave Ohio River Valley

1754

MAY 1754

Washington defeats the French; ensign Jumonville killed. Washington retreats to Fort Necessity

JUNE 1754

Albany Congress; Benjamin Franklin's plan to unify colonies rejected by king and all state assemblies

JULY 1754

French take Fort Necessity; Washington surrenders

1755

JUNE 1755

British seize Acadia (Nova Scotia)

JULY 1755

French win Battle of Monongahela. British general Edward Braddock mortally wounded

1756

MAY 1756

Great Britain and France declare war on each other

NOVEMBER 1756

Pitt the Elder assumes power in Britain

1757

AUGUST 1757

French take Fort William Henry, resulting in massacre

1758

JULY 1758

French take Fort Ticonderoga; British seize Louisbourg

AUGUST 1758

French surrender at Fort Frontenac. British make peace with various Native American tribes

NOVEMBER 1758

British recapture Fort Duquesne

1759

JUNE 1759

British take Fort Ticonderoga, then Fort Niagara, thus gaining control of entire western frontier

SEPTEMBER 1759

Britain wins Battle of Quebec

1760

SEPTEMBER 1760

Montreal falls to British; French surrender hold on Canada. Death of King George II; George III begins reign

1762

JANUARY 1762

England declares war on French ally, Spain

1763

FEBRUARY 1763

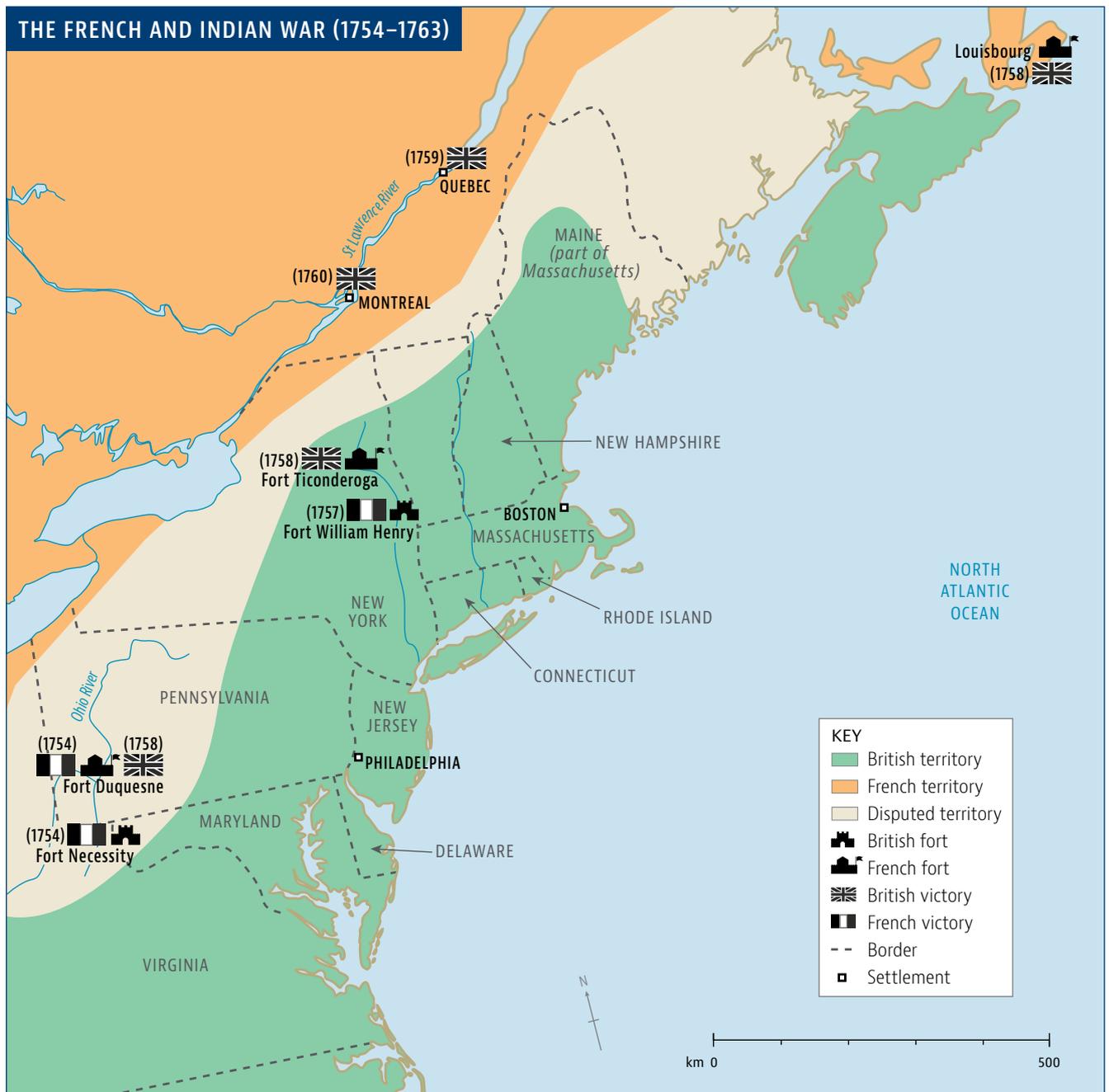
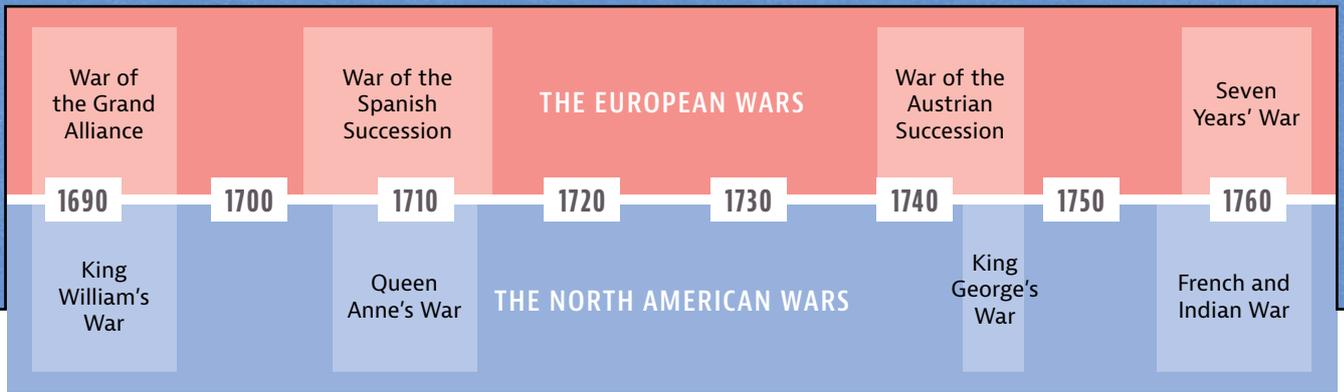
Treaty of Paris.

Britain keeps 10,000 soldiers in America to prevent unrest

TURNING POINT

TURNING POINT

TURNING POINT



↑ Source 2.02

INCREASING INTEREST IN THE WESTERN LANDS

Benjamin Franklin (1751): 'Hence the Prince that acquires new Territory, if he finds it vacant, or removes the Natives to give his own People Room ... may be properly called Fathers of their Nation.'

In the early eighteenth century, various Native American nations lived in the area west of the Appalachian Divide. France and Britain saw the value of the land, too.

Before the outbreak of the French and Indian War, Britain controlled the thirteen colonies along the eastern seaboard. To the north and west lay New France—a large, sparsely settled colony that stretched from Louisiana through the Mississippi Valley and Great Lakes to Canada. The French had arrived in the Americas before the British, and their primary interest was trade. The French fur trade was flourishing around Quebec and Montreal, and fishing was also profitable. Trade in furs and fish led the French to explore further in North America, but they built trade outposts and forts rather than settlements.

American colonists eyed the land to the west of the Appalachians greedily. In 1751, Benjamin Franklin wrote 'Observations Concerning the Increase of Mankind'. In this paper, which circulated among his friends in the American Philosophical Society, Franklin noted that the colonial population was doubling every two decades—which was the product of immigration and the natural birth rate. In 1700 the population of the colonies numbered 250,000 people, but by 1750 it had increased to 1,250,000. Franklin calculated that the American population would soon outstrip metropolitan Britain and, when that happened, 'the greatest number of Englishmen will be at this side of the water'.¹ The increase in population forced poorer, land-hungry colonists to push further west where they squatted in the 'back country'. Business people and land **speculators**—people who buy land and sell it when the price goes up—seized on this opportunity for profit, forming land companies and then demanding rent or a purchase price from colonists. Some colonists gave in but others moved on, and the process of western expansion was repeated, taking the colonists further and further into contested territory.

speculators people who buy and sell land in the hope of making a profit

In the 1740s, British traders entered the Ohio River Valley, where they competed with established French traders for business with the Native Americans. In Virginia in 1745, the legislative assembly (known as the House of Burgesses) began granting western lands to Virginia-based land companies. One such company was the Ohio Company of Virginia, which boasted members of prominent families such as the Lees, Mercers and Masons—as well as Lawrence Washington (who was half-brother to George Washington). In 1749, the Ohio Company successfully **petitioned** the English **Crown** for lands in the Ohio region, with the aim of building a permanent settlement. Consequently, in 1751, a small outpost was built in the Ohio River Valley at the junction of the Monongahela and Allegheny rivers. However, the French also held claims in the Ohio River Valley. In order to prevent further British advances into what they considered French territory, the French rushed to construct forts in the Ohio valley.

petitioned sending a document to a leader or government, requesting or urging a particular course of action

Crown a royal power

ACTION IN THE OHIO RIVER VALLEY

Robert Dinwiddie (1753): 'The lands upon the River Ohio, in the western parts of the colony of Virginia, are ... known to be the property of the Crown of Great Britain.'

The British and French were no strangers to conflict—they had been at war three times between 1689 and 1748. In each case, the causes of war were largely unrelated to America, although the wars did involve small-scale fighting between British and French colonists.

However, unlike previous conflicts, the French and Indian War was started by events in America rather than in Europe.

As with most events in the colonies in the second half of the eighteenth century, British politicians were behind the scenes, pulling strings. In the lead up to the war, the **Tory** (conservative) members of parliament in England were in favour of war, while their opposition, the **Whig** (progressive) ministers, were arguing for restraint. The Whigs, led by the Duke of Newcastle, Lord Pelham, wanted to avoid war for economic reasons, but the Tories were waiting for any small incident that would justify military action. That incident happened in the Ohio River Valley in 1754—and it would go on to ignite the Seven Years' War.

Tory a person of conservative political views; in this context an individual or group opposing the American Revolution

Whig a member of the progressive faction in eighteenth-century British politics, or a supporter of the American Revolution

BRITAIN AND FRANCE BOTH CLAIM THE OHIO RIVER VALLEY

In the Ohio River Valley, colonists were increasingly fearful of the French forts and the French presence in the west. They were worried that their land claims were under threat. Robert Dinwiddie, the governor of Virginia, petitioned the Virginia House of Burgesses for funds to defend the area.



Dinwiddie held shares in the Ohio Company and stood to gain a considerable sum of money when the land was sold. When the House of Burgesses denied his request, Dinwiddie decided to send a representative to demand that the French leave the area. The man chosen to present the letter was a twenty-one-year old Virginia militia major named George Washington.

Accompanied by a small group of men, Washington was directed to deliver the message to the commandant of Fort Le Boeuf, a man named Captain Jacques Legardeur de Saint Pierre.

← *Robert Dinwiddie*, by an unknown artist, ca. 1760–1765.

➔ **Source 2.03** Cited in Francis Parkman, *Montcalm and Wolfe*, vol. 1 (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1914), 134.

Dinwiddie's letter to the French Commander, 1753

The lands upon the River Ohio, in the western parts of the colony of Virginia, are so notoriously known to be the property of the Crown of Great Britain; that it is a matter of equal concern and surprise to me, to hear that a body of French forces are erecting fortresses, and making settlements upon that river, with his Majesty's Dominions.

The many and repeated complaints I have received of these acts of hostility, lay me under the necessity, of sending, in the name of the king my master, the bearer hereof, George Washington, Esq: on the Adjutants General of the forces of this dominion; to complain to you of the encroachments thus made, and of the injuries done to the subjects of Great Britain, in the open violation of the law of nations, and the treaties now subsisting between the two crowns.

If these facts are true, and you shall think fit to justify your proceedings, I must desire you to acquaint me, by whose authority and instructions you have lately marched from Canada, with an armed force; and invaded the King of Great Britain's territories, in the manner complained of? That according to the purport and resolution of your answer, I may act agreeably to the commission I am honoured with, from the King my master.

However, Sir, in obedience to my instructions, it becomes my duty to require your peaceable departure; and that you would forebear prosecuting purpose so interruptive of the harmony and good understanding, which his majesty is desirous to continue and cultivate with the most Christian king.

I persuade myself you will receive and entertain Major Washington with the candour and politeness natural to your nation; and it will give me the greatest satisfaction, if you return him with an answer suitable to my wishes for a very long and lasting peace between us. I have the honour to subscribe myself,

Sir,
Your most obedient,
Humble Servant
Robert Dinwiddie

ACTIVITY

HISTORICAL SOURCES

Using Source 2.03 and your own knowledge, respond to the following:

- 1 According to Dinwiddie, to whom did the lands in the Ohio River Valley belong?
- 2 What action did Dinwiddie demand of the French?
- 3 Select two statements from the letter that suggest Dinwiddie saw the French as aggressors.
- 4 Identify language from the letter that conveys a respectful and diplomatic tone.

It was early in December 1753 when Washington arrived at Fort Le Boeuf. After having a friendly dinner with Saint Pierre, he gave Governor Dinwiddie's 'cease and desist' message to the French officers building the forts. Politely but firmly, Commandant Saint Pierre replied, 'we will not'.²

Having received his answer, Washington scouted the area to assess the strength of the French forts and prepared a detailed report. When he was informed of Saint Pierre's reply, Dinwiddie dispatched Washington's report to England and ordered that a British fort be built at "the forks of the Ohio," the junction of the Ohio, Monongahela and Allegheny rivers, ... considered the gateway to the western frontier'.³

As a result of the report, Governor Dinwiddie had the backing of Britain's Privy Council—a group of advisors to the king—to stop what was considered to be a French invasion of the Ohio River Valley. British instructions were to protect English claims and Dinwiddie gained approval for military action from the British Privy Council rather than from the Virginia House of Burgesses.

However, when George Washington was sent back west with a few hundred men to reinforce the British fort in the Ohio River Valley, he discovered the French had captured it and renamed it Fort Duquesne.

JUMONVILLE GLEN: THE START OF THE FRENCH AND INDIAN WAR

Meanwhile, Washington, newly promoted to lieutenant-colonel, was increasingly confident. But he was not happy with the quality of his recruits. He wrote: 'you may, with equal success, attempt to [raise] the Dead, as to raise the force of this Country'.⁴

Washington went on a recruitment drive but found it difficult to attract 'desirable' recruits. As the pay was low, most enlistees were poor and without adequate clothing, shoes or a gun. In a bid to avoid being drafted themselves, some local officials offered Washington men who were straight from jail.⁵ More suitable recruits were eventually lured with promises of land—however, they were not well provisioned and did not have uniforms. Washington complained again, noting that he was having trouble managing a 'number of self-will'd ungovernable people'.⁶ There were also problems with food, wagons and horses.

With his ragged bunch of recruits, Washington headed west and met up with Tanacharison, an Iroquois warrior known as Half-King, who had information that a French party was nearby. The French commander at Fort Duquesne, aware of the English presence, sent a small force headed by Joseph Coulon De Villiers, Sieur de Jumonville to report on their actions. In the early hours of 28 May 1754, Tanacharison and Washington led their combined forces to the French camp, situated in a small glen.

As with many battles, there were conflicting accounts about who fired the first shot, whether entreaties of surrender were ignored and whether the force of the aggressors was justified. However, the result was indisputable. After a *skirmish* lasting about fifteen minutes, Jumonville was dead, along with several members of his company.

After the events at Jumonville Glen (as the area became known), Washington quickly retreated, convinced that the French would retaliate in force. He cobbled together a makeshift stockade at Great Meadows in Pennsylvania, named it Fort Necessity and dug in, hoping to hold off an attack until reinforcements arrived.

The attack came soon enough. Surrounded and heavily outnumbered, Washington surrendered on 4 July and was forced to return to Virginia. The terms of the surrender were written in French, and the interpreter accompanying Washington had poor English skills. Although the terms at first seemed generous, it was not until the surrender document was more accurately translated that it was revealed Washington had admitted to 'assassinating an ambassador on a mission of peace'.⁷ Reflecting on these events, English statesman Horace Walpole remarked, 'A volley fired by a young Virginian in the backwoods of America set the world on fire'.⁸



Source 2.04 Artwork depicting George Washington's clash with the French during the French and Indian War, 1754.

skirmish a small or insignificant battle

ACTIVITY

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 Why did both Britain and France want to control the land in the Ohio River Valley?
- 2 How did Governor Dinwiddie's letter increase the tension between Britain and France?
- 3 Explain what Horace Walpole meant by this remark: 'A volley fired by a young Virginian in the backwoods of America set the world on fire.'

THE ALBANY CONGRESS, 1754

KEY GROUP

At the same time as the early stages of the French and Indian War, a group met with plans for a union of the colonies. In 1754, two important circumstances arose that the colonies needed to discuss among themselves. They were:

- the weakening relationship between the Iroquois Confederacy and the colonial governments
- the French threat on the western frontier.

So, in June–July 1754, delegates from seven colonies attended the Albany Congress in New York.

The first task of the delegates was to renew the friendship and alliance between the colonies and the Six Nations of the Iroquois Confederacy. This was important, because the colonists feared that the French would try to convince the Iroquois to side with them.

The second task of the delegates was to prepare an account for the British Government outlining the threat that faced the colonies and suggesting that they be unified in some way.

The third task was the most important, even though it was unauthorised. It involved the formation of the Albany Plan of Union. Benjamin Franklin had come to the Congress with 'hints towards a scheme of union', which he circulated among the delegates for discussion. The delegates agreed to a Grand Council of colonial representatives with a president-general appointed by the British Government. Together, this unified government would regulate colonial–Native American relations and resolve territorial disputes among the colonies. The delegates decided this Albany Plan would require approval from the British Parliament, which shows that the Congress delegates recognised parliamentary authority over the colonies.

In spite of some support from colonial leaders, the Albany Plan was rejected by all of the named colonial assemblies and never made it to Britain for endorsement. Some colonial governments were concerned that it would curb their own authority, while others believed their priority was preparing for war.

Despite the decision not to unite, the work done by the Albany Congress would later provide a blueprint for **Federalism** after the colonies declared their independence in 1776.

↓ *Benjamin Franklin* by Henry Bryan Hall, 1868, after J.A. Duplessis, 1783.



Federalism a political system where power and responsibility is shared between a central government and other units such as states and local governments



← Source 2.05

Benjamin Franklin's warning to the British colonies in America: 'join, or die'. Franklin was exhorting the colonies to unite against the French and the Native Americans. The drawing shows a segmented snake labelled with the initials 'S.C., N.C., V., M., P., N.J., N.Y., [and] N.E.'

THE WAR FOR NORTH AMERICA

Christian Frederick (1758): ‘So long as the world has stood there has not been such a War.’

Within days of hearing about Washington’s defeat, Governor Dinwiddie had written letters and sent them to England for the Duke of Newcastle, the **secretary** of the war and the president of the Board of Trade. He also requested that neighbouring colonies send aid, and ordered more troops be raised, allocating a £20,000 military grant.⁹ In England, the Tories seized upon the news of the events in the Ohio River Valley—they wanted to force the issue with France and escalate to a full-scale war. The Whigs were still pleading for restraint, hoping that local militia action in the colonies could contain the French.

secretary government minister

The heated debates in London were echoed in the French centre of government in Versailles, where French war agitators were also urging action. The French intention was to adopt a **policy** of ringing Britain’s mainland colonies with forts and garrisons.¹⁰ In Britain and France the militants finally won, and each country sent additional forces to fight in America. However, Britain and France did not officially declare war against each other until May 1756.

policy a course of action decided upon and implemented by a government, such as new taxation, legislation or regulation

The British sent brigadier-general Edward Braddock to Virginia as commander-in-chief of the British forces—and also shipped 10,000 regular soldiers to America. The British Government was anticipating contributions of manpower and resources from the colonies, as the colonists stood to gain the most from a French defeat. However, these contributions were less than hoped for.

A 1755 meeting between General Braddock and the governors of the five richest colonies (Maryland, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, New York and Virginia) resulted in some men and supplies committed to help the British. However, the governors refused Braddock’s request for funds, declaring that financial responsibility for the war lay with the British Government. In a letter to an English official, Braddock commented on ‘the necessity of laying a tax upon all his Majesty’s dominions in America ... for reimbursing the great sums that must be advanced for the service and interest of the colonies’.¹¹

THE EARLY YEARS OF THE WAR

Despite their greater strength, the early years of the French and Indian War did not go well for the British. One of the worst defeats of the early phase came in July 1755 when Braddock led approximately 2500 men—mostly British regular troops—to retake Fort Duquesne. Washington, newly returned to service, was part of the advance guard. When the French made a surprise attack, panic ensued. Many British regular soldiers, known as **Redcoats**, huddled together, sheeplike, awaiting the blow of a hatchet.¹² Braddock had refused to adapt European combat tactics to conditions in the wilderness—which meant that he and up to 1000 soldiers were killed.

Redcoat common name for a regular British soldier in eighteenth-century America

Following their defeat in what came to be known as the Battle of Monongahela, Washington led the survivors back to a safe camp where they met up with British forces led by Colonel Dunbar.

➔ **Source 2.06** George Washington, 'George Washington to Mary Ball Washington, July 18, 1755,' *George Washington Papers, Series 2, Letterbooks 1754 to 1799*, www.loc.gov/item/mgw2.001

ACTIVITY

HISTORICAL SOURCES

Using Source 2.06 and your own knowledge, respond to the following:

- 1 What kind of language does Washington use to suggest that the English soldiers and their officers were unimpressive?
- 2 What assessment does Washington make of the Virginian troops?
- 3 Where does Washington lay the blame for the defeat?
- 4 Reflecting on this letter and the earlier account of the skirmish at Jumonville Glen, in what ways could Washington be considered to have experienced 'good fortune' in his early days in the war?

Letter from George Washington to his mother, Mary, 18 July 1755

Honoured Madam:

As I doubt not but you have heard of our defeat [in the Battle of Monongahela], and perhaps have it represented in a worse light (if possible) than it deserves; I have taken this earliest opportunity to give you some account of the Engagement, as it happened within seven miles [11 km] of the French Fort, on Wednesday the 9th [July].

We marched on to that place without any considerable loss, having only now and then a straggler picked up by the [Native American] scouts. When we came there, we were attacked by a body of French and Indians. whose number, (I am certain) did not exceed 300 men; our's consisted of about 1300 well armed troops; chiefly of the English soldiers, who were struck with such a panic, that they behaved with more cowardice than it is possible to conceive; The officers behaved gallantly in order to encourage their Men, for which they suffered greatly; there being near 60 killed and wounded; a large proportion out of the number we had! The Virginia Troops showed a good deal of bravery, and were near all killed; for I believe out of 3 Companies that were there, there is scarce 30 men left alive; Capt. Peyrouny and all his officers down to a corporal was killed; Capt. Polson shared near as hard a Fate; for only one of his was left. In short the dastardly behaviour of those they call regulars exposed all others that were inclined to do their duty to almost certain death; and at last, in [spite] of all the efforts of the officers to the contrary, they broke and ran as sheep pursued by dogs; and it was impossible to rally them.

The General [Braddock] was wounded; of which he died three days after; Sir Peter Halket was killed in the field where died many other brave officers; I luckily escaped without a wound, tho' I had four bullets through my Coat, and two Horses shot under me; Captains Orme and Morris two of the General's Aids de Camp, were wounded early in the engagement which rendered the duty hard upon me, as I was the only person then left to distribute the General's Orders which I was scarcely able to do, as I was not half recovered from a violent illness, that confined me to my Bed, and a Wagon, for above ten Days; I am still in a weak and Feeble condition; which induces me to halt here, two or three days in hopes of recovering a little strength, to enable me to proceed homewards; from whence, I fear I shall not be able to stir till towards Sept., so that I shall not have the pleasure of seeing you till then, unless it be in Fairfax...

I am, Honoured Madam Yr. most dutiful Son

➔ **Source 2.07** *Life of George Washington—the Soldier*, showing Washington on horseback, fighting during the battle of the Monongahela, 1755.



Following the death of Braddock, two different generals led the army. Each was appointed for political reasons rather than military reasons. They both proved to be failures. The situation in North America worsened throughout 1755–56, as more territory was taken by the French.

British military historians have highlighted two key reasons for the poor British performance:

- inept leadership
- adherence to outdated military tactics.

There was a growing sense of desperation and isolation as the colonies' borders shrank and settlers abandoned their farms on the frontier out of fear of being attacked by Native Americans.

THE LATER STAGES OF THE WAR

The situation changed in 1757 after William Pitt the Elder became Britain's secretary of state for the Southern Department. Pitt's first action was to increase British commitment to the North America war, which had merged into what was known as the Seven Years' War—a conflict that involved most of Europe and European colonies as far away as India.¹³ The American colonies were now given more skilful British officers and a larger contingent of troops. Still, there were initial defeats at Lake George in 1758, as well as Fort Ticonderoga and Fort William Henry. The defeat at Fort William Henry became infamous because British soldiers who had surrendered and were retreating under French protection came under attack from Native Americans allied with the French. Close to 185 men were killed and hundreds were held for ransom.¹⁴

However, the British managed to turn the tide by providing more resources and being willing to collaborate with the colonial militia, rather than command them.

In July 1758, the British won their first great victory in the French and Indian War at Louisbourg on the Gulf of St Lawrence. The New Englanders would take great pride in this victory, claiming they 'virtually fought on their own'.¹⁵

A month later, the British took Fort Frontenac. Focus then shifted to the north with Fort Niagara falling to the British in 1759 and, in September, the British moving towards the city of Quebec (in present-day Canada). It was at Quebec that two great commanders faced off against each other—Britain's James Wolfe and France's Marquis de Montcalm. Both lost their lives in a battle that was recorded as a British victory. After Montreal was taken in 1760, the war in the colonies was finally at an end. The American chapter of the Seven Years' War was over, although fighting would continue in Europe. In the closing years of the Seven Years' War, England declared war on France's ally Spain and successfully attacked Spanish outposts in the Caribbean and Cuba. The conflict ended in 1763.

ACTIVITY

KEY EVENTS—TABLE

Create a table like the one below and fill it in.

KEY BATTLES IN THE FRENCH AND INDIAN WAR, 1754–63				
	DATE(S)	REGION/COLONY	COMBATANTS	OUTCOME
Monongahela				
Fort William Henry				
Louisbourg				
Quebec				

WASHINGTON AFTER THE WAR

Ironically, Washington's final action in the French and Indian War ended in the Ohio River Valley—the site of his initial embarrassment. Following a change in war policy in 1755, Washington and his Virginia regiment were assigned to General John Forbes. In 1758, Forbes' expedition headed the attack on Fort Duquesne. This time the campaign to take back the fort was successful.

Washington returned to Williamsburg and permanently resigned his commission from the Virginian forces. He successfully stood for election to the House of Burgesses and looked forward to his impending marriage to Martha Dandridge Custis.

The war was a defining experience for Washington. He gained valuable military and command experience. He had hoped for a regular commission and recognition but, with great disappointment, came to understand that Britain did not bestow these honours on colonials. Yet his time serving under British commanders taught Washington valuable lessons in politics. It was during this period that his perceptions of the relationship between the colonials and the British were forged.

KEY INDIVIDUAL
(see pp. 248–249)



Source 2.08 *Portrait of George Washington* by Charles Wilson Peale, 1772.

ACTIVITY KEY PEOPLE—GEORGE WASHINGTON

TIMELINE

Create a timeline for George Washington, from 1732 to 1758, when he resigned his commission from the Virginian forces.

SUMMARY

Read about Washington on pages 250–251 and summarise his main challenges and achievements.

ACTIVITY

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 Why did the British lose early battles during the French and Indian War?
- 2 What were the significant factors that led to British victories later in the war?
- 3 Why were the British captures of the cities of Quebec and Montreal so important?

THE TREATY OF PARIS, 1763

King George III (1763): ‘No prince has ever begun his reign by so glorious a war and so generous a peace.’

The French and Indian War ended with the Treaty of Paris, which also signalled the end of the Seven Years’ War. The treaty handed the territories of New France—all land east of the Mississippi River as well as the eastern half of modern-day Canada—over to Great Britain.

France no longer had political authority in the region, even though thousands of French Canadians remained there. The British Government promised to allow French Canadians to freely practise Catholicism and provided France with fishing rights off Newfoundland. Britain’s King George III and his ministers were in favour of the terms, and it was *ratified* in parliament by a majority of 319 to 64 votes.

The treaty came into effect on 10 February 1763, bringing excitement and expectation to the thirteen British colonies. Not only did fears of French attack cease but it also seemed that land in the Mississippi and Ohio valleys would be opened up for future exploration and settlement. In London, the overriding question was how to organise, secure and govern a vast space, inhabited by ‘foreigners’ and Native Americans.

LESSONS FROM THE FRENCH AND INDIAN WAR

Historian Colin G. Calloway: ‘The year 1763 ... brought an end to an era of world war but initiated an era of upheaval that remade America.’

The French and Indian War gave the colonists three important lessons.

The first lesson was that Britain’s interest in the colonies was primarily financial. Britain’s key motivation for entering the war was to protect ‘British’ territory from the French.

Before the war, many colonists had believed that parliament was sympathetic to the plight of colonists living in isolation on the frontier. They were dismayed to discover that parliament’s priority was the defence of its own interests. It was clear that imperial interests were not the same as colonial interests. Further, British military commanders had conducted their role as commanders-in-chief with an attitude of superiority. They had bullied members of the colonial militia, even threatening them personally. Historian Francis Jennings claims that the colonists and troops regarded each other as aliens, adding that, after the war, the colonists still professed loyalty but had lost respect.¹⁶

The second lesson from the war was the reliance of the British forces on traditional military strategies. In the early stages of the war, the British were defeated because they insisted on marching against their foe before engaging them. The colonists knew, as did the French, that victory was more likely when the terrain was used to advantage and *guerrilla tactics* were adopted. The colonists concluded that the Crown’s troops could not defend them—so they had better defend themselves. Benjamin Franklin made reference to this understanding: ‘... this whole transaction gave us Americans

ACTIVITY

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE —CONCEPT MAP

Create a concept map that summarises the outcome and significance of the Treaty of Paris for each of the following: Native Americans, the British Government, the American colonists and the French government.

ratified / ratification the process by which a proposal or suggested reform is passed into law

DID YOU KNOW?

Of Canada’s current population of 35 million people, almost one-third speak French as their first language—which is a legacy of France’s colonisation of the region in the 1700s.

guerrilla tactics small groups of soldiers fighting against larger forces, using irregular fighting strategies

ACTIVITY

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 How did the Treaty of Paris change Britain's territory in North America?
- 2 In your own words, summarise the three lessons the colonists learned from the French and Indian War.

the first suspicion that our exalted ideas of the progress of British regulars had not been well-founded'.¹⁷

A third lesson centred on who would be responsible for the cost of the war. From the beginning, Britain signalled that defence did not come cheaply. One of Braddock's first actions before heading out to battle was to summon the colonial governors to a meeting to discuss the raising of funds. At this meeting, the governors confessed that they would not be able to deliver these funds because their elected assemblies would most likely resist. The assemblies were aware of their responsibilities but when the funds were allocated it was not of the size expected by British Parliament. When the issue of raising additional money through taxation was raised, the provincial assemblies were not in favour. After the war, Parliament was confronted with a national debt of almost £130 million, carrying an interest charge of over £4 million a year.¹⁸ Britain did not intend to shoulder this burden alone.

THE LAST OF THE MOHICANS: SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

James Fenimore Cooper's popular 1826 book, *The Last of the Mohicans*, has been made into a film several times, most recently in 1992. Set in the French and Indian War, the book loosely recalls the battle for Fort William Henry in the wilderness of western New York. Most of its characters—Mohican tribesman Chingachgook, his son Uncas, his white companion Nathaniel, the Huron warrior Magua and the Munroe daughters—are fictional. However, the film's three military commanders—Colonel Munroe, General Webb and the General Marquis de Montcalm—are based on real characters. The attack on the British garrison by Native Americans after the surrender of the fort also occurred, generating outrage from both the British and French.

Michael Mann's 1992 film *The Last of the Mohicans* (Twentieth Century Fox) occasionally highlights tensions and differences between Britons and American colonists, as well as the difficulties English officials and generals faced in governing America. In one scene, a British officer visits a rural village in western New York to find recruits for a colonial militia.

He finds a mixture of support and resistance: 'You call yourselves loyal subjects to the Crown?' he asks, when some men refuse to fight. Nathaniel responds that he does not consider himself 'subject to much at all'. A British major, newly arrived from England, is also surprised to find the powerful General Webb negotiating with American farmers about their service in the colonial militia. 'You've got to reason with these colonials,' Webb explains. 'Tiresome, but that's the lay of the land'.



 **Source 2.09** Film still from *The Last of the Mohicans* (1992).

CHAPTER 2 REVIEW

KEY SUMMARY POINTS

- The French and Indian War was caused by conflict between French and British troops in the Ohio River Valley
- The British lost early battles because their generals did not understand the specific challenges of warfare in North America
- The British won later battles because of better leadership and use of tactics
- The key victories for the British were at Quebec and Montreal
- The Treaty of Paris gave the British control of all land east of the Mississippi, including modern-day Canada.

ACTIVITY

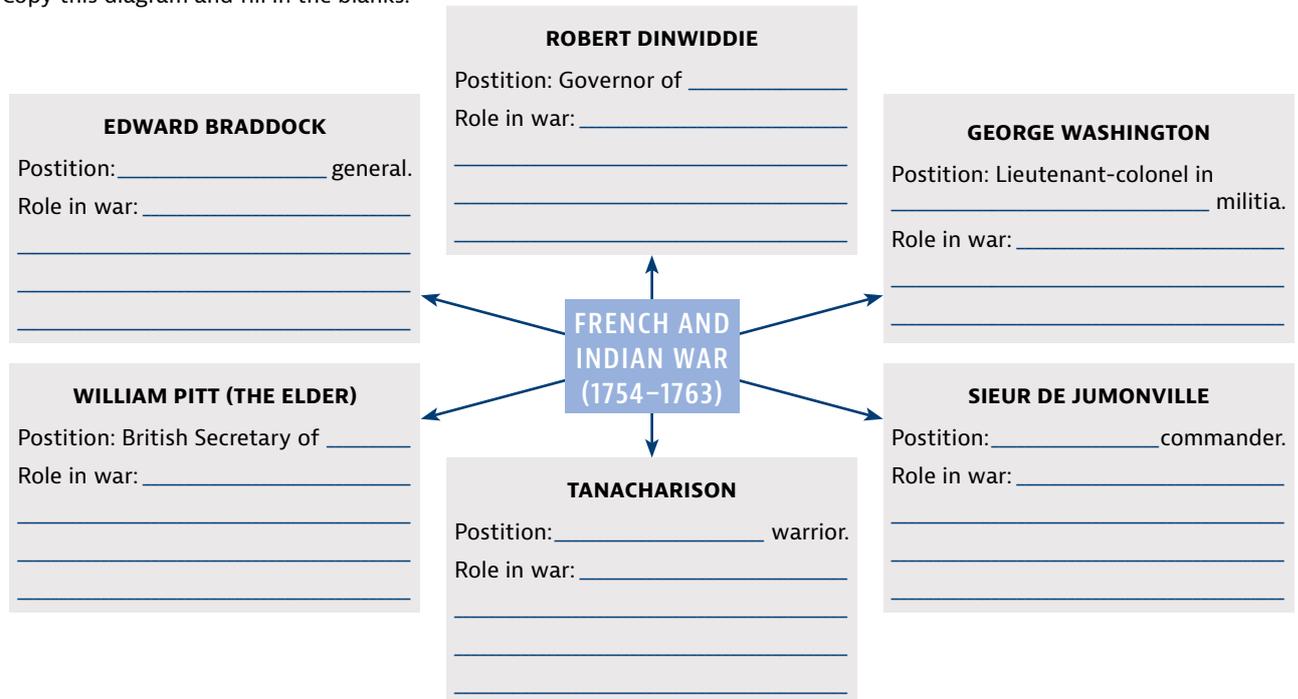
CONSTRUCTING AN ARGUMENT—ESSAY

Write a 600–800-word essay on one of the topics below. Your essay should include an introduction, paragraphs supported by relevant evidence from primary sources and historical interpretations, and a conclusion.

- What were the causes of the French and Indian War and its consequences for the American colonies?
- To what extent did the French and Indian War raise and resolve questions about the need for colonial unity?
- What was the nature and significance of Native American involvement in the French and Indian War?

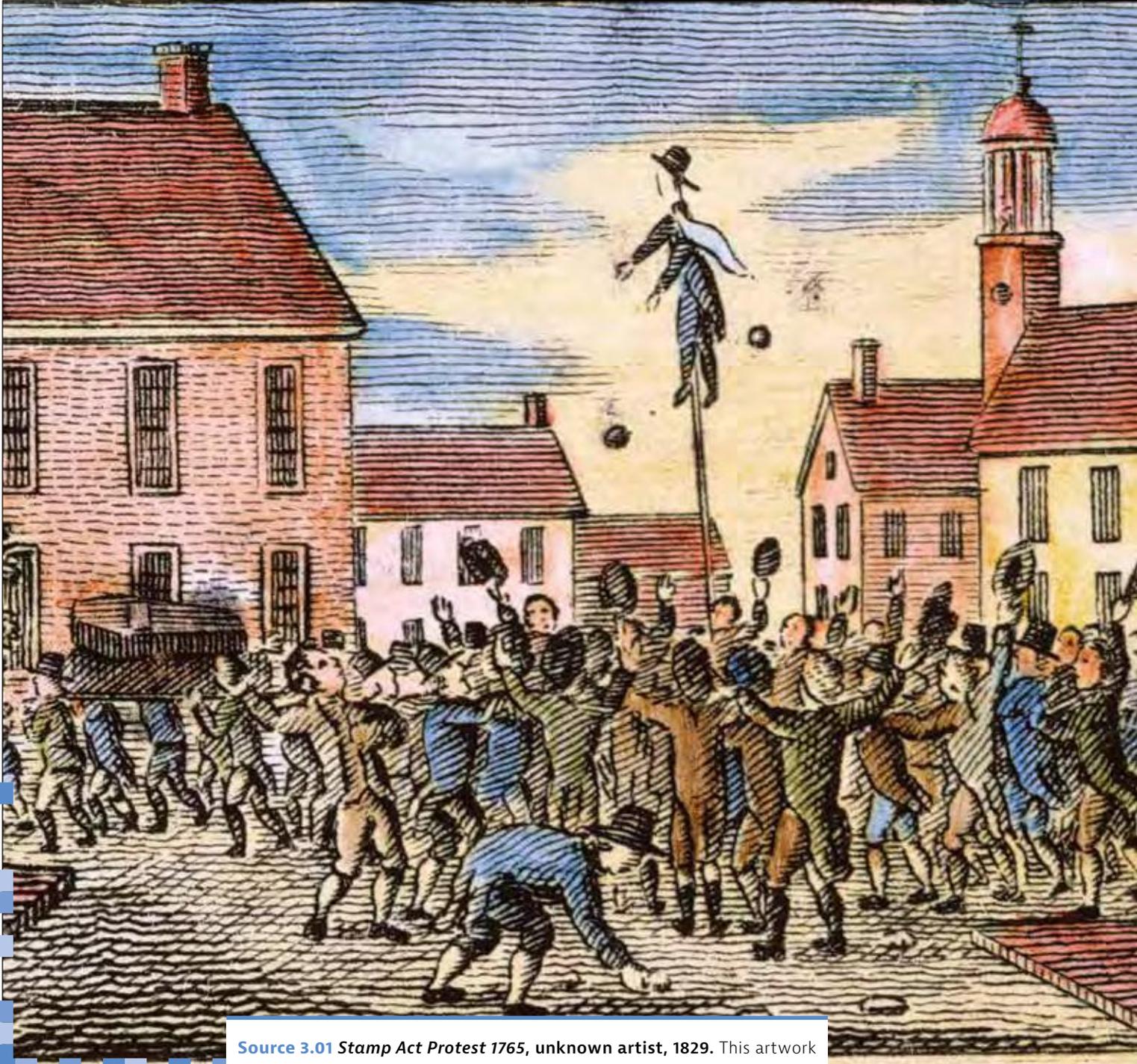
KEY PEOPLE—FILL IN THE BLANKS

Copy this diagram and fill in the blanks.



STIRRINGS OF REBELLION

(1763–1766)



Source 3.01 *Stamp Act Protest 1765*, unknown artist, 1829. This artwork shows a Stamp Act agent being hung in effigy in New Hampshire.

CHAPTER 3

‘No parts of his Majesty’s dominions can be taxed without their consent.’

—James Otis

After 1763, the relationship between Britain and the thirteen American colonies began to change. The reasons for this are complex but at its heart were:

- changes in the British Government
- revision of imperial policy
- political and financial effects of the French and Indian War.

From 1763, the British Government decided to manage the American colonies more directly—until then, the colonies had ruled themselves for generations. British Parliament passed a series of acts and regulations relating to the colonies, with the aim of:

- restricting settlement
- exerting control over trade
- generating revenue to meet the cost of colonial defence.

When these policies were vigorously opposed and resisted in the colonies, the British Parliament responded with an increased military presence and by closing rebellious colonial legislatures.

KEY EVENTS

- **May–October 1763**
Pontiac’s War
- **October 1763**
The Royal Proclamation
- **April 1764**
The Sugar Act
- **September 1764**
The Currency Act
- **March 1765**
‘The Quartering Act’; The Stamp Act
- **May 1765**
Virginia Stamp Act Resolves
- **October 1765**
Stamp Act Congress
- **March 1766**
Stamp Act repealed

KEY QUESTIONS

- In what way was British mercantilist policy a long-term cause of the American Revolution?
- How did the Proclamation of 1763 lead to tensions between Great Britain and the colonies?
- To what extent was the Stamp Act Crisis a turning point in colonial politics?
- How did significant individuals, such as Patrick Henry and Samuel Adams, influence the outcome of the Stamp Act Crisis?
- In what way did the Sons of Liberty mobilise society against the Stamp Act?



THE PROCLAMATION ACT KEY DEVELOPMENT

The Royal Proclamation (1763): 'And We do hereby strictly forbid, on Pain of our Displeasure, all our loving Subjects from making any Purchases or Settlements whatever, or taking Possession of any of the Lands above reserved [to Native Americans] without our especial leave and Licence for that Purpose first obtained.'

The removal of French authority and the opening of the west filled the British colonists with optimism. Farming land had become scarce and expensive during the rapid population increases of the 1700s, so landless farmers and frontiersmen saw great opportunities in resettling further west.

The colonial elites also liked the situation. They laid claim to vast tracts of the western territory for subdivision, sale and profit later on. Both George Washington and Benjamin Franklin were avid land speculators and drew up claims on the new territories.

The rush by the colonists to acquire land presented two dilemmas for the Ministers in London:

- how to organise, settle and manage such a large area
- how to prevent skirmishes and a possible war with hostile Native Americans as colonial settlers pushed west.

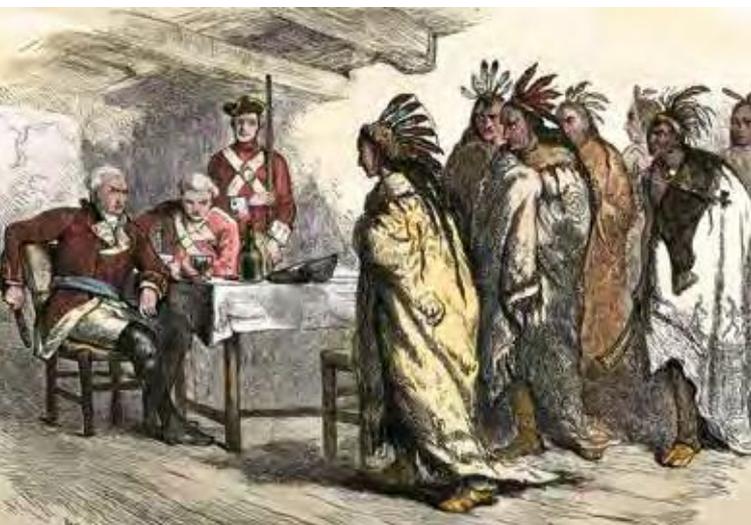
PONTIAC'S WAR

In May 1763 the second scenario came to pass when Pontiac, an Odawa chieftain, launched the first in a string of attacks against British frontier settlements. Having been allied with France during the recent war, Pontiac was unhappy with the British victory and believed that driving English colonists from the west might inspire France to reclaim its former territories. Pontiac's initial assault on Fort Detroit inspired almost every western tribe—Odawa, Huron, Ojibwa, Miami, Kickapoo, Delaware, Shawnee, Mingo and others—from the Great Lakes in the north to the lower Mississippi in the south. Large numbers of native people launched surprise attacks on British forts, wiping out garrisons and raiding unprotected settlements.

Pontiac was originally thought to have single-handedly unified and coordinated these attacks (and they are referred to as 'Pontiac's War' or 'Pontiac's Rebellion'). Most historians now reject this view and consider the attacks a sign of widespread discontent among Native Americans, as well as an attempt to prevent settlers from moving further west. Pontiac's bold raids are seen as the beginning of a chain reaction, as news of them spread southwards to other tribes along the frontier.

However, regardless of origins, the attacks were mostly successful: eight of thirteen British forts fell to Native Americans; hundreds of soldiers, militiamen and civilians died; and dozens of settlements were devastated. The British Army responded strongly where it could, but it lacked an extensive military presence along the western frontier. Instead, British officials negotiated a peace with the tribes.

↓ **Source 3.02** *Visit of Pontiac and his Native American allies to British officer Major Gladwin during Pontiac's War 1760s, unknown artist, nineteenth century.*



Source 3.03



proclamation a new law or regulation issued by a monarch and announced publicly

DID YOU KNOW?

The old British currency system consisted of pounds (£), shillings (s) and pence (d): £1 = 20s, 1s = 12d.

➔ **Source 3.04** Merrill Jensen, *The Founding of a Nation* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1968), 387.

A ROYAL PROCLAMATION

Pontiac's uprising saw the British cabinet rush through a measure it had been considering since the end of the war.

Released in October 1763, this Royal **Proclamation** drew a boundary line along the western fringe of the Appalachian Mountains and blocked all settlement west of the line. Current land claims or purchases of land from native tribes were invalidated and new ones prohibited. Hunting and fishing rights negotiated with some tribes in the wake of Pontiac's War were included and formalised in the proclamation. In hindsight it seems to have been a common-sense policy, intended to prevent further conflict with Native Americans and unchecked colonisation of the western territory. For the colonists eyeing off land in the west, the proclamation was either a temporary annoyance or something to be disregarded altogether.

Merrill Jensen, *The Founding of a Nation*

There were settlers beyond the boundary line and more and more joined them, defying troops, speculators and governors' proclamations to stop them. But the Virginia speculators with pre-war claims, and with new ones they hoped to establish, were interested in tens of thousands of acres, not mere clearings in the wilderness. Such men could not believe the boundary line would be permanent, protested against it, and made plans to go beyond it. George Washington, for instance, proposed surveys beyond the line so as to be ready to secure title the moment it was abandoned. He instructed his agent to search out good land, but above all to keep his plans a 'profound secret' because he did not want to be censured for open opposition to the Proclamation—or to have his speculating rivals adopt his methods.

BRITISH MANAGEMENT OF THE COLONIES

KEY DEVELOPMENT

Edmund Burke (1775): 'If America gives you taxable objects on which you lay your duties here, and gives you, at the same time, a surplus by a foreign sale of her commodities ... she has performed her part to the British revenue.'

Colonies, by definition, are ruled by their 'mother country'. In British America this was true in theory, as the thirteen colonies were under the nominal control of the king and a colonial governor—but things were very different in practice.

During the 1600s and early 1700s, Britain did not enforce all of the trade laws relating to the North American colonies. They also did not pay close attention to the way the colonies chose to govern themselves. This was because in the early decades the colonies were not as economically important as the British Government had hoped they would be. As long as Britain received some economic benefit from the colonies, they were left to their own devices. The arrangement was best expressed by British prime minister Robert Walpole, who declared that 'if no restrictions were placed on the colonies they would flourish'.

After the French and Indian War, the British Parliament decided to rein in the colonies and enforce firmer colonial policy—and this would strongly contribute to revolution in America.

ACTIVITY

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

Read about the Royal Proclamation of 1763 and complete the tasks below.

- 1 What was 'Pontiac's War'? Why were the Native Americans upset with Britain?
- 2 Summarise the role played by George Washington in land acquisition in the western regions.
- 3 What evidence is there that colonials defied the Royal Proclamation of 1763?

MERCANTILISM KEY DEVELOPMENT

Another emerging problem between Britain and the American colonies was their changing perception of each other. The dominant British economic theory was **mercantilism**, which stated that the more trade, resources and gold reserves an empire possessed, the more powerful it was.

In line with mercantilist theory, colonies benefited and enriched the mother country by supplying natural resources and materials, and by providing a market for manufactured goods. America, rich in forests and farmland, supplied the raw materials needed by England's growing industrial economy: cotton for its textile mills, iron for its forges, and timber for its furniture makers and shipbuilders.

The end products were then sold back to the colonies. This arrangement provided the British with ample raw materials, and provided the Americans with a stable market for whatever they grew, gathered or harvested.

However, for mercantilism to work, economic development in the colonies had to be restricted. Local manufacturing had to be limited so that colonials would continue to import finished goods—furniture, clothing, iron goods and so on—from England, rather than producing their own.

From the late 1600s, the British Parliament passed legislation banning or limiting the manufacture of certain items in the American colonies. The Iron Act (1750) encouraged America's production of pig iron (or raw iron) but banned the colonial manufacture of iron tools, farming equipment or tinplate. Excessive production of certain types of clothing, such as woollen garments, was also restricted. American development was stunted by this prohibitive legislation—even after almost two centuries of settlement, agriculture was still the lifeblood of the colonies, while industrial and manufacturing existed only on a small scale.

Britain also sought to prevent the American colonies trading with the French, Spanish and Dutch, all of whom had commercial operations in North America and the Caribbean. A series of laws called the Navigation Acts, dating back to the mid-1600s, banned the trade of certain commodities with traders who were not British. Some items could be traded with foreigners but only if American **merchants** paid an additional customs fee. The Molasses Act (1733) required Americans to pay a sizeable duty (or tax) on sugar or molasses (sugar syrup) purchased in the French West Indies.

Alvin Rabushka, *Taxation in Colonial America*

A fundamental mercantilist principle was that colonies should supply useful commodities to strengthen the mother country. In order of importance were precious metals, commodities that could not be produced in England, naval stores, and products that could be profitably traded in international markets. Mercantilism provided the ideas that governed colonial economic relations ... that colonial interests were subordinate to the mother country; that trade with its colonies should be restricted to English subjects; that the trade and resources of a colony should be sent to the mother country; and that the trade and resources of a colony should be kept out of the hands of rivals. Colonies were to provide a captive market for English manufactured goods. Monopolised trade with its colonies could stimulate domestic employment and industry, thereby reducing industrial unrest, poverty and idleness. In political terms, colonies were regarded as possessions, not an integral component of the English state. Even though colonists were granted the political rights of Englishmen, colonies were to be administered for the economic and military benefit of the mother country.

mercantilism economic system where colonies existed only to enrich the 'mother country' with a supply of raw materials and purchases of manufactured goods

ACTIVITY

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 Create a chart showing the flow of raw materials and manufactured goods between Britain and America under mercantilism.
- 2 List the advantages and disadvantages of the mercantilist system for both Britain and the American colonies.

merchant person who engages in buying, selling, importing and exporting goods for profit

← **Source 3.05** Alvin Rabushka, *Taxation in Colonial America* (Princeton University Press, 2008), 95–96.

MERCANTILISM: HISTORICAL INTERPRETATIONS

Because the events of the 1760s mark the beginnings of the American Revolution, historians have studied them closely. Different theories have emerged about how and why the revolution occurred. Some historians argue that the events in America must be viewed in the fuller context of the British Empire: its composition, complexities and administrative challenges. Both the colonies and the empire were changing throughout the eighteenth century; the revolution was as much a product of changing perceptions as it was of tensions between Britons and Americans.

These historians tend to view mercantilism—the principle that colonies exist to enrich the mother country—as having been mutually beneficial, allowing both Britain and her colonies to flourish. Problems only arose when British ministers attempted to reinterpret and strengthen mercantilist legislation when logic suggested that it should have been wound back. For these historians, the origins of the revolution lay in a clash of interests, not an ideological concern with rights and liberties. Charles Andrews (1863–1943) asserts that ideas about colonial rights were barely relevant to most Americans before the late 1760s. *Natural rights* were a ‘subject of more or less legal and metaphysical speculation’ that had little ‘marked influence on the popular mind’. However, by 1770, what began as a set of colonial grievances transformed into ‘a political and constitutional movement and only secondarily one that was financial, commercial or social!’

While Andrews undermined the view that mercantilism was a flawed policy, historian Lewis Namier (1888–1960) attacked the belief that King George III was an interfering *tyrant* whose actions provoked revolution.

Namier’s groundbreaking studies of British politics in the 1700s examined individuals and *factious* within British Parliament—and concluded that most acted in their own self-interest. The role played by the king in forming policy was more harmless than previously suggested: George III appointed ministers, as was his responsibility, but he almost always listened to their advice and rarely interfered in matters of policy. According to Namier, the king’s refusal to act upon American petitions was not pig-headed arrogance—rather, it was appropriate behaviour for a constitutional monarch to leave matters of government and empire to his ministry.

Lawrence H. Gipson (1880–1971) focused on broader changes within the empire, particularly the effects of the English triumph in the French and Indian War. Gipson argues that this victory created a *geopolitical* void in North America, radically altering the perspective of colonists. No longer hemmed in and threatened by France and Spain, British-Americans redefined their conceptions of ‘empire’—and they began to imagine a North America that they would own and run themselves. Suddenly, British rule in the colonies no longer seemed either necessary or relevant.

➔ **Source 3.06** ‘The Political Cartoon, for the Year 1775’, unknown artist, Britain. It shows King George III and Lord Mansfield, seated on an open carriage drawn by two horses labelled ‘Obstinacy’ and ‘Pride’. They are about to lead Britain into an abyss, representing the war with the American colonies.



Lawrence H. Gipson, Victory in the French and Indian War

[Victory in the French and Indian War] not only freed colonials for the first time in the history of the English-speaking people in the New World from the dread of the French, their Indian allies, and the Spaniards, but ... opened up to them the prospect, if given freedom of action, of a vast growth of power and wealth with an amazing westward expansion ... If many Americans thought they had a perfect right to profit personally by trading with the enemy in time of war, how much more deeply must they have resented—in time of peace—the serious efforts made by the home government to enforce the elaborate restrictions on commercial trade?

← **Source 3.07** Lawrence Gipson, 'The American Revolution as an Aftermath of the Great War for Empire' in *Political Science Quarterly* 65 (March 1950): 102.

Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr argues that the origins of the American Revolution can be found in seemingly ordinary items such as rum and molasses.

Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr, *The Colonial Merchants and the American Revolution*

A keen observer declared in retrospect ... that the union among the colonies had derived 'its original source [from] a confederacy of Smugglers in Boston, Rhode Island and other seaport towns ...'. These gentry were aided and abetted by the rum-distillers, who were particularly powerful in New England. John Adams was franker than most historians when he reflected in his old age: 'I know not why we should blush to confess that molasses was an essential ingredient in American independence'.

← **Source 3.08** Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr, *The Colonial Merchants and the American Revolution* (Washington DC: Beard Books, 1939), 59–61.

The first move was made by the merchants of Boston in April 1763, when they organised the 'Society for encouraging Trade and Commerce within the province of Massachusetts Bay' ... The merchants of New York were next to take action. Of these merchants Lieutenant-Governor Colden said: 'Many of them have rose suddenly from the lowest rank of the people, to considerable fortunates, and chiefly by illicit trade in the last war. They abhor every limitation of trade and duty on it' At the suggestion of the New York committee of merchants, the merchants of Philadelphia became active and appointed a committee to urge the Pennsylvania assembly to solicit Parliament to discontinue the molasses duties.

ACTIVITY**HISTORICAL INTERPRETATIONS**

Using Sources 3.07 and 3.08, the text on page 54 and your own knowledge, respond to the following:

- 1 According to Schlesinger, what was the source of union between the colonies? What role did colonial merchants play in the development of the revolution?
- 2 How does Schlesinger's emphasis differ from that of Lawrence Gipson? Are there any similarities?
- 3 What do the interpretations of Schlesinger, Gipson, Andrews and Namier add to your understanding of how Britain's mercantilist approach affected the American colonies?

natural rights an Enlightenment belief that all individuals are born with certain rights, such as the right to life, and freedom from oppression

tyrant an oppressive and cruel ruler

factions people grouped according to their religious or political beliefs

geopolitical relating to national power, frontiers and the possibilities for expansion

TRADERS AND SMUGGLERS

Bernard Bailyn (2005): 'What made all this possible—what helped bind the widespread and intensely competitive Atlantic commercial world together—was the mass of illegal trade that bypassed the formal, nationalistic constraints.'

Despite the restrictions and regulations imposed by mercantilism, some American colonists had become very wealthy through trade. The British economy boomed through much of the 1700s and the Navigation Acts virtually guaranteed colonial exporters a market for their goods.

Meanwhile, the fast-growing colonial population—with its thirst for all things British, and few local industries to draw upon—saw imports flourish. Most merchants lived in the great colonial port cities—Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Charlestown (later Charleston)—where they often played a role in local government. Most merchants belonged to the affluent middle class but a few merchants did so well—through a combination of inheritance, talent and economic circumstances—that they became the wealthiest people in America. Among the wealthiest merchants were:

- John Hancock (Massachusetts)
- Henry Laurens (South Carolina)
- Robert Morris (Pennsylvania)
- Edward Shippen (Pennsylvania).

Many American merchants increased their profits by finding ways around trade regulations. Smuggling was a common practice in colonial trade, dating back to the 1600s. Smuggling was done through:

- illegal shipping
- evading customs duties
- bribing customs officers.

America's long coastline, its great distance from England and the lack of any significant naval presence made it easy to evade goods checks or customs inspectors. The willingness of poorly paid customs inspectors to accept bribes also helped—and some of them were virtually on John Hancock's payroll. Most of this illicit trade was conducted with the other European powers: France, Spain, Portugal, Holland, Italy and the German states. By far the most commonly smuggled commodities were molasses and sugar, which were brought into America from the French colonies in the West Indies.

It is difficult to gauge the extent of smuggling in colonial America, as the merchants obviously kept no records of it and arrests were rare. However, smuggling is mentioned so frequently in letters, newspaper articles, governors' diaries and other incidental documents that it must have been common practice. American captains and sailors tended to be blasé about smuggling—and some even viewed it as romantic.

→ **Source 3.09** *Boston Evening Post*, 21 November 1763.

Boston Evening Post, 1763

There is no error so full of mischief as making acts and regulations oppressive to trade without enforcing them. This opens a door to corruption. This introduces a looseness in morals. This destroys the reverence and regard for oaths, on which government so much depends. This occasions a disregard to those acts of trade which are calculated for its real benefit. This entirely destroys the distinction, which ought be preserved in all trading communities, between 'merchant' and 'smuggler'.

The British were aware of the smuggling problem, as they had agents in European and Caribbean port cities, and an American ship loading illegal imports would have been quite conspicuous. The more conscientious officials reported suspected smugglers to their governors, some of whom reported them to London.

Ultimately, the question was not whether smuggling was taking place, but what action, if any, should be taken to stop it.

DID YOU KNOW?

While some colonial Americans—particularly the wealthy—saw smugglers as criminals, others portrayed them as daring, romantic heroes undermining the British Navigation Acts.

ACTIVITY**CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING**

- 1 Why did King George III issue the Royal Proclamation of 1763?
- 2 How did colonists view the Royal Proclamation of 1763?
- 3 How did mercantilism help the British economy?
- 4 Why did some colonial merchants choose illegal trade with other European colonies over legal trade with Britain?

COLONIAL TENSION IN FOUR ACTS KEY DEVELOPMENTS

Alan Taylor (2016): ‘Grenville also wanted to prove a point: that Parliament could exercise its sovereign power to tax the colonists.’

THE SUGAR ACT, 1764

The Sugar Act—officially called the American Revenue Act—was passed by British Parliament in April 1764. Its purpose was to increase commercial competition with the French West Indies and to better regulate American colonial trade. London had long been aware that American merchants were trading sugar and molasses with French colonies and avoiding most of the required duties (or taxes). The Sugar Act was an attempt to beat the smugglers by reducing the duty on foreign molasses from sixpence to threepence per gallon. This would make the British molasses a cheaper option for American traders, and undercut the appeal of French molasses.

However, there was more to the Sugar Act than simply incentives. The legislation also expanded the list of goods that were subject to a duty, including:

- raw sugar
- a range of wines
- coffee
- spices
- certain types of cloth.

The Sugar Act also tightened up the collection of these duties by endorsing ‘writs of assistance’. These writs were general search warrants with no expiry date, which allowed customs officials to enter any property they believed might contain smuggled goods. These writs had been around since 1760 and were grossly unpopular—even though they were rarely used.

In 1761, Boston lawyer James Otis challenged the legality of writs of assistance in the Massachusetts Supreme Court. Otis was acting on behalf of sixty-three merchants. In



↑ Sugar cone and sugar tongs.

SUGAR ACT, 1764

When: April 1764

What: Import duty on foreign molasses and on raw sugar, among other things. Endorsed use of ‘writs of assistance’ to enforce the Act.

Why: To stop smuggling of foreign molasses by making English imports cheaper.





ACTIVITY

HISTORICAL SOURCES

Using Source 3.10 and your own knowledge, respond to the following:

- 1 What do the authors of the statement mean when they say 'our trade is to be curtailed in its most profitable branches'?
- 2 Why might they have said that 'it is the trade of the Colonies that renders them beneficial to the mother country'?
- 3 What do the authors suggest might happen if Britain continues to pass laws regulating trade and imposing customs duties?
- 4 From your broader knowledge, assess the strength of the Bostonians' argument.

➔ **Source 3.10** Cited in *Massachusetts Gazette and Boston News-Letter*, 31 May 1764.

bullionism belief that a nation's wealth was determined by the amount of gold, silver and foreign coin stored in its treasury

his four-hour closing speech, Otis argued that the writs were 'against the fundamental principles of law' and breached English rights, which had been established as far back as the Magna Carta in 1215. Despite Otis' compelling argument, the case was eventually lost, and the writs continued to be issued against suspected smugglers.

Colonial outrage over writs of assistance reached its apex during the 'Malcom affair' of 1766. Described by historian William Cuddihy as 'the most famous search in colonial America', the home of Boston merchant Daniel Malcom was ransacked by customs officials, who had received a tip that Malcom had smuggled brandy and other liquors into his cellar. At first, Malcom cooperated with the officials, but eventually he refused their requests to open a locked cellar. Tensions flared and Malcom produced two pistols, threatening to blow out the brains of any customs officer who broke a lock or a door. During this stand-off, a mob of about 300 people gathered outside Malcom's house, forcing the customs officials to retreat. Malcom was possibly following the instructions of James Otis, his lawyer, as a means of initiating a further legal challenge to the writs.²

The Sugar Act aroused plenty of resentment, especially in Boston. Although anger was initially confined to merchants, shipping companies and shopowners, these groups enjoyed influence in the press and at town meetings.

The merchants and their followers painted the Sugar Act as an attempt by the British to impose new taxes and collect them by force. The Massachusetts assembly joined the chorus of criticism, noting to the governor that 'the civil rights of the colonies are affected by it, by their being deprived, in all cases of seizures, of that inestimable privilege and characteristic of English liberty—a trial by jury'. Historians Findling and Thackeray consider the Sugar Act to be 'the point when British colonial policy regarding the North American colonies altered ... Parliament deliberately taxed the colonies to raise revenue for the empire—an action not previously undertaken'.³

Boston town meeting, statement to Massachusetts assembly, 1764

As you represent a town which lives by its trade, we expect in a very particular manner that you make it the object of your attention to support our commerce in all its just rights, to vindicate it from all unreasonable impositions, and promote its prosperity. Our trade has for a long time laboured under great discouragements; and it is with the deepest concern that we see such further difficulties coming upon it, as will reduce it to the lowest ebb if not totally obstruct and ruin it. We cannot help expressing our surprise of the intentions of the ministry to burden us with new taxes.

It is the trade of the Colonies that renders them beneficial to the mother country ... But if our trade is to be curtailed in its most profitable branches ... we shall be so far from being able to take the manufactures of Great Britain that it will be scarce[ly] possible for us to earn our bread.

THE CURRENCY ACT, 1764

In addition to protecting trade, the British Government aimed to increase its gold reserves. An important element of mercantilist theory was **bullionism**: the belief that a nation's wealth was determined by the amount of gold, silver and foreign coin stored in its treasury. It was vital that more precious metals and 'hard money' flowed into England than out of it.

However, by 1762 the British economy was struggling, partly because of the expense of the war with France. Exports dropped and internal production began to slow; the amount of *specie* (gold and silver coin) coming into England decreased dramatically. The economic slump had a moderate impact across the Atlantic as British trading companies called in the debts of several colonial businesses.

The colonies, for the most part, avoided the economic downturn, which sparked curiosity and anger in London. Living in England as an agent of Pennsylvania, Benjamin Franklin was called upon by the Bank of England to explain why the colonies enjoyed such prosperity. ‘That is simple’, Franklin reportedly said. ‘In the colonies we make our own money. It is called colonial scrip. We issue it in proper proportion to the demands of trade and industry, to make the products pass easily from the producers to the consumers. In this manner, creating for ourselves our own paper money, we control its purchasing power and have no interest to pay to no-one.’⁴ England’s bankers were annoyed that the colonies had developed a separate currency system, and pressured the British Parliament to take action. In September 1764, just five months after the Sugar Act, Parliament passed the Currency Act.

The provisions of the Currency Act were relatively simple: it banned further printing of colonial paper money and prohibited the use of existing paper money to pay private debts. A similar measure had been implemented in 1751—although this was confined to New England and only limited the production of banknotes, not their use. The new Act ordered royal governors not to sign any new paper currency or agree to its being printed. This reform was problematic for American businesses and banks. They had long endured a shortage of gold and silver, and had no natural supply of these metals. They also were not allowed to get them by trading with France, Spain or other nations. The colonial scrip referred to by Franklin had been a workable substitute—but now this too would be restricted.

The Currency Act had consequences for American merchants and importers, who now had to find gold or foreign coin to settle their accounts with British companies. As the number of banknotes in circulation declined, Americans found trade within the colonies more difficult, and it became almost impossible to pay foreign debts. Bankruptcy—which was greatly feared at the time, because it was a crime punishable by imprisonment—increased steadily in the late 1760s. Many people claimed that the sugar and currency legislation had destroyed the American economy—though this was only partly true. Historians Egnal and Ernst suggest that the revolution began here, with a move towards economic independence.

Egnal and Ernst

While modern analysts may debate the wisdom of the varying colonial monetary practices and proposals, there is no doubt that Britain’s constant and jealous supervision of the colonists’ currency systems seriously weakened the Americans’ ability to control their own economy. The reaction to the Currency Act ... reflected a new and extreme phase of a long struggle of this aspect of economic *sovereignty*. Control over currency and banking was for some ... the ‘sovereign remedy.’



specie metallic currency such as gold or silver coin; also called ‘hard money’

DID YOU KNOW?

Spanish dollars and Portuguese reals were the most common foreign coins circulating in America. Local banknotes were issued in pounds, shillings and pence—although these were of less value than British currency.

← Gold coin with the image of King George III on the front and British coat of arms on the back.

CURRENCY ACT, 1764

When: September 1764

What: Banned printing of colonial paper money. Required use of gold or silver coins to settle debts.



Why: To increase the amount of gold and silver coins that circulated in the British economy.

← **Source 3.11** Marc Egnal and Joseph A. Ernst, ‘An Economic Interpretation of the American Revolution’ in *Historical Perspectives on the American Economy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 56.

sovereignty the right of a people, or a government acting on its behalf, to make decisions, form laws and exercise power within its own borders

DID YOU KNOW?

The military presence in Boston prompted Samuel Adams to publish a 'Journal of Events' that recorded 'incidents' of drunkenness, assault and rape by British soldiers. It later emerged that many of these stories were fabricated or grossly exaggerated.

QUARTERING ACT, 1765

When: March 1765

What: An update of the Mutiny Act. Required colonial assemblies to provide quarters (accommodation) to British soldiers.

Why: To help pay for the cost of posting soldiers to the colonies.



propaganda political materials—such as pamphlets, posters or cartoons—that carried a political message; often exaggerated or distorted

DID YOU KNOW?

The daily rate of pay for a private in the British Army was 8–10 pence, before deductions for food and lodging. At that time, a loaf of bread cost one penny, a pound of cheese four pence and a pound of tea one shilling (twelve pence).

THE QUARTERING ACT, 1765

While financial legislation caused concern among America's wealthier merchants, average people were aggravated by a more obvious problem. The end of the French and Indian War should have seen the English military presence decline in America, but the number of British soldiers remained high long after the 1763 Treaty of Paris. Early in 1763, more than 10,000 British troops were still garrisoned in the colonies, mostly in the cities and along the frontier. For the British Government this was an expensive but necessary measure. Maintaining a few thousand troops in distant colonies was a financial burden—and this was on top of difficult economic times and a £138 million war debt. A view circulating in British Parliament was that the colonies should be contributing to the cost of the soldiers who protected them.

In March 1765, Parliament completed its annual update of the Mutiny Act, a perpetual law to ensure and improve discipline in the British military.

However, within its 1765 amendment was a provision requiring colonial assemblies to provide quartering (accommodation), food and other equipment for British soldiers. Shelter was to be offered in barracks, public buildings or halls, which were to be organised and provided by colonial authorities. If there were not enough buildings of this type available, colonial governors and assemblies were to rent suitable inns, tenements, barns or vacant houses. The colonial governments were also responsible for providing soldiers with firewood, candles, beer or rum, blankets and cooking utensils.

This measure, coming as it did after three other troublesome pieces of legislation, provoked an angry response. Through misunderstanding, misrepresentation and **propaganda**, the updated Mutiny Act was portrayed as an obscene attempt to force free citizens to host unruly British soldiers in their private homes. Colonial stirrers began referring to it as the 'Quartering Act'—although this was never its title—and protesting that it ignored the fundamental rights of Englishmen. In reality the Act said nothing about housing soldiers in private homes, while it provided compensation at reasonable set rates for the owners of inns, barns and vacant houses.

In some colonies there was little fuss and the assemblies complied with the Act. Pennsylvania, for example, willingly gave British soldiers accommodation up until 1774. Other colonies objected to the obligations placed on them, arguing that the order to provide rented accommodation, food and necessities was simply an alternative form of taxation. In New York, which contained the largest contingent of soldiers at the time the Act was passed, rioting by locals led the assembly to refuse to enforce any of the quartering requirements. This drew an angry response from the British Government, which later passed the New York Restraining Act, suspending the New York assembly for not complying with the law.

THE STAMP ACT, 1765

The fourth and most notorious British Act of the colonial era was the Stamp Act. This Act was passed in March 1765, the same month as the Mutiny Act.

No decision prompted more revolutionary fervour than the Stamp Act. From the colonial elite to common artisans and sailors, from cities to remote villages, ordinary people and their leaders spoke against the new tax. The crisis spawned one of the most famous revolutionary slogans in history, 'no taxation without representation', a phrase dating from 1750 that was adopted by James Otis, Patrick Henry and others.

The slogan referred to the fact that the colonies did not have direct representation in British Parliament. Instead of having their own elected Members of Parliament, English politicians believed that the colonists had ‘virtual’ representation because they were subjects of the British Crown. Some colonists believed that taxes could not be raised if they had not directly agreed to them, either by a direct vote or by having their own representatives in Parliament vote on their behalf.

Yet despite the uproar it caused in America, British Parliament did not view the introduction of a stamp tax as unusual. Stamp duties had been applied in Britain since 1689, copied from the Dutch, largely as an emergency measure to fund wars. Bills of sale, deeds, titles, mortgages, indentures, contracts, wills, insurance policies and other documents were not legal until they bore evidence that the appropriate duty had been paid. There were protests when stamp taxes were first introduced in England, but over time they were grudgingly accepted. They became an important source of revenue. When the government needed money, it simply added to the list of items on which stamp taxes were payable.

So imposing a stamp tax in America was considered a minor reform by those who passed it. They forecast the collection of £60,000 to be passed to British officials in the colonies for ‘procurement of supplies for the troops stationed there’.⁵ A common misconception is that the Stamp Act arrived in America by surprise and caught the colonies unaware—but this was not the case. The British Parliament actually floated the idea in the colonies in mid-1764. It signalled its intent to raise revenue in America, proposed a stamp duty as a means of doing so and invited colonial legislatures to suggest alternatives. Most colonial legislatures opposed any stamp tax but could suggest no other option, so Parliament began work on the bill.

Benjamin Franklin, America’s most prominent figure in Europe, was in London when the Stamp Act went to a vote in Parliament. Acting on instructions from Pennsylvania, Franklin attempted to stop the bill by petitioning the king and lobbying leading parliamentarians. This failed, and the Stamp Act passed into law. Almost overnight, Franklin transformed himself from colonial-rights advocate to self-interested entrepreneur. He snapped up large quantities of embossed stamp paper for export to America. He also recommended a friend for the lucrative position of stamp distributor in Philadelphia. When word of this filtered back to Philadelphia, an angry mob declared Franklin a traitor and besieged his home, trapping his wife Deborah for several hours.



Source 3.12 *Pennsylvania Journal and Weekly Advertiser* (24 October 1765), ‘This is the Place to affix the Stamp.’ A satirical ad protesting the passage of the Stamp Act. The skull and crossbones symbolise the death of free press.

DID YOU KNOW?

Under the provisions of the Stamp Act, a pack of cards was liable for a one shilling tax stamp; a set of dice incurred a tax of ten shillings. Landlords were outraged by the tax on liquor licences: four pounds, which was a year’s wages for some.

ACTIVITY

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 According to politicians in London, what were the advantages of the Sugar Act, both for England and for the colonists?
- 2 Why did the colonists dislike the Sugar Act?
- 3 Why was it difficult for colonists to follow the regulations of the Currency Act?
- 4 What were the changes to the Mutiny Act (Quartering Act) in 1765?
- 5 How significant was the colonists’ renaming of the Mutiny Act as ‘the Quartering Act’?
- 6 Why did the British Parliament view the Stamp Act as a reasonable piece of legislation?
- 7 Why did the colonists view the Stamp Act as an unreasonable piece of legislation?

STAMP ACT, 1765

When: March 1765

What: Tax on official documents, such as contracts and wills, and on other reading materials, such as newspapers.

Why: To raise money to help pay the government debt as a result of the French and Indian War.



COLONIAL RESPONSES TO THE STAMP ACT

KEY DEVELOPMENTS

Resolves of the Pennsylvania Assembly on the Stamp Act (1765): 'That it is the inherent Birth-right ... of every British Subject, to be taxed only by his own Consent, or that of his legal Representatives.'

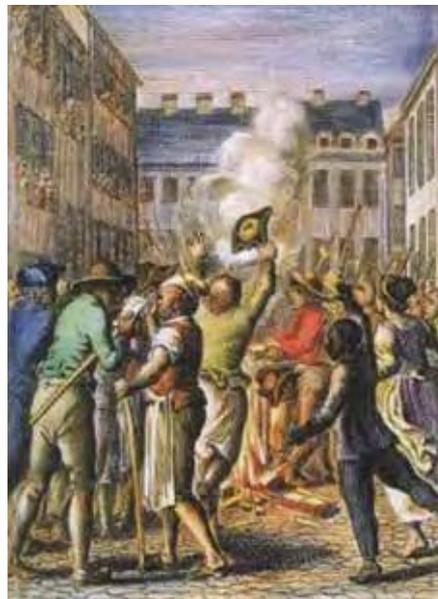
News of the Stamp Act reached the colonies in April 1765, with the tax scheduled to come into effect on the first day of November. The response was broader and more intense than even the pessimists in England had predicted. This was largely because of the timing.

The political climate in the colonies, particularly regarding matters of British policy, was sceptical and paranoid. The very nature of the Stamp Act was also problematic. Imposed on a wide variety of official and semi-official documents—such as contracts, bills of sale, wills, property titles, broadsheets and periodicals—it affected a wide range of people. Fifteen different categories of legal document were taxed, which upset colonial lawyers. Bonds, contracts and bills of sale were taxed, which aggravated merchants and retailers. Newspapers and pamphlets were taxed by the page, which outraged publishers, journalists and essayists. Gambling items like dice and playing cards also needed stamps, which affected common labourers, dockhands and sailors.

DISORDER IN BOSTON AND ELSEWHERE

Over the next seven months there was intense debate, protest and petitioning across the thirteen colonies. Colonial assemblymen were furious at the British Government's disregard of their views. Merchants, still complaining about trade regulations and the Sugar Act, joined in the chorus of protest. Speaker after speaker railed against Britain, from political theorists arguing for better representation to tavern troublemakers predicting that new taxes would bleed the colonies dry. Others argued that if the right to tax was conceded once, then it was conceded forever and might go on and on.

boycott withhold money from a particular nation or group, or refuse to trade with them



➔ **Source 3.13** *Bostonians Protesting the Stamp Act by burning the stamps in a bonfire* by Daniel Chodowiecki, 1784.

A consensus emerged that if the new tax stamps were **boycotted**—that is, if people didn't buy them—then the Act could not be enforced. A campaign of non-compliance was started and seemed to have been effective, with only a few tax stamps sold in the colony of Georgia. Other colonies went further, deciding that the best propaganda, in the words of Patricia Bradley, 'was a combination of the related word and representative deed'.⁶

Ideas and words were supported by harassment, intimidation and violence directed at royal officials. Two of the most famous victims were Andrew Oliver and Thomas Hutchinson. Oliver was the man appointed by Parliament to oversee the



↑ Source 3.14

implementation of the Stamp Act in Massachusetts. On 14 August 1765, his *effigy* was hanged and burned from the *Liberty Tree*, a huge elm tree near Boston Common. An angry mob left the scene and marched on Oliver's house, robbed it, and made off with the supplies of the stamp paper. The assault on property and the implied threat to his safety were too much for the 'king's stamp man' and Oliver resigned his position.

Another attack followed a fortnight later, this time on the home of the Lieutenant-Governor Thomas Hutchinson. Hutchinson was a forthright and self-important figure who was widely disliked. Samuel Adams particularly despised him and rarely failed to mention and condemn Hutchinson in his written rants. Hutchinson actually considered the Stamp Act to be a flawed policy—but he was a royal official, and had to implement it. On 26 August 1765, a large mob gathered outside Hutchinson's home. When the crowd smashed windows, Hutchinson and his family fled for their lives. The mob entered, raiding his wine cellar, stealing £900 in cash, ransacking the building and destroying his priceless collection of books.

Throughout the second half of 1765, officials in other colonies also suffered threats, intimidation, vandalism, arson and beatings. The stamp commissioners of both Newport (Rhode Island), and Charleston (South Carolina), were hung in effigy by mobs opposed to the new stamp duty.⁷ Life became difficult and dangerous for any official in charge of carrying out the new Stamp Act.

effigy a crude dummy, scarecrow or mannequin representing a specific person, often set alight as a public show of intimidation or criticism

Liberty Tree a symbol of freedom, based on a large elm tree in Boston Common that was a meeting place for various Sons of Liberty activities; other American towns had their own 'liberty trees'

DID YOU KNOW?

Andrew Oliver was not completely discouraged by the burning of his effigy in 1765. He became lieutenant-governor of Massachusetts in 1771.



ACTIVITY

HISTORICAL SOURCES

Using Source 3.15 and your own knowledge, respond to the following:

- 1 Look at how the Bostonians are represented in this painting. How are they dressed? What group or class do you think they belong to?
- 2 Who is the 'Excise-man'? What is happening to him, and why?
- 3 Why do you think the Stamp Act has been hung upside down on the Liberty Tree?
- 4 Do you think the artist was sympathetic to the actions depicted? Explain your answer.
- 5 Using your broader knowledge, discuss what the source adds to an understanding of pre-revolutionary America. What other perspectives were there on the Stamp Act at the time?



➔ **Source 3.15** *The Bostonians Paying the Excise-man, or Tarring and Feathering*, attributed to Philip Dawe, 1774.

CAUSES OF REVOLUTION—BRITISH REVENUE ACTS

After reading about the Acts and proclamations imposed on the American colonies up to 1765, draw up a table like the one below and fill it in.

BRITISH REVENUE ACTS			
BRITISH LAW	YEAR IMPOSED	PROVISIONS OF ACT	COLONIAL RESPONSES TO ACT
Royal Proclamation			
Sugar Act			
Currency Act			
Quartering Act			
Stamp Act			

DISSENT GROWS

Considerable opposition to the Stamp Act broke out in other colonies. In Virginia, a young Williamsburg lawyer named Patrick Henry ran for election to the House of Burgesses specifically to challenge the Stamp Act.

After just one week as a representative, Patrick Henry introduced a series of five resolves (or resolutions) that rejected any British authority to tax the colonies. He spoke in favour of these resolves in the strongest possible terms, criticising the king and making a thinly veiled comparison between King George III and Julius Caesar and Charles I—both of whom were assassinated by their rivals. This prompted cries of ‘**treason!**’ in the chamber and folklore has it that Patrick Henry responded with, ‘If this be treason, make the most of it’. The record suggests that he later apologised to the house for his ‘intemperate remarks’ and reaffirmed his loyalty to the king.

KEY INDIVIDUAL
(see p. 255)



↑ Patrick Henry.

treason an idea or action that threatens or undermines the ruling monarch or government; in most cases it is a serious criminal offence punishable by death

The Virginia Stamp Act Resolves, 1765

Resolved, that the first adventurers and settlers of His Majesty’s colony and dominion of Virginia brought with them ... all the liberties, privileges, franchises, and immunities ... held, enjoyed, and possessed by the people of Great Britain.

Resolved, that ... the colonists aforesaid are declared entitled to all liberties, privileges, and immunities ... as if they had been abiding and born within the realm of England.

Resolved, that the taxation of the people by themselves, or by persons chosen by themselves to represent them, who can only know what taxes the people are able to bear ... is the only security against a burdensome taxation, and the distinguishing characteristic of British freedom ...

Resolved, that His Majesty’s people of this his most ancient and loyal colony have without interruption enjoyed the inestimable right of being governed by such laws, respecting their internal policy and taxation, as are derived from their own consent, with the approval of their sovereign, or his substitute; and that the same has never been forfeited ...

← **Source 3.16** ‘Enclosure: Patrick Henry’s Stamp Act Resolves, 30 May 1765,’ *Founders Online*, National Archives, founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/03-07-02-0369-0002

ACTIVITY

GROUP WORK

In a small group, read through the Virginia Stamp Act Resolves (Source 3.16) and discuss their meaning and **implications**. How would Henry’s resolves have affected the day-to-day administration of the American colonies?

implication the conclusion that can be drawn from something even though it is not stated directly

Objections to the Stamp Act continued to emerge elsewhere. Maryland’s Daniel Dulany criticised it as an illegal Act in his essay *Considerations on the Propriety of Imposing Taxes in the British Colonies*. Richard Bland penned an eloquent examination of the crisis from a political viewpoint in *An Inquiry into the Rights of the British Colonies*. These and other pamphlets were discussed by a host of town meetings, many of which drafted resolutions condemning the Stamp Act.

Some cities organised boycotts of British goods. At least seven colonial assemblies put anti-Stamp Act petitions on ships to London, while British MPs such as Edmund Burke and William Pitt spoke against the Act in the House of Commons, accusing

the ministry of legislating beyond its authority. Street protests and vandalism broke out in New York, Rhode Island, New Hampshire and the Carolinas. Gangs promised retaliation against anyone seen buying a tax stamp, let alone those who dared sell them. By the end of 1765, fourteen stamp agents had been forced to resign.

Critics of the Stamp Act now began to argue for some form of unified colonial response. In October 1765, twenty-eight delegates from nine colonies gathered in New York for what later became known as the Stamp Act Congress. They produced a document called the Declaration of Rights and Grievances, which pledged affection and loyalty to the king but argued that George III and his Parliament had taken away colonial rights. It claimed that since the colonists could only vote for their local assemblies, only those bodies held the authority to tax them. It also asserted the right to trial by jury and complained about the shortage of specie (gold and silver coin) because of the Currency Act. It was not the first expression of colonial rights—but it was the first made by a body claiming to represent a majority of the American colonies.

ACTIVITY

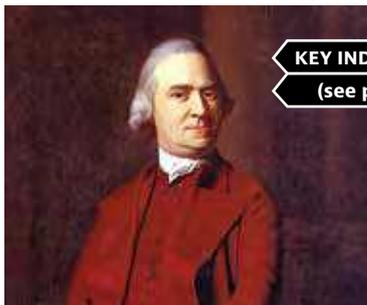
LIST

- 1 List the four colonies that did *not* send representatives to the Stamp Act Congress.
- 2 List the arguments for and against the Stamp Act. Which groups were advantaged and disadvantaged by the Act?

DID YOU KNOW?

Isaac Barré was an Irish-born member of parliament who lost his left eye during the French and Indian War. He was one of the very few MPs with a close knowledge of America and he maintained friendships with many colonial merchants.

↓ Samuel Adams.



KEY INDIVIDUAL
(see p. 250)

THE SONS OF LIBERTY **KEY GROUP**

The Sons of Liberty began as local groups who organised or engaged in protest against the Stamp Act. However, it's difficult to say precisely what these groups did or how they operated. There was no single Sons of Liberty group. A range of groups emerged in different areas, each with its own leadership and membership base. The term became a catch-all phrase to include anyone engaged in anti-British activity. It was first used in the British Parliament by Isaac Barré, a veteran of the French and Indian War, who praised 'these sons of liberty' who were standing up for American rights.

In Boston, Massachusetts, the Sons of Liberty modelled themselves on a small group calling itself the Loyal Nine. Little is known about this body except that it was composed of nine Bostonian men who began meeting in May or June 1765 to organise opposition to the Stamp Act. Its members were small-scale merchants, artisans and shopkeepers who organised in secret and kept no records. As a result, the Loyal Nine is not as well known as other revolutionary activists. Activists Samuel Adams and Paul Revere were members of the Boston Sons of Liberty, but weren't members of the Loyal Nine—although they are likely to have been aware of the Loyal Nine, and possibly influenced by them. The Loyal Nine is believed to have organised the intimidation of Andrew Oliver in August 1765, an incident generally considered to be the starting point for the Sons of Liberty in Boston.

Once established in Massachusetts, Sons of Liberty groups emerged in other colonies. New York had its own group by November, while towns in New Hampshire, New Jersey, Maryland, Virginia and North Carolina had similar organisations by the end of 1765. These gangs either adopted the Sons of Liberty name or had it given to them by excited journalists and pamphleteers.

Other groups adopted names of their own choosing, such as Rhode Island's Respectable Populace. In most cases, the Sons of Liberty groups rejected secrecy and conspiracy—they gave their views in the press (they had many printers as members) and portrayed themselves as the protectors of colonial rights and the public good. Some attempted to form links with groups in other colonies through correspondence. The Boston and New York Sons of Liberty, for instance, were in regular contact from January 1766.

BOYCOTTS BY WOMEN

Colonial women were present at many of the gatherings and protests of 1765. They also played a significant role in defeating the Stamp Act. As household managers responsible for purchasing food, clothing and other items, women were ideally placed to organise anti-Stamp Act boycotts. Some economic historians suggest that this empowered colonial women and brought them into the political sphere, if only indirectly. T. H. Breen points out that, 'The wife [found herself] in a strategic position, located ... at the intersection of the household's three functions: reproduction, production and consumption'.⁸ Groups of women, mostly middle class, began organising meetings to discuss ways of opposing the stamp tax by refusing to buy imported goods.

ACTIVITY

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 In what ways did colonial people react to the Stamp Act?
- 2 In what ways did colonial assemblies react to the Stamp Act?
- 3 Why was there such a strong response to the Stamp Act throughout the colonies?

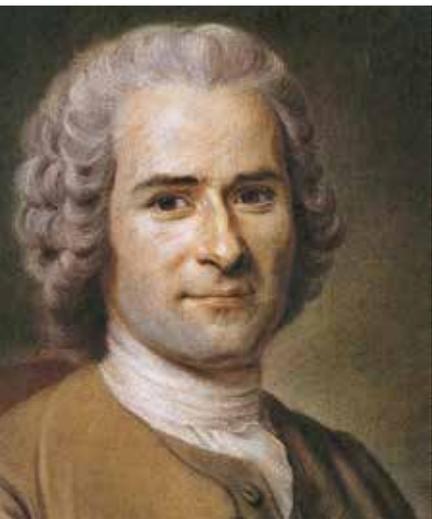
HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

In a paragraph of 200–300 words, explain the significance of the Stamp Act as a prompt to revolutionary activity in the American colonies.

↓ **Source 3.17** A view of the obelisk erected under Liberty-tree in Boston on the rejoicings for the repeal of the Stamp Act 1766, by Paul Revere, 1766.



IDEAS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION



THE ENLIGHTENMENT, 1685–1780

The Enlightenment was a period when thinkers and writers challenged traditional authority, such as monarchy and religion. European philosophers, scientists and politicians developed the idea that society could be changed in a positive way through rational—or reasoned—thinking. As a result, this era is also known as the Age of Reason.

Enlightenment thinkers believed in rational questioning, and that progress could come from dialogue or discussion. Their ideas were read by educated people on both sides of the Atlantic, and formed the basis for several key documents of the American Revolution, including the Declaration of Independence, Thomas Paine’s *Common Sense* and Samuel Adams’ Circular Letter.

There were several important English and French philosophers during the Enlightenment, and their writings circulated widely among educated people, influencing their thoughts about personal rights and freedoms, and about the political contracts between individuals and their governments. The key English philosopher for the political ideas of the American Revolution was John Locke (1632–1704). Important French philosophers include Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778) and Montesquieu (1689–1755). Rousseau’s ideas about general will and representative government shaped the thinking of intellectual patriots, including Thomas Jefferson. Montesquieu’s thinking about the separation of powers would be particularly influential during the drafting of the Constitution.

NATURAL RIGHTS

Natural rights developed out of debates about legal rights. Legal rights are given to a person by a legal system—but can be changed or removed if the related law is changed or removed. However, Enlightenment philosophers argued that natural rights are the rights a person is born with—and they cannot be changed or removed by a government or a legal system.

John Locke wrote in his *Second Treatise of Government* (1690) that people exist in a **natural state of equality where no one person has more power or authority than anyone else**. According to Locke, a person’s natural rights include **equality, freedom and the right to protect life and property**. Locke believed that these rights were fundamental, and a person could not give them up to a government.

Francis Hutcheson, in his *Inquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty in Virtue* (1725), took up Locke’s argument and extended it. Hutcheson coined the phrase ‘unalienable rights’ for those rights that a government could not take away.

When Thomas Jefferson wrote the opening of the Declaration of Independence, he adopted the ideas about natural rights from both Locke and Hutcheson to create the following sentence: ‘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.**’

REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT

The debate between the colonists and the British Government about what constituted representative government was based on British custom and political precedent.

Representatives of the common people (called ‘the Commons’) had been elected to Parliament as far back as 1275 CE, during the reign of King Edward I. Up until the eighteenth century, it was usual for these representatives to be landowners and to live in the area (or electorate) that voted for them.

But by the eighteenth century, the Members of Parliament—the elected representatives in the Commons—did not always live in the electorate that voted for them. On top of this, because of local differences in population and the requirement that voters own property, only about 17 per cent to 23 per cent of the adult males in Britain voted for representatives to the British Parliament.⁹

This led some politicians to believe that representation did not necessarily need to be by a local person who served as the voice of the adults in the electorate. British prime minister George Grenville was one key politician who tried to use this idea to his advantage. In order to justify the Stamp Act, Grenville and his secretary of the treasury, Thomas Whately, came up with the theory of ‘virtual representation’. Historian Jack Greene summarises virtual representation like this: ‘the colonists, like those individuals and groups who resided in Britain but had no voice in elections, were nonetheless virtually represented in Parliament.’¹⁰

However, colonial assemblies in the colonies had a much more direct link to the people who voted for them. Most farmers were freeholders (or landowners), so this meant that up to 75 per cent of adult males in the colonies qualified as voters.¹¹ Also, most colonies had rules that required representatives to live in the electorate that voted for them—and this led to a widespread belief in the colonies that representation was direct.

← (Opposite page: top to bottom)
Jean-Jacques Rousseau; Montesquieu; John Locke.

By 1763, the idea of direct representation had become such a deep-seated idea in America that several colonial lawyers and politicians argued for direct representation in the British Parliament. For example, James Otis, in his pamphlet *The Rights of the British Colonies Asserted and Proved* (1764), argued: ‘That the colonies ... should not only be continued in the enjoyment of subordinate legislation [colonial governments], but be also represented in some proportion to their number and estates, in the grand legislature of the nation[parliament].’

These differing views of representative government would prove divisive from 1763 to 1776—especially during the Stamp Act crisis.

REPUBLICANISM

In eighteenth-century colonial America, republicanism was based on the idea of participation by citizens in the government for the good of the community. A good citizen had responsibilities and duties to the community, and all citizens were equal in these responsibilities and duties. It was linked to the ideas about representative government because, according to republicanism, a good government carried out the general will of the people.

LIBERTY

The eighteenth-century American idea of liberty was tied to John Locke’s ideas of natural rights. For colonists, liberty meant the right to have individual consent to be governed, and the right to have their property protected from government interference.

According to historian Gordon S. Wood: ‘Individual liberty and the public good were easily reconcilable because the important liberty in the Whig ideology was public or political liberty. In 1776 the solution to the problems of American politics seemed to rest not so much in emphasizing the private rights of individuals against the general will as it did in stressing the public rights of the collective people against the supposed privileged interests of their rulers.’¹²

A REPEAL WITH CONDITIONS

William Pitt (1766): 'At the same time, let the sovereign authority of this country over the colonies be asserted in as strong terms as can be devised, and be made to extend every point of legislation whatsoever: that we may bind their trade, confine their manufactures, and exercise every power whatsoever—except that of taking money out of their pockets without their consent.'

The Stamp Act proved problematic in England, as well as in America. Several notable members of the House of Commons, such as Edmund Burke and William Beckford, had spoken against the bill during parliamentary debate. The English press also criticised the Act. In July 1765, the king dismissed Grenville as prime minister in favour of Lord Rockingham—and the Stamp Act lost its creator and strongest defender. Worrying reports about violence and intimidation in the colonies began to reach London in October. Both before and after these reports, British exporters complained about losing American contracts and income because of colonial boycotts.

Parliament spent nine days in January 1766 sifting through anti-Stamp Act petitions, many from America but most from English business interests. A bill for **repeal** was submitted, drawing a hostile response from some in Parliament. Lord Lyttleton produced an essay condemning the repeal and launching a stinging attack on the Americans. It was countersigned by thirty-three peers from the House of Lords. Common sense won out in the end: the House of Commons moved to repeal the Act (276 votes to 168), as did the House of Lords (105 votes to 71).

repeal the act of legally reversing an Act of parliament

In some colonies, the death of the Stamp Act prompted toasts to the health of the king, the wisdom of his Parliament and the glory of the British political system. In Boston a young slave girl, Phillis Wheatley, recognised these high spirits. Born in Gambia, Wheatley had been kidnapped and transported to Massachusetts when she was just seven years old. She was purchased as a slave by a wealthy merchant, John Wheatley, to do domestic work. His family treated her kindly. Phillis Wheatley received a good education and, by the age of twelve, was composing her own poetry. She was freed by John Wheatley in 1774. She chose to stay as a free woman with the family until his death in 1778. At the time of the repeal of the Stamp Act, Phillis Wheatley was barely in her teens, yet she composed a short poem about it.



➔ **Source 3.18**
Phillis Wheatley, from the frontispiece of *Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral* by Phillis Wheatley, 1773.

Phillis Wheatley, poem, 1768

To the King's most Excellent Majesty on the Repealing of the Stamp Act

Your subjects hope

The crown upon your head may flourish long

And in great wars your royal arms be strong.

May your sceptre many nations sway

Resent it on them that dislike obey

But how shall we exalt the British king.

← **Source 3.19** Phillis Wheatley, *The Poems of Phillis Wheatley* (Raleigh: University of North Carolina Press, 1898), 126.

Cartoonists in London were less forgiving of George III's government. One biting engraving, *The Repeal, or the Funderal of Miss America-Stamp*, lampooned the pro-stamp tax ministers by showing them at a mock funeral for their failed legislation. In a climate where there was near-constant criticism of political decision-making and matters of empire, the failure of yet another element of economic policy severely embarrassed the government.

↓ **Source 3.20** *The Repeal, or the Funderal of Miss America-Stamp*, by Benjamin Wilson, 1766.

DID YOU KNOW?

For some time it seemed the House of Lords might vote to reject the repeal of the Stamp Act, but pressure from the king saw many of the Lords rethink their voting.



DECLARATORY ACT, 1766

Despite the repeal of the Stamp Act, the hardliners in the British Parliament refused to let the issue of colonial management rest. Rockingham's ministry only accepted repeal on the condition that it be accompanied by an assertion of parliamentary authority over the American colonies. Without such a provision, the further governance and regulation of America might prove impossible—and good order in other English colonies could be undermined.

So, on the same day that the Stamp Act was repealed, it was followed by a new piece of legislation, the Declaratory Act. It boomed across the Atlantic that, 'the said colonies and plantations in America have been, are, and of right ought to be, subordinate unto, and dependent upon the imperial crown and Parliament of Great Britain'. Furthermore, the Act declared that the king and Parliament 'had, hath, and of right ought to have, full power and authority to make laws and statutes ... to bind the colonies and people of America in all cases whatsoever'.

The Declaratory Act did not raise many eyebrows in America. Most people were swept up in celebrating the repeal of the Stamp Act. They saw the Declaratory Act as simply an attempt at parliamentary face-saving.

However, for the radicals, the last passage of the Act read as dramatic prophecy: Parliament was expressing its right and its intentions to pass laws over the colonies as it saw fit. There was some precedent in the similarly worded Dependency of Ireland Act of 1719, which had been used to dominate the independent Irish courts. Although the Declaratory Act had no practical implications, many historians consider it the point when the revolution transformed from an anti-taxation protest into something deeper.

➔ **Source 3.21** Randall Miller, ed., *Zubly: A Warm and Zealous Spirit* (Atlanta: Mercer University Press, 1982), 51.

Randall Miller, interpreting the impact of revolutionary pamphleteer John Joachim Zubly

The Declaratory Act ... among other events, combined to persuade many Americans that the English ministry regarded the colonies with contempt ... American political and constitutional thinkers began to take a closer look at the implications of the Declaratory Act ... Such a naked assertion of parliamentary power aroused American fears of legislative tyranny, and the unlucky and ill-considered British policies fuelled such apprehensions. From 1766 to 1770 Americans matured rapidly in their constitutional theory. They began to question Parliament's role to legislate for the empire at all and to posit a theory of divided sovereignty.

ACTIVITY

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 Why would colonists have been happy about the repeal of the Stamp Act?
- 2 Why would politicians in England have been unhappy about the repeal of the Stamp Act?
- 3 Why was the Declaratory Act passed?

KEY SUMMARY POINTS

- The Proclamation Act of 1763 restricted colonial expansion west of the Appalachian Mountains, causing resentment among some colonists
- In order to pay for the debt of the French and Indian War and tighten its control of colonial revenue, the British Parliament passed four Acts: the Sugar Act, the Currency Act, the Quartering Act, and the Stamp Act
- The colonists protested against the Stamp Act as a direct tax, claiming that it was 'taxation without representation' and an overreach of Parliament's power
- Parliament repealed the Stamp Act but passed the Declaratory Act, which claimed Parliament's right to pass laws for the colonies on any matter it chose.

ACTIVITY

CONSTRUCTING AN ARGUMENT—ESSAY

Write a 600–800-word essay on one of the topics below. Your essay should include an introduction, paragraphs supported by relevant evidence from primary sources and historical interpretations, and a conclusion.

Alternatively, hold a class debate on one of these topics:

- 'The American colonists overreacted to a series of unpleasant but necessary measures, such as the Stamp Act.' Discuss.
- To what extent was British mercantilism to blame for tensions in pre-revolution America?
- 'The Sugar Act of 1764 marked a turning point in the American Revolution.' Discuss.



BLOODY PERSUASION

(1767-1772)



Source 4.01 *Landing of British troops at Boston harbour* by Paul Revere, 1768. This engraving depicts the arrival of British troops in Boston to suppress the unrest in the city after the passage of the Townsend Acts.

CHAPTER 4



‘Let this sad tale of death never be told without a tear: let every parent tell the shameful story to his listening children, till tears of pity glisten in their eyes, or boiling passion shakes their tender frames.’

—John Hancock

The repeal of the Stamp Act was not the end of British Parliament’s intent to tax the American colonies—nor was it the end of the colonists’ resistance. In 1767, British treasurer Charles Townshend proposed import taxes for goods shipped to the American colonies.

While these were not direct taxes, like the Stamp Act, the colonists did not like them. Tensions between Great Britain and her colonies increased. The Sons and Daughters of Liberty took more and more direct action, including protests and boycotts. Events in Boston turned bloody in March 1770, and reached a peak with the Boston ‘Massacre’. It appeared that the chances of the colonies restoring friendly relations with Britain were shrinking.

KEY EVENTS

- June 1767**
The Townshend Acts
- June 1768**
Seizure of the *Liberty*
- March 1770**
The Boston ‘Massacre’
- April 1770**
Townshend Acts repealed

KEY QUESTIONS

- How did the Daughters of Liberty mobilise society against the Townshend Acts?
- To what extent did the Boston ‘Massacre’ aggravate the tensions between Britain and the colonies?
- In what ways did individuals such as John Hancock and Samuel Adams inflame the situation in Boston from 1767 to 1770?

THE TOWNSHEND DUTIES KEY DEVELOPMENT

Revenue Act (1767): 'Whereas it is expedient that a revenue should be raised in your Majesty's dominions in America, for ... defraying the charge of the administration of justice, and for the support of civil government, in such provinces where it shall be found necessary ... and towards further defraying the expenses of defending, protecting and securing the said dominions ...'

→ Charles Townshend.

↓ **Source 4.02** A political cartoon, c. 1767, showing a colonist reading the royal proclamation of a tax on tea in the American colonies (part of the Townshend Acts).



The British Parliament continued to be upset over the unwillingness of the American colonies to contribute to the cost of their own defence. This was a view held by Charles Townshend, who was appointed treasurer in 1766.

Townshend came up with a solution: rather than getting revenue through direct taxation, he would get it through import duties. Goods shipped to America from Britain, or shipped to America by British merchants, would have a duty added for the specific purpose of raising revenue. This duty would be collected when the goods were unloaded in American ports, and the revenue would be used to pay salaries of colonial governors and other British colonial officials. To police Townshend's new duties, the Acts also established three new admiralty courts and granted further writs of assistance. The duties were expected to raise a modest £40,000 per year, although Townshend anticipated this amount would grow.

The Revenue Act of 1767—the formal title of the import duties—angered not only the merchants and traders but also the average colonist. The colonists recognised that the duties were an underhanded attempt to raise money for Britain. They also feared the expansion of the admiralty court system and the reimposition of writs of assistance. The move to pay colonial governors from this revenue also threatened American sovereignty. Since the colonial assemblies could no longer wield influence by withholding governors' salaries, the assemblies feared that the governors and their officials might start to act independently—and more in line with the wishes of the British Government.

The Townshend duties were charged on everyday items such as paper, paint, oil, glass, tea and lead. Colonial protesters decided that they would not pay the duties—and the best way to achieve this was by reducing demand. The protesters applied a trade boycott to English goods and

sought out local alternatives. Various Sons of Liberty chapters and local communities began signing **non-importation** agreements, pledging not to buy British goods and to boycott traders who sold them. Many colonial assemblies endorsed the non-importation pacts, and agreed to resist the duties when and where they could.

non-importation a pact or agreement in which individuals refuse to import, buy or accept goods from a foreign power



COLONIAL RESPONSES TO THE TOWNSHEND DUTIES

KEY DEVELOPMENT

Mercy Otis Warren (1774): ‘But as every domestic enjoyment depends on the decision of the mighty contest, who can be an unconcerned and silent spectator?’

TARRING AND FEATHERING



The Townshend legislation did not provoke the same level of violence as the Stamp Act. However, there are records of intimidation of royal officials and suspected ‘Tories’, and records of attacks upon them.

A preferred means of dealing with people who approved of import duties was tarring and feathering. The victim was smothered with pine tar—which was sometimes hot—and then covered in feathers and paraded through town. Occasionally the victim was stripped before being tarred and feathered. Once the tar dried, it was almost impossible to remove without also removing at least the top layer of skin. Although rarely fatal, tarring and feathering left many victims with permanent scarring.

← **Source 4.03** *A New Method of Macarony Making, as practised at Boston in North America, 1774.* Print showing two American revolutionaries tarring and feathering the tax collector. Gallows appear in the background.

There were about twenty instances of tarring and feathering between 1768 and 1770. It occurred mainly in New England, but sometimes in other colonies. For example, on 28 October 1769, a Boston mob tarred and feathered George Gailer for ‘allegedly inform[ing] against the sloop [sailboat] *Success*’.¹ Most people tarred and feathered between 1768 and 1770 were suspected of supporting the royal officials who were enforcing the Townshend Acts.

THE DAUGHTERS OF LIBERTY

KEY GROUP

Rather than tarring and feathering, the more typical response to the Townshend Acts was to boycott British goods. This was not just an attempt to evade the duties, but also to kill off the policy by sabotaging the profits of British companies, as had been done with the Stamp Act.

Colonial merchants were at the heart of the boycott movement. They formed associations and signed non-importation agreements urging shipping companies to stop importing goods from Britain, as well as pressuring stores to remove British items from their shelves. Meanwhile, citizens were encouraged to ignore those shopkeepers who continued to sell British goods in defiance of the boycott. (These shopkeepers were sometimes singled out for public ridicule, petty vandalism—and even beatings.)

Patriot an individual or group who supported the cause for independence from Great Britain

petition a document sent to a leader or government requesting or urging a particular course of action, such as the repeal of an existing policy or the implementation of a new policy

Just as they had during the Stamp Act campaign, women contributed to the non-importation agreements as consumers and producers. Calling themselves the Daughters of Liberty, they boycotted shops that sold imported goods and joined in shaming those that did not uphold the boycotts. They formed 'spinning clubs', repairing and recycling old clothing or producing new homespun garments. These spinning clubs gained public support and praise in newspapers. Some dealt with the boycott of tea—which was a widely popular beverage—by creating substitutes using rosehip, raspberry leaf, sassafras, chicory and other herbal mixes. Historian Alan Taylor observes that, 'Women's participation gave depth to **Patriot** claims to speak for the entire community'.²

One of the better known women's groups was formed in Edenton, North Carolina, in October 1774. Convened at the home of Penelope Barker and attended by fifty prominent North Carolinian women, the Edenton Ladies' Tea Party—as it was later described—drafted a **petition** pledging support for a continental boycott of British merchandise. Reports of the petition crossed the Atlantic and featured in several publications in Britain, where they both amused and appalled English readers. The news that American colonials were involving women in political events was considered farcical. The Edenton group provided little more than a patriotic gesture—but this was the first time in colonial society that a group of women signed a political petition.

➔ **Source 4.04** *A Society of Patriotic Ladies, at Edenton in North Carolina* by Philip Dawe, London, 1775. This satire shows a group of women in America pledging to boycott English tea.



Hannah Griffiths, *The female Patriots: Addres'd to the Daughters of Liberty in America, 1768*

Since the Men from a Party, on fear of a Frown,
 Are kept by a Sugar-Plumb, quietly down,
 Supinely asleep, and depriv'd of their Sight
 Are strip'd of their Freedom, and rob'd of their Right
 If the Sons (so degenerate) the Blessings despise,
 Let the Daughters of Liberty, nobly arise,
 And tho' we've no Voice, but a negative here,
 The use of the Taxables, let us forbear,
 (Then Merchants import till yr. Stores are all full
 May the Buyers be few and yr. Traffick be dull.)
 Stand firmly resolved and bid Grenville to see
 That rather than Freedom, we'll part with our Tea
 And well as we love the dear Draught when adry,
 As American Patriots, -- our Taste we deny,
 Sylvania's, gay Meadows, can richly afford
 To pamper our Fancy, or furnish our Board,
 And Paper sufficient (at home) still we have,
 To assure the Wise-acre, we will not sign Slave.
 When this Homespun shall fail, to remonstrate our Grief
 We can speak with the Tongue or scratch on a Leaf
 Refuse all their Colours, the richest of Dye,
 The juice of a Berry—our Paint can supply,
 To humour our Fancy—and as for our Houses,
 They'll do without painting as well as our Spouses,
 While to keep out the Cold of a keen winter Morn
 We can scree the Northwest, with a well polish'd Horn.
 And trust Me a Woman by honest Invention,
 Might give this State Doctor a Dose of Prevention.
 Join mutual in this, and but small as it seems
 We may jostle a Grenville and puzzle his Schemes
 Bot a motive more worthy our patriot Pen,
 Thus acting—we point out their Duty to Men,
 And should the bound Pensioners, tell us to hush
 We can throw back the Satire by bidding them blush.

← **Source 4.05** Cited in Louise V. North, Janet M. Wedge, and Landa M. Freeman, *In the Words of Women: The Revolutionary War and the Birth of the Nation, 1765–1799* (New York: Lexington Books, 2011), 6–7.

ACTIVITY

HISTORICAL SOURCES

Using Sources 4.04 and 4.05 and your own knowledge, respond to the following:

- 1 Describe who the intended audience of the poem is.
- 2 Identify four items that the Daughters of Liberty were willing to boycott, and what they would use as substitutes.
- 3 Discuss how this poem reflects the influence that colonial women had in opposing the Townshend duties. Describe what you can see in the cartoon and identify its likely message.
- 4 Identify four aspects of the cartoon that suggest a negative aspect of the Edenton women.
- 5 Discuss how this cartoon reflects the eighteenth-century assumption that women have no place in political matters.

JOHN DICKINSON'S 'LETTERS FROM A FARMER'

Not every response to the Townshend Acts involved violence and boycotts—two of the most important and persuasive responses were actually letters.

On 2 December 1767, the first in a series of twelve letters from a Pennsylvania farmer began to circulate around the thirteen colonies. It was common knowledge that they were the handiwork of Philadelphia lawyer and politician John Dickinson. However, they were published anonymously like many revolutionary essays and pamphlets of that era, in order to protect the author from possible repercussions.

Dickinson's 'Letters from a Farmer' became one of the more influential and widely read revolutionary writings. It earned him considerable acclaim and, eventually, a place in the Continental Congress. The main point of Dickinson's letters was that Britain had authority to regulate external matters such as trade, but its ministers had no right or power to interfere in colonial politics or to raise taxes in the colonies—such matters were the sole domain of the thirteen assemblies.

SAMUEL ADAMS' CIRCULAR LETTER

John Dickinson's 'Letters from a Farmer' influenced another of the great public letters of the revolution. The letter in question was written in February 1768 by Boston radical Samuel Adams, and it contained strongly worded criticisms of the British Government and its policies.

Among Adams' claims were that:

- the Townshend duties were unconstitutional
- the actions of royal officials were both inappropriate and illegal.

Adams called for a unified colonial response to force a return to the way it had been before the Townshend duties, with only the local assemblies responsible for taxes in America. His letter was endorsed by the Massachusetts colonial assembly and forwarded to the speaker of every other colonial assembly. It became known as the 'Massachusetts Circular Letter'.

➔ **Source 4.06** Harry Alonzo Cushing, ed. *The Writings of Samuel Adams* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1904), 8.

Samuel Adams, Massachusetts Circular Letter, 1768

KEY SOURCE

The House have [sic.] humbly represented to the ministry their own sentiments: that His Majesty's high court of Parliament is the supreme legislative power over the whole empire [and that because] the supreme legislative derives its power and authority from the constitution, it cannot overleap the bounds of it without destroying its own foundation ... His Majesty's American subjects, who acknowledge themselves bound by the ties of allegiance, have an equitable claim to the full enjoyment of the fundamental rules of the British constitution. It is an essential [and] unalterable right, in nature, engrafted into the British constitution as a fundamental law.

It is [the colonists'] humble opinion, which they express with the greatest deference to the wisdom of the parliament, that the acts made there imposing duties on the people of this province, with the sole and express purpose of raising a revenue, are infringements of their natural and constitutional rights ... as they are not represented in the British Parliament ... [Members of the] House are further of opinion that their constituents, considering their local circumstances, cannot by any possibility be represented in the Parliament ... being separated by an ocean of a thousand leagues.

ACTIVITY

KEY IDEAS—NO TAXATION WITHOUT REPRESENTATION

Using Source 4.06 and your own knowledge, respond to the following:

- 1 How does Adams view the authority of the British Parliament? Which document does he say must be accorded with?
- 2 What does Adams claim to be the right of American colonists?
- 3 What is his argument against the imposition of taxes and duties on America by British Parliament?
- 4 What is significant about Adams' suggestion that there should be no 'infringements of natural and constitutional rights' without political representation?

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 Why did Charles Townshend propose the Revenue Act of 1767?
- 2 Why did so many colonists oppose the Townshend duties?
- 3 How would the actions of the Daughters of Liberty have aided the Patriot cause?
- 4 How would political writings, such as those by John Dickinson and Samuel Adams, have aided the Patriot cause?

RISING TENSIONS

Earl of Hillsborough (1768): ‘His Majesty has thought fit that the Hands of Government in His Colonies should be further strengthened by the Addition of Two Regiments from Ireland, ... sent immediately to Boston, ... for the Purposes of supporting and protecting, ... the civil Magistrates & Officers in the Discharge of their Duty, and for inducing a due Obedience to the Laws of this Kingdom.’

SEIZURE OF THE *LIBERTY*

Tension rose in Boston in June 1768, when the cargo ship *Liberty* was boarded in Boston Harbor for a customs inspection. The *Liberty* was owned by John Hancock, a wealthy Boston merchant and suspected smuggler—who was also one of the Boston Sons of Liberty.

The *Liberty* arrived from Madeira, Portugal, with a cargo of wine, dropped anchor and had a customs inspector come aboard. Before the tightening of policy under the Townshend Acts, the usual procedure was for inspectors to ask the captain how much of his cargo was liable for a customs duty. Corrupt captains usually declared only a fraction of the cargo, before unloading the rest duty-free. This meant that merchants didn’t have to pay the full amount of duty, the customs inspectors avoided conflict (and sometimes received a bribe), and the ship’s captain was usually paid off for his dishonesty.

However, the customs official who boarded the *Liberty* believed in sticking to the rules. He demanded a full inspection of the cargo—and that duty be paid on every relevant item.

Furious, the skipper of the *Liberty* seized the customs officer, locked him in the ship’s hold and unloaded all of the cargo. The next morning, Boston was abuzz with the news, which prompted a customs official to order the seizure of the *Liberty*. A British gunship was sent to tow the *Liberty* from Boston Harbor to a holding yard—which prompted an angry mob to appear on the docks. Property was damaged, windows were broken—and two customs officials were beaten senseless. However, the violence did not prevent the *Liberty* from being confiscated, and John Hancock later received several writs for costs and unpaid customs duties.

Although John Hancock had been outwardly loyal to Britain, the incident hardened his views about British rule, and helped to raise his profile as a figurehead of revolutionary sentiment.

SENDING IN THE TROOPS

In England, Lord Hillsborough, the secretary for colonial affairs, had been outraged by Samuel Adams’ words in the Circular Letter. He declared the letter to be traitorous and dangerous, and ordered that colonial assemblies refuse to support it. Governors in America were directed to dissolve any assembly that refused to obey.

Hillsborough’s orders arrived in Massachusetts days after the *Liberty* affair. Tensions in Massachusetts were high. When the Massachusetts assembly voted 92–17 against withdrawing the letter from circulation, Massachusetts Governor Francis Bernard closed the assembly. As a result, Massachusetts was without a colonial government for much of 1768–69, which led to occasions of lawlessness and mob violence. In response, Hillsborough sent four regiments of soldiers to Massachusetts to restore order. The

DID YOU KNOW?

When colonists boycotted tea to avoid paying the duties, they had to search for alternatives, and this led them to another beverage crop from the Caribbean and South America: coffee. The tea boycotts of 1767–74 reduced Americans’ taste for tea and began the coffee culture that is seen in America today.

DID YOU KNOW?

Hancock’s *Liberty* was later forfeited to Royal authorities, who, ironically, used the ship as a customs vessel. In 1769 it was boarded, set alight and burned to the waterline by an angry mob in Rhode Island.

Lobsterback an insulting term for British soldiers, based on the red scars on their backs from floggings

soldiers began arriving in October 1768. Rather than having quarters in the town's fort, the soldiers camped in tents scattered across Boston Common.

Arguably, Lord Hillsborough's decision to post almost 2000 soldiers in a city of just over 15,000 civilians was ill-considered. Boston was a city with a history of difficult relations with the military. As a port city it had long been a target for impressment—the British Navy's practice of kidnapping civilian sailors and forcing them into service. Bostonians had rioted against impressment in 1741, 1747 and 1764. Now they had to share their city with a flood of **Lobsterbacks** (British soldiers).

The soldiers—who were poorly paid and therefore took up part-time work wherever they were garrisoned—competed for jobs with Boston's labourers in the midst of an economic slump. Their platoons paraded, drilled and shouted on Sunday mornings when respectable Bostonians were at worship. British soldiers were stationed on major thoroughfares, along the harbourside and outside government buildings. Off-duty soldiers filled the taverns, staggered through the streets drunk, cat-called and pawed the local women. The soldiers became both an annoyance and an ever-present reminder of British imposition on colonial life.



ACTIVITY

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 Explain how the seizure of the *Liberty* would have made the situation in Boston worse for Royal officials.
- 2 Explain how the decision to post soldiers in Boston would have increased tension rather than easing it.

DID YOU KNOW?

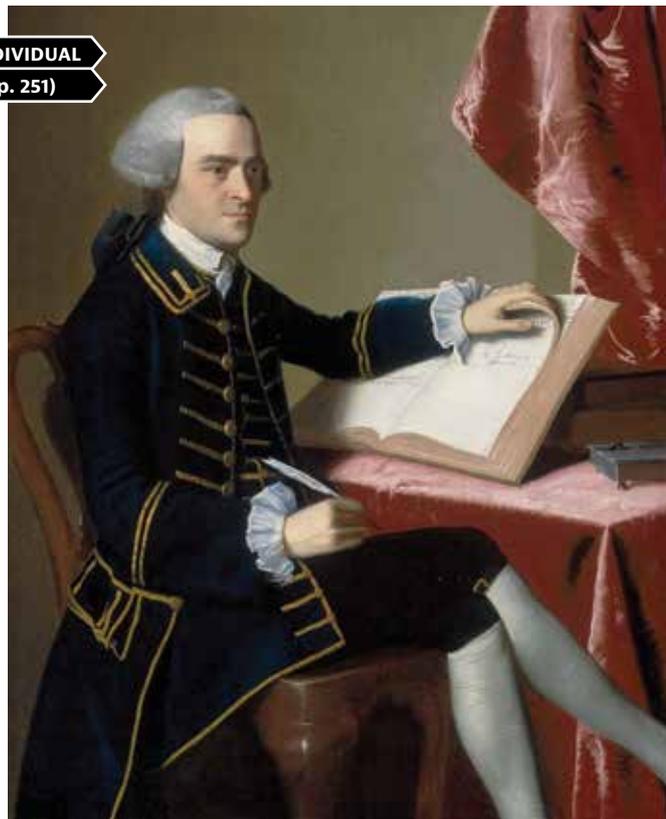
The British government confiscated the *Liberty*, refitted it and renamed it *HMS Liberty*. It was used to patrol for smugglers off Rhode Island. On 19 July 1769, the crew of *HMS Liberty* seized and towed two Connecticut ships to Newport, Rhode Island. In retaliation, a mob of Rhode Islanders confronted the captain, boarded, scuttled and later burned the ship as one of the first American acts of defiance against the British government.

↓ Image of an 18th century ship known as a sloop, similar to John Hancock's *Liberty*.



→ John Hancock.

KEY INDIVIDUAL
(see p. 251)



THE BOSTON 'MASSACRE'

KEY DEVELOPMENT

John Adams (1770): 'Facts are stubborn things, and whatever may be our wishes, our inclinations, or the dictums of our passions, they cannot alter the state of facts and evidence.'

In February 1770, Boston was rocked by the death of an eleven-year-old boy named Christopher Seider. Seider had been with a crowd of young boys who were harassing a customs official named Ebenezer Richardson. The boys had gathered outside Richardson's house and were throwing stones at it—and some stones smashed windows and landed inside the house. When one stone struck Richardson's wife, he furiously grabbed a musket and waved it at the mob from a window. This had no effect, so Richardson loaded it with birdshot and fired into the street. Most of the pellets hit Seider in the chest and injured him severely, and he later died of his wounds. Seider's funeral took place a week later. It was a bitter and turbulent affair, and was organised by Samuel Adams. It was attended by around 2000 people, including some of Boston's noted radicals.³

The death and funeral of Christopher Seider ignited a new wave of anti-British feeling around Boston. Richardson was arrested and charged with murder but this did little to calm the coarser elements in the city. Mobs prowled the streets, openly abusing soldiers in taverns or at their sentry posts. When a British soldier passed the business of rope-maker Samuel Gray, Gray asked him if he were looking for work and the soldier said that he was. Gray's response was '[Well] then, go and clean my shithouse'.⁴ On the evening of 5 March 1770 a British sentry named Hugh White, who was tired of young boys throwing snowballs at him and swearing at him, clipped one of them on the head with his musket. White returned to his post outside the customs house on King Street without the slightest idea about what he had just started.

Word of White's assault on the boy spread and a hostile mob began to form in King Street. Some of Boston's more notorious brawlers, including the rope-maker Samuel Gray and a part-African American dockworker named Crispus Attucks showed up. Both men were allegedly carrying clubs. The ringing of the town bell—ordinarily a fire warning—drew more people to King Street and before long there was a crowd of over 300 people. Fearing for White's safety, Captain Thomas Preston of the 29th Regiment deployed a small platoon of men with fixed bayonets, although he gave orders not to fire. The soldiers surrounded White, and the crowd pelted them with snowballs, rocks, oyster shells and other debris.

What is known for certain is that some of the soldiers opened fire and several of the mob were hit, five of them fatally. However, it is not clear what happened just before the shooting. There are four conflicting accounts of the shooting, which produce four different stories:

- Story 1:** An order was given.
- Story 2:** One of the soldiers fired intentionally.
- Story 3:** Members of the crowd shouted 'Fire!'
- Story 4:** A weapon was discharged by accident.

Regardless of what happened, four men lay dead, Gray and Attucks among them. Another man, seventeen-year-old Patrick Carr, was mortally wounded and died from

DID YOU KNOW?

Richardson was convicted of Seider's murder, but the following year he received a royal pardon and obtained a job at the customs service. Richardson remained a loathed figure in Boston, and left the city some time later.

ACTIVITY

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

As you read about the Boston 'Massacre' in the following pages, note down different beliefs and attitudes about the British soldiers in Boston in 1770.

his injuries nine days later. On his deathbed Carr testified to a doctor that 'he was a native of Ireland, that he had frequently seen mobs and soldiers called upon to quell them ... He had seen soldiers often fire on the people in Ireland but had never seen them bear [put up with] half so much before they fired in his life'.⁵ Despite the apparent actions of the mob in provoking the soldiers, Boston was soon thick with emotive propaganda as the rowdy elements demanded British blood.

➔ **Source 4.07** 'A Poem in Memory of the never to be forgotten Fifth of March, 1770,' printed in a Boston pamphlet in May 1770. Cited at Massachusetts Historical Society, www.masshist.org/database/2725?ft=Boston%20Massacre&from=/features/massacre&noalt=1&pid=34

A Poem in Memory of the never to be forgotten Fifth of March, 1770

Look into King-street, there with weeping eyes
Regard O Boston's sons, there hear the cries
There see the men lie in their wallow'd gore
There see their bodies, which fierce bullets tore
There hear their dying shrieks, their dying cries
Though but a few, before they clos'd their eyes
Before the living took the dead away
Those barb'rous monsters pierc'd them as they lay.
Where, like a current, Christian blood did flow
No one can tell what they did undergo
Step to the burying ground, and there behold
The bones of FIVE, which now in dust are roll'd
Young Seider's face we ought now to bemoan
And drop a tear on his unhappy tomb
He was the first that fell in a just cause
His murd'rer must now dye by Heaven's laws.
If bloody men intrude upon our land
Where shall we go? Or wither shall we stand?
Then may I wander to some distant shore
Where man nor beast had never trod before.

➔ **Source 4.08** *The Boston Massacre*, engraving after the painting by Alonzo Chappel, 1770.



Captain Thomas Preston, account of 5 March 1770

On Monday night about eight o'clock two soldiers were attacked and beat. [At] about nine, some of the guard came to and informed me the town inhabitants were assembling to attack the troops and that the bells were ringing as the signal for that purpose. I saw the people in great commotion, and heard them use the most cruel and horrid threats against the troops. In a few minutes after I reached the guard, about a hundred people passed it and went towards the custom house where the king's money is lodged. They immediately surrounded the sentry posted there and with clubs and other weapons threatened to execute their vengeance on him. I was soon informed by a townsman their intention was to carry off the soldier from his post and probably murder him. This I feared might be a prelude to their plundering the king's chest.

I immediately sent a non-commissioned officer and twelve men to protect both the sentry and the king's money, and very soon I followed ... so far was I from intending the death of any person that I suffered the troops to go to the spot where the unhappy affair took place without any loading in their pieces [guns] nor did I ever give orders for loading them. The mob still increased and were more outrageous, striking their clubs or bludgeons one against another, and calling out, 'Come on you rascals, you bloody backs, you lobster scoundrels, fire if you dare, God damn you, fire and be damned, we know you dare not'. At this time I was between the soldiers and the mob, endeavouring all in my power to retire peaceably, but to no purpose. They advanced to the points of the bayonets, struck some of them and even the muzzles of the pieces, and seemed to be endeavouring to close with the soldiers. They then asked me if I intended to order the men to fire. I answered no ...

While I was thus speaking, one of the soldiers having received a severe blow with a stick, stepped a little on one side and instantly fired, on which turning to and asking him why he fired without orders, I was struck with a club on my arm, which for some time deprived me of the use of it. Had it been placed on my head [it] most probably would have destroyed me. On this a general attack was made on the men by a great number of heavy clubs and snowballs being thrown at them ... Instantly three or four of the soldiers fired, one after another, and directly after three more in the same confusion and hurry. The mob then ran away, except three unhappy men who instantly expired.

← **Source 4.09** Cited in *An Impartial History of the War in America, Between Great Britain and her Colonies*, Volume 1 (Michigan: Gale Ecco, 2010), 190.

ACTIVITY**HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES**

Using Sources 4.07 and 4.09 and your own knowledge, respond to the following:

- 1 Summarise the two different perspectives of the events of 5 March.
- 2 Is one perspective more convincing than the other? Give evidence to support your answer.
- 3 Referring to both accounts, describe the social and political atmosphere of Boston in March 1770.

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

Read about the Boston 'Massacre' on pages 83–87 of this textbook and in other sources.

- 1 In your own words, describe what is known to have happened on 5 March 1770.
- 2 Why were there conflicting versions of the events of the Boston 'Massacre'?
- 3 Why would the Boston 'Massacre' be considered a cause of the American Revolution?

'THE BLOODY MASSACRE': A STUDY IN PROPAGANDA

satire a form of writing or cartooning using ridicule as a form of political and social criticism; common in eighteenth-century England

➔ **Source 4.10** Esther Forbes, *Paul Revere and the World he Lived In* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1999), 160.

DID YOU KNOW?

Revere later received a letter from an infuriated Henry Pelham, reading in part: 'When I heard you were cutting a plate of the late murder, I knew you were not capable of doing it unless you had copied it from mine.'

Paul Revere, a life-long resident of Boston, was best known as a skilled silversmith, though he also dabbled in drawing and engraving. From the late 1760s Revere produced several political drawings and **satires**, generally mimicking others produced in London. In the wake of the shootings of 5 March 1770 Revere produced a sketch—now held by the Boston Library—showing the position of the dead and injured in King Street. It is detailed enough to suggest that he was probably there. Several days later Revere constructed another image altogether, an engraving entitled 'The Bloody Massacre perpetrated in King Street'.

Esther Forbes on Paul Revere's engraving

Revere was primarily interested in the political aspects of his print, not in its art or accuracy ... In the engraving the soldiers are standing in a straight line, firing at an almost equally straight line of extremely non-belligerent inhabitants. An awkward space is filled in by exploding gunpowder and a bored mongrel dog. Captain Preston, with an evil grin and a sword, urges on his men ... That night every man fought for himself, but in the engraving the shooting is in a regular volley. Attacks is not black. There is no snow. The sky is blue—only a faint moon suggests that all this happened at night. The sign over the custom house, 'Butcher's Hall', is sheer propaganda. Yet Revere did what he wanted to do—produce, as fast as possible, a hair-raising Whiggish version of the 'bloody work in King Street.' He was so successful Josiah Quincy warned the jury which tried the British soldiers against 'the prints exhibited in our houses' which had added 'wings to fancy'.

Revere's engraving appeared three weeks after the events of 5 March and he put considerable effort into selling it around Massachusetts at eight pence a sheet. However, it was soon discovered although Revere had engraved the piece, he was not the original artist. Revere had plagiarised from a drawing by Henry Pelham. By the time Pelham got around to distributing his own image, Revere's version had already flooded the market.

Captain Preston and eight of his men were arrested, detained and committed to trial. Unsurprisingly, they found it difficult to find legal representation. John Adams, a lawyer from Braintree (also in Massachusetts), who had been a vocal opponent of the Stamp Act, agreed to defend the soldiers. Though such a decision might have been expected to ruin Adams' career, he was elected to the Massachusetts assembly a few months later, suggesting that anger over the 5 March shootings was not as strong among the upper classes as it was among commoners. Indeed, there was a feeling among the elites that the shootings were provoked by the mob, and by the victims themselves.

This sentiment formed the basis of Adams' defence. He fervently contended that the dead men were members of 'a motley rabble of saucy boys, negroes and mulattos, Irish teagues and outlandish Jack Tars,'⁶ meaning, in other words, a gang of drunks, African Americans, people of mixed race, rough farmers and sailors. The five dead men were known brawlers and rioters whose preferred evening activity was beating up 'Redcoats'. Adams' witnesses affirmed the poor behaviour of the mob, while Patrick Carr's deathbed testimony—that the soldiers endured much before firing—was accepted by the court. The accusation that Captain Preston gave an order to fire was, crucially, not upheld. The members of the jury, all of whom had been recruited from outside Boston, found Preston and six of his soldiers not guilty of murder. Two soldiers who had fired into the crowd were convicted of manslaughter but received the relatively light sentence of thumb-branding.



Source 4.11 The bloody massacre perpetrated in King Street Boston on March 5th 1770 by a party of the 29th Regt. Engraved, printed and sold by Paul Revere, Boston, 1770.

ACTIVITY

COMPARING HISTORICAL SOURCES

Examine the representation of the Boston 'Massacre' in Source 4.11 and find another primary source about the same event. Based on your knowledge of the event, which source do you find the most accurate?

CONTINUED DISORDER AND DESTRUCTION

Governor Wanton of Rhode Island (1772): 'I am now reduced to the necessity of addressing your Lordship upon a most disagreeable subject; the destruction of the schooner *Gaspee*, under the command of Lieutenant W. Dudingston, by persons unknown.'

ACTIVITY

CONSTRUCTING AN ARGUMENT—ESSAY

Write a 600–800-word essay on the topic below. Your essay should include an introduction, paragraphs supported by relevant evidence from primary sources and historical interpretations, and a conclusion.

Alternatively, hold a class debate on this topic:

- 'The so-called Boston 'Massacre' was just one example of the American revolutionaries winning the propaganda war against Britain.'

Despite some expressions of unhappiness at the verdict on the Boston 'Massacre', British soldiers remained garrisoned in Boston, and the city soon settled down, enjoying relative calm through 1771. This was largely because the Townshend duties were repealed by the British Government—on the same day as the 'massacre'.

The repeal was partly because the boycotts of British goods had worked—they chopped £700,000 from British profits. There was a new British prime minister, Lord North, and he was keen to approach colonial policy in his own way rather than imitate previous prime ministers. However, not all the Townshend duties were repealed, as North insisted on retaining the tea duty as a gesture of parliamentary sovereignty over the American colonies. This 'gesture' would prove to be very costly.

Although Boston was quiet, there were troublesome events in other parts of the colonies. In North Carolina, the bitter feud between the Regulators and the colonial government reached its peak in mid-1771. The Regulators were a provincial militia made up of farmers and craftsmen. Their anger was fuelled by gross inequality, high taxes, corrupt government officials and the lavish amount of money the governor had spent on his own mansion. Tax collectors were the main target of the Regulators, receiving regular harassment and beatings from them from the mid-1760s onwards. The Regulators were eventually crushed after a defeat at the Battle of Alamance in May 1771. Some members were arrested and executed, while other Regulators fled to other colonies or avoided blame by renouncing the group and signing oaths of allegiance.

The burning of the British ship *HMS Gaspee* also served to spread revolutionary sentiment in the colonies. The *Gaspee* was a Royal customs vessel sent to Rhode Island—a colony notorious for smuggling—at the beginning of 1772. In June, while chasing a small merchant craft, the *Gaspee* ran aground in shallow water. The local Sons of Liberty boarded the ship, wounded the captain and burned the *Gaspee* to the waterline. This was not the first attack on a British customs ship but it was by far the most destructive. Officials made a determined effort to identify the culprits and bring them to justice, even conducting a royal commission into the affair, but they were unable to make any arrests. News of the *Gaspee*'s destruction—as well as rumours that colonial suspects might be tried in England—caused a sensation throughout the American colonies.



Source 4.12 *Destruction of the Schooner Gaspee* by J. McKevin, engraved by J. Rogers, 1861.

Each tax dispute, trade duty, skirmish with soldiers or attack on a customs official heightened passions and made reconciliation all the more difficult. The period from 1767 to 1772 was awash with community action, determined individuals, new-found ideologies, propaganda and even violence. In 1773 colonial gesture politics—as well as another hated British law—would set the colonies on the road to revolution.

CHAPTER 4 REVIEW

KEY SUMMARY POINTS

- In 1767, Charles Townshend proposed import taxes for goods shipped to the American colonies.
- Daughters of Liberty introduced boycotts of taxed goods.
- John Dickinson and Samuel Adams wrote political letters that argued against Britain's right to tax the colonists.
- The Boston 'Massacre' caused further division between colonists and the British Government.

ACTIVITY

POPULAR MOVEMENTS—SUMMARIES

Read summaries of the following popular movements in the Glossary (found in your ebook):

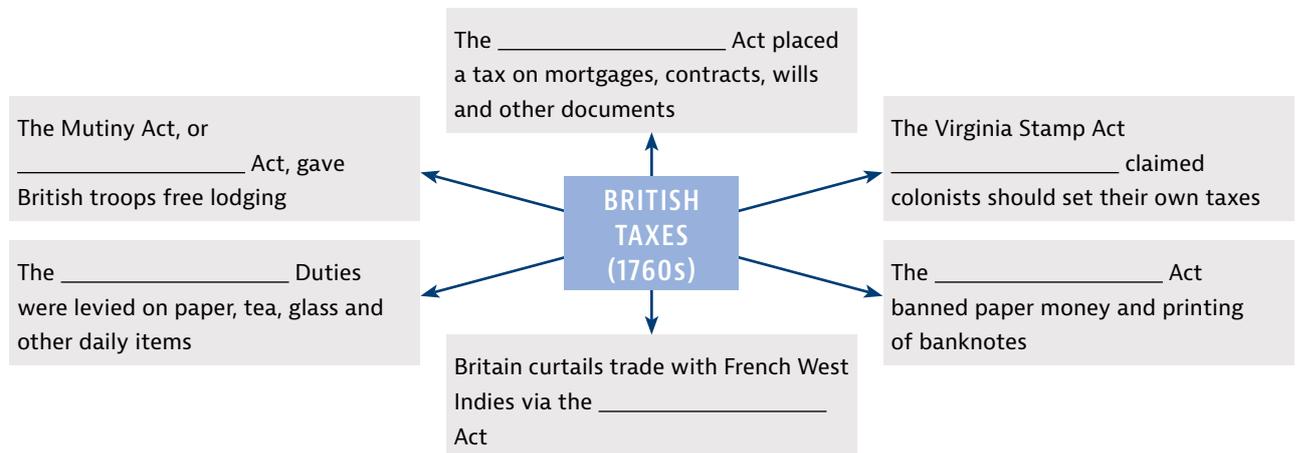
- Patriots
- the Sons of Liberty
- the Daughters of Liberty
- the Committees of Correspondence
- the Provincial Congresses.

Find an example of the activities of each group in Section A of this book.

CAUSES OF REVOLUTION—FILL IN THE BLANKS

Copy this diagram and fill in the blanks from the missing words listed below.

Missing words: Sugar, Quartering, Resolves, Townshend, Currency, Stamp



EXTENSION

Find out how much support there was for the American colonists in Britain after 1765. For example, look at the criticisms made by William Pitt, Edmund Burke and John Wilkes of British actions in relation to the thirteen colonies.



TEA AND CONSEQUENCES

(1773-1774)



Source 5.01 *The Able Doctor, or, America swallowing the bitter draught* by Paul Revere, 1774. This is a colonial critique of the Coercive Acts.

CHAPTER 5

‘The die is now cast; the colonies must either submit or triumph ... we must not retreat.’

—King George III

Following the Boston ‘Massacre’, the people of Massachusetts remained tense. After the destruction of British East India Company property at the Boston Tea Party in December 1773, the situation in Boston worsened for the colonists in 1774, when the British Parliament passed four Acts intended to restore order in the colony. The Acts involved:

- dissolving the local assembly
- installing a military governor
- increasing the number of troops
- closing Boston harbour.

Knowing that Massachusetts could never stand alone against England, radicals like Samuel Adams sought support from other colonies by making out that the plight of Boston affected all thirteen colonies. Adams had difficulty getting support because:

- there was disunity and distrust between the colonies
- some people believed that the people of Boston had brought the problem upon themselves.

Despite these problems, ideas and proposals travelled between the colonies, steered by the Committees of Correspondence. A meeting of colonial delegates was scheduled to discuss the events in Massachusetts. This rare attempt at an American consensus took root—and the Continental Congress that emerged would later become the first national government.

KEY EVENTS

- **April 1773**
Tea Act
- **December 1773**
Boston Tea Party
- **March 1774**
Boston Port Act
- **May 1774**
Massachusetts Government Act,
Administration of Justice Act
- **June 1774**
Quebec Act
- **September–October 1774**
First Continental Congress

KEY QUESTIONS

- To what extent did the Coercive Acts spark a greater unity among the American colonies?
- How did the Committees of Correspondence contribute to the spread of revolutionary ideas and information?
- In what ways did the passage of the Articles of Association by the First Continental Congress differ from previous attempts by the colonies to deal with Britain?



A TEMPEST OVER TEA

The Boston Gazette (20 December 1773): 'But, BEHOLD what followed! A number of brave & resolute men, determined to do all in their power to save their country from the ruin which their enemies had plotted, in less than four hours emptied every chest of tea on board the three ships ... into the Sea!'

THE TEA ACT, 1773

In the eighteenth century, the world's largest company was a trading corporation called the British East India Company. At the start of 1773—because of oversupply and a slump in European demand—the British East India Company had a massive surplus of Asian tea. With its future at risk, the company sought assistance from the British Government.

In response, in May 1773 the British Parliament passed the Tea Act—giving the East India Company direct access to colonial markets. This meant that the East India Company no longer had to deal with colonial tea wholesale merchants in England. Instead, they could ship tea straight to American cities, where it could be sold legally and at lower prices than the tea Americans had been smuggling in from the French and the Dutch. It seemed like the Tea Act would benefit both Britain and colonial consumers.

Contrary to popular belief at the time, the Tea Act did not charge a new tax on tea. The Townshend duty of 1767 was still in place, and it was a duty on tea alone. But even with the Townshend duty included, the wholesale price of British East India tea would be a remarkable nine pence per pound *cheaper* than the other tea being sold in the colonies. British parliamentarians expected that the price would be too attractive for the colonists. In particular, Prime Minister North believed that the colonists' principles about taxation and representation would fade away when they could buy cheap tea.

But Lord North did not count on the radicals whipping up anti-taxation sentiment in American cities. The Tea Act was portrayed as a sly attempt by Britain to import and sell a taxed commodity. The protest was led by the tea traders whose profits were threatened by the East India Company's entry into the American market. Boycotts were strengthened. Women pledged not to drink the 'king's brew', while men talked of tougher actions against royal officers and **Loyalists**. At a meeting in New York in October 1773, it was declared that 'the resolution lately entered into by the East India Company, to send out their tea to America subject to the payment of duties on its being landed here, is an open attempt to enforce the ministerial plan and a violent attack upon the liberties of America'. It was decided that the cargo of East India Company tea ships would not be unloaded—and as a result, the duty would not be paid.

THE BOSTON TEA PARTY TURNING POINT

When three tea-bearing ships arrived in Boston Harbor in late November 1773, it prompted a stand-off between local gangs, the shipping companies and the Royal governor—who just happened to be the much-despised Thomas Hutchinson.

When the first ship, the *Dartmouth*, dropped anchor on 28 November, Samuel Adams and Boston's Sons of Liberty called several well-attended public meetings. Merchants and dockyard workers—and even the owners of tea ships—were summoned to the meetings and given strict orders that the tea was not to be unloaded. Gangs kept



↑ *East India House in London* by Thomas Malton the Younger, c. 1800.

Loyalist an American who remained loyal to Great Britain before, during or after the revolution

watch on the docks to ensure compliance. Meanwhile Hutchinson, determined to implement London's policies, was working equally as hard to get the tea ashore.

Under the terms of the Tea Act, the *Dartmouth* was required to unload its cargo within twenty days of arrival, a deadline set to expire on 16 December. By this time it had been joined by two more tea ships. The *Eleanor* docked on 2 December. The *Beaver* docked on 15 December, one day before the *Dartmouth* had to be unloaded. Adams called another town meeting—this one by far the largest, with more than 6000 people attending. After dark a band of men—perhaps as many as fifty, all crudely dressed as Native Americans—slipped quietly towards Griffin's Wharf. The three vessels were boarded and their holds burgled; 342 chests of tea were raised to the deck and toppled into the shallow waters below. It was all done almost silently, under cover of darkness, to avoid attention from soldiers or officials. There was little violence, except for some jostling of the crew and one broken padlock.

George Hewes, eyewitness account of 16 December 1773, as told to James Hawkes in 1834

During the time we were throwing the tea overboard there were several attempts made by some of the citizens of Boston and its vicinity to carry off small quantities of it for their family use. To effect that object they would watch their opportunity to snatch up a handful from the deck, where it became plentifully scattered, and put it into their pockets.

One Captain O'Connor, whom I well knew, came on board for that purpose, and when he supposed he was not noticed, filled his pockets and also the lining of his coat. But I had detected him and gave information to the captain of what he was doing. We were ordered to take him into custody and just as he was stepping from the vessel, I seized him by the skirt of his coat ... By a rapid effort he made his escape. He had, however, to run a gauntlet through the crowd upon the wharf nine, each one, as he passed, giving him a kick or a stroke [hit].

Another attempt was made to save a little tea from the ruins of the cargo by a tall, aged man who wore a large cocked hat and white wig ... He had slyly slipped a little into his pocket, but being detected, they seized him and, taking his hat and wig from his head, threw them, together with the tea, of which they had emptied his pockets, into the water. In consideration of his advanced age, he was permitted to escape, with now and then a slight kick.



ACTIVITY

HISTORICAL SOURCES

Using Sources 5.02 and 5.03 and your own knowledge, respond to the following:

- 1 Describe the actions, attitudes and behaviour of the colonists in the written document.
- 2 Describe the actions, attitudes and behaviour of the colonists in the image.
- 3 How do the two depictions of the Boston Tea Party differ?
- 4 Why would the visual representation differ from the eyewitness account?
- 5 Using your broader knowledge of American history, explain why the Boston Tea Party has been celebrated as a revolutionary turning point.

← **Source 5.02** Cited in James Hawkes, 'Eyewitness account of the Boston Tea Party,' in *A Retrospect of the Boston Tea Party with a memoir of George R. T. Hewes* (New York: S. S. Bliss, 1834).

← **Source 5.03** *The Destruction of Tea at Boston Harbor* by Nathaniel Currier, 1846.

ACTIVITY

DEBATE

As a class, debate the topic below. Appoint affirmative and negative speakers (three of each) and a timekeeper. Each speaker has three minutes to make their case. The rest of the class should vote on which team was the most convincing.

Topic: 'The Boston Tea Party was more about vandalism than heroism.'

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

With your class, discuss why the Boston Tea Party provoked such different responses at the time. How does the event appear today, with the benefit of hindsight?

↳ Lord North, prime minister of Great Britain from 1770 to 1782, unknown artist, about 1779.



Coercive Acts passed in response to the Boston Tea Party, the Coercive Acts were imposed on Massachusetts in 1774 to set an example to other colonies. They comprised the Boston Port Act, Massachusetts Government Act, Administration of Justice Act and the Quartering Act

A similar tea-tipping incident occurred at Hubbard's Wharf, Boston, in March 1774, where sixteen chests of tea belonging to Davidson, Newman and Company were tipped into the water. Governor Thomas Hutchinson's determination to force the unloading of East India Company tea was a significant factor in both these events. There had been similar stand-offs in other colonies, but the governors and high officials had kept their distance and refused to intervene. Public demonstrations in New York forced ships to return to England—with their tea unloaded. In Philadelphia, the tea was brought ashore but left to rot in locked warehouses. In Charleston it was unloaded, then seized, warehoused and later auctioned off to help fund the war effort.

No other colony had responded as strongly and as destructively as Massachusetts. Its response drew a mixed reception. Some people in Massachusetts strongly praised the actions of the 'tea party'. John Adams, writing the following day, commented that 'there is a dignity, a majesty ... in this last effort of the Patriots that I greatly admire'.¹ Other people thought that it was an act of vandalism. One Boston newspaper suggested that whenever 'people rise to such a pitch of insolence as to prevent the execution of the laws, or destroy the property of individuals ... there is an end of all order and government'.² Benjamin Franklin called it 'an act of violent injustice', pointing out that the Bostonians had attacked a private corporation to protest against a government policy.³ Franklin, John Dickinson and others urged payment for the lost tea.

THE COERCIVE ACTS, 1774 KEY DEVELOPMENT

The colonial 'tea-dunking' prompted disgust in the commercial and political circles of London. British Parliament resolved to haul the Massachusetts' radicals into line, recover the cost of the lost tea and restore some order to New England. Lord North told the House of Commons that 'the Americans have tarred and feathered your subjects, plundered your merchants, burnt your ships, denied all obedience to your laws and authority; yet so [tolerant] has our conduct been that it is incumbent on us now to take a different course. Whatever may be the consequences, we must risk something; if we do not, all is over.'⁴

A series of **coercive acts** by the British Government soon followed.

First, on 30 March 1774, North's government passed the Boston Port Act, closing the docks to all private shipping. Four warships were deployed to lend muscle to the Act, blockading the entrance to Boston Harbor. All unapproved seagoing trade was stopped, as was deep-sea fishing in the Atlantic—despite deep-sea cod being an important food for Bostonians.

Second, on 20 May, the British Parliament passed the Massachusetts Government Act, which officially cancelled the colony's charter, suspended its assembly and replaced Thomas Hutchinson with a military commander, General Thomas Gage. Boston would remain under military rule until order was restored and the East India Company was compensated for the destroyed goods.

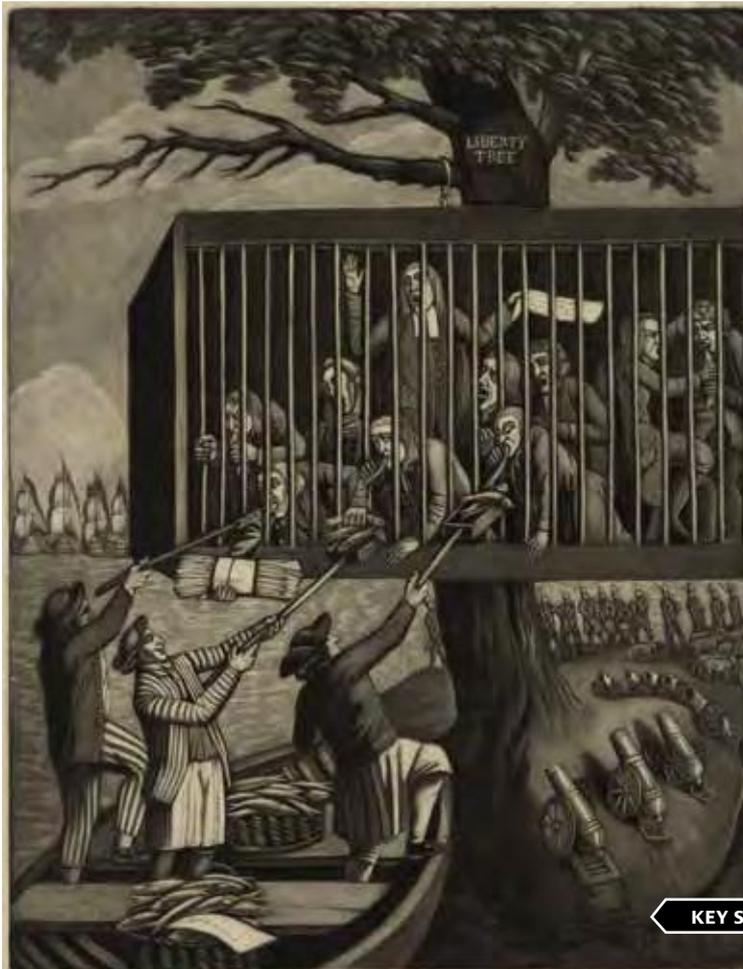
Third, anticipating further violence between mobs and soldiers, Parliament pushed through the Administration of Justice Act on 20 May 1774. This legislation gave the governor, at his discretion, the authority to send anyone charged with murder to trial in England, away from the potentially hostile juries and judges of New England. From the view of the radicals, the Justice Act was giving the Loyalists and British soldiers a licence to kill—so they referred to it as the 'murder act'.

Fourth, on 2 June, the Parliament updated the quartering provisions. The measures contained in the 1765 Mutiny Act (Quartering Act) remained—however, now governors were authorised to forcibly take possession of halls, barns and vacant buildings, although they still could not house soldiers in occupied homes.

COERCIVE ACTS, 1774

BOSTON PORT ACT	MASSACHUSETTS GOVERNMENT ACT	ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE ACT	'QUARTERING' ACT
<p>When: 30 March 1774</p> <p>What: Closed the port of Boston to all private shipping</p> 	<p>When: 20 May 1774</p> <p>What: Suspended the colonial government and replaced the governor with a military commander</p> 	<p>When: 20 May 1774</p> <p>What: Gave the governor the discretion to send those accused of murder to Britain for trial</p> 	<p>When: 2 June 1774</p> <p>What: Governors could forcibly take over halls, barns and vacant buildings for military quarters</p> 

ACTIVITY



HISTORICAL SOURCES

Using Source 5.04 and your own knowledge, respond to the following:

- 1 Identify three symbols or features that connect this image to the Coercive Acts.
- 2 Who do the men in the boat represent? Why are there fish in the boat?
- 3 The words on the paper held by the man in the cage (standing) read: 'They tried with the Lord in their Troubl [trouble] and he saved them out of their Distress.' What is the significance of these words?
- 4 How useful is this source for understanding the situation in Boston at the end of 1774? In your answer, refer to other sources of evidence and to historical interpretations.

← **Source 5.04** *The Bostonians in Distress*, attributed to Philip Dawe, London, 19 November 1774.

KEY SOURCE

THE QUEBEC ACT, 1774

News of the Quebec Act arrived in America in 1774, around the same time the four Coercive Acts were implemented. The legislation radically expanded the province of Quebec, extending its territory across the Great Lakes and south to the junction of the Ohio and Mississippi rivers. Quebec became almost three times as large as it had been, spanning the area now occupied by Illinois, Ohio, Wisconsin, Michigan and Indiana. Just as New France had done previously, Quebec dwarfed the thirteen colonies and boxed them in between the east coast and the Appalachian Mountains.

The legislation also changed the way Quebec was organised and governed. Since gaining the territory in 1763, British administrators had encountered many problems in Quebec, mainly because most of the population were French, Catholic, and spoke little or no English.

Since all elected and appointed officials in British colonies were required to swear loyalty to the Protestant faith, this effectively excluded Quebec's French Catholic population. The British had also introduced their own legal codes and systems of land management.

Parliament sought to strike a balance between British rule and French values. Among the compromises made was the continuation of French civil law for solving disputes, while British common law was used for criminal matters. The oath of office was replaced by an oath that made no reference to Protestantism. This meant that Catholics could hold political positions. Freedom of religion was affirmed in Quebec, and Catholic Jesuit missionaries were permitted back into the region for the first time since 1764.

ACTIVITY

HISTORICAL SOURCES

Using Source 5.05 and your own knowledge, respond to the following:

- 1 Photocopy or print a copy of this image.
- 2 Attach notes to relevant parts of the image, explaining the people, symbols, events and ideas depicted, as well as the tone of the representation.
- 3 Compare your annotated source with those of other students. Discuss what the representation communicates about perceptions of power relations between Britain and the colonies.

KEY SOURCE



Source 5.05 *The Able Doctor, or, America swallowing the bitter draught*, by Paul Revere, 1774.

Source 5.06



The Quebec Act upset Americans for two reasons. For Protestant New Englanders it raised the fear of French Catholicism. The views of many were summed up by Philip Reading's 1755 sermon to the Christ Church in Philadelphia.

➔ **Source 5.07** Philip Reading, 'The Protestant's Danger and the Protestant's Duty' (published sermon, 1755), 6.

Philip Reading

What shall we pursue in defence of our native rights and privilege, when these dogs of hell ... dare to erect their heads ... Shall we not rise up as one man and with united hearts and hands vindicate our [Protestant] religion and [British] liberties?

The Quebec Act revived the anger of a decade earlier when King George III's Proclamation of 1763 closed off the western territories to settlers and speculators. However, this time, the western territories seemed permanently lost. This closing off of territory generated anger on the frontier and also in the halls of power, as modern historian Gary B. Nash explains.

➔ **Source 5.08** Gary B. Nash, *The Unknown American Revolution* (New York: Viking, 2005), 171–172.

Gary B. Nash

The roll call of Virginia revolutionary leaders was also the roll call of Virginia speculators in western lands whose rights, they believed, had been obliterated by a series of policy decisions, legal judgements and parliamentary acts ... George Mason had watched the Proclamation of 1763 destroy first his beloved Ohio Company and then his hopes of obtaining 50,000 acres of Kentucky Land ... Richard Henry Lee [saw the Quebec Act thwart] his Mississippi Land Company's hopes to lay hands on 2.5 million acres ... George Washington had thousands of acres of bounty lands that he purchased cheaply slip from his hands ... Thomas Jefferson had invested in three land companies that would have given him 17,000 acres ... Patrick Henry saw five of his land ventures disappear like smoke.

➔ **Source 5.09** *The Mitred Minuet*, by Paul Revere 1774.



Historians since Charles Metzger in the 1930s have recognised that the Quebec Act was an important factor in the spread of revolutionary feeling beyond Massachusetts. The Coercive Acts, though more severe, were intended for one colony only. John C. Miller suggests that the Quebec Act 'gave colonial propagandists their juiciest plum since the Stamp Act'.⁵ The colonial press and propagandists angrily criticised it, forecasting all manner of disaster from having 'Papists' on their western doorstep. Some developed wild conspiracies, suggesting it was a deliberate British attempt to further suppress their rights. One engraving attributed to Paul Revere, called *The Mitred Minuet*, shows an unholy alliance between English politicians,

Anglican bishops and Catholics, hovering around the Quebec Act with the Devil providing advice. This rabid propaganda from the autumn and winter of 1774–75 prompted a new wave of anti-Catholic bigotry through most of the colonies.

Francis Jennings, *The Creation of America*

By two main provisions [the effect of the Quebec Act] was to set off Quebec distinctly from the tumultuous colonies farther south. Internally it legalised the Roman Catholic religion and permitted its professors to hold office, thus authorising the governor to appoint Catholics to his governing council—to the frustration of the tiny Protestant minority scheming to take rule into its own hands. Externally the act affected the frontiers by fixing the boundary line of the 1763 Royal Proclamation as Quebec’s boundary south to the Ohio River.

Both provisions worked well for Quebec. The majority [French] population achieved its desired freedom of religion and was grateful ... Trade with the Indians, Quebec’s only [constant] trade, was brought under control ... However so far as the rebellious colonies were concerned, the Quebec Act was one more outrageous ‘Coercive Act’ emanating from London. Liberties for Catholics aroused special rage in New England ... For the rebels, the Act was an evil device to win Canadian Catholics against the disaffected Protestant colonies.

← **Source 5.10** Francis Jennings, *The Creation of America* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 146–148.

ACTIVITY

HISTORICAL INTERPRETATIONS

Using Source 5.10 and your own knowledge, respond to the following:

- 1 According to Jennings, who was pleased and who was displeased by the Quebec Act, and why? Cite three statements from the document to support your view.
- 2 Why was the Quebec Act’s removal of the ban on Catholics holding office an annoyance for some people in the region and why did the Act create particular animosity in New England?
- 3 Locate an extract about the Quebec Act written by another historian. Note down similarities and differences between the extract you found and the Jennings extract. Which interpretation do you find most convincing?

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

After reading about the four ‘Coercive Acts’ and the Quebec Act, construct a table like the one below and fill it in.

DISCUSSION

With your class, discuss why many Americans objected to the Quebec Act. Was it a reasonable objection?

FEATURES OF THE COERCIVE ACTS AND THE QUEBEC ACT						
	ACT	DATE/YEAR	PROVISIONS	BRITISH AIMS	AMERICAN OBJECTIONS	SIGNIFICANCE IN REVOLUTION
COERCIVE ACTS	1 Boston Port Act					
	2 Massachusetts Government Act					
	3 Administration of Justice Act					
	4 Quartering Act					
	QUEBEC ACT					

BEGINNING TO DRAW BATTLE LINES

Dr Joseph Warren (1775): 'Short-sighted mortals see not the numerous links of small and great events on which the fate of kings and nations is suspended.'

BRITISH RULE IN BOSTON

➔ *General Thomas Gage*, by John Singleton Copley, ca. 1768.



By May 1774, Boston was under the control of British military governor-general Thomas Gage and his regiment. Gage was a veteran of the French and Indian War and a former military governor of Montreal, Canada. At first, the Bostonians, glad to be rid of Thomas Hutchinson, greeted Gage warmly. This warmth faded once the general began issuing arrest warrants for leading radicals and enforcing the closure of the port. Gage soon ordered troops to remove or destroy rebels' weapons and ammunition.

The events unfolding in Boston convinced many colonials that the British had decided to use military force to bring Massachusetts—and, by extension, the other colonies—into line.

The disbanding of the colonial assembly, the appointment of a military governor and the imposition of **martial law** were the acts of an aggressive invader, not the acts of a kind 'mother country'. Word spread to rural and remote areas about troops landing at Boston in their hundreds. It was only a matter of time, many believed, before this British iron fist would seize the countryside.

There was already some preparation underway for a colonial military response. Since the mid-1600s, almost all towns and villages had trained and supported small militias, mainly to protect residents from Native American tribes or, in border regions, from the French. Made up of teenage boys and young men (both married and single), these militias lacked the qualities of a professional army. They were poorly armed, wore no uniforms and did little or no marching. Their officers were elected democratically and decisions were made by consultation rather than command. Their combat experience consisted of brief skirmishes with Native Americans. They had, however, done regular training—some as often as twice a week—and had good shooting skills, local knowledge and community spirit.

In 1774, following the passage of the Coercive Acts, the Massachusetts assembly—by now meeting illegally outside Boston—ordered a count of militia units around the colony. The October census found only 17,000 militiamen, some of whom were sick or unfit to fight. Such a small militia would not be able to defend Massachusetts against serious attacks by British Redcoats. The assembly ordered an increase in recruits of 'minutemen'—men who were ready to fight at a minute's notice—as well as improvements to militia organisation and command.

martial law military government, involving the suspension of ordinary law

DID YOU KNOW?

Although the Massachusetts Government Act had dissolved the colonial assembly, they continued to meet illegally, referring to themselves as the Massachusetts Provincial Congress. The first president of the Congress was John Hancock, who became a 'wanted man' for accepting the role.

THE POWDER ALARMS KEY DEVELOPMENT

Minutemen were mobilised during the Powder Alarms, a series of war scares in late 1774. General Gage, on arrival in Boston, realised that war might easily erupt, given the tensions in the colony. To defuse the situation, Gage decided his first priority was to remove or destroy gunpowder stores scattered around Massachusetts. It was important that this operation be conducted in secret to prevent revolutionary activists from taking the powder first and hiding it in other locations. One of the first significant powder seizures, in Middlesex County, was successful and met little opposition. However, Gage's written instructions were later leaked to local Patriots, who spread the word that Gage planned to disarm American colonists.

This incident sparked rumour, paranoia and false alarms. There were reports of massive British troop mobilisations and the capture and imprisonment of Americans. Bands of minutemen and Patriots rallied to remove powder supplies, concealing them in forests, private barns or other buildings. Minutemen brigades were strengthened and Committees of Safety were formed to monitor British troop movements. 'Express riders' were nominated to spread the word to others should the British march on an area.

Faced with this volatile situation, Gage called a temporary halt to the powder seizures and troop patrols outside Boston. By December 1774, the atmosphere had calmed and Gage was once again able to send British regulars into rural Massachusetts to confiscate gunpowder.

ACTIVITY

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 How was the military control of Boston viewed by other colonies?
- 2 Why did General Gage want to remove the gunpowder stores in the towns around Boston?
- 3 How did the Patriots view Gage's actions?

KEY GROUP

 **Source 5.11** *A Minuteman Preparing for War*, engraving after Felix O.C. Darley, ca. 1850s.



COMMITTEES OF CORRESPONDENCE

KEY GROUP

Purpose of the Boston Committee of Correspondence, as decided by the town meeting (2 November 1772): 'Prepare a statement of the rights of the colonists, and of this province in particular, as men, as Christians, and as subjects; Prepare a declaration of the infringement of those rights; and Prepare a letter to be sent to all the towns of this province and to the world, giving the sense of this town.'

While some American colonists were making military preparations, others were considering how they could find enough support to stand against the British. Many looked to a well-established form of communication: the Committees of Correspondence. These groups had been active since the mid-1760s. They first formed in response to the Sugar Act. They became important during the boycotts against the Stamp Act and the Townshend Acts, but had become less active between 1768 and 1771. Samuel Adams revived the Boston Committee of Correspondence in 1772 with twenty-one members, and their use again quickly spread throughout New England, and then throughout the rest of the colonies.



➔ **Source 5.12** *A militia meeting, 1773, showing a meeting of the Committee of Correspondence.*

The committees consisted of groups of like-minded people circulating political grievances and ideas through letter-writing campaigns. They shared information on what British Parliament was doing and discussed ways to respond politically. At first, the committees were informal groups of friends.

From 1772 onwards, the committees often took the form of shadow colonial governments. On 12 March 1773, the Virginia House of Burgesses created the first colony-level Committee of Correspondence. It had fifteen members, including Patrick Henry and Thomas Jefferson. The other colonial governments quickly organised their own committees, and by 1774 there were many ongoing committees, dedicated to resisting the Coercive Acts and other aspects of British rule.⁶

The Committees' activity was not confined to North America. Many committees maintained close contact with correspondents in England, such as the controversial historian Catharine Macaulay. Macaulay was one of the few prominent female writers in the British Empire at the time, and was an advocate for **Republicanism**. Macaulay corresponded with James Otis and John Adams, both members of the Boston Committee of Correspondence.⁷

Not all American colonists had access to this network, which was generally confined to the urban middle and upper classes. People in rural and remote areas looked to their civic leaders, taverns and town meetings for news and guidance. Churches also played a role, although there was wide variation in the views they espoused; some preachers spoke of the evils of unrepresented taxation and the need for revolution. For example, a 1774 sermon from Massachusetts minister Gad Hitchcock declared that when people are abused by political power 'they have the ... right to transfer it to others'.⁸

Republicanism system of government based upon popular sovereignty, a degree of democracy and an elected president rather than a hereditary monarch

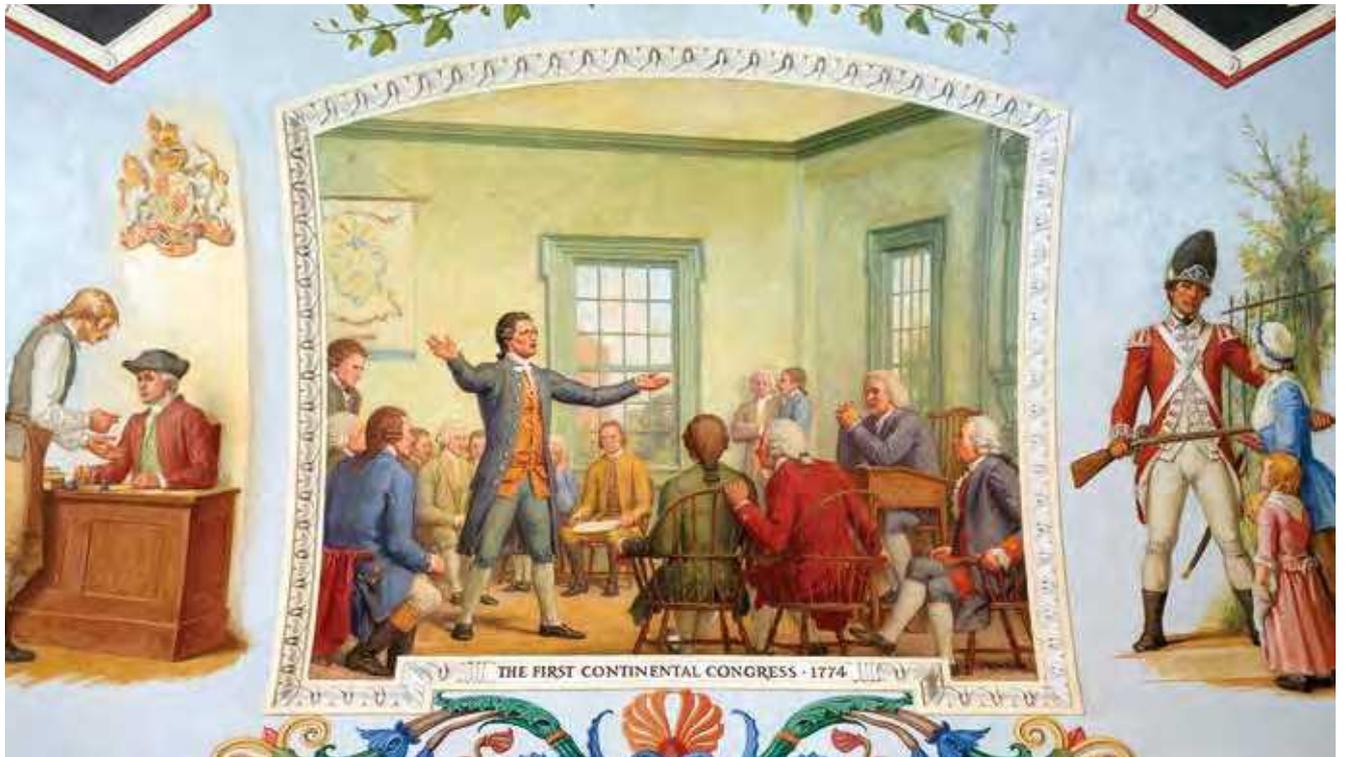
THE FIRST CONTINENTAL CONGRESS KEY DEVELOPMENT

Declaration and Resolves on Colonial Rights of the First Continental Congress (October 1774): ‘That they are entitled to life, liberty, and property, and they have never ceded to any sovereign power whatever, a right to dispose of either without their consent.’

Samuel Adams’ wish for an inter-colonial summit became a reality with the gathering of the First Continental Congress in Philadelphia in September 1774. The Congress initially consisted of fifty-five men from twelve colonies. Georgia, which needed British support to combat a native uprising on its frontier regions, chose not to attend. Many of the revolutionary notables attended:

- Samuel and John Adams of Massachusetts
- George Washington, Patrick Henry and Richard Henry Lee of Virginia
- John Jay of New York.

Not all men were elected by their legislatures—some attended because they had the desire and resources to do so. Nevertheless, the delegates were thought to be acting on behalf of their colonies.



[↑ Source 5.13](#) *The First Continental Congress, 1774* by Allyn Cox. Mural in the US Capitol Building, Washington.

The Congress debated the Coercive Acts and the ongoing conditions in Massachusetts. Many argued that Boston deserved its fate, thanks to its hot-headed mobs and radicals. Southern delegates, in particular, thought the actions of some Bostonians excessive. However, there was a broad consensus on several key principles. The Congress drafted and passed the Articles of Association, which contained an outline of grievances, as well as fourteen measures to be adopted by each of the colonies in attendance. The measures included a boycott of goods, which was by now a tried and true way to get Parliament’s attention.

➔ **Source 5.14** Continental Congress, cited in J. R. Pole, ed., *Revolution in America 1754–1788* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1970), 24–25.

redress setting right what is wrong

Continental Congress, 'Articles of Association,' 20 October 1774

Several late, cruel, and oppressive acts have been passed respecting the town of Boston and the Massachusetts-Bay, and also an act for extending the province of Quebec so as to border on the western frontiers of these colonies, establishing an arbitrary government therein, and discouraging the settlement of British subjects in that wide extended country ... to dispose the inhabitants to act with hostility against the free Protestant colonies ...

To obtain **redress** of these grievances which threaten destruction to the lives, liberty and property of his majesty's subjects in North-America, we are of opinion that a non-importation, non-consumption, and non-exportation agreement, faithfully adhered to, will prove the most speedy, effectual, and peaceable measure ...

That from and after the first day of December next, we will not import into British America, from Great-Britain or Ireland, any goods, wares, or merchandise whatsoever ... nor will we, after that day, import any East-India tea from any part of the world; nor any molasses, syrups, panels, coffee or pimento from the British plantations or from Dominica; nor wines from Madeira or the Western Islands ...

We will neither import nor purchase any slave imported after the first day of December next, after which time we will wholly discontinue the slave trade ... nor will we hire our vessels, nor sell our commodities or manufactures to those who are concerned in it ...

That a committee be chosen in every county, city, and town by those who are qualified to vote for representatives in the legislature, whose business it shall be attentively to observe the conduct of all persons [affected by] this association ... any person [who] has violated this association ... may be publicly known and universally condemned as the enemies of American liberty; and thenceforth we respectively will break off all dealings with him or her.

ACTIVITY

HISTORICAL SOURCES

Using Source 5.14 and your own knowledge, respond to the following:

- 1 Identify the criticisms of the Quebec Act made in the document, and list three measures to be taken by the colonies under the Articles.
- 2 Discuss the tone and message of the document. What threats are made to those colonists who act in breach of these resolves?
- 3 From your broader knowledge, discuss the likelihood of the success of the non-importation provisions. In your answer, refer to the boycotts of 1768–69 (see Chapter 4).

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 How did the Committees of Correspondence connect the colonists?
- 2 What were the aims of the First Continental Congress?

CHAPTER 5 REVIEW

KEY SUMMARY POINTS

- The Boston Tea Party was a reaction against the British Government's attempts to control imports of tea to the colonies.
- The British Government responded to the unlawful actions of the Boston Tea Party by passing the Coercive Acts. These Acts effectively isolated Boston and shut down the Massachusetts colonial government.
- The Quebec Act caused wider unrest, as colonists in all thirteen colonies viewed it as further restricting their expansion west of the Appalachian Mountains.
- Patriots organised Committees of Correspondence to keep various rebel groups informed of actions taken against royal and military authorities in Massachusetts.
- The First Continental Congress met to organise a united strategy for all colonies to deal with the British Government.

ACTIVITY

CONSTRUCTING AN ARGUMENT—ESSAY

Write a 600–800-word essay on one of the topics below. Your essay should include an introduction, paragraphs supported by relevant evidence from primary sources and historical interpretations, and a conclusion.

- 'The Coercive Acts were the primary long-term cause of the American Revolution.' To what extent is this a valid statement?
- To what extent did the Boston Tea Party trigger the revolution?

CONCEPT MAP

Create an annotated concept map linking the following events and people in this chapter:

- | | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------|
| • Tea Act | • Lord North |
| • Boston Tea Party | • General Gage |
| • Coercive Acts | • Samuel Adams |
| • Quebec Act | • John Adams |
| • Powder Alarms | • George Washington |
| • Committees of Correspondence | • Benjamin Franklin |
| • First Continental Congress | • Patrick Henry. |
| • King George III | |



BREAKING WITH THE MOTHER COUNTRY

(1775–4 JULY 1776)

'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.'

—Declaration of Independence

Tension continued to increase in Boston as preparations were made for war. The colonists were busy stockpiling weapons and organising militias. When Governor Gage attempted to seize the colonists' stores of gunpowder, it started a skirmish with local farmers at Lexington. This was the first battle in what became the American War of Independence.

Despite bitter fighting in 1775, many Americans were still unsure about being independent. Some colonists were afraid they would endanger the social fabric of their world if they rejected both the mother country and a monarchical system of government.

In January 1776, Thomas Paine published a very influential pamphlet called *Common Sense*. In the pamphlet, Paine argued that:

- England was corrupt
- monarchy was a flawed system
- American colonies could and should be independent.

Paine expressed his ideas in a clear and logical manner, and he convinced many people that the colonies need to separate from Britain. In July 1776, the Continental Congress passed a Declaration of Independence.

KEY QUESTIONS

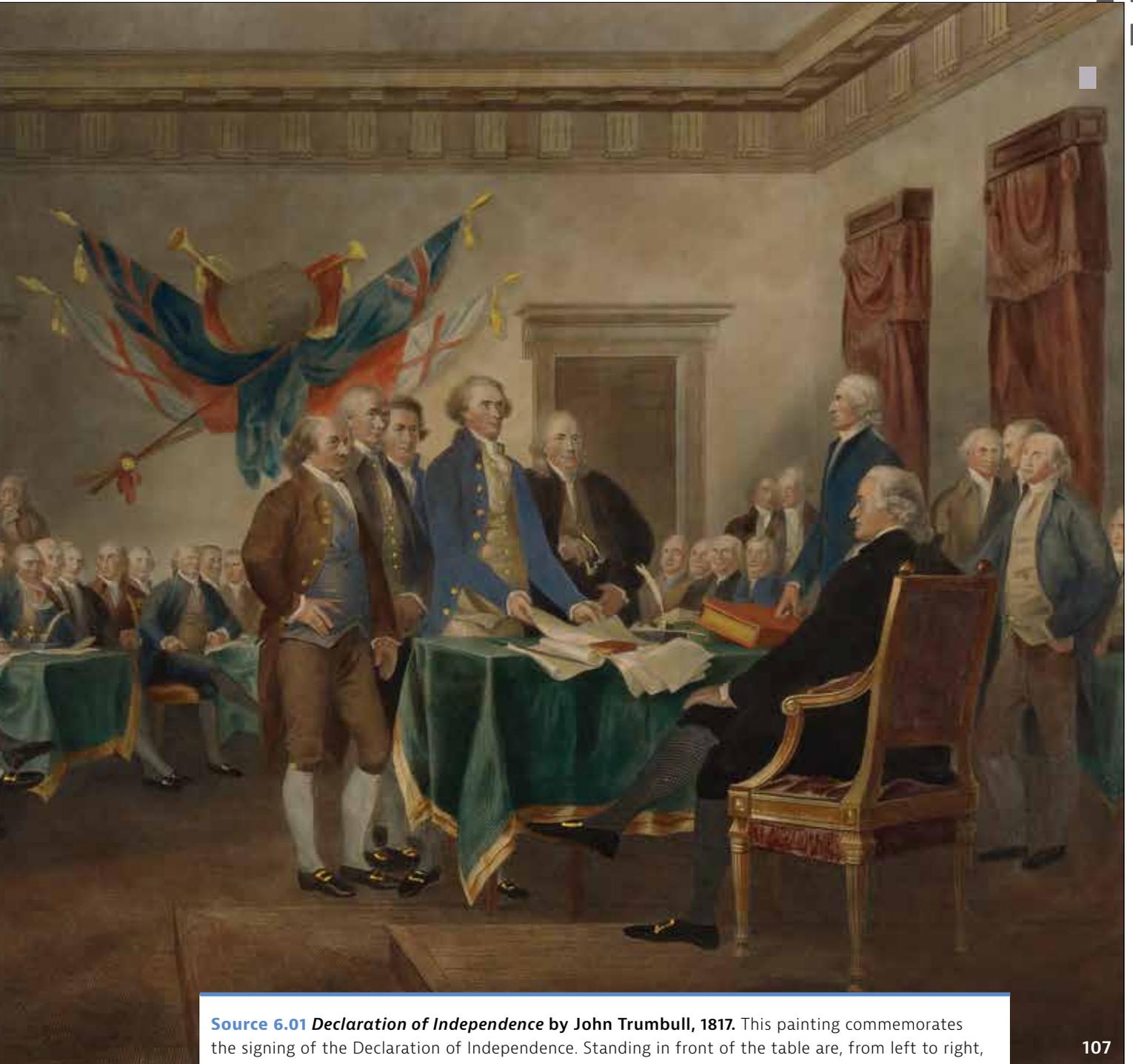
- How was Thomas Paine important to the spread of ideas that challenged British rule in the colonies?
- To what extent did the response of King George III to the Second Continental Congress contribute to the American Revolution?
- How did the ideas of the Enlightenment and Natural Rights influence the writers of the Declaration of Independence?

KEY EVENTS

- **April 1775**
Battles of Lexington and Concord
- **May 1775**
Capture of Fort Ticonderoga
Second Continental Congress
- **June 1775**
Battle of Bunker Hill
- **January 1776**
Thomas Paine publishes *Common Sense*
- **4 July 1776**
Declaration of Independence



CHAPTER 6



Source 6.01 *Declaration of Independence* by John Trumbull, 1817. This painting commemorates the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Standing in front of the table are, from left to right, John Adams, Roger Sherman, Robert Livingston, Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin.

THE WAR BEGINS

Ralph Waldo Emerson (1837): 'Here once the embattled farmers stood / And fired the shot heard round the world.'

LEXINGTON AND CONCORD KEY DEVELOPMENT

History and folklore agree that the first shots of the Revolutionary War were fired on a village field in Lexington, Massachusetts, in April 1775. Although the fighting at Lexington was small in scale—it was actually more a skirmish than a pitched battle—it was the result of a year of deep tensions between the British military and the colonists of Massachusetts. The civilian population had been gradually nudged onto a war footing by:

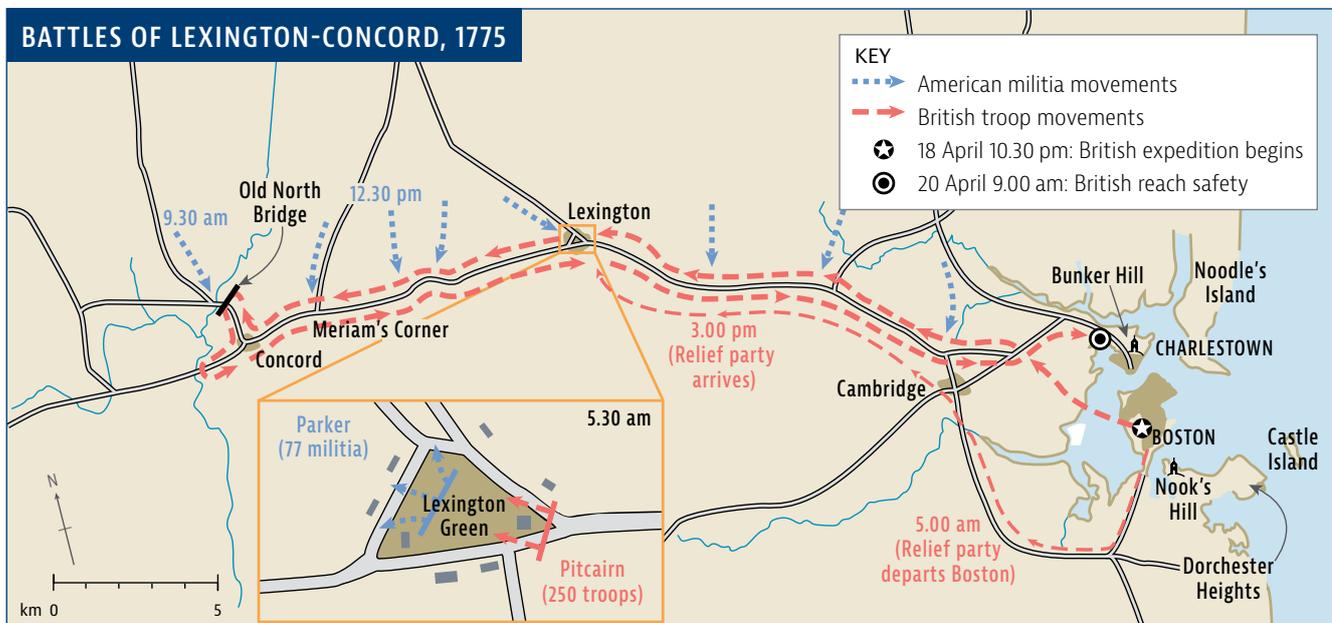
- colonial propaganda
- the Powder Alarms of 1774
- General Gage's seizing of ammunition stores.

The situation was ready to explode. Then General Gage ordered over 700 British regular troops to march on the town of Concord, thirty-two kilometres west of Boston, where there was a large store of gunpowder.

Travelling in separate units and moving west into rural Massachusetts, the British arrived in Lexington at dawn on 19 April 1775. The British troops were confronted on the village green by around seventy men, under the command of Captain John Parker, a veteran of the French and Indian War. With the colonials blocking their path, the British captain ordered his men to adopt an attack formation, then called on the rebels to disperse.

Parker stated later in his deposition to the Massachusetts government that 'upon their sudden approach I immediately ordered our Militia to disperse and not to fire.' Then a shot was fired—it is not known why or by whom—which led to an exchange of gunfire from both sides. The British soldiers killed eight colonial militiamen and wounded ten. Only one British soldier was wounded.

Source 6.02



The warning systems of the local Committee of Safety sent news of the fighting along the narrow road between Boston and Concord. In Concord, the militia was soon aware of the British advance. The first British troops arrived in Concord at 7:30am and immediately began searching for weapons and gunpowder—but with little success.

During the search, the British set fire to the courthouse and the blacksmith's shop. Historians don't know if these fires were accidental or deliberate—but they led some townspeople and militiamen to believe that the British were torching the whole town.

Meanwhile, hundreds of militia had gathered from Concord and the surrounding towns. The militia started shooting at the soldiers, who fired back at them, before the British were ordered to retreat to Boston. The casualties from Concord were the reverse of Lexington. Only two militiamen were killed and one wounded, while three British soldiers died and nine officers and soldiers were wounded.²



← **Source 6.03** *The Battle of Lexington* by Amos Doolittle, December 1775.

On the thirty-two-kilometre march back to Boston, the British troops encountered occasional but deadly guerilla attacks from militia in the forests along the road, as well as sniping from armed civilians. After two days, more than 130 men were dead—most of them British soldiers.

When General Gage awoke on the morning of 20 April he discovered that the outskirts of Boston were surrounded by a militia of 12,000 men. The militia had arrived overnight and, after hearing about the bloodshed at Lexington and Concord, they wanted revenge.

The colony of Massachusetts now appeared to be in a state of war.

THE BATTLE OF BUNKER HILL **KEY DEVELOPMENT**

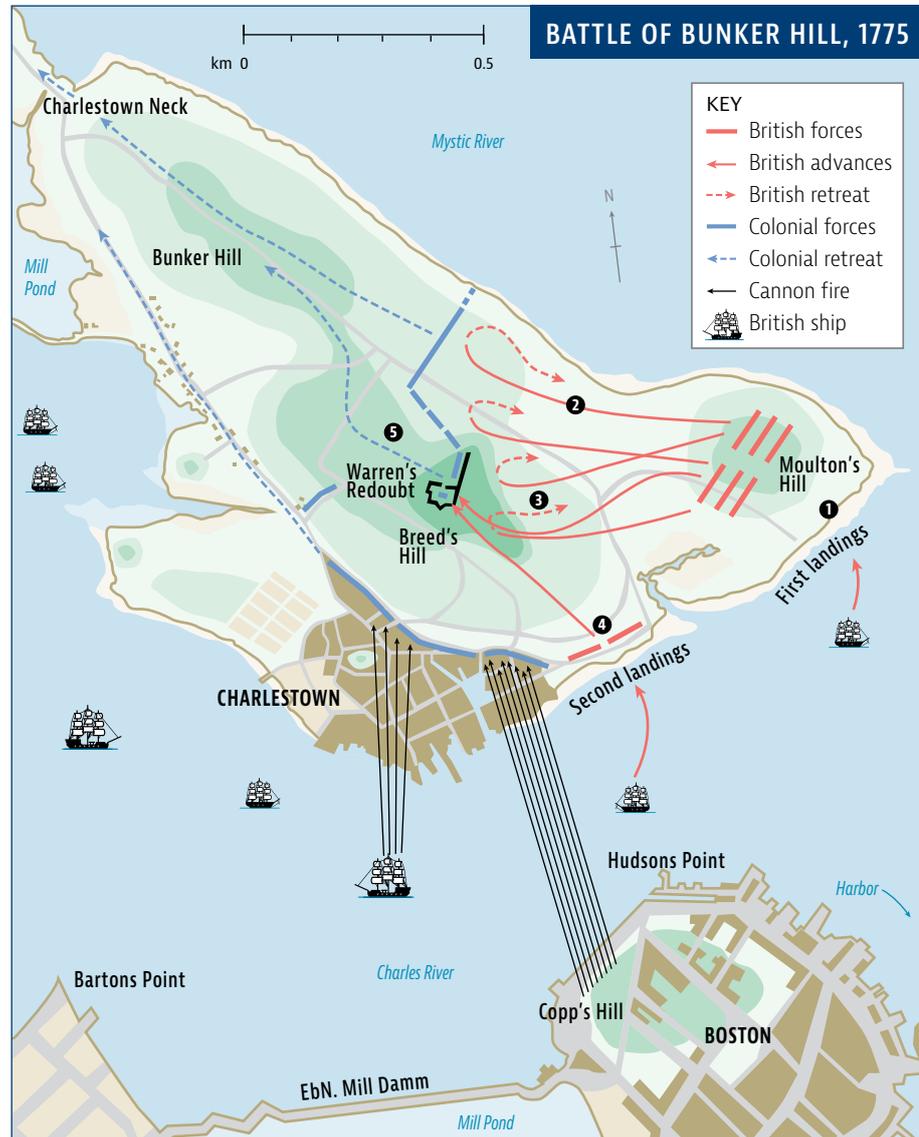
The next significant battle between the colonists and the British happened across the river from Boston, on a peninsula known as Bunker Hill. This peninsula included Bunker Hill, Breed's Hill, Moulton's Hill and several other rises. It was strategically important, because whoever controlled it could stop ships from entering Boston Harbor.

On 16 June, 3200 colonial troops under the leadership of Colonel William Prescott fortified the peninsula around Bunker Hill and Breed's Hill. On 17 June, General Gage landed 2200 British soldiers on the south coast of the peninsula. They attacked the colonial troops, who had dug in on the hilltops, including Breed's Hill. The fierce fighting only ended because the colonists ran out of ammunition and were forced to retreat.

The British took control of the peninsula—but at a cost of 228 dead and 826 wounded soldiers. The Battle of Bunker Hill was considered a British victory, but the colonists had showed that they would not be easily defeated.

➔ Source 6.04

- ➊ British troops land on Charlestown peninsula around noon.
- ➋ British troops attack colonial troops and are forced to retreat.
- ➌ British troops reform and attack Breed's Hill. Again, they are forced to retreat.
- ➍ More British troops land. They attack Breed's Hill a second time. This time they capture Breed's Hill.
- ➎ The colonial troops retreat to Bunker Hill. Almost out of ammunition, all colonial troops finally retreat to the mainland.



ACTIVITY

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 Explain the significance of Lexington and Concord to the American Revolution.
- 2 Why was the Battle of Bunker Hill so important militarily?

THE SECOND CONTINENTAL CONGRESS KEY DEVELOPMENT

The First Continental Congress had concluded in 1774, after deciding to review the situation the following year. It gathered again in Philadelphia in May 1775, with most of the previous delegates attending. There were also two notable newcomers: Benjamin Franklin, who had recently returned from London, and John Hancock. Massachusetts had been in a state of war with Great Britain for three weeks.

On the first day that Congress met, there was conflict between militia groups and British troops in western New York. There the Green Mountain Boys, led by Ethan Allen, and Connecticut militiamen, led by Benedict Arnold, had successfully attacked the British fort at Ticonderoga, stealing several cannons and raiding munitions stores.

The Second Continental Congress resolved to take control of the war effort. It declared the formation of a Continental Army. The Congress:

- turned the various New England militias surrounding Boston into its first regiment
- nominated George Washington as its commander-in-chief.

Washington was appointed commander-in-chief for two quite different reasons:

- he had experience fighting in a militia, unlike most delegates
- he was from Virginia, and his involvement might bring the powerful southern colony further into the revolution.

In July 1775, the delegates to Congress drafted and released a justification for their military action. It was called, ‘The Declaration of the Causes and Necessities for Taking up Arms’.

The Declaration of the Causes and Necessities for Taking up Arms

Our forefathers, inhabitants of the island of Great Britain, left their native land, to seek on these shores a residence for civil and religious freedom. At the expense of their blood, at the hazard of their fortunes, without the least charge to the country from which they [departed], by unceasing labour, and an unconquerable spirit, they effected settlements in the distant and inhospitable wilds of America, then filled with numerous and warlike barbarians.

Societies or governments, vested with perfect legislatures, were formed under charters from the crown, and harmonious commerce was established between the colonies and the kingdom [of] their origin. The mutual benefits of this union became, in a short time, so extraordinary, as to excite astonishment. It is universally confessed that the amazing increase of the wealth, strength and navigation of the realm arose from this source.



↑ **Source 6.05** ‘Declaration of the Causes and Necessities for Taking up Arms, Thursday, July 6, 1775,’ *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774–1789*, vol. 2, ed. Worthington C. Ford et. al. (Washington, DC., 1904–1937), 142.

↑ **Source 6.06** *Washington, appointed Commander in Chief* by Currier & Ives, c. 1876.

The Second Continental Congress would remain in session continually throughout the Revolutionary War. King George III considered the Congress to be illegal, and refused to read many of its petitions and declarations. The delegates to the Congress—particularly the more vocal delegates—were considered enemies of the British Empire and subject to charges of treason.

Loyalist cartoons in London often depicted delegates as sly traitors or as sheep, blindly following a treacherous bunch of radicals. The Congress was forced to flee Philadelphia twice because British soldiers were too near, and would meet together elsewhere briefly until the danger had passed.

The Congress also came under verbal attack from some of its own countrymen, who were unhappy with the inability of Congress to supply the army, and with its inability to control the various colonies.

DID YOU KNOW?

The Olive Branch Petition was sent to London with Richard Penn, a Loyalist descendant of William Penn, founder of Pennsylvania. King George III refused to grant Penn an audience or to receive the petition.

➔ **Source 6.07** 'Petition to the King, July 8, 1775', *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774–1789*, vol. 2, ed. Worthington C. Ford et al. (Washington, DC., 1904–1937), 158.

➔ **Source 6.08** 'Petition to the King, July 8, 1775', *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774–1789*, vol. 2, ed. Worthington C. Ford et al. (Washington, DC., 1904–1937), 159.

THE OLIVE BRANCH PETITION KEY SOURCE

Even after war had started in 1775, many of the delegates to the Second Continental Congress preached retreat and reconciliation rather than revolution and independence. To these moderates, a military confrontation between the thinly populated and under-resourced American colonies and the British military forces was doomed to fail—and would result in unspeakable suffering and devastation of property.

The best-known promoter of this moderate view was John Dickinson of Pennsylvania. By June 1775, Dickinson had raised enough support in the Congress for a petition for reconciliation—a final letter to George III pledging loyalty to Britain and seeking peace.

'Olive Branch Petition,' Second Continental Congress, July 1775

The union between our mother country and her colonies, and the energy of mild and just Government, produce benefits so remarkably important that the wonder and envy of other nations were excited while they beheld Great Britain rising to a power the most extra-ordinary the world had ever known ... That your Majesty may enjoy long and prosperous reign, and that your descendants may govern your Dominions with honour to themselves and happiness to their subjects, is our sincere prayer.

However, even in its call for peace, the Olive Branch Petition—as it came to be known—affirmed colonial rights and criticised the king's ministers for their mishandling of the colonies.

'Olive Branch Petition,' Second Continental Congress, July 1775

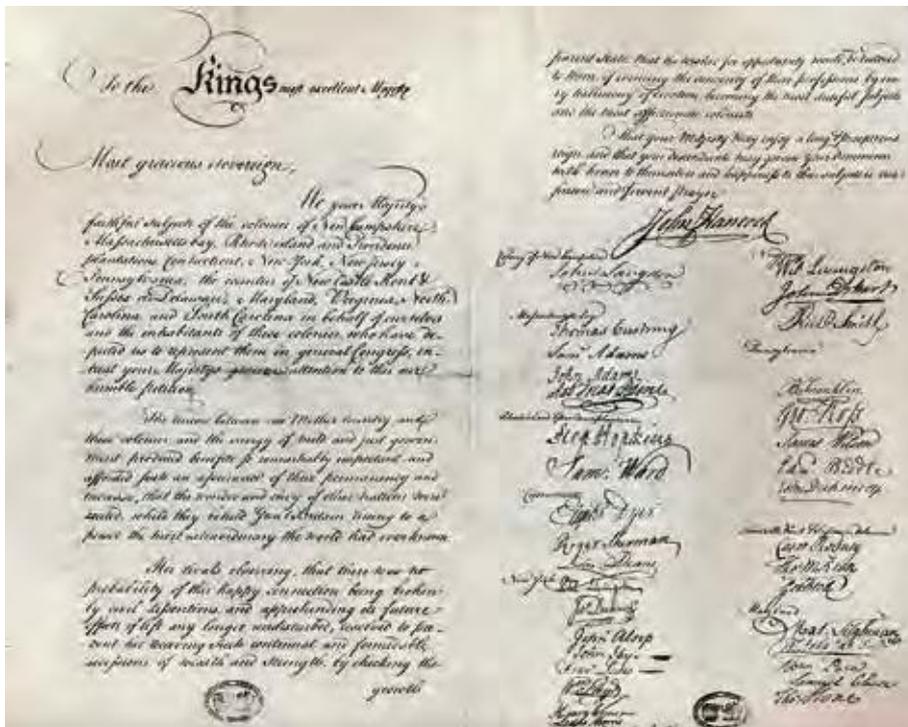
We shall decline the ungrateful task of describing the irksome variety of [tricks] practised by many of your Majesty's Ministers, the delusive pretences, fruitless terrors and unavailing severities that have ... been dealt out by them, in their attempts to execute this ... plan, or of tracing ... the progress of the unhappy differences between Great Britain and these Colonies, that have flowed from this fatal source. Your Majesty's Ministers ... have compelled us to arm in our own defence, and have engaged us in a controversy so peculiarly abhorrent to the affections of your still faithful Colonists that when we consider whom we must oppose in this contest, and if it continues, what may be the consequences, our own particular misfortunes are accounted by us only as parts of our distress.

Among those to sign the Olive Branch Petition were noted Patriots like John Hancock, Samuel and John Adams, John Jay and Patrick Henry—but, privately, few believed that the petition would bring about peace and reconciliation. John Adams said as much in a personal letter, noting his belief that continuation of the war was inevitable, and admitting that America was already forming a navy and a military strategy. Adams’ letter was intercepted by Loyalists and sent to England for analysis, arriving at about the same time as Dickinson’s petition.

It’s not surprising that the mixed messages contained in the petition and in Adams’ letter convinced George III that the petition was the work of deceivers and hypocrites—which prompted him to disregard it. The petition went on to make claims of renewed loyalty once ‘the present controversy’ was settled.

DID YOU KNOW?

Samuel Adams was one of few Americans to welcome the war with England. On hearing news of the fighting at Lexington, he is reported to have said, ‘What a glorious morning this is for America!’



Source 6.09 The ‘Olive Branch Petition’ to King George III from the second Continental Congress, 1775.

ACTIVITY

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 Identify and describe the two military actions taken by the Second Continental Congress in 1775.
- 2 Why did the Second Continental Congress send the Olive Branch Petition to King George III?
- 3 Why did George III refuse to accept the Olive Branch Petition?

CAUSE AND CONSEQUENCE

Discuss to what extent King George III helped to cause the revolution by refusing to receive colonial petitions.

TOWARDS INDEPENDENCE

John Adams (1776): 'It has ever appeared to me, that the natural Course and order of Things, was this—for every Colony to institute a Government—for all the Colonies to confederate, and define the Limits of the Continental Constitution—then to declare the Colonies a sovereign State, or a Number of confederated Sovereign States.'

INDIVIDUAL COLONIES CHOOSE INDEPENDENCE

Pauline Maier's 1998 book *American Scripture* explores the path to American independence, seeing it as a crystallisation of broad public opinion. Until late 1775, most Americans were reluctant to abandon their hopes of reconciliation with Britain, despite the brutal fighting in Massachusetts and New York. Their conversion to independence came gradually—and painfully—in the first half of 1776.

Maier's research tracks this change by examining ninety different sets of resolves for independence, drafted and passed by towns, counties and colonial assemblies around America. Unlike previous historians of the era, Maier does not focus entirely on the political ideology in these documents. She considers them a product of 'the grubby world of eighteenth-century American politics'.³ Maier places these declarations in the context of a 'complex political war', in which the independence movement struggled to win enough support to pressure the Continental Congress towards independence.

One of the sources Maier consults is the New Hampshire motion for independence, passed on 5 January 1776, several days before the first editions of Thomas Paine's *Common Sense* (see pages 115–117) appeared. The New Hampshire assembly not only declared its independence, but also produced the first written **Constitution** in the new nation. However, their actions were prompted by need as much as ideology. New Hampshire Governor John Wentworth had fled the previous year, leaving the colony with considerable uncertainty. The assembly's move towards independence did not please everyone: New Hampshire's western settlers denied the legitimacy of their new government, 'a little horn, growing up in the place where the other was broken off'.⁴

Despite this, New Hampshire provided an important precedent. Politicians in other colonies were inspired by New Hampshire's example and began to follow its ideas as they came to recognise that reconciliation with Britain was unlikely. In Halifax, North Carolina, all eighty-three members of the provincial assembly voted unanimously to authorise its Congressional delegates to vote for independence:

Constitution the foundation for a political system, outlining institutions, processes and limits of power

➔ **Source 6.10** 'Historical Miscellanea: An Early History of North Carolina,' *North Carolina Manual*, (North Carolina: NC Department of the Secretary of State, 1991–1992).

The Halifax Resolves, North Carolina, April 1776

It appears ... that pursuant to the plan concerted by the British ministry for [controlling] America, the king and parliament of Great Britain have [claimed] a power over the persons and properties of the people, unlimited and uncontrolled; and disregarding their humble petitions for peace, liberty and safety have made legislative Acts ... That British fleets and armies have been and still are daily employed in destroying the people and committing the most horrid devastations on the country. That governors in different colonies have declared protection to slaves who [would like to soak] their hands in the blood of their masters. That the ships belonging to America are declared prizes of war and many of them have been violently seized and confiscated ...

Resolved: that the delegates for this colony in the Continental Congress be empowered to concur with the delegates of the other Colonies in declaring independency ... reserving to this colony the sole and exclusive right of forming a constitution and laws for this colony

ACTIVITY**HISTORICAL SOURCES**

Using Source 6.10 and your own knowledge, respond to the following:

- 1 Identify three grievances of the North Carolina assembly expressed in the Resolves.
- 2 What instruction did the Resolves give to North Carolina's delegates to the Continental Congress?
- 3 What justification is offered in the Resolves for this final course of action?
- 4 Consider the statement about governors and slaves. What does this statement suggest about the beliefs and attitudes of North Carolinians towards slavery?

In May 1776 the Continental Congress moved that all colonies should establish state governments along whatever lines they saw fit. Delaware, New Jersey, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, Pennsylvania and Maryland all formed governments by the end of the year. Georgia, New York and Vermont followed in 1777. Their draft Constitutions contained many liberal innovations, but they also included limitations on voting such as property qualifications; women, slaves, Native Americans and indentured servants were banned from elections altogether. Apart from New York and Virginia, all other states ordered that only Protestants could hold public office. In Maryland, where conservatives held sway, there was no secret ballot, so voting was conducted verbally and in public.

Pennsylvania enacted the most democratic Constitution of the time. There was no governor, just a one-house legislature with a thirteen-man executive council. The legislature was elected every year and individuals were prohibited from serving more than four years out of every seven. Elections were held by secret ballot and all free men over the age of twenty-one could vote, provided they paid some form of tax. Bills passed by the legislature could not be enacted until one year after they had been made available for public reading—which prevented unpopular policies from being 'rushed through' into law.

DID YOU KNOW?

Hundreds of resolves were drafted by colonial assemblies, counties and town meetings between 1774 and 1776. Some urged peace and reconciliation—but most resolves expressed the need for Americans to defend their rights militarily.

DID YOU KNOW?

The Pennsylvania Constitution of 1776 was greatly admired by some French revolutionaries, who incorporated many of its structures and principles into the 1789 National Constituent Assembly.

ACTIVITY**CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING**

- 1 What were some common features of the new state Constitutions?
- 2 Why would the Continental Congress have wanted the colonies to set up their own state governments?

COMMON SENSE: THE POWER OF A PAMPHLET

If the town meetings and colonial assemblies were the engines of the independence movement, then Thomas Paine's radical pamphlet *Common Sense* was its manual. Released onto the streets of Philadelphia in January 1776, *Common Sense* at first



KEY INDIVIDUAL
(see p. 253)

↑ Thomas Paine.

DID YOU KNOW?

Thomas Paine's *Common Sense* earned its publisher, Robert Bell, a healthy £60 profit. When the author insisted that half this sum be donated to the Continental Army for the purchase of mittens, Bell refused.

DID YOU KNOW?

Ray Raphael's *Founding Myths* queries the circulation and impact of *Common Sense* in the American colonies. Raphael argues that the figure of 500,000 printed copies, which is often quoted in textbooks, is grossly exaggerated.

➔ **Source 6.11** The cover of Paine's pamphlet *Common Sense*, 1776.

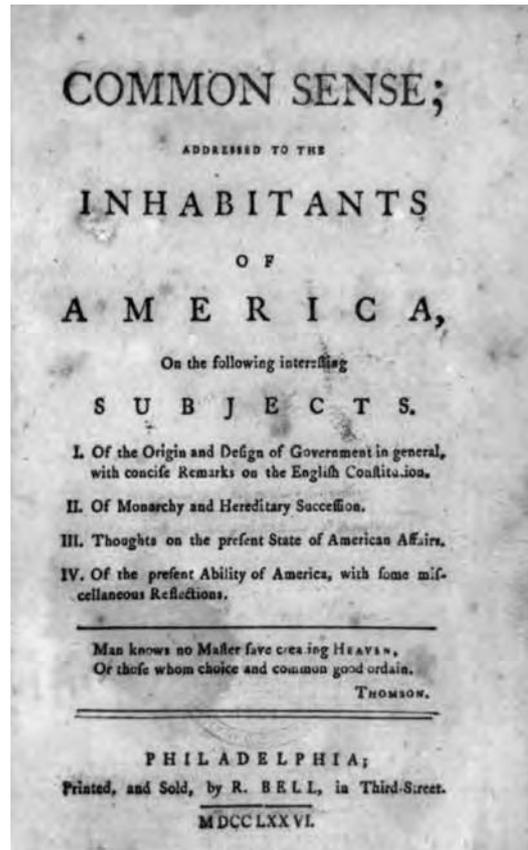
seemed unremarkable: just another political essay. The fifty-page booklet sold for two shillings a copy and made no mention of its author, Thomas Paine. Paine had arrived in Philadelphia in late 1774, a newcomer to America and half-dead from the typhus he contracted on the ship. Paine came from England with a written reference from Benjamin Franklin—which in Philadelphia was a powerful document—and managed to gain a position as editor of *Pennsylvania Magazine*. Yet his work at the magazine gave no indication of what he would achieve with *Common Sense*.

The first print run of Paine's pamphlet—1000 copies—sold within a fortnight. Copies of the second edition soon appeared in Boston, New York and elsewhere. As many as 100,000 copies were sold in the first year, one for every twenty or so adult colonists. *Common Sense* was a hugely popular text, its distribution approaching that of the Bible. And much like the Bible, *Common Sense* would be read as a kind of scripture in churches, schools, town meetings, military camps and private gatherings.

Common Sense addressed three broad themes. They were:

- the flawed basis of monarchy
- the situation in the colonies
- the future potential of America.

Although Paine's pamphlet was radical, it was not greatly original. Most of his ideas could be found elsewhere. But the key achievement of *Common Sense* was the way it gathered existing ideas and conveyed them clearly and forcefully, using language, rhetoric and analogies understood by ordinary Americans. As a writer, Paine avoided abstract political theories, deep philosophy and references to the ancient Greek philosophers. Instead, he wrote clear, logical statements with witty comments—and the occasional insult—that were easy for the colonial population to understand.



The success of *Common Sense* made Paine a household name. He was adored by Patriots, mentioned in high places, even celebrated in the salons of France. However, not everyone in America admired his work, and many were outspoken in their loathing of the pamphlet. John Adams, an opponent of British 'tyranny' but never a radical democrat, declared *Common Sense* to be 'a poor, ignorant, malicious, short-sighted crapulous mass', and described Paine as 'a mongrel between pig and puppy, begotten by a wild boar on a bitch wolf'.⁵ Loyalists treated the pamphlet with scorn. A Loyalist named James Chalmers wrote a spirited response titled *Plain Truth*, in which he called Paine a 'political quack' and described the English constitution as 'the pride and envy of mankind'.

Thomas Paine, *Common Sense*, January 1776**KEY SOURCE**

← **Source 6.12** Thomas Paine, *Common Sense* (Philadelphia: R. Bell, 1776).

Some writers have so [confused] society with government, as to leave little or no distinction between them ... they are not only different but have different origins. Society is produced by our wants and government by our wickedness. The former promotes our happiness positively by uniting our affections, the latter negatively by restraining our vices ... The first is a patron [supporter], the last a punisher ... Society in every state is a blessing, but government, even in its best state, is but a necessary evil; in its worst state an intolerable one ... There is something exceedingly ridiculous in the composition of Monarchy. It first excludes a man from the means of information, yet empowers him to act in cases where the highest judgment is required. The state of a king shuts him from the World, yet the business of a king requires him to know it thoroughly ... England since the conquest has known some good monarchs, but groaned beneath a much larger number of bad ones. No man in his senses can say that their claim under William the Conqueror is a very honourable one. A French bastard landing with armed bandits and establishing himself king of England against the consent of the natives is, in plain terms, a very paltry, rascally original. It certainly has no divinity in it ... Monarchy and succession have laid ... the world in blood and ashes. 'Tis a form of government which the word of God bears testimony against ...

I have heard it asserted by some that [since] America has flourished under her former connection with Great Britain, the same connection is necessary [for] her future happiness ... Nothing can be more [false] than this kind of argument. We may as well assert that because a child has thrived upon milk that it is never to have meat; or that the first twenty years of our lives is to become a precedent for the next twenty. But ... America would have flourished as much, and probably much more, had no European power taken any notice of her. The commerce by which she has enriched herself are the necessaries of life, and will always have a market while eating is the custom of Europe.

ACTIVITY**HISTORICAL SOURCES**

Using Source 6.12 and your own knowledge, respond to the following:

- 1 Photocopy or print the extract.
- 2 Using a colour code, highlight parts of the extract that discuss:
 - the nature of government
 - the nature of society
 - the monarchy (in general)
 - William the Conqueror
 - America's relationship with Britain
 - God
 - American commerce.
- 3 Create a text box for each of the seven themes, using a different colour for each. Write a few lines in each text box summarising Paine's view on that subject.

THOMAS PAINE: HISTORICAL INTERPRETATIONS

Thomas Paine's treatment by historians provides an interesting contrast to the praise given to George Washington, Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson. Essentially, historical interpretations of Thomas Paine paint two different portraits of the same man.

At the time of the revolution, Paine was viewed as a hero, a 'professional revolutionary', democrat and egalitarian. He is the skilful wordsmith of *Common Sense* who convinced thousands of doubting Americans of the need for independence.

However, a contrasting view of Thomas Paine was dominant through the 1800s and into the early twentieth century. In such accounts, Paine is a loathsome figure, shunned by mainstream historians and considered an ideological outcast. For these historians, Paine was an iconoclast—a destroyer of sacred things—as well as being an **atheist** and a dangerous troublemaker who ultimately did more harm than good. His disregard for social status and his malicious criticisms of organised religion were dangerously unsettling. He is held responsible for much of the violence and terror that later surfaced during the French Revolution, which he supported.

For decades after Paine's death, he was effectively written out of the revolution. Thomas Ayres suggests that 'no figure in American history has been more undeservedly ignored in our textbooks, a terrible oversight [for] one of our nation's most colourful icons'.⁶ Information about Paine and his influence are noticeably absent from most histories written before the twentieth century. Gilbert Vale, who wrote one of the very few 1800s accounts of Paine's life, said that *Common Sense* and other works were overlooked in many of the notable accounts of the American Revolution.



↑ **Source 6.13** *Mr Thomas Paine, Author of the Rights of Man*, by George Romney, c. 1800.

atheist a person who believes God does not exist; being declared an atheist in the eighteenth century could lead to social isolation

Gilbert Vale on Thomas Paine

We have now in our house a compact history of the revolution ... in which the same injustice is done to Mr Paine, for he scarcely occupies one line in the history ... a larger work does him the same injustice. In a biography of distinguished American characters ... a short notice was inserted of Mr Paine ... [The author] was obliged to alter [the text] ... not because the facts and sentiments were incorrect, but because the praise of Mr Paine would spoil the sale of the book.

← **Source 6.14** Gilbert Vale, *The Life of Thomas Paine* (New York: Published by the author, 1841), 137.

Today Paine is recognised as a significant revolutionary. Most modern historians, such as Alan Taylor and Robert Middlekauff, separate Paine's personal failings from his influential ideas. Taylor paints a picture of a failed man attempting to remake himself in a new country and, in doing so, shaping that new country himself.

Alan Taylor on Thomas Paine

Hard drinking, self-educated, cranky, and restless, Paine had accomplished little during the previous thirty-seven years of his checkered life. The son of a poor artisan, Paine had lost his job as an excise tax collector in England in 1774, the same year that his marriage crumbled and creditors auctioned his paltry household goods to pay his debts. At rock bottom, Paine sought a new start by migrating to the colonies.

...

[Paine] elevated the Patriot struggle in utopian and universal terms. By winning republican self-government, Americans could create an ideal society of peace, prosperity, and equal rights. That conspicuous success would, in turn, inspire common people throughout the world to seek freedom either through revolution at home or by migrating to America, 'an asylum for mankind.'

← **Source 6.15** Alan Taylor, *American Revolutions: A Continental History, 1750–1804* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc, 2016), 155, 157.

ACTIVITY**CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING**

- 1 What were the three themes covered in *Common Sense*?
- 2 How was *Common Sense* different from other political writing of that era?
- 3 In what way was *Common Sense* a cause of the American Revolution?
- 4 How has the view of Thomas Paine's contribution to the revolution changed over time?

LOYALISTS: THE TORMENTED 'KING'S MEN'

The debate over independence was not only of political significance. It had implications for American society—especially for those whose allegiance remained with Great Britain.

Even as war loomed, American society had begun to divide into two distinct groups:

- those who supported the revolution—called 'Patriots', 'Whigs' or 'rebels'
- those who remained loyal to Britain—called 'Loyalists', 'royalists' or 'Tories'.

These cracks first emerged during the Stamp Act crisis of 1765, when those who spoke in defence of the policy were persecuted by those who denounced it. A decade later, these social divisions had widened considerably, to the point where the Revolutionary War was, in some areas, also a *civil war*.

It is difficult to gauge how many Loyalists there were in America before July 1776. John Adams famously observed that one-third of the people supported independence, one-third remained loyal to England and the other third were indifferent. Recent historians suggest that the number of Loyalists has been exaggerated, both by propaganda at the time and by subsequent research. Robert Middlekauff's *The Glorious Cause* suggests Loyalists made up 19 per cent of the American population, their numbers being higher in the *Middle Colonies*.

civil war an armed conflict between organised groups or sections within a single nation

Middle Colonies the states of New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Delaware

➔ **Source 6.16** Robert Middlekauff, *The Glorious Cause* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 564.

Robert Middlekauff

[M]any tenant farmers of New York supported the king, for example, as did many of the Dutch in the colony and in New Jersey. The Germans in Pennsylvania tried to stay out of the Revolution, just as many Quakers did, and when that failed, clung to the familiar connection rather than embrace the new. Highland Scots in the Carolinas, a fair number of Anglican clergy and their parishioners in Connecticut and New York, a few Presbyterians in the southern colonies, and a large number of the Iroquois Indians stayed loyal to the king ... In no colony did loyalists outnumber revolutionaries.

Understanding why some Americans remained loyal to the crown is complex. On average, Loyalists tended to be wealthier than Patriots. Their families were often recent arrivals in America, they maintained closer ancestral links with Britain and were active within the Anglican Church. Many Loyalists held royal appointments or government posts, or owned businesses dependent on English contracts. The southern states—which produced raw materials such as cotton and tobacco—relied almost exclusively on Britain for the sale of their goods, so their loyalism may have been driven by economic need. Some divisions were simply personal. For example, the DeLanceys of New York are said to have supported the king because they had a bitter feud with the Livingstons, who were Patriots.

To the Patriot movement, the Loyalists were enemies of the revolution. As tensions increased in 1775, so too did harassment of—and attacks against—Loyalists. Incidents of tarring and feathering peaked in New England during that year, usually carried out against the so-called 'king's men'. Pressure was also brought to bear on neutral parties.

➔ **Source 6.17** James Volo, *Daily Life during the American Revolution* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2003), 59.

James Volo

[M]any persons who wished to remain neutral were driven from their homes in the countryside by the more radical elements ... Timothy Ruggles, chosen as a [lawyer] to General Thomas Gage, was attacked in the night, his horse had its tail cropped and was painted over its entire body ... Daniel Leonard ... avoided the mobs but had several musket balls shot through the windows of his sleeping chamber in the night.

By the time of the Declaration of Independence, many radical groups concluded that Loyalists must be removed from American life, their positions filled with patriotic individuals and their property seized for the public good. As a result, a civil war against Loyalists ran parallel to the war against Britain. Claude H. Van Tyne, one of the few historians to focus specifically on Loyalists, suggested that the revolutionaries had a job on their hands convincing many people *not* to support the king.

Claude H. Van Tyne

The great majority of men could be regarded as ... ready to stampede and rush along with the successful party; yet even among the masses, this traditional love of kingship had to be reckoned with and combated. Loyalty was the normal condition, the state that had existed and did exist; and it was the [Patriots] who must do the converting.

← **Source 6.18** Claude H. Van Tyne, *The Loyalists in the American Revolution* (New York: Macmillan, 1902), 2–3.

ACTIVITY

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

Create a T-chart or table comparing Loyalists and Patriots. Include their social, political, religious and geographical information about them.

↓ **Source 6.19** *The Savages Let Loose, or the Cruel Fate of the Loyalists*, unknown artist, 1783.



THE FINAL STEP TO SEPARATION

Lee Resolution, Second Continental Congress (1776): 'Resolved, That these United Colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and independent States, that they are absolved from all allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain is, and ought to be, totally dissolved.'

As the ideas in *Common Sense* were popularised, and the voices for independence grew louder through the early months of 1776, a faction within the Continental Congress began to push actively for separation from Britain. This group, with Samuel and John Adams and Richard Henry Lee at its head, believed that reconciliation was a hopeless dream. Its members began lobbying the moderate delegates, seeking their support for independence if such a motion should be put before the Congress. New advice flowed in from the colonial legislatures in May and June, including instructions to Lee that had been passed by the convention in his native Virginia on 15 May:

➔ **Source 6.20** 'Preamble and Resolution of the Virginia Convention, May 15, 1776,' in *Documents Illustrative of the Formation of the Union of the American States*, (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1927).

Resolution of the Virginia Convention, Williamsburg, 15 May 1776

Resolved unanimously: That the Delegates appointed to ... Congress be instructed to propose to that respectable body to declare the United Colonies free and independent States, absolved from all allegiance to, or dependence upon, the Crown or Parliament of Great Britain ... That a Committee be appointed to prepare a Declaration of Rights and such a plan of Government as will be most likely to maintain peace and order in this Colony, and secure substantial and equal liberty to the people.

DID YOU KNOW?

John Adams predicted that 2 July, the day Lee's motion was passed, would become America's national holiday. He was mistaken, although American independence certainly was decided on 2 July rather than 4 July.

Lee introduced this motion on 7 June 1776. There was some debate—but no vote could proceed, as many delegates had not received directions from their assemblies to vote either for or against independence. The delegates decided to consider the matter again in just under a month, after they had consulted with their own colonial assemblies. Anticipating the probable success of Lee's motion, Congress decided to have a suitable declaration of independence prepared. It appointed a subcommittee—Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, Robert Livingston and Roger Sherman—to complete this task.

THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE KEY DEVELOPMENT

The subcommittee decided that the first draft should be left entirely to Thomas Jefferson. Jefferson, a tall, reserved and softly spoken Virginian, was recognised both as a brilliant intellect and an eloquent writer. His first published work, *A Summary View of the Rights of British America* (1774) was probably the best written indictment—

an accusation of serious crimes—of English policy and expression of colonial rights. Equally important was Jefferson's combined knowledge of political philosophy and the unfolding events in America. He had read the 1689 English *Bill of Rights* and *Enlightenment* philosophers like Locke and Rousseau. He was familiar with the dozens of resolves and declarations that had been written since 1775. Decades later, in a letter to Henry Lee, Jefferson explained his approach to drafting the Declaration of Independence:

➔ Thomas Jefferson.

KEY INDIVIDUAL
(see p. 254)



Bill of Rights a formal declaration of the legal and civil rights of the citizens of any state, country or federation

Enlightenment period of intellectual curiosity and development from the mid-1600s to the late 1700s

Jefferson on the Declaration of Independence

Neither aiming at originality of principle or sentiment, nor yet copied from any particular previous writing, it was intended to be an expression of the American mind, and to give that expression the proper tone and spirit called for by the occasion. All its authority rests on the harmonizing sentiments of the day, whether expressed in conversation, in letters, printed essays, or in the elementary books of public right ...

Jefferson's declaration proved to be both an astute summary of American ideology and a superb piece of theatre. His four colleagues on the drafting committee were suitably impressed. They tinkered with some wording but left most of it unchanged. On 28 June the committee presented the draft to Congress, which was more heavy-handed with its editing. The southern delegates insisted that Congress delete Jefferson's condemnation of British support for the slave trade. A second vote on Lee's motion for independence passed on 2 July, twelve votes to none, with one abstention: the delegates from New York had not yet received their instructions, so cast no vote. Congress passed the Declaration of Independence itself on 4 July.



← **Source 6.21** 'From Thomas Jefferson to Henry Lee, 8 May 1825', *Founders Online*, National Archives, founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/98-01-02-5212

← **Source 6.22** *Writing the Declaration of Independence, 1776*, by Jean Leon Gerome Ferris.

Declaration of Independence, 1776**KEY SOURCE**

... 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 ...

Prudence, indeed, will dictate that governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes ... But when a long train of abuses ... evinces a design to reduce them ... it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such government, and to provide new guards for their future security ...

The history of the present King of Great Britain is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations [taking control of something without the right], all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over these states. To prove this, let facts be submitted to a candid world.

He has refused his assent to laws, the most wholesome and necessary for the public good ...

He has dissolved representative houses repeatedly, for opposing, with manly firmness, his invasions on the rights of the people ...

He has kept among us, in times of peace, standing armies, without the consent of our legislatures ...

He has combined with others to subject us to a jurisdiction foreign to our Constitution and unacknowledged by our laws, giving his assent to their acts of pretended legislation:

For quartering large bodies of armed troops among us;

For protecting them, by a mock trial, from punishment for any murders which they should commit on the inhabitants of these states;

For cutting off our trade with all parts of the world;

For imposing taxes on us without our consent;

For depriving us, in many cases, of the benefits of trial by jury;

For transporting us beyond seas, to be tried for pretended offences;

For abolishing the free system of English laws in a neighbouring province, establishing therein an arbitrary government, and enlarging its boundaries ...

For suspending our own legislatures, and declaring themselves invested with power to legislate for us in all cases whatsoever ...

He has plundered our seas, ravaged our coasts, burned our towns, and destroyed the lives of our people.

He is at this time transporting large armies of foreign mercenaries to complete the works of death, desolation, and tyranny already begun ...

He has excited domestic insurrection among us, and has endeavoured to bring on the inhabitants of our frontiers the merciless Indian savages, whose known rule of warfare is an undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes, and conditions.

In every stage of these oppressions we have petitioned for redress in the most humble terms; our repeated petitions have been answered only by repeated injury ...

 **Source 6.24** 'Declaration of Independence,' National Archives and Records, www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/declaration_transcript.html

ACTIVITY**HISTORICAL SOURCES**

Using Source 6.24 and your own knowledge, respond to the following:

- 1 Identify three revolutionary ideas found in the opening three paragraphs of the Declaration.
- 2 In your own words, summarise the Declaration's beliefs and attitudes about government, its purposes and the source of its power.
- 3 Select three of the grievances against the king listed in this document, then identify an event or British policy from the period 1763–75 that it might be referring to.

HOW RADICAL WAS THE REVOLUTION? HISTORICAL INTERPRETATIONS



↑ **Source 6.25** *The Spirit of '76* by Archibald MacNeal Willard.

➔ **Source 6.26** Daniel Boorstin, *The Genius of American Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), 74.

According to American folklore, the revolution was a pivotal moment in the Western tradition. The 'shot heard 'round the world', the emergence of 'the spirit of '76' and the Declaration of Independence were watershed events; they revealed not just the determined heroism of a people prepared to battle tyranny but the origin of a bold new republican ideal.

According to this view, the birth of the independent United States was also the birth of modern democratic society, a political system founded upon the belief that people could govern themselves.

However, some historians have asked whether the ideas and motives of the revolution were truly radical and groundbreaking. Louis Hartz, Robert E. Brown and Daniel Boorstin have argued that the revolutionaries embarked on a campaign to protect, bolster and re-energise British rights and traditions—in other words, they sought to protect and cleanse the existing system, not replace it. Boorstin has further contended that the Declaration of Independence was a legal document, full of technicalities rather than radical ideology, while the revolution itself was almost wholly political in nature and thus achieved quite easily.

Daniel Boorstin

The Revolution itself had been a kind of affirmation of faith in ancient British institutions. In the institutional life of the American community the Revolution thus required no basic change. This helps to account for the value which we still attach to our inheritance from the British constitution: trial by jury, due process of law, representation before taxation, habeas corpus, independence of the judiciary, and the rights of free speech, petition and free assembly, as well as our antipathy to standing armies in peacetime. There had been no considerable tradition in America of revolt against British traditions. The political objective of the Revolution, independence from British rule, was achieved after one relatively short effort. 1776 had no sequel and needed none: the issue was separation, and separation was accomplished.

British historian Hugh Brogan has adopted a similar view, arguing that the revolutionaries came to independence slowly and painfully. Much of their dissenting prose and rhetoric up to 1774 had been a defence of their rights as free British subjects, not expressions of radical ideas. Yet Brogan has also embraced the idea that the colonial experience—living in isolation, in the wilderness and on the frontier, at the very edge of civilisation—instilled in Americans a naturally independent spirit. When in 1775–76 they came to a realisation that the old system and its traditions could not meet their needs, they overcame the problem by constructing a new order, just as their forefathers had overcome problems constructing a new world.

Hugh Brogan

They expressed attitudes which everything in their experience as settlers had tended to stimulate and reinforce. Side by side their grandfathers had set up new polities; their fathers and then they themselves had enjoyed the consequent responsibilities and rewards of self-government ... Their democratic habits were so ingrained that one of the reasons for the failure of the rebel invasion of Canada in 1775–76 was that whenever the New England volunteers were given orders to attack, they held an ad hoc town meeting to decide in the manner they were used to, that is by voting, whether to obey or not. And even revolution was to them a practical matter, almost an institution, since they had been trained ... by the endless feuds with noble proprietors and royal governors and between the diverse interests within the colonies themselves ... They were the progeny of the Old World: an Old World whose social order was based ultimately on force, hierarchy and religion which condemned the pursuit of happiness as delusory ... The thirteen colonies no longer accepted these principles.

← **Source 6.27** Hugh Brogan, *The Penguin History of the United States* (London: Penguin Books, 1985), 176.

Historians such as Charles Beard, Carl Becker and Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr have had a different interpretation—namely that the revolution was primarily driven by socioeconomic conflict, both internal and imperial. The main sources of tension between Britain and America were the Navigation Acts and the mercantilist ideal that underpinned them. The merchant and commercial classes—along with their political representatives and propagandists—were the main engine of revolutionary sentiment. These elites were not drawn to revolution by breaches of legal or constitutional principles, but because their economic interests were put at risk by a shift in British policy.

CONTINUED ...

Howard Zinn has argued that the revolution should be seen as a successful bid by colonial elites to take power and profit away from Britain, while avoiding rebellion at home.

➔ **Source 6.28** Howard Zinn, *A People's History of the United States* (New York: HarperCollins, 1980), 56.

Howard Zinn

Around 1776, certain important people in the colonies made a discovery that would prove enormously useful for the next 200 years. They found that by creating a nation, a symbol, a legal unity called the United States, they could take over land, profits and political power from the British Empire. In the process they could hold back a number of potential rebellions and create a consensus of popular support for the rule of a new, privileged leadership.

When we look at the American Revolution this way, it was a work of genius ... the Founding Fathers created the most effective system of national control devised and showed generations of future leaders the advantages of combining paternalism with command.

Most recently, historians such as J.H. Elliott, Elizabeth Fenn, J.C. Miller, Daniel Richter, and Alan Taylor view the American Revolution as part of a more broadly defined set of economic, social, imperial and geographical upheavals of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Alan Taylor argues that the American revolution needs to be viewed within the context of larger continental and trans-Atlantic realities.

➔ **Source 6.29** Alan Taylor, *American Revolutions: A Continental History, 1750-1804* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2016), xv.

Alan Taylor

By adopting 'Atlantic' or 'Continental' approaches, recent historians have broadened the geographic stage and diversified the human cast of colonial America. New scholarship pays more attention to rival Spanish, French, Dutch, and even Russian colonizers. We also now understand that relations with native peoples were pivotal in shaping every colonial region and in framing the competition of rival empires. Enslaved Africans also now appear as central, rather than peripheral, to building colonies that overtly celebrated liberty.

Most books on the revolution and early republic, however, still focus on the national story of the United States, particularly the political development of republican institutions. That approach demotes neighboring empires and native peoples to bit players and minor obstacles to inevitable American expansion. Canada, Spanish America, and the West Indies virtually vanish when American historians turn to the period after 1783.

ACTIVITY

HISTORICAL INTERPRETATIONS

Using Sources 6.26–6.29 and your own knowledge, respond to the following:

- 1 What does Zinn (Source 6.28) argue were the true motivating factors for the American revolutionaries?
- 2 What kinds of evidence would you need to be convinced by Zinn's argument?
- 3 Compare Zinn's views with those of other historians mentioned. Who agrees with him? Who disagrees? Why or why not?
- 4 How does Alan Taylor (Source 6.29) reframe the American Revolution?
- 5 What groups does Taylor say must be considered when discussing the revolution?

CHAPTER 6 REVIEW

KEY SUMMARY POINTS

- The battles of Lexington and Concord and Bunker Hill moved Massachusetts into open war with Great Britain.
- The Second Continental Congress supported Massachusetts, sending George Washington to take over military control of the various militias as a united Continental Army.
- Thomas Paine's publication of *Common Sense* in January 1776 swayed many people to support the move for independence from Great Britain.
- Individual colonies set up new state governments and gave their delegates at the Continental Congress approval to declare independence.
- The Declaration of Independence stated the reasons why the new United States of America was severing ties with Great Britain.

ACTIVITY

CONSTRUCTING AN ARGUMENT—ESSAY

Write a 600–800-word essay on the topic below. Your essay should include an introduction, paragraphs supported by relevant evidence from primary sources and historical interpretations, and a conclusion.

- 'Britain brought the American Revolution upon itself.' Do you agree?

REVOLUTIONARY TRIGGERS—RANKING

Rank these events and conditions in order of their significance in triggering the revolution by 4 July 1776:

- Agitation by Sons and Daughters of Liberty
- Revolutionary work by the Committees of Correspondence
- The passing of state Constitutions
- Anger at the Stamp Act and other British policies
- The concept of 'no taxation without representation'
- The Boston Tea Party
- The Powder Alarms
- Poor decisions by King George III
- Paine's pamphlet *Common Sense*
- The events at Lexington and Concord.

Compare your ranking with those of other students.



SECTION B

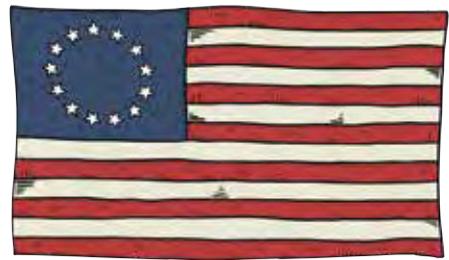
CONSEQUENCES OF REVOLUTION

- What were the consequences of revolution?
- How did the new regime consolidate its power?
- What were the experiences of those who lived through the revolution?
- To what extent was society changed and revolutionary ideas achieved or compromised?¹

'The world turned upside down.'

Folk song made popular in 1781

13 STARS & STRIPES



to represent the 13 states

'I hold it that a little rebellion now and then is a good thing.'

Thomas Jefferson, 1787



¹ Extract from the VCE History Revolutions Study Design (2022–2026) © VCAA, reproduced by permission.



3/5 OF A PERSON

what a slave was considered in the US Census under the Constitution

4435
BATTLE DEATHS

6188
WOUNDED

11,000+
PATRIOT DEATHS
ON BRITISH
PRISON SHIPS

'I have not yet begun to fight.'

John Paul Jones, 1779

'These are the times that try men's souls ...'

Thomas Paine, 1776

'We the People of the United States ...'



US Constitution, 1787

BATTLE OF YORKTOWN

14,000
AMERICAN &
FRENCH
FORCES



7000
BRITISH
FORCES

The allied French and American forces outnumbered the British forces two to one

'Who ... could imagine that the most violent local prejudices would cease so soon, and that Men who came from the different parts of the Continent, strongly disposed, by the habits of education, to despise and quarrel with each other, would instantly become but one patriotic band of Brothers.'

George Washington, 1783



EXPERIENCES OF REVOLUTION



Boston King and his wife, Violet (among thousands of African American Loyalists who boarded ships in New York bound for Nova Scotia, Jamaica, and Britain), November 1782:

'[P]eace was restored between America and Great Britain, which diffused universal joy among all parties, except us, who had escaped from slavery, and taken refuge in the English army; for a report prevailed at New York, that all the slaves, in number 2000, were to be delivered up to their masters, altho' some of them had been three or four years among the English ... Many of the slaves had very cruel masters, so that the thoughts of returning home with them embittered life to us.'



Nathan Hale (Patriot), 1776:

'I only regret that I have but one life to lose.'



George Washington, 1789:

'... Thee foundations of our National policy will be laid in the pure and immutable principles of private morality; and the pre-eminence of a free Government, be exemplified by all the attributes which can win the affections of its Citizens, and command the respect of the world ...'



Esther Reed (in An American Woman), 1780:

'On the commencement of actual war, the Women of America manifested a firm resolution to contribute as much as could depend on them, to the deliverance of their country. Animated by the purest patriotism, they are sensible of sorrow at this day, in not offering more than barren wishes for the success of so glorious a Revolution.'



Continental Army soldiers (in the Newburgh Petition), 1783:

'We have borne all that men can bear.'



Alexander Hamilton (Hamilton Federalist Papers), 1787: '... You are called upon to deliberate on a new Constitution for the United States of America. The subject speaks its own importance; comprehending in its consequences nothing less than the existence of the Union, the safety and welfare of the parts of which it is composed, the fate of an empire [which is] in many respects the most interesting in the world.'



Chickasaw chiefs (message of conciliation to Congress), 1783: 'When our great father the King of England called away his warriors, he told us to take your People by the hand as friends and brothers. Our hearts were always inclined to do so & as far as our circumstances permitted us, we evinced our good intentions ... It makes our hearts rejoice to find that our great father, and his children the Americans have at length made peace, which we wish may continue as long as the Sun and Moon, And to find that our Brothers the Americans are inclined to take us by the hand, and Smoke with us at the great Fire, which we hope will never be extinguished ...'



James Madison (at the Constitutional Convention), 11 July 1787: 'All men having power ought to be mistrusted to a certain degree.'



Thomas Jefferson (Declaration of Independence), 1776: '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.'



Patrick Henry (Anti-Federalist), 1788: 'Guard with jealous attention the public liberty.'

ACTIVITY

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

- 1 Identify the people on these pages as either
 - a significant individual, or
 - representing a social group.
- 2 Explain in your own words what each are saying in the quote.
- 3 For each significant individual, discuss how their historical perspective helped influence and change society.
- 4 For each social group, discuss how their historical perspective was influenced by the challenges and changes in society.



- 23 July 1778
France declares war on Britain
- 6 February 1778
Alliance with France
- 15 November 1777
Articles of Confederation adopted by Congress
- 7 October 1777
Battle of Saratoga
- 26 December 1776
Battle of Trenton
- 4 July 1776
Declaration of Independence



KEY EVENT

1776

4 JULY 1776

The Declaration of Independence is adopted by the Second Continental Congress

3–20 JULY 1776

Days after the Declaration of Independence passes on the 4th, British warships menace New York. A brief peace conference between Washington and British officers fails

27 AUGUST 1776

Washington's army is defeated, scattered and forced to flee west after the Battle of Long Island. New York is left undefended, and soon taken by the British

16 SEPTEMBER 1776

The Battle of Harlem Heights, the burning of New York and the execution of Nathan Hale

28 SEPTEMBER 1776

Pennsylvania passes the first state Constitution since independence. Other states soon follow, including Maryland, North Carolina, Georgia and New York

26 OCTOBER 1776

Benjamin Franklin departs for Europe to seek help from (and alliances with) foreign powers

NOVEMBER 1776

After a string of costly defeats, Washington moves his army further west to the Delaware River, with the forces of Lord Cornwallis in pursuit

12 DECEMBER 1776

The Continental Congress, under threat from British forces, adjourns in Philadelphia to move to Baltimore

25 DECEMBER 1776

'The Crossing of the Delaware': Washington leads the Continental Army across the frozen Delaware River on Christmas night



KEY EVENT

1777

3 JANUARY 1777

The Continental Army follows the victory at Trenton with a victory against a small British contingent at Princeton

12 MARCH 1777

The Continental Congress returns to Philadelphia after Washington's military successes in New Jersey

14 JUNE 1777

Congress approves a new national flag of thirteen stars and thirteen stripes, although many military units still prefer to use their colonial flags

2–6 JULY 1777

The British under Burgoyne capture Fort Ticonderoga, a crucial American stronghold containing large stores of arms and munitions

31 JULY 1777

Congress commissions the Marquis de Lafayette as a major general despite his youth

SEPTEMBER 1777

The Americans are defeated at Brandywine Creek and the British occupy Philadelphia, forcing the Continental Congress to flee



KEY EVENT

7 OCTOBER 1777

The Battle of Saratoga, one of the few major American victories of the war, results in 600 British casualties (minimal American losses)

TIMELINE

19 June 1778
End of Continental Army's painful encampment at Valley Forge

1 January 1781
Princeton mutiny

1777
(continued)

15 NOVEMBER 1777

Congress passes the Articles of Confederation, a new form of national government; the Articles require ratification by the thirteen states

KEY EVENT

1778

6 FEBRUARY 1778

France signs an alliance and a trade deal with the Americans, agreeing to send major shipments of arms and military goods

22 APRIL 1778

Congress refuses the offer of a British delegation in Philadelphia. Offer allows for peace and agrees to meet all American demands—except independence

MAY 1778

Conflicts on the American frontier increase, spurred on by British promises and enticements to their Native American allies

KEY EVENT

19 JUNE 1778

The Continental Army's painful winter encampment at Valley Forge ends, with as many as 2000 men dying because of cold, malnutrition and disease

23 JULY 1778

France declares war on Britain after an incident at sea. The American Revolutionary War now becomes a world war between the major powers

1779

21 JUNE 1779

Spain declares war on England

27 SEPTEMBER 1779

The Continental Congress appoints John Adams to handle future peace negotiations with England

18 OCTOBER 1779

A major American assault on Savannah, Georgia, fails miserably

26 DECEMBER 1779

A British contingent of 8500 men sails from New York City to attack Charleston, South Carolina

1780

12 MAY 1780

British capture Charleston after a long siege, including the harbour and around 5000 soldiers

25 MAY 1780

Washington puts down a mutiny at Morristown, New Jersey, as two regiments demand food and five months' unpaid salaries

23 SEPTEMBER 1780

Benedict Arnold, one of Washington's most capable and trusted generals, is revealed as a spy. He defects and becomes a brigadier-general in the British Army

22 OCTOBER 1780

General Nathanael Greene is put in charge of the Continental Army in the south and adopts similar tactics to Washington, inviting the British forces to pursue him

25 OCTOBER 1780

Massachusetts passes a new Constitution with radical statements of freedom and equality. Soon after, this constitution would be seen as promoting the same for African-Americans and slaves. It is the world's oldest written constitution still in use

1781

1 JANUARY 1781

A major mutiny near Princeton as Pennsylvania troops break away, elect representatives and vote to take orders only from their state assembly. Negotiation ends the crisis



17 January 1781
Battle of Cowpens

19 October 1781
Fall of Yorktown

8 July 1783
Slavery abolished in
Massachusetts



KEY EVENT

1781
(continued)

17 JANUARY 1781

Battle of Cowpens—a significant American victory over British troops

21–22 MAY 1781

Washington meets the French commander, General Rochambeau. Together they decide on a joint naval and infantry attack on New York

1 AUGUST 1781

After months pursuing Greene’s army through the south, Cornwallis and his army of 10,000 arrive at Yorktown

14–18 SEPTEMBER 1781

Washington and Rochambeau formulate a major attack on Yorktown, involving a naval attack by the French fleet and a joint American–French siege on land

19 OCTOBER 1781

After a three-week siege and the loss of naval support, Cornwallis surrenders and Yorktown falls to the American and French forces

18 NOVEMBER 1781

The British withdraw their forces from North Carolina and large numbers of Loyalists begin leaving New England for Canada

KEY EVENT

1782

27 FEBRUARY 1782

The British Parliament votes against continuing the war in America, empowering Royal delegates to sue for peace with the United States

5 MARCH 1782

Peace negotiations begin in Paris between Benjamin Franklin and British delegates

20 JUNE 1782

Congress adopts the Great Seal of the United States, incorporating symbols such as the native bald eagle, thirteen stars, a pyramid and the ‘eye of providence’

14 NOVEMBER 1782

A skirmish between the Americans and British in South Carolina marks the last real fighting of the Revolutionary War

30 NOVEMBER 1782

The Americans and British sign a preliminary peace agreement in Paris and plan formal treaty negotiations

DECEMBER 1782–MARCH 1783

The ‘Newburgh Conspiracy’: officers circulate letters criticising Congress and raising the prospect of a coup

1783

20 FEBRUARY 1783

Spain formally recognise the United States

15 MARCH 1783

Washington addresses officers in Newburgh about their concerns over unpaid service

APRIL 1783

Another 7000 Loyalists leave New York for England or Canada, bringing the total number of departed Loyalists to about 100,000

JUNE 1783

Most of the Continental Army is demobilised and returns home; Congress is forced to relocate temporarily to avoid heated protests by unpaid soldiers

8 JULY 1783

Slavery is abolished in Massachusetts by a ruling of the state Supreme Court



—3 September 1783
Treaty of Paris ends
Revolutionary War

—23 December 1783
Washington resigns
his commission

KEY EVENT

1783

(continued)

3 SEPTEMBER 1783

On behalf of the United States, John Adams, Benjamin Franklin and John Jay sign the Treaty of Paris with the British Government, formally ending the Revolutionary War

25 NOVEMBER 1783

The final shiploads of British troops depart New York, as Washington bids farewell to his soldiers and begins a journey to meet the Congress

23 DECEMBER 1783

Washington resigns his commission as commander-in-chief of the Continental Army, and returns home to Mount Vernon

KEY EVENT

1784

14 JANUARY 1784

Congress ratifies the Treaty of Paris

1 MARCH 1784

In Congress, Thomas Jefferson proposes a ban on slavery in all new states admitted from the Northwest Territory. The motion is narrowly defeated

MARCH 1784

Congress acquires large tracts of land to the north and west of the Ohio River after Virginia gives up its claims to the territory

APRIL 1784

Thomas Jefferson suggests that the western territories be divided into new states, each equal to the original thirteen; the motion is defeated in Congress

AUGUST 1784

Several counties of North Carolina declare their independence as a new state, named Franklin (which lasts just four years)

1785

11 JANUARY 1785

Congress relocates to New York City, which becomes the temporary capital of the United States

FEBRUARY 1785

John Adams is appointed ambassador to Great Britain; Britain still refuses to send an ambassador to the United States

20 MAY 1785

The Land Ordinance of 1785 is passed, establishing regulations and procedures for the surveying, division and settlement of all western lands, as well as the allocation of land for public schools

1 JUNE 1785

John Adams has a royal audience with King George III

28 NOVEMBER 1785

In Hopewell, South Carolina, the first of several treaties with Native American tribes is signed between the Cherokee and Benjamin Hawkins, a member of Congress

1786

16 JANUARY 1786

The Virginia assembly passes Thomas Jefferson's Ordinance of Religious Freedom, which provides for freedom of worship and protection from discrimination on the basis of religious belief

8 AUGUST 1786

Congress adopts a monetary system based on the decimal system of dollars and cents

AUGUST 1786

In Massachusetts there is widespread outrage over land prices, state taxes and worthless local currency



—7 December 1787

First state ratifies Constitution (Delaware)

—27 October 1787

Federalist Papers

—25 May—

17 September 1787

Philadelphia Convention creates a new constitution to replace Articles of Confederation

—25 January 1787

Shays' rebels dispersed

—31 August 1786

Shays' Rebellion begins with disruptions to Northampton, Massachusetts Court House



1786
(continued)

31 AUGUST 1786

In Northampton, Massachusetts, former Continental Army officer Daniel Shays leads a mob that forces a court to close, thus beginning the events that will be known as 'Shays' Rebellion'

11–14 SEPTEMBER 1786

Delegates from five states meet in Annapolis, Maryland, to discuss revisions of the Articles of Confederation. They decide to convene a larger convention the following year

16 OCTOBER 1786

Congress orders an army of 1400 men to be raised and taken to Springfield to protect the state arsenal from Shays' rebels; the Massachusetts assembly raises its own militia

25 JANUARY 1787

Shays leads a group of nearly 1200 men to raid the federal armory in Springfield, Shays' rebels are dispersed by a combined federal and state militia of 4500 men

KEY EVENT

1787

21 FEBRUARY 1787

In the wake of Shays' Rebellion, Congress endorses a motion for a Constitutional Convention, to be held in Philadelphia

25 MAY 1787

The Philadelphia Convention begins with twenty-nine of the eventual fifty-five delegates present; the first votes include a motion to keep proceedings secret and the election of George Washington as chairman

13 JULY 1787

Congress passes the Northwest Ordinance, a means of creating new states from the western territories; among the requirements is a controversial ban on slavery in the newly created states

KEY EVENT

17 SEPTEMBER 1787

After almost four months, the delegates of the Philadelphia Convention emerge with a new draft Constitution to replace the Articles of Confederation; within two days copies of the document are printed and released to the public

SEPTEMBER 1787

Congress votes to send the Constitution to state conventions for ratification; it will be enacted if nine of the thirteen states ratify it—a two-thirds majority

KEY EVENT

27 OCTOBER 1787

The first essay of what came to be known as the *Federalist Papers* appears, an articulate defence of the Constitution that calls for ratification in the national interest

KEY EVENT

7 DECEMBER 1787

Delaware becomes the first state to ratify the Constitution, soon followed by Pennsylvania on 12 December and New Jersey on 18 December

1788

2 AND 9 JANUARY 1788

The state conventions of Georgia and Connecticut ratify the Constitution

6 FEBRUARY 1788

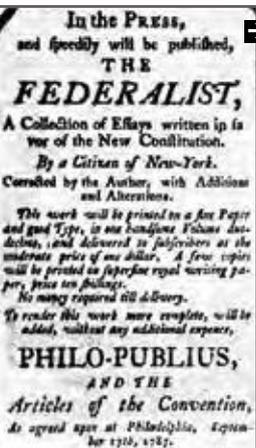
The Massachusetts Convention ratifies the Constitution, but only after arguments by Samuel Adams and others that a series of amendments protecting individual rights be formulated

24 MARCH 1788

The tiny state of Rhode Island, having refused to send a delegate to the Philadelphia Convention, becomes the first state to vote against ratification

28 APRIL 1788

Maryland votes to ratify the Constitution



—15 December 1791
United States
Bill of Rights
ratified

—30 April 1789
George Washington's
inaugural speech to
the Senate

—26 July 1788
United States
Constitution
is ratified by
the ninth state,
allowing for its
acceptance

1788
(continued)

23 MAY 1788
South Carolina ratifies the Constitution

21 JUNE 1788
New Hampshire votes to ratify the Constitution

25 JUNE 1788
In Virginia, a heated dispute between Federalists (led by James Madison) and Anti-Federalists (led by Patrick Henry and George Mason) results in a close vote in favour of ratification

KEY EVENT

26 JULY 1788
New York votes for ratification, suggesting that a bill of rights be formulated; the United States Constitution is enacted by Congress (with the nine-state majority secured)

2 AUGUST 1788
North Carolina's ratification convention votes to adjourn without ratifying the Constitution

13 SEPTEMBER 1788
New York City chosen as the temporary seat of the new national government

31 OCTOBER 1788
The full Confederation Congress adjourns for the last time

23 DECEMBER 1788
Maryland donates a ten-square-mile (sixteen square kilometre) portion of its territory along the Potomac River for the construction of a new federal capitol

1789

4 FEBRUARY 1789
The first ballots for a United States presidential election are lodged

4 MARCH 1789
The new Congress meets for the first time; fifty-four of the fifty-nine members of the House of Representatives had served in the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia two years prior

6 APRIL 1789
The Senate meets to count the presidential ballots cast in February, with George Washington securing a clear victory. Washington is appointed president and John Adams vice-president

KEY EVENT

30 APRIL 1789
In New York, George Washington delivers his inaugural speech to the Senate

21 NOVEMBER 1789
North Carolina ratifies the Constitution

1790

MARCH 1790
Judith Sargent Murray's pamphlet *On the Equality of the Sexes* advocates education for women

29 MAY 1790
Rhode Island is the last state to ratify the Constitution

1791

8 FEBRUARY 1791
Congress charters the Bank of the United States, with a stabilising effect on the currency

4 MARCH 1791
Second United States Congress opens in Philadelphia

KEY EVENT

15 DECEMBER 1791
The United States Bill of Rights—comprising the first ten amendments to the Constitution—is ratified



SECURING INDEPENDENCE

(4 JULY 1776–1781)

KEY SOURCE



Source 7.01 *Washington Crossing the Delaware* by Emanuel Leutze, 1851. This classic painting highlights the heroic attitude of Washington, the dangerous nature of the trip and the brighter future that came as a result. The painting gives a clear sense of movement—both physical and metaphorical.

CHAPTER 7

‘Crude, obvious, and unappealing as this truism may be, it is still true; without war to sustain it, the Declaration of Independence would be a forgotten, abortive manifesto.’

—John Shy

The Second Continental Congress had finally declared independence. However, that independence was not accepted by Britain, nor was it inevitable. The Declaration of Independence formally created a new nation but it had to defeat Great Britain—the superpower of the eighteenth century.

The United States had several crises to overcome—state disunity, a weak national political system and an underdeveloped economy.

George Washington had to wage war with an inexperienced and poorly equipped army. There was no navy nor any warships. A successful war against England depended upon obtaining foreign supplies and military assistance.

The 'United States' was a loose association of thirteen governments under the 'Articles of Confederation'. Would this optimistic coalition actually work?

KEY EVENTS

- July 1776**
Declaration of Independence drafted
- December 1776**
Battle of Trenton
- July 1777**
Lafayette arrives
- October 1777**
Battle of Saratoga
- February 1778**
France signs alliance and trade deal
- December 1778**
The British begin Southern Campaign
- January 1781**
Battle of Cowpens
- October 1781**
The Battle of Yorktown

KEY QUESTIONS

- What were the initial challenges faced by the Second Continental Congress?
- To what extent did the Revolutionary War challenge the consolidation of the new nation?
- How did key individuals such as Washington react to crises?
- How did the revolution affect the experiences of social groups like the Continental Army, women, Loyalists and African Americans?
- To what extent were the Patriots successful in achieving their aims and goals by 1781?



IMMEDIATE CONSEQUENCES OF THE DECLARATION

Alan Taylor (2016): 'By declaring independence, Congress gave the conflict greater clarity and raised its stakes.'

broadside propaganda in the form of a large poster-sized sheet, usually containing scathing criticism of a particular person, group or policy

After passing the Declaration of Independence on 4 July 1776, the Second Continental Congress sent the document by courier to Philadelphia printer John Dunlap. Dunlap worked through the night, setting type and running off **broadside**s so that Congress would have 200 copies by morning. Dunlap's copies of the Declaration were distributed to legislative assemblies, military commanders, Committees of Safety and to British governors and generals. A single copy was sent to King George III in London.

The Dunlap broadside contained no signatures, only the printed name of John Hancock, president of the Second Continental Congress. A common but incorrect assumption is that the Declaration was signed by all fifty-six delegates on 4 July. It was certainly passed, printed and distributed on that day. However, the more official version, endorsed with the signatures of the fifty-six delegates, was not completed until early August.

REACTIONS TO THE DECLARATION

Public readings of the Declaration began four days after its passage through Congress. Washington ordered it to be read aloud to unify his troops and provide clarity of action. This assured that everyone understood the aims of the revolution—even those who couldn't read. Within a week, the Declaration of Independence had been proclaimed to crowds in Massachusetts, New Jersey and Pennsylvania.

In some towns, these readings provoked attacks on Loyalist homes and businesses, or upon symbols of the crown:

- gangs sought out the king's portrait and defaced it
- British insignia (or 'royal arms') were stripped from buildings and carriages
- some towns held meetings to rename streets or buildings that had been named after King George III.

On 9 July, a crowd in New York City attacked a gilded statue of George III on horseback, pulling it to the ground and sending it away to be melted down to make 40,000 bullets. But, ironically, Patriots paid for slaves to tear down the statue in the name of liberty.¹ This was done to limit resistance to the revolution and to present the new social order.

There were some hostile reactions to the Declaration, both in America and abroad. Loyalists dismissed the Declaration as a fantasy and some, like Thomas Hutchinson, wrote stinging criticisms. By mid-August, copies of the Declaration had reached England and appeared in the press. However, neither King George nor parliament issued official comment. The British ministry secretly commissioned a speechwriter named John Lind to create a wordy 110-page *Answer to the Declaration of the American Congress*—however, Lind's *Answer* did not have the impact of either the Declaration or *Common Sense*.



KEY SOURCE

← **Source 7.02** *The destruction of the royal statue in New York* by André Basset. French representation showing New Yorkers tearing down a statue of George III on horseback on 9 July 1776. After the Declaration of Independence was read in public across America, the king's image was often destroyed—or removed from public view.

HOW TO GOVERN? THE ARTICLES OF CONFEDERATION

On 9 June 1776, the day after Congress appointed Jefferson and four others to draft a statement of independence, the body had nominated another subcommittee to formulate a draft Constitution.

This committee contained one man from each of the thirteen states and included well-known figures such as Samuel Adams, John Dickinson and Edward Rutledge. The committee left much of the writing to Dickinson; by 12 July his draft 'articles of *confederation*' had been tabled before a full meeting of Congress. Command and organisation of the war effort became a higher priority, as did the safety of Congress itself—the delegates were forced to abandon Philadelphia because of approaching British troops. The Articles were debated for six weeks and then tabled.

The Articles of Confederation were slowly accepted by the different states, but not finally ratified by all until 1781. However, they did allow Congress to function and for the young nation to be united enough in the 'firm league of friendship' to win the war, obtain foreign allies and negotiate a successful peace treaty. The revolutionary state's survival was its principle concern. However, the dangers of not being able to obtain essential funds for the troops, or to run the government, or to have the capacity to enact meaningful change, or protect national borders would be significant challenges for the government in the years to come.

The critical issues with the Articles of Confederation will be discussed in Chapter 9.

confederation a loose union of states or nations, with each state keeping its independence and the right to govern itself

ACTIVITY

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 What were the most significant immediate consequences of declaring independence?
- 2 What were critical issues the Continental Congress faced in governing the new nation?

THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR KEY DEVELOPMENT

INITIAL MILITARY CHALLENGES

George Washington (September 1776): 'Our situation is truly distressing ... [my troops are filled] with apprehension and despair'

The Continental Army formed by the thirteen states fared so poorly throughout 1776 that many delegates to the Congress were preparing for a British victory. By early December, the Continentals had endured a string of defeats, mainly in New York, at Bunker Heights, Long Island, Harlem Heights and White Plains. British General Richard Howe almost captured Washington's troops, and the Second Continental Congress sent Adams, Franklin and Rutledge to hear an offer from the Crown on 11 September on Staten Island in New York. An invasion of Canada, with the aim of getting the Canadians to join the fight against the British, would fail as well; the Royal Navy controlled the Canadian coastal waters and burned the port cities of Falmouth and Norfolk. And, most serious of all, Washington's army was pushed out of New York state, which fell to the British—and forced a Loyalist wedge into the young revolutionary state.



A young Patriot spy named Nathan Hale was captured by the British in New York City—and hanged for treason on 22 September 1776. His last words were claimed to be: 'I only regret that I have but one life to lose for my country'. Hale's words would become a rallying cry for the Patriots' cause.² KEY GROUP

He had refused to reveal any information to the British, and was championed by supporters of the new nation.

Only a few months after challenging Britain, it seemed that the revolutionary fire was about to be snuffed out. In early December 1776, Washington was forced by the British to cross the Hudson River into New Jersey, and he and his men were then driven even further west into Pennsylvania. By this stage, Washington was down from a high of 19,000 men in New York to only several thousand³, after many *desertions*, and Continental Army Major General Lee was beginning to question whether Washington had the ability to lead troops.⁴ Across the river in New Jersey, Patriotic fervour had died down after an invasion by the British Army and *mercenary* troops from New York City.

↑ **Source 7.03** Nathan Hale, a young Patriot spy, was hanged for treason on 22 September 1776.

desertion when an enlisted soldier abandons his post during war and flees; generally punishable by death

mercenary a soldier who will fight for anyone who will pay them, even a foreign army

Hessians colloquial American term for professional soldiers hired by the British from the royalty of provinces in modern-day Germany, especially the province of Hesse

Among the soldiers fighting for Britain was a group of mercenaries—soldiers who will fight for anyone who pays them—known as *Hessians*, because many of them came from Hesse (now in south-west Germany).

So why were there German soldiers fighting in America? The Hessian troops were there because Britain had approached princes and aristocrats in German provinces and asked to rent their armies. The Hessians were poorly paid and many had been forced into service—but they were disciplined soldiers and experienced in combat.

By mid-December, the Continental Army had set up camp on the Pennsylvania side of the Delaware River. Winter had set in—the days were bitterly cold and the nights were freezing. Snow fell often, and ice covered the river. On the other side of the Delaware, in New Jersey, a Hessian regiment had set up camp in Trenton, and they were getting ready for Christmas. A small British force was located further east at Princeton.

Both the Americans and the British had set up camp for winter. It was common practice in the eighteenth century for combatants to stop fighting and seek shelter from the harsh weather. Neither the English nor their Hessian allies were expecting trouble from the Americans until March or April 1777.

Meanwhile, George Washington was in danger of becoming a general without an army. His troops had low morale after a number of defeats during 1776—and they were running low on supplies and food. Most of Washington’s enlisted men had signed up for twelve months—and most of them would probably return to their farms in the spring. New recruits would replace the enlisted men, but there wouldn’t be enough of them to cover those who had died, and the states were unable to fill their recruitment quotas. And to top it all off, Major General Charles Lee—George Washington’s most vocal rival—was sending letters to Congress hinting that Washington should be removed.

DID YOU KNOW

About 30,000 mercenaries fought against the Americans in the Revolutionary War—and they made up about a quarter of the British forces.



← **Source 7.04** *Regiment von Bose* by J. H. Carl, 1784. This is a post-war painting showing bearskins instead of the brass grenadier caps the Hessian soldiers wore during the war.

ACTIVITY

CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

Create a table like the one below and fill it in as you read about the Revolutionary War. List dates and events to show continuity and change.

RELATIVE STRENGTH OF ARMIES THROUGHOUT THE WAR		
	BRITISH ARMY	CONTINENTAL ARMY
Sources of funding		
Personnel		
Technology and equipment		
Allies		
Leadership		
Supplies		
Local knowledge		
Naval support		
Popular support		
Prospects of success in Revolutionary War		

THOMAS PAINE REIGNITES REVOLUTIONARY FERVOUR

TURNING POINT

One of the men travelling with the Continental Army was Thomas Paine, whose pamphlet *Common Sense* was a source of inspiration for Patriots. He despaired that the independent United States he craved might be lost to military defeat. However, Paine also recognised that the American cause needed a boost of revolutionary fire, so he began work on a new series of patriotic essays, later known as *The American Crisis*. The first essay began with these stirring words:

➔ **Source 7.05** Thomas Paine, *The American Crisis* (No. 1.) By the author of *Common Sense* (Boston, 1776).

Thomas Paine, *The American Crisis*, 1776

These are the times that try men's souls. The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of their country; but he that stands it now, deserves the love and thanks of man and woman. Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered; yet we have this consolation with us, that the harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph. What we obtain too cheap, we esteem too lightly: it is dearness only that gives every thing [sic] its value. Heaven knows how to put a proper price upon its goods ... it would be strange indeed if so [heavenly] an article as freedom should not be highly rated. Britain, with an army to enforce her tyranny, has declared that she has a right (not only to tax) but 'to bind us in all cases whatsoever'—and if being bound in that manner is not slavery, then there is not such a thing as slavery upon earth. Even the expression is [sacrilegious]; for so unlimited a power can belong only to God.

➔ **Source 7.06** The first page from Paine's *The American Crisis* (first edition).



Paine circulated his first essay among the high-ranking officers in the army. Washington was so impressed that he instructed his junior officers to gather together the enlisted men and read excerpts to them. The first instalment was later circulated in the cities to much acclaim. Paine followed it with another twelve essays over the next eighteen months.

At one of the darkest points of the Revolutionary War, Paine's words convinced doubting Americans that their cause was just, and that great rewards awaited them if they could defeat the British. The tone of *The American Crisis* helped inspire the Continental Army's aggressive strike against the Hessian regiment at Trenton.

CROSSING THE DELAWARE

With his opportunities dwindling, Washington took a risk. With his closest advisors, Washington came up with a plan to lead the army across the half-frozen Delaware River at night and attack the Hessian position at Trenton. The date chosen was Christmas night, as the Hessians were likely to be off their guard—either asleep or drunk.

Moving thousands of men, horses, equipment and light **artillery** across an icy river in the black of night was no easy feat, yet Washington's men managed to do it undetected.

artillery large calibre guns; in eighteenth-century warfare this mainly referred to cannon



← **Source 7.07** *George Washington Crossing the Delaware River* by Henry Mosler, c. 1912–1913.

ACTIVITY

HISTORICAL SOURCES

Using Source 7.07 and your own knowledge, respond to the following:

- 1 Describe Washington's appearance and demeanour in the representation. What impressions or attributes are implied?
- 2 According to the painting, what obstacles must the American soldiers overcome to achieve their objective at Trenton?
- 3 The US Stars and Stripes flag did not exist at the time of the Battle of Trenton. Provide a possible explanation about why it appears in this painting.
- 4 To what extent is this representation a complete and accurate depiction of the Continental Army's crossing of the Delaware River in December 1776?

COMPARE AND CONTRAST

Examine Leutze's representation of the same event (Source 7.01 on page 140). List the similarities and differences between Leutze's representation and Source 7.07, and comment on any instances where the painters have taken 'artistic licence'.

MAJOR BATTLES OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION



At 4.00 am, after all the troops had crossed the river, the Continental Army began the nine-mile (14-km) march to Trenton. Some of the soldiers were without boots or shoes, and had to wrap rags around their bleeding feet. The weather conditions were so harsh that two Continental soldiers died along the way.

The Americans attacked Trenton at 8.00am—and by noon they were victorious. Almost a thousand Hessians were killed, wounded or captured, compared to only four Americans lost (including the two men who died during the march to Trenton).

Colonel Rall, who was in command of the Hessians, had been warned that the Continentals were preparing to attack—but he either ignored the warning or underestimated it, and he ultimately died during the battle. Washington's army went on to defeat the British regiment stationed at nearby Princeton in New Jersey. These two victories over the British—although they were of limited strategic significance—consolidated Washington's position, helped restore morale in the army and—in conjunction with Paine's essays—boosted American hopes. As noted by historians Charles A. Beard and Mary R. Beard: 'Not until near the end of that year did a light appear in the blackness'.⁵

↓ **Source 7.09** *The Capture of the Hessians at Trenton, December 26, 1776* by John Trumbull. Washington's surprise attack on the Hessian soldiers at Trenton helped improve American morale.



ACTIVITY

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 Why would Nathan Hale's execution be so important to the Patriots in 1776?
- 2 What was the most significant defeat for the Patriots in late 1776, and why?
- 3 Why was Thomas Paine's message so important? Which lines of his essay would be the most inspirational?
- 4 Which factors made Washington's decision to cross the Delaware River so risky?
- 5 Why was the Battle of Trenton such an important victory?

GROWING SUPPORT FOR THE UNITED STATES

Robert J. Allison (2011): 'France was more likely to help rebels who could help themselves.'

Trenton and Princeton were victories, but they were minor—the war was not won yet. With a disorganised army of barely 3000 men, inadequate supplies, inexperienced officers and a small, rural population, the United States was incapable of defeating Britain single-handedly.⁶ It was critical to find support from overseas. Congress recognised this, and sent diplomats to Europe in search of support—moral, material and military.

THE SEARCH FOR ALLIES

Some of America's most talented figures were dispatched to Europe in the search for allies:

- Benjamin Franklin to France
- John Jay to Spain
- John Adams to Holland.

Congress even sought help from unlikely sources such as Russian leader Catherine the Great, who was renowned for her love for Enlightenment ideas. However, on Russian soil, her enforcement of **absolutism** displayed other values. Unfortunately, Francis Dana, the American sent to St Petersburg to seek an alliance with the Russians, could not speak Russian—but he still stayed there for two years, achieving little.

The American delegates spent many months abroad:

- lobbying for international recognition of the new United States
- trying to organise trade agreements
- seeking loans, equipment contracts and military alliances.

The Americans' best hope was to form a military alliance with France.

The British and the French were fierce rivals, so the French were paying close attention to the difficulties the British were having in America. They were aware of the opportunities that might come their way. However, France had significant financial problems. Committing to an alliance with America—and possibly another costly war with England—would further drain the French treasury, which was already near bankruptcy. As a result, the French ministers were very careful in their early dealings with the Americans.

It was not until late 1777—after America's fortunes in the war had improved—that foreign leaders began to consider getting involved. The critical alliance with France was signed in 1778, largely because of Benjamin Franklin, who had become popular at the French royal court. Franklin was treated as a scientific genius. He deliberately dressed in the clothes of a commoner and wore a raccoon-skin hat to play up his 'American-ness'. He became so well-known that his image appeared on coins, watches, brooches and paintings. Franklin's time in France was a diplomatic success but he also enjoyed himself, living extravagantly, attending balls and galas, and allegedly having several affairs, despite being married and in his seventies. When the more conservative John Adams called upon Franklin in Paris in 1777, he was shocked by Franklin's decadent lifestyle.

absolutism a form of government in which a single monarch or ruler wields power without limits

In October 1777, the Continentals defeated the British at the pivotal Battle of Saratoga. The American victory stopped the British from dividing the new nation in two, captured significant numbers of troops—and showed that their military tactics were improving.

TURNING POINT

After the Battle of Saratoga, the French began to openly support the Americans, with French king Louis XVI signing two treaties on 6 February 1778. These were:

- the Treaty of Alliance—a military alliance stating that neither France nor the United States could agree to a separate peace with Great Britain, and that American independence was a condition of the future
- the Treaty of **Amity** and Commerce—an agreement to promote trade and economic ties between France and the United States.⁷

amity friendship

The French foreign minister, Comte de Vergennes, saw distinct advantages in forming an alliance with America.

Comte de Vergennes (French foreign minister), January 1778

The advantages which will result [from American independence] are [endless]. We shall humiliate our natural enemy [England] ... who never knows how to respect either treaties or the right of nations. We shall divert to our profit one of the principal sources of her [wealth]. We shall shake her power, and reduce her to her real value. We shall extend our commerce, our shipping, our fisheries. We shall ensure the possession of our islands, and finally, we shall re-establish our reputation and shall resume amongst the powers of Europe the place which belongs to us ...

I mean that France must undertake the war for the maintenance of American independence, even if that war should be in other respects disadvantageous. In order to be convinced of this truth, it is only necessary to picture to ourselves what England will be when she no longer has America.

← **Source 7.10** Cited in Edward Corwin, *French Policy and the American Alliance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1916), Appendix III.

Once the Treaty of Alliance was signed, French supplies and money began openly making their way across the Atlantic. A twenty-nine-ship French fleet and thousands of French troops arrived in America in 1780, when British military strategies were faltering and London's appetite for war was in decline. Spain and Holland also joined the alliance against Britain, although their contribution to the war effort was significantly smaller. Britain was now at war with three European powers, and British attention began to shift from its American colonies to its other imperial possessions—and to the British Isles themselves.

ACTIVITY

HISTORICAL SOURCES

Using Source 7.10 and your own knowledge, respond to the following:

- 1 Identify three statements from the extract that convey an anti-British perspective.
- 2 In your own words, identify the advantages Vergennes saw for France in American independence.
- 3 Putting the benefits aside, why might participation in the Revolutionary War be 'in other respects disadvantageous' for the French, according to Vergennes?
- 4 What does this extract add to your understanding of the international context of the American Revolution?

RESEARCH

Find out more about the battles of the American Revolution. With each battle or key strategy, what were the political, economic and social consequences?



Meanwhile, the British Navy had been seizing any ship from a neutral country that they suspected was carrying supplies for the Americans. This led Catherine the Great to set up the League of Armed Neutrality in 1780—to protect trade routes from the British Navy. Denmark, Prussia, Austria and the Kingdom of Two Sicilies (now southern Italy) joined the league. The Dutch Republic was about to join the league, but Britain declared war on the Dutch before they could sign the treaty.

However, Britain's attack on the Dutch would ultimately leave the British overstretched in a growing conflict.⁸

HELP FROM AFAR

Line from *Hamilton: An American Musical* (2015): 'Immigrants. (We get the job done.)'

Foreign involvement in the Revolutionary War was not limited to treaties and alliances.

The conflict drew in thousands of soldiers from Europe—both as volunteers and paid mercenaries. Many historians have written about the contributions that foreign officers made to the Continental Army. Historian George Washington Greene found that non-Americans were overrepresented in the higher ranks of the army. For example, eleven of the twenty-nine major-generals were European, as were sixteen of the brigadier-generals.⁹ However, there were fewer foreigners in the lower ranks, perhaps because 'few could care to serve as captains or lieutenants in the half-clad, half-starved army of America, who could be captains and lieutenants in the well-clothed and well-fed armies of France or Prussia'.¹⁰

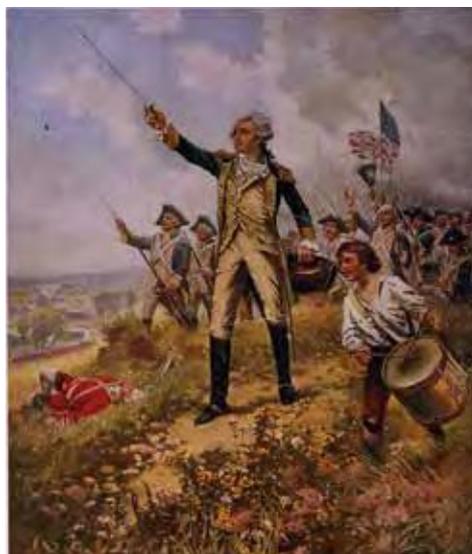
LAFAYETTE FROM FRANCE

The most famous foreign officer to serve with the Americans was Gilbert du Motier, Marquis de Lafayette—better known as Lafayette.¹¹ Lafayette was a member of an esteemed military family, and was given a captain's commission in the French army as a wedding gift. At the age of nineteen, and with only a few months' military service under his belt, Lafayette began **lobbying** American diplomats for a general's commission—and the Americans were so keen to involve the French that they agreed.

DID YOU KNOW?

Lafayette returned to France as a hero in late 1781. He would later play a key role in the French Revolution, sitting in the Estates-General, leading the National Guard and drafting the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen*.

lobbying attempting to influence a politician in return for some reward or favour



Lafayette sailed for the United States in 1777, defying orders from King Louis XVI, and leaving behind his pregnant wife. Although Lafayette would play a relatively minor command role, he was present at several significant battles and became a close friend of George Washington.

← (Far left) Lafayette.

← **Source 7.11** *Lafayette's baptism of fire* by E. Percy Moran, c. 1909. While Lafayette is shown here leading American troops into battle against the British, in reality he was an advisor and played a minimal command role.

KOSCIUSZKO AND PULASKI FROM POLAND

Tadeusz Kosciuszko was a minor Polish noble who arrived in Philadelphia in 1775, and was quickly commissioned as Colonel of Engineers in the Continental Army. He joined General Gates' northern army and played a key part in the victory at Saratoga.

Kosciuszko is also remembered for his engineering feats. He designed and constructed the fort at West Point—which was the most modern of its type in North America.¹² Kosciuszko would go on to create wagons that could convert into barges, which aided military victories in territory with swamps or river crossings. He was highly revered in Poland after his death (for attempting to free Poland from the Russian Empire). In Australia he was honoured by having the highest mountain named after him.

Casimir Pulaski was also from minor nobility, but had a different background to Kosciuszko. He had fought for the Polish nation. After being marked for certain death by rival nobility, he emigrated to France, where he ended up in a debtor's prison. With the intervention of Benjamin Franklin—who was acquiring funds and assistance from France—Pulaski was allowed to leave for the United States to fight for the Patriots'.

Pulaski arrived in Boston on 23 July 1778, and served as a volunteer in Washington's staff at the Battle of Brandywine. Soon after, Congress commissioned him as a Brigadier-General and Commander of the Horse—and so he became the first American cavalry commander.¹³

Pulaski was praised for his honour. At one point in the war, he resigned his command so that he could lead a charge against the British that had not been ordered by Washington. Washington was impressed with Pulaski's principles—and reassigned him to fight in the South. He died bravely in battle.

Historians had long wondered whether Pulaski was buried at sea or secretly buried under his monument. In the 1990s, Pulaski's body was found under his monument. But the truth was even more surprising. Using DNA techniques, Pulaski's body was positively identified as being intersex—being neither wholly male nor wholly female. Pulaski clearly identified as a male in public, but the DNA finding showed another side to his story. As historian Brigid Katz notes: 'Pulaski can be seen as a valiant representative of a group that has largely been erased from the historical record'.¹⁴

VON STEUBEN FROM PRUSSIA

Baron Frederick von Steuben was an instrumental officer. His arrival in the Continental Army in Valley Forge gave new energy to the organisation, and his Prussian military training enabled the United States to maintain its momentum against British soldiers on the field. (See pages 157–158 for more on von Steuben.)



↑ Kosciuszko. ↓ Pulaski.



↓ Von Steuben.



ACTIVITY

CAUSE AND CONSEQUENCE

What would the consequences have been for the Americans if they had not received foreign support in the Revolutionary War?

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 Why was foreign assistance so critical for the Patriots?
- 2 What were some key factors that guaranteed assistance from foreign powers?
- 3 What specific qualities did Lafayette, Kosciuszko, Pulaski and von Steuben bring to the war effort?



↑ **Source 7.12** *Infantry: Continental Army 1779–1783* by H. A. Ogden, c. 1897.

THE CONTINENTAL ARMY

Commander George Washington (1775): ‘[The Continental Army soldiers] would fight very well if properly officered, although they are an exceedingly dirty and nasty people.’

The Continental Army was vulnerable in its early years—but it was able to adapt, improvise and, ultimately, to survive and succeed.

Formed by an order of the Second Continental Congress in June 1775, the first soldiers of the Continental Army were gathered from the New England militia units that swarmed around Boston after the battles at Lexington and Concord.

Until the late 1770s, most Continental Army recruits were drawn from the north-eastern states. They initially enlisted for a one-year term—which meant that experienced soldiers were continually being replaced with raw recruits. For this reason, Washington frequently lobbied Congress for longer periods of service.

KEY GROUP

SOLDIERS: CONDITIONS AND CULTURAL SHIFTS

The early Continental Army hardly looked like an army at all. Washington said his soldiers ‘would fight very well if properly officered, although they are an exceedingly dirty and nasty people’. Military discipline and command structures hardly existed, and it was difficult to command an army that was based on a revolutionary and independent spirit. For example, most militiamen were accustomed to *electing* their officers—and obeying only those orders they thought were valid. In late 1775, in a bid to improve discipline, Washington introduced floggings. He also set an example by assisting with lower-level tasks that were not usually performed by officers—such as organising drills and issuing daily orders.

However, the morale of the Continental Army was boosted by victories, from the end of 1776, and from having their own song and their own flag.

Historians believe the song ‘Yankee Doodle’ was originally written during the French and Indian War as a statement about the uncivilised **Yankees**—colonists with rustic appearance and customs. Although the song was originally used to mock the colonists, the Americans reclaimed it as ‘their song’, taking pride in their unique American culture, and proudly singing the song after their victories—especially after the victory at Saratoga in October 1777.¹⁵

On 14 June 1777, the Second Continental Congress approved a new symbol for the new nation: the Stars and Stripes flag. The flag had thirteen stars arranged in a circle on a blue square, with thirteen alternating white and red stripes. According to legend, the design was suggested by seamstress Betsy Ross, but historians disagree about this. However, regardless of who designed it, the flag was a powerful cultural symbol that united the thirteen states and its people.¹⁶

Captured soldiers and sailors suffered in the Revolutionary War. They were expected to pay for their own food and supplies. Opposing armies often exchanged one prisoner for another or issued war parole, granting freedom if the prisoner agreed to quit the fighting. Many prisoners of war were released on condition that they defect and join the capturing army. A significant number took up this option—because it made it easier to escape.

Yankees term originally for New Englanders, but in this case for a colonist from the United States. In the American Civil War (1861–1865), it became a term for Northerners

JOSEPH MARTIN'S WAR DIARIES: PERSPECTIVE OF A CONTINENTAL ARMY SOLDIER

Much of what is known about life in the Continental Army has been extracted from the diaries of Joseph Plumb Martin (1760–1850).

At the age of fifteen, Martin was inspired by the news from Lexington and Concord and rushed to enlist. He joined the Continental Army in 1776 after a brief stint in the Connecticut militia. Martin remained in service until the end of the war, and was present at several key events, including:

- the Battle of Brooklyn
- the winter camp at Valley Forge
- the final surrender at Yorktown.

Martin's diaries are an important primary source. He wrote candidly, recounting his hopes, frustrations and pains. He was a private for most of the war and never rose any higher than sergeant. Although Martin rarely wrote about military strategies or leaders, he did write about the men who came together to form the Continental Army in 1775.

Joseph Martin

They put me in this regiment, half New Englanders [like myself] and half Pennsylvanians, folks about as different as night and day. Myself, I'd rather be fighting with a tribe of Indians than with these Southerners. I mean they're foreigners; [they] can't hardly speak English. They don't like me either. They call me that 'damn Yankee.' And that's about the nicest thing they say.

 **Source 7.13** Joseph Plumb Martin, *A Narrative of Some of the Adventures, Dangers and Sufferings of a Revolutionary Soldier* (Hallowed, Maine: Glazier, Masters, and Co., 1830).

Martin often wrote about his anger at shortages of food and supplies, which were a constant problem for the army. He frequently describes being hungry, being given stale bread and salted horsemeat. He was refused food by farmers. On one occasion, after going without food for three days, Martin finds, cooks and eats a discarded oxtail—only to violently regurgitate it. He is sharply critical of the officers, as they rarely go without food or shelter while their men starve and freeze.

Many captured American prisoners were held on board large barges that were kept permanently at anchor in American harbours. The HMS *Jersey* held thousands of captured servicemen in appalling conditions in New York Harbor. As many as eight men a day died from disease, starvation or beatings on board. Their bodies were either thrown overboard or buried in shallow graves along the shoreline. The number of Patriots who died aboard the HMS *Jersey* and other British prison ships is estimated to be over 11,000 men. To put this in perspective, it is estimated that 4500 American military were killed in combat during the entire war.¹⁷ So the number of Americans who died in prison ships was two and half times greater than the number who died in warfare.

DEFINING MOMENT AT VALLEY FORGE

No single event better demonstrates the suffering of the Continental Army than its stint at Valley Forge in the winter of 1777–1778. This six-month winter encampment saw around 11,000 soldiers and an unknown number of civilians, including many women, living in a Pennsylvania field. The first three months were bitterly cold, and there were shortages of food, clothing, blankets, tents, bandages and medicine. Washington ordered foraging parties into the local countryside to request and **requisition** supplies; however, with the army requiring 5000 pounds (2.2 tonnes) of meat and twenty-five barrels of flour per day, such efforts were insufficient.¹⁸

requisition a formal request for money, goods or other necessities, usually made by or on behalf of a government

THE SPECTRE OF SMALLPOX



↑ **Source 7.14** *The cow-pock—or the wonderful effects of the new inoculation*, by James Gillray, 1802. A British cartoon expressing doubts about the safety of smallpox inoculations. A doctor administers the infection while those already inoculated begin to turn into farm animals.

vaccination to minimise the impact of smallpox. It was called 'variolation'. This involved deliberately infecting healthy people by scratching or cutting their skin and rubbing in (or injecting) pus from the blisters of a smallpox victim. The patient would then contract a mild form of smallpox, and need several weeks in quarantine so they wouldn't pass the disease to others.

Although this method of inoculation caused suffering—and, on occasion, death—it was generally considered a success. Americans were thirty times more likely to die from the naturally acquired airborne form of the virus than from variolation. Home-made inoculations became something of a social ritual: members of the elite would invite others to 'take the pox' at a dinner party or gathering. To have someone of high status refuse this invitation, as Martha Washington pointedly did to the wife of John Hancock, was a significant snub.

Smallpox posed a grave threat to the Continental Army, whose members lived in close contact and were already suffering from malnutrition and exposure, as well as being vulnerable to typhoid and dysentery. In mid-1775 George Washington heard a rumour that the British intended to decimate American ranks by deliberately infecting them with smallpox. Washington thought such an act was unlikely—but he still ordered a series of inoculations for his troops. It was a bold move, with significant results. Records suggest that the death rate for the inoculated smallpox was one in 300, far less than the sixteen per cent death toll from naturally contracted smallpox (which would have been the equivalent of forty-eight people in 300).¹⁹ Despite the success of variolation, Elizabeth Fenn's book *Pox Americana* suggests that the disease still killed around 130,000 North Americans between 1775 and 1782.²⁰

The Revolutionary War was waged during a smallpox epidemic that lasted ten years. The disease ravaged North America, and killed up to five times as many people as died in the war. Smallpox had been present in Europe throughout the 1700s, and had killed around half a million people in almost every year of that century.

It is not known how smallpox found its way to North America. The Spanish conquistadors had introduced it to South America, where it wiped out large numbers of Incas and Aztecs. The first recorded outbreak in the British colonies was in the 1630s, in Plymouth, Massachusetts.

By the time of the revolution, both the Americans and the British had developed a crude form of

By December the shortages were acute, and men began to die from hypothermia (exposure to cold), pneumonia and malnutrition, as well as from typhus, smallpox and dysentery. Hundreds of horses and many civilians succumbed to disease or cold. Accounts of the suffering reached some American cities and prompted efforts to raise food, livestock and other necessities for those serving at Valley Forge. Albigeance Waldo, a civilian serving in the encampment as George Washington's doctor, recorded the following observations in his diary:

Diary of Albigeance Waldo, Valley Forge, 14 December 1777

The Army, which has been surprisingly healthy, now begins to grow sickly from the continued fatigues they have suffered ... yet they still show a spirit of ... contentment not to be expected from troops so young. I am sick, discontented and out of humour. Poor food, hard lodging, cold weather, fatigue, nasty clothes, nasty cookery, vomit half my time, smoked out of my senses ... I can't endure it. Why are we sent here to starve and freeze? ... There comes a bowl of beef soup, full of burnt leaves and dirt, sickish enough to make [one] spew ... I am sick, my feet lame, my legs are sore, my body covered with this tormenting itch, my clothes are worn out, my constitution is broken



← **Source 7.15** Albigeance Waldo, *Valley Forge, 1777-1778. Diary of Surgeon Albigeance Waldo, of the Connecticut Line* (1897).

← **Source 7.16** *Valley Forge, 1777*, by Philip Haas, c. 1843. Print showing George Washington and Lafayette visiting soldiers at their winter encampment at Valley Forge, Pennsylvania.

ACTIVITY

HISTORICAL SOURCES

Using Source 7.16 and your own knowledge, respond to the following:

- 1 What problems does it suggest were experienced by the Continental Army at Valley Forge?
- 2 Compare the representation with Albigeance Waldo's diary entry (Source 7.14).

Conditions improved by February and most of those still present, including Waldo, marched out alive. However, as many as 2500 men did not survive Valley Forge—and remain buried in what is now a national park.

The Continental Army received one major benefit from the encampment, thanks to the training of Baron von Steuben. Another European volunteer, von Steuben had been a captain in the powerful Prussian Army, but had fled Europe to avoid a scandal about his homosexuality. Franklin, and presumably Washington, knew of von Steuben's sexuality but did not believe his private life to be an issue.²¹ Von Steuben was barely able to speak English when he arrived in America, and then Valley Forge, where he offered his services to Washington.

ACTIVITY

DIVERSE EXPERIENCES

Find out why the winter encampment at Valley Forge has become a celebrated event in the history of the Continental Army, even though it involved such misery for individuals. In your research, find out about the women present at the encampment, including Catherine Littlefield Green, Lucy Knox and Lady Stirling.

Von Steuben was given an organisational role and passed on his strict Prussian training and military skills to the American soldiers. He added drills to the daily routine, and his tactics were still in use at military academies well into the nineteenth century. Von Steuben also introduced to the Continental Army the idea of using a bayonet as a weapon—until this point, most soldiers had been using the bayonet as a cooking utensil! In this way, Von Steuben turned the Continental Army into a force to be reckoned with. As historian Erin Blakemore puts it: ‘Three years into the Revolutionary War, the army was low on discipline, morale and even mood. With [von Steuben’s] strict skills, showy presence and shrewd eye for military strategy, he helped turn them into a military powerhouse.’

THE WAR AT SEA

John Paul Jones (1779): ‘I have not yet begun to fight.’



The war for American independence was mainly fought on land. However, armies in the 1700s relied heavily on naval support for food, munitions and equipment. Military orders were often conveyed by ship, so whoever controlled the seas and harbours had a significant advantage on land. Naval vessels, with their huge cannons, could also blockade harbours or bombard a coastal city, leaving it in ruins. This was a serious problem for the Americans, who did not have a navy or any capacity to withstand blockades or naval attacks.

By the end of 1775, most colonies had requisitioned—or taken control of—private ships, which they then armed and assembled into a basic navy. Congress realised there was a need for a maritime force, and established the Continental Navy and a small marine corps. The

fledgling American navy eventually put about twenty-seven ships to sea, with the navies of the separate colonies contributing about another forty ships. In contrast, the British Navy had 270 warships, many of which were heavily armed frigates or battleships—and by the end of the war, they had 468 ships.²²

Because they were outnumbered so badly, American navies found it more effective to target British merchant ships and private boats rather than directly confront the British Navy. Most of the damage inflicted on British shipping was carried out by **privateers**, or privately owned warships. Congress encouraged this practice by issuing shipowners and sea captains with documents called letters of marque, giving them the authority to attack British ships on behalf of the United States. The king reciprocated by granting letters of marque to Loyalists and Quebec shipowners, licensing them to attack American vessels. It is estimated that around 10,000 Americans were engaged in privateering by the start of 1778. Later the same year, when the British were occupied with resisting the naval fleets of France and Spain, even greater numbers of American privateers emerged.

One privateer was a man named John Paul Jones. Jones was a Scottish-born American Lieutenant in the United States Navy. In 1778, he attacked British ships in British waters in the Irish Sea, and off the Scottish and English coasts, taking many prisoners, using tactics that historians have compared to those of pirates and terrorists. Jones even led attacks on the British coastal towns, including the town of his birth. In 1779, he led a Franco-American expedition in the USS *Bonhomme Richard*, named after

Source 7.17 A caricature from 1780 showing a British ‘press gang’ at work, forcing civilians into service in the Royal Navy. This practice was used by both Britain and America.

privateer a sailor or ship captain given authority during wartime to attack and plunder private and merchant shipping owned by the enemy

Benjamin Franklin's pen-name, 'Poor Richard'. On 23 September 1779, he took the HMS *Serapis* in a dramatic naval night battle, and boarded the captured ship just as his own ship began to sink.

In the final year of the war, more than 400 American vessels operated as privateers in the waters of the eastern seaboard, around the British colonies in the Caribbean, and as far abroad as Great Britain. The damage the privateers inflicted on British ships and trade was severe, as it brought about the loss or capture of 2000 ships, 12,000 men and cargo valued at £18 million.



ACTIVITY

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 What were critical issues regarding the state of the Continental Army in 1777?
- 2 What symbols of the revolution began to appear in the Continental Army? What was their significance?
- 3 How did their winter encampment in Valley Forge change the Continental Army?
- 4 How did Washington and von Steuben change the way soldiers were trained?
- 5 How did the war at sea affect the American Revolution?

← **Source 7.18** *Bonhomme Richard vs. HMS Serapis*, September 23, 1779, provides an artist's impression of privateer John Paul Jones at battle.

BENEDICT ARNOLD: A HERO TURNED TRAITOR

Benedict Arnold was one of Washington's most capable and trusted generals. At least, he was—until he tried to hand the West Point fort in New York to the British in September 1780.

Once leader of the Connecticut militiamen, Arnold changed sides after being chastised by Washington and overlooked for promotion. The shock of Arnold changing sides showed that loyalties could be shaken with marriage, by a place in society—or by lack of advancement.

Washington is reported to have lost his cool temperament when he heard about Arnold's defection. Washington declared, 'Arnold has betrayed us! Whom can we trust now?' and Nathanael Greene

replied, '[Benedict Arnold was] once his Country's Idol [sic], now her horror'.²³ Arnold escaped to Loyalist-held New York City with his wife, before they both fled to England. His co-conspirator Major Andre was hanged for treason.

The British may have thought that Arnold's defection would cast doubt over the revolutionary cause—but the opposite happened, with a surge of patriotism. The Patriot press vilified Arnold and effigies of him were burned. Americans began to identify as supportive of the revolutionary cause rather than the greed that led a hero to commit treason. To this day, the nickname for a traitor in the United States is 'a Benedict Arnold'.



↑ *Benedict Arnold* by Thomas Hart, 1776.

THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR IN THE SOUTHERN STATES

Alan Taylor (2016): 'The violence and looting devastated the landscape. Tarleton notes that military foraging had "made a desert of the country"'

By late 1778, strategists in London were frustrated with the inability of their generals to track down and eradicate Washington's army. They also realised that disorder in New England and in some Middle Colonies was so strong that they might never regain these provinces. So they developed a new strategy to recoup at least something from the war. This new tactical approach was headed by Lord Cornwallis and began with a major offensive against the southern colonies and their two main cities: Savannah in Georgia and Charleston in South Carolina.

➔ Source 7.19



There were several reasons why the British turned their attention to the southern states. Patriot forces in the South were weaker, and could be overcome more easily. The British expected to find higher numbers of Loyalists there than in the North. The South, with its rich plantations of tobacco, rice, indigo and cotton, was of great economic importance to British manufacturers. By getting rid of the rebels and setting up Loyalist governments, the English hoped to establish a more obedient cluster of American colonies.

Although Britain overestimated the number of Loyalists living in the South, its early military interventions were successful. The first assaults were centred on Georgia, which was almost entirely under British control by the end of 1778. Two years later, General Clinton led a successful attack on Charleston, South Carolina, which was one of the largest and wealthiest cities in North America. In May 1780, more than 5000 American soldiers were captured—by far the largest American surrender of the war—while the feared British colonel Banastre Tarleton relentlessly pursued what remained of the southern regiments of the Continental Army. By late 1780 it appeared that the British, in league with local Loyalists, were firmly in control. Pulaski was killed in battle, attempting to hold off the British.

The southern region became more of a civil war than a war of independence. There was no organised American army in the South, so resistance to the British came from shadowy groups of civilian militia, led by men like Francis Marion—nicknamed ‘Swamp Fox’. Many battles in the South were fought by local Patriots and Loyalists rather than by British and American regulars—and were motivated by petty grievances and revenge rather than politics or beliefs.

The British promise of freedom for any African slave who took up arms complicated matters. Many Loyalist slave-owners were afraid of both a slave revolt and of losing their property. Because of this fear, many chose to support the revolution over British promises to free the South’s 400,000 slaves.



Source 7.20 *General Francis Marion Inviting A British Officer to Share His Meal*, by John Blake White. The painting shows Francis Marion providing food and courtesy to a captured British officer. However, Marion often ignored the ‘rules of war’.

THE BATTLE OF COWPENS **TURNING POINT**

The turning point in the South came at the Battle of Cowpens in January 1781.²⁴ General Nathaniel Greene headed the Continental Army’s southern campaign. In December 1780, Greene had divided his forces in rural South Carolina to ensure they would not all be captured, and given command of the other half to General Daniel Morgan.

Greene sent Morgan and his troops west to an area known as Cowpens, knowing that British forces would follow him. This allowed Greene to stay behind, monitor the British forces and rally the local militia.

Colonel Tarleton was sent to capture Morgan. He chased Morgan’s forces into what he thought was an open field, but discovered that there were sharpshooters hidden in the trees at the entrance to the field. The British were surrounded. Overall, 112 British troops were killed and 702 were captured, compared with Morgan’s loss of 12 killed and 60 wounded.

This victory by the southern Continental Army sent shockwaves through the British forces—and boosted support for the Patriot cause in the South.

ACTIVITY

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 How was the war in the southern states different from the war in the northern states?
- 2 Which losses for the Patriots were the most substantial in the southern campaign? Which losses were the most substantial for the British?

GEORGE WASHINGTON: HISTORICAL INTERPRETATIONS

Most of written history has been concerned with the actions of powerful public figures such as kings, presidents and generals. This focus on ‘great men’ in history began with writers like Plutarch (CE 46–120), whose *Parallel Lives* contained biographical studies of notable Greeks and Romans.

After the revolution, Washington was considered to be its figurehead, its military saviour, and a character of the utmost grace and civility. Praise for Washington often had political motives behind it. As historian Ernst Breisach puts it: ‘Washington the national hero ... became the personification of those virtues which the young republic wished its citizens to have: thrift, patriotism, temperance, frugality, industry, honesty and obedience’²⁵

One of the first biographies of Washington was written by Parson Weems. Weems told—and possibly invented—a story about how the young Washington chopped down his father’s favourite cherry tree and was unable to lie that he hadn’t done it.

Weems’ book, *A History of the Life and Death, Virtues and Exploits of General George Washington*, was a commercial and critical success, published at the height of Washington’s popularity.

Weems’ research was minimal, as he relied on anecdotes and rumours, and he was definitely on Washington’s side, describing him as ‘the greatest man that ever lived’. But because Weems was one of the first popular narrators of the revolution, his accounts have survived in folklore—and even in modern history books.

Realistic assessments of Washington are quite distinct from the myths. His tactical sense was essential to the survival of the Continental Army, but he lost twice as many significant battles as he won. Washington pestered Congress for better supplies for his army, yet didn’t hold back with his own expense claims—including one \$831 bill for new saddlery and stationery.

Washington was civil and refined in public, but often moody and short-tempered in private. He was a keen seeker of wealth, always looking for ways to extend his profit, and was an avid speculator in the western lands. He kept large numbers of African slaves, and once attempted to use slaves as payment when he was buying land.²⁶ The Iroquois tribes called Washington *Conotocarious*, which meant ‘Devourer of Towns’—this was because of the **scorched-earth** strategies he ordered his officers to use during the 1779 Sullivan expedition.

Like his fellow revolutionaries, Washington had his flaws and contradictions. Yet his three-fold status has invited claims of near-sainthood, as he had been:

- commander of the army and revolutionary leader
- chairman of the Philadelphia Convention
- first President of the United States.

The challenge for historians is to remove the myths that have been added to Washington’s story over the last two centuries.

← **Source 7.21** *Apotheosis of Washington*, by John James Barralet, c. 1800. This painting depicts the president ascending to heaven. Lady Liberty and a Native American grieve at his tomb. Immortality and Genius aid his ascension as Faith, Hope and Charity watch.

scorched earth military tactic that destroys the land and crops of the enemy, leaving nothing behind



REVOLUTION OR CIVIL WAR?

Historian David Armitage argues that the American Revolution—like many revolutions—can more usefully be seen as a civil war. Even while the war was taking place, some British commentators referred to it as ‘the American civil war’.

For Armitage, the War of Independence was a civil war because it involved armed combat within a sovereign entity—as the colonies were then still ‘part’ of Britain—and the fighting was between two parties who, at the start of the war, shared a common ruler: King George III.²⁷

Before war broke out, the Continental Congress had stated in July 1775 that it sought reconciliation with Britain ‘on reasonable terms ... thereby to relieve the Empire from the calamities of civil war’.²⁸ When people talk of the American Civil War, they are referring to the attempt in 1861–1865 by southern slave-owning states to break from the Union. However, America had experienced many civil wars before then.

Armitage suggests that people tend to use the term *revolution* to imply progress and innovation, but *civil war* suggests far greater destruction.

ACTIVITY

EVALUATING THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR

- 1 To what extent could the American Revolution be considered a civil war? Write an extended response using evidence.
- 2 For further study, look at contrasting historical interpretations or statistics using social groups to compare whether the war was a civil war or a revolution. Your school or local library may have access to databases to help you with your search. Create a chart or a Venn diagram to show your findings.

DIVERSE EXPERIENCES IN THE WAR

John Adams (1818): ‘The Revolution was in the minds and hearts of the people; a change in their religious sentiments, of their duties and obligations ... This radical change in the principles, opinions, sentiments, and affections of the people was the real American Revolution.’

WOMEN KEY GROUP

Historian Sarah Pearsall maintains that ‘...women’s stories, as well as their activities, transformed them from mere victims into agents in the war, battling demons of brutality, tyranny, chaos and hunger’.²⁹

AT HOME

Women contributed to the War of Independence in many ways. While their husbands were away fighting, women took over the management of farms and shops. Many had to use muskets and rifles to defend their property from British or mercenary troops.³⁰ Daughters of Liberty groups—which originally campaigned against imports—started up again to raise funds or to source equipment for the Continental Army and state militias.

Some women—mainly women from middle and upper classes—opened their homes and barns as military hospitals and barracks.

↓ **Source 7.22** *The women of '76: 'Molly Pitcher' the heroine of Monmouth*, by Currier & Ives, c. 1856–1907. A representation of 'Molly Pitcher,' a Pennsylvanian woman who took up arms after her husband was injured in battle. Many historians consider Molly Pitcher to be a composite of several patriot women.



↓ Deborah Sampson.



AT ENCAMPMENTS

Thousands of women followed their soldier husbands into encampments, where they worked as nurses, cooks and cleaners. Women mended uniforms, tended animals, cleaned rifles, searched the battlefield for weapons and ammunition, treated the sick and buried the dead.

PRINTING THE DECLARATION

Following Washington's victories at Trenton and Princeton, the members of the Second Continental Congress were happy to attach their signed names to the Declaration of Independence. They turned to a Baltimore woman named Mary Katharine Goddard. Goddard was one of the most successful journalists and publishers in the thirteen states—and most likely the first female employee in the United States. Goddard normally used her initials to sign her work, but she included her full name on the Declaration of Independence—thus declaring that it had been printed by a woman. However, Congress could not afford to pay Goddard what she was owed, and she was only able to continue publishing patriotic materials by bartering for goods.³¹

ON THE BATTLEFIELD

Women also helped out on the battlefield, where they were commonly known as 'Molly Pitcher'. The name came from the phrase men used when they needed fresh water from canteens: 'Molly, pitcher!' However, women were also responsible for caring for the injured, gathering supplies and boosting morale. Mary Ludwig Hays McCauley became known as *the* legendary 'Molly Pitcher' at the 1778 Battle of Monmouth. After her husband William Hays was injured, Molly Hays took his place in the gun crew, loading and firing the cannon repeatedly. It was a decisive victory for the Continental Army.

One woman actively pursued military combat. Deborah Sampson was a young Massachusetts schoolteacher.³² At five feet and seven inches (170 cm) she was tall and strongly built for a woman of that era. Sampson cut her hair short, wrapped binding around her breasts to flatten them, dressed in farmers' clothes and enlisted under the name of Robert Shurtleff. She was such a good shot with a rifle that no one doubted she was a man—although her fellow soldiers teased her for not having to shave.

Deborah Sampson participated in several minor battles in 1782 and acquitted herself well. She was shot in the thigh after a skirmish in New York and used a knife to dig out the bullet herself to prevent army doctors from finding out her secret. Later, after falling severely ill, medics discovered her true sex, and she was honourably discharged from the army.

At first, Sampson was denied payment for combat, until 1804 when Paul Revere lobbied Congress to grant Sampson a monthly pension. She married, raised four children and later earned a modest living by dressing in military uniform and retelling her wartime experiences.

IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

The ravages of war affected women in the countryside, as well as in the cities.

Recent historians have noted the violence associated with the American Revolutionary War as well as economic impact on the household. According to historian Sarah Pearsall, 'the violation of women's bodies, families and homes was a reality for some; it was a threat enacted against many more'. Pearsall notes how in 1778 a Boston minister

rallied his parishioners by asking them if they could ‘hear the cries and screeches of our ravished matrons and virgins?’ Furthermore, Mercy Otis Warren declared outrage over young women being subjected to the ‘brutal lust’ of British troops.³³

In 1780, after British troops ransacked her home, searched her mother and drank her alcohol, Eliza Wilkinson, a southern woman from a *non-combatant* family, wrote in her diary, ‘After such unwelcome visitors, it is not surprising that the unprotected women could not eat or sleep in peace. They lay in their clothes every night, alarmed by the least noise; while the days were spent in anxiety and melancholy ...’³⁴

According to historian Elizabeth Evans, while reports of rape by American soldiers or militiamen were censored by the Second Continental Congress (or by members of the Patriotic press), most rape assaults were committed by British soldiers. Other women became refugees because of the fighting. Some of the most tragic consequences of war were the assaults on women, and the subsequent trauma suffered by them and their families—much of which went unreported.³⁵

AFRICAN AMERICANS KEY GROUP

African Americans took part in the fighting from the outset, including the Boston Massacre, the first skirmish at Lexington and the first significant battle at Bunker Hill.

Yet in mid-1775 when Washington arrived to take command of the newly formed Continental Army, he was shocked to see African Americans armed and housed alongside white soldiers. Washington—who was a slave-owner—immediately recommended to Congress that the enlistment of further ‘Negroes’ be prohibited, regardless of their status as slaves or free men. Shortly afterwards Lord Dunmore, Governor of Virginia—the state Washington was from—issued a proclamation promising freedom to any slave who volunteered to take up arms against the revolution.

Lord Dunmore’s proclamation

I do, in Virtue of the Power and Authority given to me by His Majesty, determine to execute martial law ... [to achieve this] I do require every person capable of bearing arms to report to His Majesty’s standard, or be looked upon as Traitors to His Majesty’s crown and government ... And I do hereby further declare all indentured servants, Negroes or others free that are able and willing to bear arms [for] His Majesty’s troops.

Dunmore wanted to achieve two things with his proclamation:

- boost the numbers of his militia
- instil panic in revolutionary Virginians, who were intensely afraid of slave uprisings.

This became a common tactic of the Revolutionary War, and was used by both sides with varying degrees of success.

Most states followed Washington’s lead and banned the recruitment of African American soldiers. However, commitment to this policy fell when it was discovered that the British were enlisting black men in their thousands. When Massachusetts and Rhode Island failed to fill their quotas of recruits for the Continental Army, state authorities issued promises of freedom and land grants to black recruits. Rhode Island extended a similar offer to Native Americans and even created the first American regiment of solely African American troops. Washington softened his determination

non-combatant person not taking part in the fighting



↑ The grave of Nero Hawley in Trumbull, Connecticut. Hawley fought for most of the war in the place of his ‘owner’. He took part in several major battles and, in 1781, earned his freedom and a small monthly pension.

← **Source 7.23** Cited in Horace Greeley, *The American Conflict* (London: Hartford, 1867), 518.

ACTIVITY

DIVERSE EXPERIENCES

Select and investigate the life and war service of one of the following African American soldiers during the Revolutionary War: Salem Poor, Peter Salem, Seymour Burr, Wentworth Cheswell, Henry Washington, Nero Hawley, Cato. What challenges and successes did your selected soldier experience? To what extent were his experiences different from those of other soldiers? Present your findings to the class.

➔ **Source 7.24** *Peter Salem Shooting Major Pitcairn at Bunker Hill* by J.E. Taylor.

to keep black men out of the army when he noticed that some of the first men to pick up arms against the British were now turning to their sworn enemy for employment. In addition, historians believe that there were two African American men in the Trenton and Princeton campaigns.

Apart from those states that had 'blacks only' regiments, most African Americans fought, lived, ate and slept alongside white soldiers. (This was a degree of racial integration that would not happen again in the United States Army until World War II.) As much as 5 per cent of the Continental Army may have been African American soldiers.³⁶

Of course, not everyone accepted the integration of black and white soldiers. Some soldiers in the British Army—which itself used the services of thousands of African American free men and slave recruits over the course of the war—sang songs that mocked the Continentals for having African Americans in their regiments in song. According to historian Gary Nash, 'Enslaved Africans in North America did not need the explosion of pamphlet literature, sermons, petitions, and legislative speeches to discover that their natural rights were violated by their enslavement'.



LOYALISTS

KEY GROUP

According to historian Alan Taylor, 'The cycles of invasion, exposure, and suppression eventually taught the Loyalists and disaffected to keep a low profile'.

Great difficulties were faced by Americans who were loyal to the British Crown during and after the Revolutionary War. The leaders of the new society became more authoritarian and responded with violence and policies of terror and repression for those who did not agree with the Patriots' cause.

Not only were people who were still loyal to the Crown shunned, persecuted and even assaulted—they were also at risk of losing their land and possessions. According to English common law, the property of traitors could be removed by the Crown. In late November 1777—and after a year of intense military opposition from Loyalists—the Second Continental Congress encouraged the states to make full use of this law.

Most state assemblies jumped at the opportunity. Loyalist land was forfeited to the state and used to fund Continental loan certificates. The belongings of Loyalists were confiscated and auctioned. Several states deliberately targeted Loyalists, declaring them guilty of crimes and subject to punishment without trial. These Loyalist individuals and their families were then banished, and some even threatened with death sentences if they returned. A bill passed by the New York Assembly in 1779 was typical of these laws:

'Act of Attainder', New York legislature, 22 October 1779

Whereas during the present unjust and cruel war waged by the King of Great Britain against the State and the other United States of America, diverse persons holding or claiming property within this State have voluntarily been [loyal] to the said King ... with intent to subvert the government and liberties of this State and the other United States and to bring the same in subjection to the Crown of Great Britain ... said persons having forfeited all right to the protection of this State and to the benefit of the laws under which such property is held or claimed ... [T]he most notorious offenders ... are hereby declared to be ... convicted ... and that all and singular the estate, both real and personal, held or claimed by them ... on the date of the passage of the act, shall be, and hereby is declared to be forfeited to ... the people of this State.

 **Source 7.25** 'Act of Attainder,' New York legislature, 22 October 1779.

A New York Loyalist affected by this law was Parker Wickham. Wickham was one of the wealthiest men in Suffolk County, and had a family estate spanning thousands of acres. Wickham's election to a high government post angered many Patriots, and in early 1777 he was kidnapped and dragged into Connecticut by a small militia. After he returned to New York, the state legislature there seized his property without compensation and banished him under threat of death. Wickham's fiercest political opponent was a man named Jared Landon, who ended up living in Wickham's house.

When Loyalists were captured by the Continental Army, they were not always considered to be prisoners of war, as they complicated matters. Instead, they were prosecuted for the crimes that were committed, and many were executed as burglars, horse thieves, traitors or murderers.

In Virginia, some Loyalists were tortured into declaring the cause of liberty. A Virginian Colonel named Charles Lynch held many rapid mock 'trials' that sentenced many Loyalists to hang. His name gave us the word 'lynch', as in 'hang', although some historians dispute this.³⁷

Other states adopted similar measures against Loyalists. Virginia invoked an English law from the fourteenth century and declared all Loyalists to be enemy aliens. Tory merchants were given forty days to leave, and all other adult males were required to swear allegiance to the state. Those that refused to swear allegiance had their names publicised and were forbidden from:

- owning firearms
- holding public office
- serving on juries
- buying land.

In Georgia, each county appointed a twelve-man 'inquisition committee' that tested suspected Tories by requiring them to pledge an oath of loyalty to the Revolution and hurl insults at King George III. Massachusetts passed the Banishment Act in September 1778, casting more than 300 Loyalists into exile.

ACTIVITY

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 How did key women provide support for the Patriots? Provide specific examples.
- 2 What were some diverse experiences of women during the Revolutionary War?
- 3 How did the war impact the everyday lives of African Americans? Provide examples.
- 4 Why was there differing support from African Americans during the war?
- 5 How did the war impact Loyalists? Provide examples.
- 6 Which were the most extreme measures taken against the Loyalists during the war? Support your answer with facts from the text.

THE AMERICAN VICTORY

TURNING POINT

An eighteenth-century song sung at the Battle of Yorktown: 'The world turned upside down.'

In early 1781, the Patriots appeared to winning in the southern states. However, Britain's Lord Cornwallis had control along the coast. The British defeated those loyal to the Patriots in Virginia but it cost them—as they were beginning to run out of supplies.

The British built a base at Yorktown, Virginia, on the Chesapeake Bay. Washington had hoped to drive the British from New York City, but he changed his strategy when he discovered that two fleets of French troops had just arrived from France: one fleet under Lieutenant General Comte de Rochambeau and the other under the Comte de Grasse.

In August, Washington ordered the French fleets and vast numbers of troops south to Virginia—he wanted to take advantage of both the fresh French troops and of Cornwallis' position in Yorktown. The British—faced with battles at sea and on land—were outnumbered and eventually overwhelmed. The allied French and American forces outnumbered the British forces two to one: 14,000 men to 7000 men.³⁸ The Siege of Yorktown lasted several weeks, before the British formally surrendered on 19 October. As the British troops were being evacuated, the American and French soldiers taunted them by singing 'Yankee Doodle' and 'The World Turned Upside Down'.

The British Government was severely criticised for:

- the inability to bring the war to a conclusion
- the failure of its southern campaign
- the 1781 defeat at Yorktown.

Neither the Second Continental Congress nor the Continental Army had been vanquished. American governments controlled twelve of the thirteen states. New York City was in the hands of the British; however, it was only a matter of time until it fell.

DID YOU KNOW

A song reportedly played in the wake of the British defeat was 'The World Turned Upside Down'. Its lyrics tell of a world where the natural order has been dramatically upset:

*If buttercups buzzed after the bee
If boats were on land and churches on sea
If ponies rode men and if grass ate the cows,
And cats should be chased into holes by the mouse
If the mamas sold their babies
To the gypsies for half a crown
If summer were spring and the other way round
Then all the world would be upside down.*

KEY SOURCE

➔ Source 7.26

American foot soldiers during the Yorktown campaign, 1781, from a watercolour drawing in the diary of Jean-Baptiste-Antoine DeVerger (circa 1781). The drawing features an African American soldier of the First Rhode Island Regiment, a New England militiaman, a frontier rifleman and a French officer.



In February 1782—seven years after the first battle at Lexington—British Parliament voted to end the war and sign a peace treaty with the Americans. The following month, Prime Minister Lord North resigned.

In assessing the reasons for Britain's defeat, it is clear that the very nature of the war was crucial. The initial strategy employed by British commanders was to:

- land their forces in America
- seize control of major cities
- destroy the Continental Army
- capture the Continental Congress
- arrest dissidents
- restore Loyalists to colonial government.

However, when some of these objectives became impossible, British generals had to focus instead on:

- occupation—setting up bases in American towns
- suppression—trying to keep the Patriots under control
- pursuit—chasing the Continental Army and Patriot militias.

The British were unable to accomplish these aims without alienating substantial numbers of Americans who had previously been Loyalists or uncommitted.

American leaders such as Washington soon recognised that their prospects would improve if they could extend the duration of the war—that is, make it last longer.

A long conflict would:

- drain the treasury in London
- erode support for the war in Britain
- bring pressure to bear on the British Government—which was already politically unstable.

Washington's main tactic of avoiding fighting was intended to prolong the war, exhaust British resources and frustrate British commanders. The survival of the Continental Army and the Congress was also crucial. As America's only national bodies, they were important symbols of American independence.

American independence had been won on the battlefield—but it would now have to be secured on the home front.



ACTIVITY

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 How did the Continental Army ultimately achieve success?
- 2 What were critical issues that needed to be solved at the end of the war?

EXTENDED RESPONSE

Using three or four points, evaluate the performance of the Second Continental Congress during the Revolutionary War. Did the Congress supply and instruct the Continental Army well? To what extent was the Congress disadvantaged by the inaction of particular states? Use evidence to support your answer.

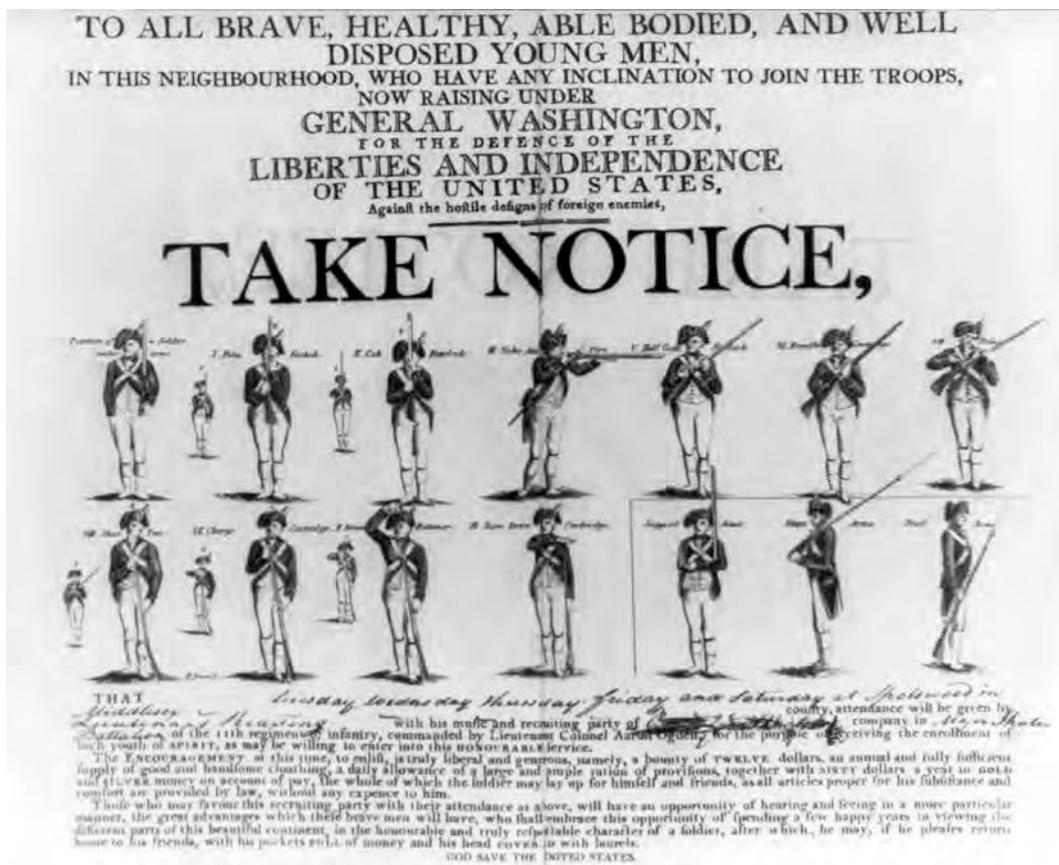
← **Source 7.27** *Second Battle of the Virginia Capes*, 1962. The battle was strategically decisive, as it prevented the Royal Navy from reinforcing or evacuating the besieged forces of Cornwallis at Yorktown, Virginia.

ACTIVITY

HISTORICAL SOURCES AND POSTER

Using Source 7.28 and your own knowledge, respond to the following:

- 1 Identify techniques used to encourage men to enlist in the Continental Army.
- 2 How effective do you think these might have been?
- 3 Construct your own enlistment poster, this time for the British Army in 1780.



[Source 7.28](#) A poster soliciting recruits for the Continental Army.

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE—DIAGRAM

Create a diagram or infographic showing the significant factors and individuals involved in the American victory in the Revolutionary War. Include the contributions of a diverse range of people.

KEY EVENTS—MEMORY TASK

Create cue cards and memorise the order of key events in the revolution.

CHAPTER 7 REVIEW

KEY SUMMARY POINTS

- The Declaration of Independence could only be secured by a military victory over Britain.
- The Articles of Confederation allowed for a loose association of states, but limited control.
- The Continental Army had a series of disastrous losses in New York and Philadelphia.
- Crossing the Delaware was a success for Washington, who gained momentum with victories at Trenton and Princeton.
- Franklin, Adams and Jefferson secured the Treaty of Amity with the French in February 1778, securing finances and, later, troops.
- The Continental Army benefited from the involvement and expertise of European personnel such as Lafayette, Kosciusko, Pulaski and von Steuben.
- The involvement of foreign allies was decisive, especially the involvement of the French.
- The French Declaration of War in July 1778 transformed the situation for London. North America was now only one war the British were fighting in a wider imperial conflict.
- The Continental Navy and American privateers enjoyed some success, costing British companies dearly in terms of property and insurance.
- The war in the southern states was different from the North, with strong Loyalist bases.
- Women were instrumental in supporting the Patriot cause on and off of the battlefield.
- African Americans had little to gain in the revolution but a sizeable number volunteered in the North.
- Loyalists were punished throughout the states for their support for the British.
- American victory was decided at Yorktown in October 1781, with French support.

ACTIVITY

CONSTRUCTING AN ARGUMENT—ESSAY

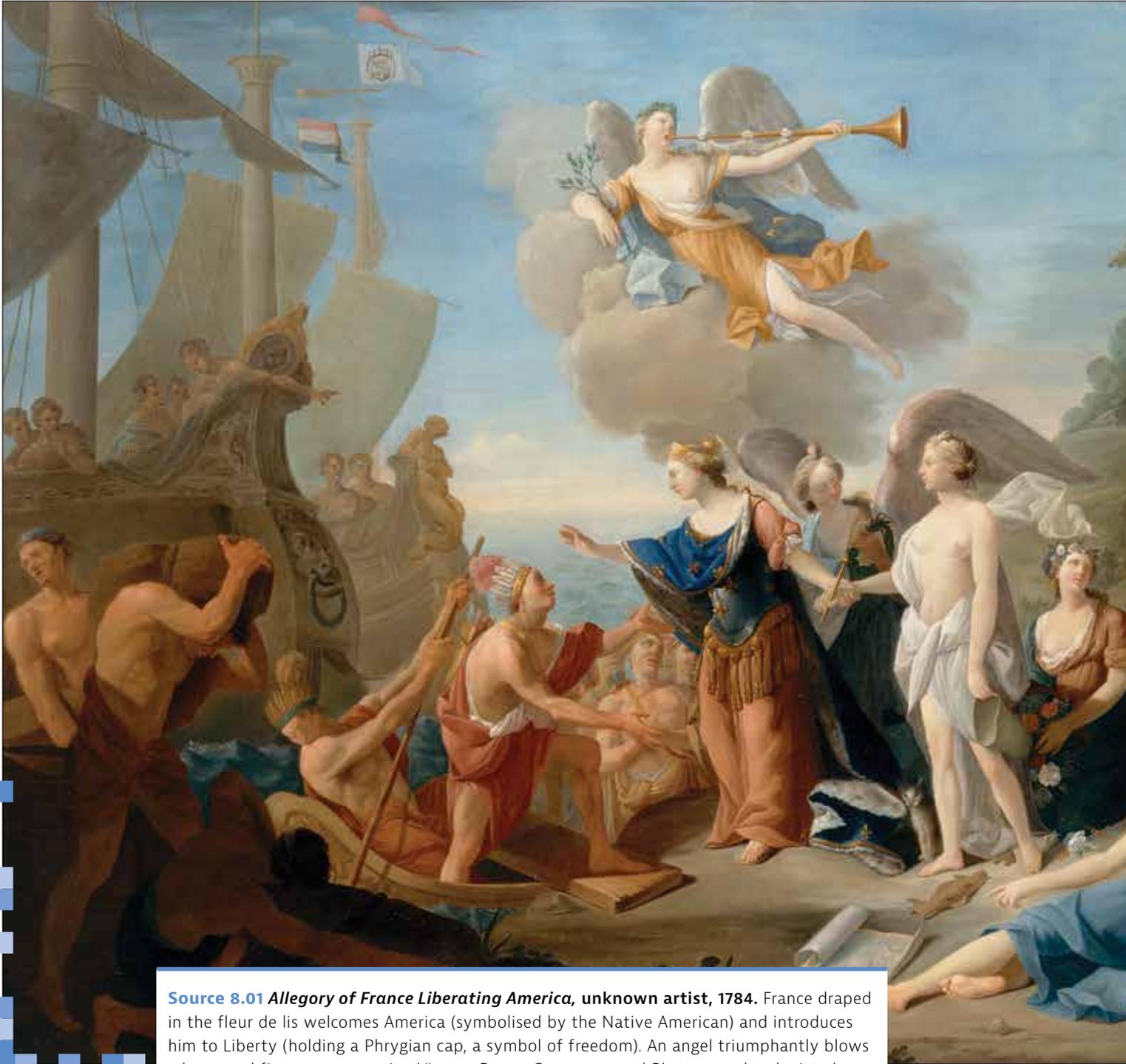
Write a 600–800-word essay on one of the topics below. Your essay should include an introduction, paragraphs supported by relevant evidence from primary sources and historical interpretations, and a conclusion.

- Did the Americans win the Revolutionary War? Or did the British lose it?
- How did the involvement of foreign countries such as France change the course of the Revolutionary War?
- Assess the strengths and weaknesses of the American leadership during the Revolutionary War—political, military and ideological. Was there any luck involved in the American victory?



THE NATION TAKES SHAPE

(1781-1787)



Source 8.01 *Allegory of France Liberating America*, unknown artist, 1784. France draped in the fleur de lis welcomes America (symbolised by the Native American) and introduces him to Liberty (holding a Phrygian cap, a symbol of freedom). An angel triumphantly blows a horn, and figures representing Victory, Peace, Commerce and Plenty are also depicted.

CHAPTER 8

‘Thomas Paine had boldly told the Americans that they had it in their power to start the world anew. Would they? How would their new country be different from every other nation in the world?’

—Robert J. Allison, 2011

Victory in the war did not automatically mean a victory for the revolution.

Despite the Treaty of Paris, the new society faced a range of political, economic and social problems. The US was economically ravaged by the war: Continental Army veterans returning home found taxes too high, market prices too low and their economic prospects poor. It seemed that the revolution had failed to deliver a better life for many Americans.

The most pressing economic problem was debt. The nation was unable to repay foreign loans—or to even honour war salaries. Shays’ Rebellion in Massachusetts required the state militia to be mobilised. The American Revolution was now at a critical juncture.

KEY EVENTS

January 1781

Attempted mutiny by soldiers in Morristown, New Jersey

December 1782

The Newburgh Petition

September 1783

The Treaty of Paris

December 1783

George Washington resigns as Commander-in-Chief

January 1787

Shays’ Rebellion

KEY QUESTIONS

- What were the initial challenges faced by the new nation after the Revolutionary War?
- To what extent did the economic issues challenge the consolidation of the new nation?
- How did opposition and unforeseen reactions affect the new government?
- How did the contributions of individuals such as George Washington and John Adams shape the politics of the new regime?
- How did the revolution affect the experiences of social groups, such as the Continental Army soldiers, Loyalists, Native Americans and African Americans?



CHALLENGES FOR THE NEW REGIME

Brooke Hunter (2005): 'Peace brought an end to the war, but marked only the beginning of America's economic difficulties.'

ECONOMIC CHALLENGES AND POST-WAR RECESSION

The United States was effectively bankrupt by the mid-1780s because of the cost of the Revolutionary War. There had been a shortage of hard currency before 1775, so it did not take long for the war to drain American coffers of gold and silver.

By the late 1770s, the last desperate response of Congress and the states was to print money as it was needed, so the number of banknotes in circulation increased rapidly. But because the banknotes were not underpinned by precious metals, commodities or land, the more that were printed, the less they were worth.

The Continental Congress had been by far the worst offender. In June 1775 it issued \$2 million worth of paper currency to fund the war, calling upon the thirteen colonies to honour these banknotes at their face value. The banknotes were designed by Paul Revere and printed on thick paper—they had complex symbols and a signature to discourage counterfeiters.

By the end of 1775, Congress had authorised the release of a further \$4 million in banknotes. The more they needed money, the more they printed until by late 1779,



there was a staggering \$242 million in circulation. There were also tens of millions of dollars of counterfeit Continental notes—some created by profiteers; others by British agents attempting to sabotage the American economy. By the end of 1779, the banknotes printed by Congress were almost worthless.

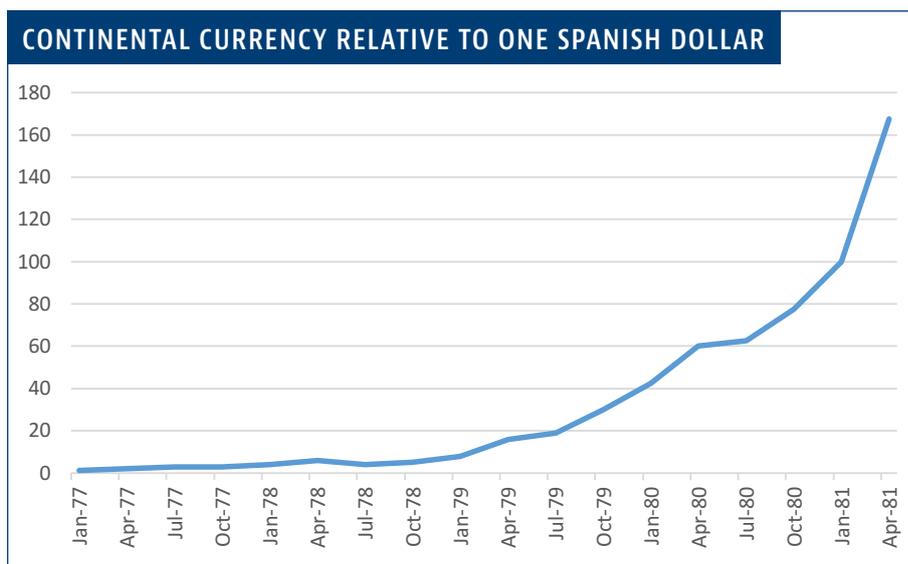
➔ **Source 8.02** Continental money.

Congress attempted to limit the economic collapse in February 1781 by appointing Pennsylvanian merchant Robert Morris as its 'superintendent of finances'. Morris was given a free hand to implement reform and undertook three major changes. Morris:

- stopped the printing and further release of Continental currency
- organised sizeable loans of gold and silver coins from French and Dutch creditors and issued a new set of banknotes backed by these reserves
- persuaded Congress to establish the Bank of North America, which he hoped would evolve into a central reserve bank like the Bank of England.

The US economy at the time was suffering from extreme **inflation**, called hyperinflation, which is when prices go up and the value of the currency goes down. Morris's changes reduced hyperinflation, but failed to end it. Morris resigned in January 1784, frustrated by a lack of cooperation between states and the inability of Congress to push through reforms.

inflation economic phenomenon caused either by rising prices or excess production of paper money, leading to a drop on its real value



← **Source 8.03** Jack Greene, *A Companion to the American Revolution* (Malden: Blackwell, 2000), 390.

Note: After the British passed the Currency Act in 1764, Spanish dollars in both gold and silver coins were widely available in colonial America, so Congress adopted the dollar as its currency standard.

ACTIVITY

DATA ANALYSIS

Using Source 8.03 and your own knowledge, respond to the following:

- 1 Describe the trend in the value of Continental currency relative to Spanish dollars 1777–1781.
- 2 Identify possible reasons for the trend.
- 3 How did Robert Morris attempt to improve the government's financial system in 1781?
- 4 Explain how the circulation of fake Continental banknotes in America might have assisted the British during the Revolutionary War.

PRESSURE FROM SOLDIERS AND VETERANS

During the war, soldiers had frequently deserted the Continental Army, especially:

- after battles were lost
- during winter encampments
- during shortages of food, clothing and wages.

Soldiers were paid money when they signed up—known as an enlistment bounty. Some soldiers joined up under false names, collected their bounty, then deserted and rejoined elsewhere. Mutinies were common, too—particularly in the second half of the war when Congress was effectively bankrupt and the soldiers went unpaid, often for months at a time.

Several regiments started to protest as early as 1780, as they were not paid well. Several hundred soldiers marched out of West Point in January 1780, with some sent back and punished. Connecticut troops followed four months later. Thirty-one New York troops did the same in June 1780, with thirteen of them executed for treason.

On New Year's Day 1781, over 1500 Pennsylvanian soldiers—many of them drunk—marched to nearby Princeton and occupied college buildings.¹ They demanded an end to their terms of service. Most of them had signed up for three years or the duration of the war, and they figured their three years was up. The disgruntled soldiers left to march on Philadelphia—where Congress was meeting—determined to express their grievances directly. Washington arrived and the mutineers were punished. The two ringleaders were shot by firing squad—but the issue of pay for soldiers was still an issue. Washington drafted a blunt letter to the heads of four state governments and to Congress.

mutiny an uprising, insurrection or refusal to obey orders in a military unit

➔ **Source 8.04** Jared Sparks, *The Writings of George Washington*, vol. VII (Boston: Russell, Odiorne, and Metcalf, and Hilliard, Gray, and Co., 1835), 352.

Washington's letter

KEY SOURCE

It is with extreme anxiety and pain of mind [that] I find myself constrained to inform Your Excellency that the event I have long apprehended would be the consequence of the complicated distresses of the Army, has ... taken place. On the night of [1 January 1781] a **mutiny** was excited by the non-commissioned officers and privates of the Pennsylvania Line, which soon became so universal as to defy all opposition ... [S]ome officers were killed, others wounded and the lives of several common soldiers lost ... At what point this defection will stop or how extensive it may prove, God only knows.

[These] aggravated calamities and distresses have resulted from the total want [lack] of pay for nearly twelve months, for want of clothing at a severe season, and not infrequently the want of provisions ... [I]t is in vain to think an Army can be kept together much longer, under such a variety of sufferings as ours has experienced ... [U]nless some immediate and spirited measures are adopted to furnish at least three months pay to the troops ... and means are devised to clothe and feed them better ... the worst that can befall us may be expected.

Congress understood that the mutinous soldiers would enjoy broad public support and—afraid the mutiny would spread—had sent Joseph Reed to negotiate. Reed managed to calm the rebels by granting them variously:

- discharges from the army
- extended periods of leave
- re-enlistment bonuses.

By 1783, America's currency situation was particularly dire, as soldiers were being demobilised and discharged from the Continental Army. Most of these troops had joined up after Congress increased its enlistment bounties in 1778. The bounties they were owed varied depending on where and when they had enlisted:

- 1778: privates and non-commissioned officers were promised \$80 and 100 acres of land if they enlisted and served for the duration of the war
- 1779: the cash payment was increased from \$80 to \$200
- individual states offered bounties to their own militia regiments—for example, in Virginia the end-of-service bounty was \$750.²

These were grand promises—but neither Congress nor the states had the money to pay the bounties. A common response was to print additional banknotes to pay wages, although these notes were never worth their face value—and some merchants and retailers refused to accept them. Foreign coins became the only accepted form of currency, and bartering (or swapping) was used if coins were in short supply.

The worthless banknotes became symbolic of broken promises and government incompetence. Many people treated Continental dollars with scorn. One soldier soaked his banknotes in water and used them to plaster his injured leg.³ Returning soldiers sometimes used their paper money to decorate their hats. In Philadelphia, a crowd captured a stray dog, coated it in tar and rolled it in a pile of worthless banknotes, before parading it past the State House.⁴

Unpaid salaries were at the heart of many mutinies during the Revolutionary War—and the end of fighting did not ease the problem. In 1782, thousands of soldiers were camped in Pennsylvania, waiting for their payments and discharge orders. Congress, which was meeting in Philadelphia did not have the funds to pay the soldiers, so instead it issued a **furlough** to them while it sought revenue from the states. It was a desperate stop-gap solution, but there were no funds in the treasury and there was nothing else Congress could do.

furlough temporary unpaid leave

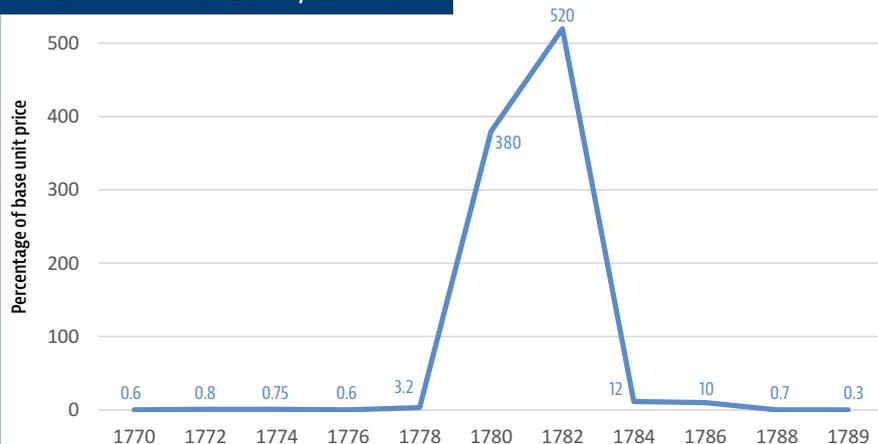
The furlough orders sparked outrage among the soldiers and the radical press. ‘To only furlough us and not to pay us is an odd unheard of piece of injustice and not to be put up with by brave men that have fought and suffered everything but the dissolution of soul and body’, wrote one private.⁵ A Philadelphia newspaper suggested that the national interest would be better served by withholding the salaries of public servants rather than of soldiers.

Independent Gazetteer, Philadelphia, 7 June 1783.

Congress, having no further occasion for the services and sacrifices of the army ... in their great wisdom ... have thought proper to grant the troops of the respective states a furlough [indefinitely]. It would not be amiss ... if the people, [Congress’] master, were to give them also leave of absence ... [so] their services may then be dispensed with. The moneys drawn forth from the public treasury for salaries on the civil list, which are by no means [small], might be appropriated to a much better purpose: discharging the [back pay] of the army.

← **Source 8.05** *Independent Gazetteer*, Philadelphia, 7 June 1783.

INFLATION IN AMERICA, 1770–1789



← **Source 8.06** Inflation in America.

ACTIVITY

DATA ANALYSIS

Using Source 8.06 and your own knowledge, respond to the following:

- In one or two sentences, describe how the cost of living changed in America between 1770 and 1789.
- In 1782, by what percentage had the cost of living risen above normal levels?
- Give two reasons for the high rate of inflation in America between 1778 and 1784.
- Suggest two political consequences of this rise in inflation.

borne carried; sustained without yielding



↑ **Source 8.07** An officer hears the complaints of a Continental Army soldier. Painting by Thomas Fogarty, c. 1890–1938.

treasonous betrayal of the nation

Although known as the ‘Newburgh Conspiracy’ for being treasonous, the letters were drafted by General Knox and endorsed by Secretary of War Benjamin Lincoln.

⇒ **Source 8.08** *Journals of the American Congress From 1774–1788: In Four Volumes*, vol. IV (Washington: Way and Gideon, 1823), 207.

destitute poor, impoverished

THE NEWBURGH CONSPIRACY

Newburgh Petition (1783): ‘We have **borne** all that men can bear.’

The bankruptcy of Congress did not just affect enlisted soldiers. In 1777, when the Continental Army was desperately short of experienced commissioned officers, Congress tried to retain its existing officers by promising lifetime pensions at half-pay for those who served the duration of the war.

The promise was strongly criticised by some state assemblies—they were wary of the cost and concerned that it might lead to the formation of a military class. In general, officers’ salaries were paid more consistently than the salaries of enlisted soldiers, but by 1781–82, some junior officers—lieutenants, captains and majors—had not been paid for months.

In late 1782, a section of the army was camped on a field near Newburgh, New York. The men built temporary buildings and prepared to sit out the winter of 1782–83. They were soon hit by shortages, just like most winter encampments:

- shipments of uniforms and blankets were promised, but never arrived
- groups of five or six soldiers took turns sharing one greatcoat to ward off the cold
- straw and fodder for the horses were in short supply.

On Christmas Day 1782, ten starving Massachusetts’ soldiers stole eleven geese from a local farmer and feasted on them—and each soldier was tried and punished with 100 lashes. George Washington sensed that the morale of his army was deteriorating, and called off his visit home.

At Newburgh, several officers began discussing the shortages and lack of pay they had endured for much of the war. There was talk of action against the ineffective Congress. Some state delegates visiting Newburgh commented on the atmosphere. Alexander Hamilton showed great concern. General Arthur St Clair reported to Congress that ‘a convulsion of the most dreadful nature and fatal consequences’ could be expected.⁶ The officers drafted a letter of grievances to present to Congress. This became known as the Newburgh Conspiracy—it was viewed by many as **treasonous**.

The Newburgh petition, December 1782

At this period of the war it is with peculiar pain we find ourselves constrained to address your august [distinguished] body on matters of a [financial] nature. We have struggled with our difficulties, year after year, under the hopes that each [year] would be the last; but we have been disappointed ... We apply to Congress for relief as our head and sovereign ...

Our distresses are now brought to a point. We have borne all that men can bear. Our property is expended, our private resources are at an end and our friends are wearied out and disgusted with our [constant appeals for help]. We, therefore, most seriously and earnestly beg that a supply of money may be forwarded to the army as soon as possible. The uneasiness of the soldiers, for want of pay, is great and dangerous. Any further experiments on their patience may have fatal effects ...

We are grieved to find that our [colleagues] who retired from service on half-pay, under the resolution of Congress in 1780, are not only **destitute** ... but [have] become the objects of [disgrace]. Their condition has a very discouraging aspect on us who must sooner or later retire ... [and] demands attention and redress. We regard the act of Congress respecting half-pay as an honorable and just recompense for several years’ hard service ... We hope, for the honor of human nature, that there are none so hardened in the sin of ingratitude as to deny the justice of the reward.



ACTIVITY

HISTORICAL SOURCES

Using Source 8.08 and your own knowledge, respond to the following:

- 1 Summarise the grievances of the officers as expressed in this petition. What is their perspective on the Revolutionary War?
- 2 Identify and analyse the language the officers use to persuade Congress to support their demands.
- 3 What does the petition suggest might happen if Congress cannot improve the situation?
- 4 Using your knowledge, evaluate this extract as a source of evidence on the economic crisis facing America at the end of the Revolutionary War. To what extent is it supported by other evidence?

As the tensions increased, a meeting was held in the church hall at Newburgh in March 1783. A surprise attendee at this meeting was George Washington, who was not entirely welcomed by his fellow officers.

Washington took the floor and first warned them not to 'lessen the dignity, and sully the glory you have hitherto maintained'.⁷ He spoke quietly but firmly about:

- the poor economic state of the nation
- the need to uphold civilian political authority
- the great virtue of loyalty.

Washington also won over the crowd by taking out his glasses and noting, 'Gentlemen, you must pardon me. I have grown gray in your service and now find myself growing blind'. This show of service helped change the mood. Washington was instrumental in halting immediate rebellion, and his speech became known as the 'Newburgh Address'.



← **Source 8.09** Washington's headquarters, Newburgh.

However, the Newburgh petition found support from some in Congress, particularly from the **Nationalists** who wanted a stronger central government that could tax and regulate trade. The appeal from those who had won the war was clear.

Furthering tensions, in June 1783 almost 500 officers from the Pennsylvania Regiment marched on Philadelphia from their encampment outside the city. For almost two weeks, disaffected soldiers lingered in the capital, gathering regularly at Independence Hall to demand a hearing and harass the delegates as they came and went. There were rumours that they might even enter the hall by force, or prevent those inside from leaving.

Nationalist a person or group that seeks to strengthen their nation through stronger government, improved trade and cultural expressions of nationhood and patriotism



Source 8.10 *Alexander Hamilton* by Thomas Hamilton Crawford, c. 1932. Alexander Hamilton is viewed by many historians as one of the ‘busiest’ of the Newburgh conspirators.

The members of Congress drafted a secret request to Pennsylvanian state leaders, and asked them to call out the local militia to disperse the soldiers. This request was refused. Faced with a lack of support and the prospect of further intimidation, Congress packed up and moved to Princeton in New Jersey—which was just one of several cities it met at during 1787, due to political instability.

Historians are divided about the significance of the Newburgh Conspiracy. John Phillips Resch suggests that it was more a ‘political bluff’ than a serious attempt at a military coup. Despite this, the Newburgh action ‘reinforced popular perceptions that the Continental Army, like all regular armies, was ... corrupt, that it threatened liberty and that it deserved to be treated as a necessary evil.’⁸ Richard Kohn maintains the event was stirred by conspirators within the Congress itself. He notes that ‘they would incite a mutiny in the Army—spark the explosion—then make certain it was immediately snuffed out. It was a treacherous double-game fraught with uncertainty. But to the nationalists, the whole future of the country was at stake.’⁹

ACTIVITY

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES—DIALOGUE

Perform a short dialogue between a pair of Continental Army officers encamped at Newburgh in March 1783. The pair should discuss their reasons for threatening to mutiny, and their thoughts about George Washington’s speech.

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 What were the key economic issues facing the new nation?
- 2 What were the key grievances of the Morristown soldiers?
- 3 Why was the so-called Newburgh Conspiracy symbolic of a growing crisis?

TREATY OF PARIS, 1783: **KEY DEVELOPMENT** A TRUE NATION EMERGES

Paul W. Mapp (2011): ‘The United States did remarkably well [in the treaty negotiations] though not so well as to avoid a crisis of immature statehood in the mid-1780s.’

Treaty of Paris not to be confused with the 1763 treaty of the same name that ended the French and Indian War

The *Treaty of Paris* on 3 September 1783 formally ended the American Revolutionary War. Although fighting had wound down in late 1781, and there were no major battles after Yorktown, it would take another two years for Britain and the United States to ratify the treaty.

Treaty negotiations were left to American diplomats who happened to be in France, notably Benjamin Franklin, John Adams and John Jay. The British relied on Richard Oswald, a Paris-based business agent and former slave-trader. The British considered that Oswald was experienced enough to negotiate on behalf of the Crown because he had previously lived in the American colonies.

By late 1782 these men had crafted a set of terms and sent them to their respective national governments. The terms were extremely favourable to the United States—in fact, Oswald had accepted almost every request made by the American delegates.

TREATY OF PARIS, 1783

Formal British acknowledgment and recognition of the independence and sovereignty of the United States.



Both nations to be allowed unrestricted access to the Mississippi River—an important waterway for trade and transport.



The surrender to the United States of all British territory between the Appalachian Mountains and the Ohio River.

The drawing of borders between the United States and British-occupied Canada to the north.



TERMS OF THE TREATY

The honoring of private and commercial debts in existence before the revolution.



American states to be 'encouraged' to compensate Loyalists for land and property seized during the revolution.

American companies to enjoy significant fishing rights in the oceans to the east of British Canada and off the coast of Newfoundland.



KEY SOURCE

DID YOU KNOW?

The American delegation in Paris commissioned Benjamin West to paint a commemorative portrait of the treaty signing. West began the portrait—but the British delegates refused to pose, and it was never completed.

← **Source 8.11** *American Commissioners of the Preliminary Peace Agreement with Great Britain* by Benjamin West, 1783–1784. From left to right: John Jay, John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Henry Laurens, and William Temple Franklin.

ACTIVITY

HISTORICAL SOURCES

Using Source 8.11 and your own knowledge, respond to the following:

- 1 *The American Commissioners of the Preliminary Peace Agreement with Great Britain* was painted to commemorate the signing of the Treaty of Paris in 1783. Why would the British commissioners have refused to sit for the painter?
- 2 Using the image and your knowledge, explain why the Treaty of Paris of 1783 was a success for the United States.

➔ **Source 8.12** Disbanding the Continental Army.



The generous terms of the Treaty of Paris sparked an angry response in London, both in British Parliament and in the press. Oswald was savaged in the House of Commons for giving away too much and gaining too little. In February 1783, the treaty was voted down three times. On the third occasion it resulted in a ‘no confidence’ motion that

brought down the government, and left Britain without a prime minister for over a month. A revised set of terms was sent back to Paris, but the Americans refused to shift from their demands. The new British Government was weak politically and not willing to restart the war, so Parliament endorsed the treaty and returned it to their negotiators for their signatures. The final document was signed in September 1783.

The Treaty of Paris was a significant victory for America and its diplomats. According to one commentator, Adams, Franklin and Jay proved to be ‘masters of the game, outmanoeuvring their counterparts and clinging fiercely to the interests most vital to the future of the United States’.¹⁰

But the treaty did not resolve all disputes, and there was still mistrust and deceit between Britain and the United States, despite the apparent good faith that had existed during negotiations. Although they had agreed on many items, it seemed doubtful that both parties would honour their commitments in full. So the Treaty of Paris brought the Revolutionary War to a close, but it did not resolve Anglo-American tensions, nor did it bring prosperity to the United States during the 1780s.

DID YOU KNOW?

Britain also had to negotiate separate peace treaties with France, Spain and the Dutch Republic. With valuable territory in India at stake, British diplomats were more concerned with securing favourable terms from the French than from the United States.

ACTIVITY

CONTINUITY AND CHANGE—DIAGRAM

Create a diagram or infographic entitled ‘The 1783 Treaty of Paris: Before and After’. Include examples of continuity and change in regard to:

- Britain’s rights and territories
- America’s rights and territories
- Canada’s status
- compensation and debts.

Discuss any obstacles or difficulties that might be faced in meeting the terms of the treaty.



↑ **Source 8.13** 1783 print by James Gillray showing John Bull (Britain) throwing up his arms in despair as the devil flies away with a map labelled ‘America’. To the left are a Dutchman, a Spaniard, and a Frenchman, in the background is a battle scene at Gibraltar.

SOCIETY OF THE CINCINNATI: A COMPROMISE OF PATRIOTIC VALUES?

In May 1783, a handful of influential war veterans formed a fraternity (or organisation) of military officers.

To be a member of the fraternity, you had to have served at least three years in the Revolutionary War at the rank of lieutenant or higher. This group appointed Washington as its president-general and within a year had recruited more than 2000 members. The most notable officers among them were Lafayette, von Steuben, Kosciuszko, Hamilton, Greene and John Paul Jones.

The fraternity called themselves the Society of the Cincinnati, taking the name from Cincinnatus, a citizen of ancient Rome who responded to a war emergency, rose to the rank of general, then gave up his command and went back to working on his farm.

The Society's stated objective was to uphold the memory of the revolution and to engage in charitable works, in a similar vein to the Freemasons (to which many already belonged). One major criticism was that the Cincinnati resembled a European knightly order—maintaining an elite military class that would express its views and apply pressure to future governments.¹¹

Among the Cincinnati's critics were John Adams and Thomas Jefferson—both of whom were excluded from membership because of their lack of military service. Both expressed concern about the disproportionate political influence that such a group might wield. Was this representative of the **meritocracy** envisioned in the Declaration of Independence or in the spirit of the revolution?

The Society of the Cincinnati continues today as a historical, cultural and charitable group. Applicants for membership must demonstrate an ancestral link to a former Continental Army officer. It is also possible to receive an honorary membership to the Society, particularly for those in high-profile political or public positions.



Source 8.14 Society of the Cincinnati membership certificate.

meritocracy a society governed by people selected according to their merit or qualities, rather than their family ties

ACTIVITY

EXTENSION

Find out more about the history of the Society of the Cincinnati. Why was George Washington known as 'the Cincinnatus of the West'? Share your findings with the class.

INTERNAL CHALLENGES FOR THE NEW NATION

Loyalist J. Mullryne Tattnell (1783): 'We are all cast off. I shall ever tho' remember with satisfaction that it was not I [who] deserted my King, but my King that deserted me.'

CITIZEN WASHINGTON: SUPPORT FOR DEMOCRACY BUT A LEADERLESS REGIME

On the evening of 4 December 1783 George Washington attended his final mess dinner in Fraunces Tavern in New York City. Only four of his fellow generals were in attendance. Most others had already returned home to their families in their home states. Washington bade a tearful farewell to each of the officers present. Each man fully expected never to see the others again. The next day Washington left the city and made his way to Philadelphia, where he paused a while to visit old acquaintances. He then departed for Virginia via Annapolis, Maryland, where Congress was in session.

Washington had two business matters to raise with Congress.

- The first was settlement of his personal expenses—a grand total of \$64,355—which was settled with paper bonds.¹²
- The second was the resignation of his commission.

In an audience with Congress on 23 December, Washington produced from a coat pocket his original commission certificate, first presented to him in Philadelphia back in June 1775. He then delivered a brief speech, so choked with emotion that many in the Maryland State House struggled to hear his words.

➔ **Source 8.15** *Washington taking leave of the officers of his army*, by Currier & Ives, c. 1848.



Washington's farewell address to Congress, 23 December 1783

... I have now the honor of offering my sincere congratulations to Congress and of presenting myself before them to surrender, into their hands, the trust committed to me; and to claim the indulgence of retiring from the service of my country. Happy in the confirmation of our Independence and Sovereignty, and pleased with the opportunity afforded the United States of becoming a respectable Nation, I resign with satisfaction the appointment I accepted with [self-doubt] ... Having now finished the work assigned me, I retire from the great theatre of action and [bid] an affectionate farewell to this august body under whose orders I have so long acted. I here offer my commission and take my leave of all the employments of public life.

Washington's surrender of his military command was a remarkable event that sparked interest around the world. European observers had expected Washington to accept—or even demand—political power in the national government. Victorious generals in other countries had done this, and Napoleon would do so a dozen years later. Some historians believe that power-brokers in the new nation privately offered Washington a crown, or any position in the new government that he wanted. Instead, Washington chose to return to civilian life, and for the first time in nine years he spent Christmas at home.

THE FATE OF LOYALISTS

The end of the war and the Treaty of Paris briefly raised hopes for an improvement in Loyalist prospects. The British negotiators were concerned about the fate of the Loyalists, certainly more than they were concerned for the Native Americans and slaves who had also been their allies, with neither group being mentioned in the final document. The Treaty of Paris urged state governments to:

- stop expelling Loyalists
- stop seizing Loyalists' property
- arrange compensation for property previously seized.

But these were merely recommendations to state legislatures which, under the Articles of Confederation, were not bound by any treaty signed by the Congress.

Treaty of Paris

Article V: It is agreed that Congress shall earnestly recommend to the legislatures of the respective states to provide for the **restitution** of all estates, rights, and properties which have been confiscated [from] real British subjects ... And that Congress shall also earnestly recommend to the several states that the estates, rights, and properties of such mentioned persons shall be restored to them ...

Article VI: That there shall be no future confiscations made nor any prosecutions commenced against any person or persons for ... the part which he or they may have taken in the present war, and that no person shall on that account suffer any future loss or damage ... and that those who may be in confinement on such charges at the time of the ratification of the treaty in America shall be immediately set at liberty and the prosecutions so commenced be discontinued.

The Treaty of Paris eased pressure on Loyalists—but did not end it completely. There was an exodus from 1783 onwards, and between 80,000 and 100,000 Loyalists left the United States. Some went to England or the British West Indies, but a large portion (46,000) relocated to Nova Scotia or Ontario, which were British-controlled provinces in what is now Canada. Most people took only what they could carry—although most

← **Source 8.16** Washington's farewell address to Congress, 23 December 1783, *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. 6, 21 May 1781–1 March 1784, ed. Julian P. Boyd (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1952), 411–412.

DID YOU KNOW?

After delivering his speech to Congress, Washington moved into a side room where he is said to have wept. After composing himself, he returned to the hall where he shook hands and said goodbye to those present.

restitution compensation for something taken wrongly

← **Source 8.17** 'Definitive Treaty of Peace between the United States and Great Britain, 3 September 1783,' *Founders Online*, National Archives, founders.archives.gov/documents/Franklin/01-40-02-0356

slave-owning Loyalists were also able to take their slaves. On 4 May 1783, a small fleet left New York for Nova Scotia, carrying 1686 white Loyalists, 936 free blacks and 415 slaves.

This marked the start of a mass relocation of Loyalists throughout the spring of 1783, which almost doubled the population of Nova Scotia and dramatically increased the number of English-speaking citizens in Canada.

AMERICAN INDIANS: THE ABANDONED TRIBES

KEY GROUP

imperialism system based upon maintaining and expanding an empire, where a 'mother country' governs and draws economic benefit from a number of colonies.

According to historian Howard Zinn, 'the white Americans were fighting against British imperial control in the East, and for their own **imperialism** in the West'. Most Native American nations supported the British during the Revolutionary War and, like the Loyalists, were in a vulnerable position following the American victory.

As many as 12,000 native warriors had participated in the fighting, most from the powerful Six Nations of the Iroquois Confederacy. Because none of these nations were totally defeated during the Revolutionary War, tribal leaders were not altogether sure which side had won in 1783: the British or the Americans. When American settlers and negotiators later informed tribal leaders that they were a 'conquered people', they found this difficult to accept.

Native Americans were also concerned by Britain's disregard for their situation. The Treaty of Paris contained nothing about Britain's former allies, and British officers gave few instructions for native commanders and leaders. Historian Celia Barnes believes that many tribes felt that their 'friend and protector, the British king, had not merely forgotten them in the negotiations; he had actually given away their land to his enemies, the Americans'.¹³ It was now up to the tribal chieftains: they could either submit to the Americans or stand and fight.

From their point of view, many Americans saw native tribes as traitors that had sided with Britain—as well as them being an obstacle to western expansion. There was hostility towards the 'Indians' in rural and frontier areas, with occasional calls for their settlements to be removed.

The Confederation Congress developed a more sensible policy, initiating a series of negotiations with native tribes. Treaties were secured with the following tribes, all without violence:

- Iroquois at Fort Stanwix—October 1784
- Delaware at Fort McIntosh—January 1785
- Odawa at Fort McIntosh—January 1785
- Shawnee at Fort Finney—January 1786.

Congressional delegate Benjamin Hawkins signed three more treaties in Hopewell, South Carolina, with the following tribes:

- Cherokee—late 1785
- Choctaw—1786
- Chickasaw—1786.

The first of these Hopewell agreements reveals the content of the treaties with the Native Americans.



Thayendanegea, Mohawk leader.

Treaty with the Cherokee, South Carolina, 28 November 1785

The Commissioners Plenipotentiary of the United States in Congress assembled, give peace to all the Cherokees, and receive them into the favour and protection of the United States of America ...

Article I: The Head-Men and Warriors of all the Cherokees shall restore all the prisoners, citizens of the United States, or subjects of their allies, to their entire liberty ...

Article II: The Commissioners of the United States in Congress assembled shall restore all the prisoners taken from the Indians, during the late war ...

Article III: The said Indians, for themselves and their respective tribes and towns, do acknowledge all the Cherokees to be under the protection of the United States of America, and of no other sovereign whosoever ...

Article V: If any citizen of the United States, or other person not being an Indian, shall attempt to settle on any of the lands westward or southward of the boundary ... allotted to the Indians for their hunting ground ... such person shall forfeit the protection of the United States and the Indians may punish him or not as they please ...

Article XII: That the Indians may have full confidence in the justice of the United States, respecting their interests, they shall have the right to send a deputy of their choice, whenever they think fit, to Congress.

Article XIII: The hatchet shall be forever buried and the peace given by the United States, and friendship re-established between the said states ... shall be universal; and the contracting parties shall use their utmost endeavours to maintain the peace

In witness of all and every thing herein determined, between the United States of America, and all the Cherokees, We, their underwritten Commissioners, by virtue of our full powers, have signed this definitive treaty ...

← **Source 8.18** Richard Peters, esq. (ed), 'Treaties between the United States and the Indian Tribes,' in *Public Statutes at Large of the United States of America*, vol. VII (Boston: Charles C. Little and James Brown, 1848), 18–20.

ACTIVITY**SOURCE ANNOTATION**

Using Source 8.18 and your own knowledge, respond to the following:

- 1 Photocopy or download the extract.
- 2 Using a colour code, highlight parts of the document that discuss:
 - peace and protection
 - prisoners of war
 - land and hunting rights
 - political control and sovereignty
 - rights and representation.
- 3 Create a text box corresponding with each of the five themes in Question 2 (using the appropriate colour). Write a few lines in each text box explaining the relevant part of the treaty in your own words. Note any points that were open to different interpretations, or likely to cause conflict later.

Despite the humane and friendly language used in the treaties with Native Americans, negotiations were often conducted in an atmosphere of intimidation. At Fort Finney, for example, General Butler made this thinly veiled threat to the Shawnee chief: 'The destruction of your women and children or their future happiness depends on your present choice. Peace or war is in your power; make your choice like men, and judge for yourselves.'¹⁴

Treaties naturally tended to favour Congress, often formalising the surrender of large tracts of land to the United States. On some occasions, the Native American negotiators were not representative of all the tribal groups in their area—and this prompted other native leaders to opt out of the related treaties. Furthermore, American settlers often ignored treaties altogether, and moved into areas set aside for native use.

In late 1785, delegates from thirty native tribes met in Ohio to discuss their fears about future land losses. They formed a loose alliance known as the Western Confederacy, which included the Iroquois, Huron, Mohawk, Miami, Kickapoo, Shawnee, Cherokee and Odawa tribes, as well as others.

One of the instigators of the Confederacy was a Mohawk man named Thayendanegea. Thayendanegea had fought as a captain in the British Army under the name Joseph Brant, and was infuriated by Britain's abandonment of his people. He travelled to London to plead his case. When his bid failed, Thayendanegea became active in forming and strengthening the Western Confederacy.

The Confederacy rejected the land transfers made at Fort Stanwix, Fort McIntosh and Fort Finney, and declared them to be illegal. Members of the Confederacy declared that they would only recognise the border agreed with the British back in 1768, and pledged to defend their territory if any Americans went west of the line. The Confederacy enjoyed secret support from the British, who sent arms, munitions and supplies south from Canada. The United States rejected the Confederacy position, and insisted that the treaties of 1785–86 were legal and binding on Native American nations.

➔ **Source 8.19** *Conflict of the Linn boys with the Indians, 1883*. Print showing Linn brothers in hand-to-hand combat in a Native American village, Kentucky, c. 1785.



By the autumn 1786, the first shots had been fired in what became known as the Northwest Indian War. For the next decade there was fighting along the Ohio River and south into Kentucky, as Native Americans attempted to establish the 1768 line as a firm boundary. American settlers continued to push west, as the lure of cheap land outweighed the dangers of 'Indian' attack. Militias raised by Congress and

state governments pursued native forces; in October 1786 ‘Logan’s Raid’ destroyed Shawnee villages in Ohio, using the ‘scorched earth’ tactics that had been used by frontier militias.

ACTIVITY

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 Which were the most favourable aspects of the Treaty of Paris? Which aspects were difficult to enforce?
- 2 Why was Washington’s resignation considered to be a challenge for the new nation? Provide evidence.
- 3 What were the consequences for Loyalists after the war?
- 4 What were the consequences for Native Americans after the Treaty of Paris?

ECONOMIC CHALLENGES FOR THE NEW NATION

Paul W. Mapp (2011): ‘What the United States did not gain [in 1783] was status and rights in international affairs commensurate with the self-image of its leaders and publicists.’

INTERNATIONAL CONCERNS

Internal concerns about Loyalists and American Indians were not the only problems that confronted the new nation. In the Treaty of Paris, the British conceded American sovereignty, rights and territorial gains—but a treaty can only succeed if all parties comply with its terms.

As noted earlier, a majority of American states ignored or avoided the fifth and sixth articles relating to Loyalists and their property. Merchants and businessmen in most states also paid little attention to Article Four, which required them to honour their pre-revolution debts to British companies. Patrick Henry, who had once been a strident defender of property rights, said that if Americans had to repay private debts to British merchants, then ‘what have we been fighting for all this while?’¹⁵

Naturally, Britain was displeased with both the terms of the treaty and America’s treatment of Loyalists, so the British also ignored several of the provisions. The common view in London was that the ‘United States’ would soon disintegrate into smaller commonwealths or *confederacies*. So it made sense for the British to maintain a foothold in the western territories and be ready to take advantage when such a situation occurred. On 8 April 1784, King George III issued secret orders to the governor-general of Canada, instructing him not to withdraw troops from forts in the north-west. The last British fort, Mackinac, remained *garrisoned* until 1796, thirteen years after the Treaty of Paris. The British officers in charge of these forts encouraged local tribes to attack American settlers. British fur-traders also remained in the region and continued shipping their product north into British Canada.

However, a far greater concern to American elites was Britain’s refusal to negotiate a new commercial treaty with the United States.



↑ Mackinac, the last British fort.

confederacies league or alliance of states

garrisoned stationed military presence

trade deficit the difference between exports and imports

The British, having lost the military conflict, began what was effectively an economic war against the new republic. In July 1783, colonial governors in the British West Indies received orders from London not to do business with American ships. This denied Americans access to highly profitable ports, commodities and trade networks. The British Government also banned companies from selling a number of critical goods to America, notably molasses. The American market was flooded with cheap manufactured British goods, while American exports to Britain were restricted by a series of regulations and high tariffs. America's **trade deficit** rose from less than £1 million in 1783 to £2.7 million in 1784.¹⁶

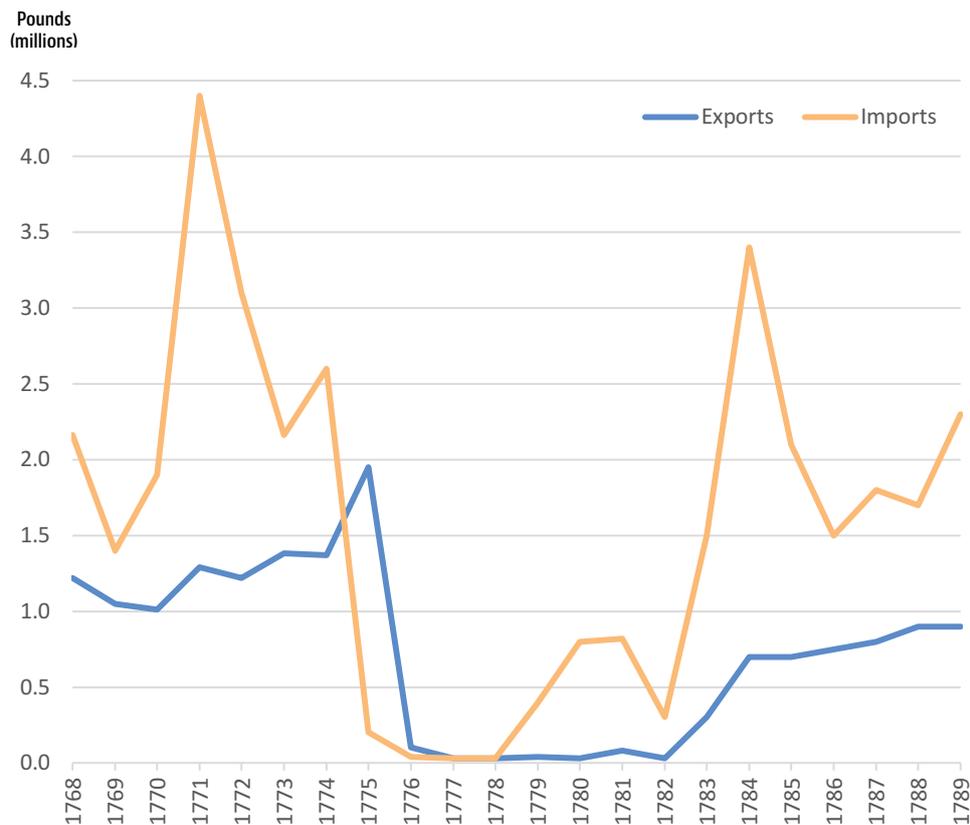
Being freed from British mercantilism meant that American merchants no longer had to send all their exports to the 'mother country', and could seek new trading partners. The French seemed the most likely trading partners, but by 1783 France was in a desperate economic situation and was not ready to agree to a generous trade agreement with the United States. French ministers and companies, confronted with their own enormous debt, were not keen to risk further losses by allowing newcomers into their markets. American negotiators, led in Paris by Jefferson, found it difficult to forge new trade deals, while French colonial administrators restricted American access to their ports in the Caribbean.

Source 8.20 Balance of trade, US 1768–1789.

BALANCE OF TRADE, UNITED STATES, 1768–1789

YEAR	EXPORTS	IMPORTS
1768	1.22	2.16
1769	1.05	1.40
1770	1.01	1.90
1771	1.29	4.40
1772	1.22	3.10
1773	1.38	2.16
1774	1.37	2.60
1775	1.95	0.20
1776	0.10	0.04
1777	0.03	0.03
1778	0.03	0.03
1779	0.04	0.40
1780	0.03	0.80
1781	0.08	0.82
1782	0.03	0.30
1783	0.30	1.50
1784	0.70	3.40
1785	0.70	2.10
1786	0.75	1.50
1787	0.80	1.80
1788	0.90	1.70
1789	0.90	2.30

This graph presents the exports (American goods being sold overseas) and the imports (foreign goods being sold domestically). When imports exceed exports, this can lead to financial issues and reliance on other nations for support. (These amounts are estimates.)



ACTIVITY

ECONOMIC CHANGE—DATA ANALYSIS

Using Source 8.20 and your own knowledge, respond to the following:

- 1 Provide two likely reasons why America's exports dropped to almost zero between 1776 and 1782.
- 2 Calculate the trade deficit (difference between exports and imports) in millions in 1784. What financial consequences did this have for America?
- 3 In what way did regulations and tariffs disadvantage America?

There were further economic difficulties in relation to Spanish-controlled lands in the south-west. Under the terms of a separate treaty, Spain had gained control of New Orleans, the Mississippi River and the territory to its west. The treaty granted American ships free access to the Mississippi so they could transport goods to and from settlements in Tennessee and Kentucky. But in 1784 the Spanish went against this agreement, closing the river mouth to all non-Spanish traffic. Spanish agents hoped to limit American expansion, and encouraged native tribes to resist frontier settlements in South Carolina and Georgia—territory that had been reserved for the United States. The Spanish also encouraged frontier settlers in Kentucky to separate from the United States and form a Spanish territory, or *protectorate*. James Madison wrote about his concern over the actions of Spain in a letter to Thomas Jefferson:

James Madison, letter to Thomas Jefferson, 1784

I am informed that sometime after New Orleans passed into the hands of Spain, her Governor forbid all British vessels navigating under the Treaty of Paris to fasten to the shore ... Nothing can delay [settlement in the Mississippi and Ohio valleys] but an impolitic and perverse attempt in Spain to shut the mouth of the Mississippi against the inhabitants above ... The importance of this matter is in almost every mouth. I am frequently asked what progress has been made towards a treaty with Spain, and what may be expected from her

protectorate a state controlled and protected by another

← **Source 8.21** *The James Madison Letters in Four Volumes*, vol.1 (New York: Townsend Mac Coun, 1884), 98.

Congress also faced financial problems because of pirates in the Mediterranean Sea. From 1784, American trading ships venturing into Mediterranean waters began to be attacked by Barbary pirates from the North African coast. The pirates raided coastal settlements, plundered passing ships, stole cargo, kidnapped crews and sold whites into slavery. In the past, pirates had left American ships alone because of their connection with Britain, and later with France—but there was no such protection after 1783. Congress followed the lead of other nations and offered bribes to the pirates to stop the attacks. The bribes were politely referred to as 'tributes'. Thomas Jefferson, then based in France, argued against the tributes, saying it would simply invite more attacks. Jefferson was proved right, and the attacks continued throughout the 1780s.

A further complication was that some states had negotiated their own trade deals in Europe—which left other states out. This caused significant disquiet among the delegates to Congress—they recognised that having a number of separate deals would generate tension and rivalry between the states.

In April 1784, Virginia and Maryland proposed an alteration to the Articles of Confederation that would give Congress the sole authority to regulate trade for the United States.

➔ **Source 8.22** United States Continental Congress, and Continental Congress Broadside Collection, *By the United States in Congress assembled: The trust reposed in Congress, renders it their duty to be attentive to the conduct of foreign nations* (Annapolis: Printed by John Dunlap, 1784), www.loc.gov/item/90898088/

ACTIVITY

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

With a partner, discuss the proposal put forward by Virginia and Maryland to amend the Articles of Confederation in 1784. What was the reason behind the proposal, and what would it entail? What advantages and disadvantages might there be from such an arrangement?

Resolutions of the Confederation Congress, 30 April 1784

... Unless the United States in Congress assembled [is] vested with powers competent [for] the protection of commerce, they can never command reciprocal advantages in trade—and without these our foreign commerce must decline and eventually be annihilated.

RESOLVED, That it be ... recommended to the legislatures of the several states to vest the United States in Congress assembled, for the term of fifteen years, with power to prohibit any goods, wares or merchandise from being imported into or exported from any of the states ... That it be recommended to the legislatures of the several states to vest the United States in Congress assembled, for the term of fifteen years, with the power of prohibiting the subjects of any foreign states, kingdom or empire, unless authorised by treaty, from importing into the United States, any goods, wares or merchandise

No other states ratified the proposal put forward by Virginia and Maryland. In July 1785 a further attempt to strengthen the commercial powers of Congress was thwarted, and the United States found itself caught in a trade war between the British, French and Spanish empires. Charged with steering a course through these turbulent waters, the national government was limited by individual states manoeuvring to look after their own interests. It was becoming clear that the power of Congress was limited indeed.

However, there was one positive step in the economy during this time—Jefferson suggested that the United States should have its own coinage and create a new decimal currency. So on 6 July 1785, Congress formally adopted the dollar with a division into tenths (dimes) and hundredths (cents). Without a national mint—or, ironically, the money needed to create one, some states attempted to create the coins themselves.¹⁷

DEBTS AND DEFAULTS

By 1785, the impact of the economic slump was being felt in many parts of the United States. The revolution against the British had promised peace, prosperity and stability for all Americans, but this prosperity was enjoyed by relatively few.

The depression of the mid-1780s caused significant suffering among ordinary Americans—particularly veterans of the Revolutionary War. The veterans had been lured into service by the Continental Congress, enticed by promises of land and cash—but instead, most soldiers went home unpaid or in possession of devalued paper money. Responsibility for fulfilling land grants to soldiers was passed to the states, which rarely met their obligations. Land for speculators and investors was a greater priority than farmland for returned soldiers. Alan Taylor writes that, ‘Disgusted by **austerity**, many common folk questioned the revolution’.¹⁸

Many ex-soldiers sought relief by borrowing from banks and private creditors. In turn, moneylending became a profitable side-business for city-based merchants and exporters whose interests in overseas trade had slumped. In 1786, Connecticut minister John Tyler remarked, ‘Most of the commercial interests have been very unsuccessful abroad since the war; and many [businessmen] seem now to be turning their attention to the estates of their debtors to make their fortunes at home’.¹⁹ While lending money was easy for those with sufficient assets, debt collection often proved difficult. Many people were unable to pay back their loans because of:

- the slump in price for agricultural produce
- the shortage of gold and silver coins
- the unreliable value of paper money.

austerity severity; lacking any luxuries

In the face of this crisis, city creditors urged state legislatures to deal with defaulting borrowers. The states had powerful debtors' courts that could:

- insist on the repayment of loans
- authorise that property be seized
- foreclose on mortgages (take the property because the owner can't make the repayments)
- order long sentences of indentured labour or in debtors' prisons.

As the economy slumped further in 1785–86, debtors' courts became busier. In Worcester County, Massachusetts, there were 4789 legal actions against debtors between 1784 and 1786, which affected almost one-third of all adult males—this was four times the 1770–72 figure.²⁰

On top of the debt crisis were high state taxes. Most legislatures had sought to recover crippling war debts by increasing taxes and levies, prompting unrest among the population. Massachusetts, the epicentre of anti-taxation protests in the 1760s, was the worst offender. The problem of state debt proved too much for John Hancock, who resigned as governor of Massachusetts in 1785. His replacement was James Bowdoin, who committed to a fifteen-year program of raised taxes. This move made him extremely popular with creditors and merchants but not with farmers, craftsmen or small traders.²¹ Furthermore, the value of the property people needed to own before they were eligible to vote increased in Massachusetts after 1783, which meant that its residents were taxed more and represented less than they had been before the revolution, thus compromising revolutionary ideals.

ACTIVITY

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 Which economic challenges posed the most important threats to the new nation internationally and domestically?
- 2 Why was the United States Government having problems raising taxes?
- 3 Why were debts and defaults such a concern in the 1780s?

'SHAYS' REBELLION' KEY DEVELOPMENT

Thomas Jefferson (1787): 'I hold it that a little rebellion now and then is a good thing.'



In August 1786, Daniel Shays' property was allegedly seized by a debtors' court. Shays, an ex-captain of the Continental Army, had fought at Lexington, Bunker Hill and Saratoga before resigning in 1780 to settle in Western Massachusetts. He joined other townsmen in protesting against the state's debt-recovery regime. In September 1786, Shays led several hundred men in a march on

the Springfield courthouse, forcing it to adjourn and close. Shays' logic was that if the court could not sit, then it could not issue foreclosures or send people to debtors' prisons. Shays' men viewed themselves as regulators, rather than rebels, and through autumn and early winter of 1786, bands of men in Western Massachusetts gathered wherever courts were scheduled to convene, lingering and presenting petitions:

Petition from Daniel Shays and his men to the Massachusetts courts

We request the Hon. Judges of this Court, not to open said Court at this term nor do any kind of business whatever, but all kinds of business remain as though no such Court had been appointed.

LUKE DAY DANIEL SHAYS THOMAS GROVER.

Source 8.23 Portraits of Daniel Shays and Job Shattuck, leaders of the Massachusetts Regulators.

Source 8.24 Richard D. Brown, *Massachusetts: a Concise History* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2000), 100.

In January 1787, Shays backed by 1200 men led an assault on the federal arsenal at Springfield, Massachusetts. This was a crisis, as it attacked a symbol of national authority and, if successful, would create a rebellious force armed with a stockpile of weapons.

➔ **Source 8.25** The Springfield Armory.



Realising the importance of the situation, the Massachusetts State Assembly—and largely paid for by the merchants of Boston—sent a state militia to confront the rebels, led by Shays, Eli Parsons and Luke Day. The militia was commanded by General Benjamin Lincoln, a veteran of the Revolutionary War. Lincoln ordered that artillery be prepared for firing against the rebels. Shays petitioned Lincoln, hoping to halt his attack and prevent bloodshed:

➔ **Source 8.26** 'Letter from Daniel Shays and Daniel Gray to Benjamin Lincoln, 25 January 1787', in *Shays' Rebellion Papers*, Massachusetts Historical Society Online Collections, www.masshist.org/database/viewer.php?item_id=2504&img_step=1&pid=3&nodesc=1&mode=transcript

Petition to Honorable Major General Lincoln, 25 January 1787

Unwilling to be any way accessory to the shedding of blood and greatly desirous of restoring peace and harmony to this convulsed Commonwealth [of Massachusetts], we propose that all the [government] troops ... be disbanded immediately, and that every person who has been acting, or any way aiding or assisting in any of the late risings of the people, may be indemnified [protected] in their person and property until the setting of the next General Court; and no person [is to] be taken, molested, or injured ... until a fair opportunity can be had for a hearing in the next General Court respecting the matters of complaints of the people...

The above conditions to be made sure by Proclamation, issued by his Excellency the Governor, on which conditions, the people now in arms, in defence of their lives and liberties, will quietly return to their respective habitations, patiently hoping and waiting for constitutional relief from the insupportable burdens they now labour under.

DANIEL SHAYS.

Per order DANIEL GRAY, *Chairman*. Wilbraham, [Massachusetts] Jan. 25, 1787.

Lincoln rebuffed the petition and gave the order to attack. The rebels fled to the north-east and on 3 February 1787 were soundly defeated at Petersham. Shays escaped to

New Hampshire. Branded a traitor, he was sentenced to death *in absentia* (meaning, without him actually being present). However, Massachusetts did not actively pursue Shays, and he was later granted a governor’s pardon. More than a thousand of the rebels underwent trials, which involved humiliation and making public statements about the wrongness of their actions. Six men were sentenced to execution; two of these, Jason Parmenter and Henry McCulloch, received last-minute pardons as they stood at the gallows awaiting execution. The testimony of Judah Marsh was typical of ‘confessions’ made by captured rebels:

‘The Confession of Judah Marsh’

[B]eing in the midst of people, who were opposed to government ... I did at the desire of the band, go with ... Capt. Shays and his party to Springfield, Ludlow, Chicopee, and Amherst ... I am now fully sensible that I have acted a part contrary to the laws of God, as well as my country; and though I never had a design to shed blood ... yet I have been greatly to blame, in hearkening to bad advice; and in undertaking in so wicked a cause; and pursuing it so far as I have done. I have voluntarily resigned myself to legal authority, and throw myself on the mercy of the community. If my youth and inexperience [sic.] or former peaceable and inoffensive behaviour, (which I doubt not will be testified by those who are acquainted with me) will be any recommendation to the mercy of my country, I hope they will plead for me. Should my life be spared, which I humbly beg of my country particularly of the authority, I hereby declare, not only my penitence for past offences, but my sincere and hearty resolution to [be a] good subject to the government of this Commonwealth—and whether my life be spared or not, I beg the forgiveness of God and an injured community.

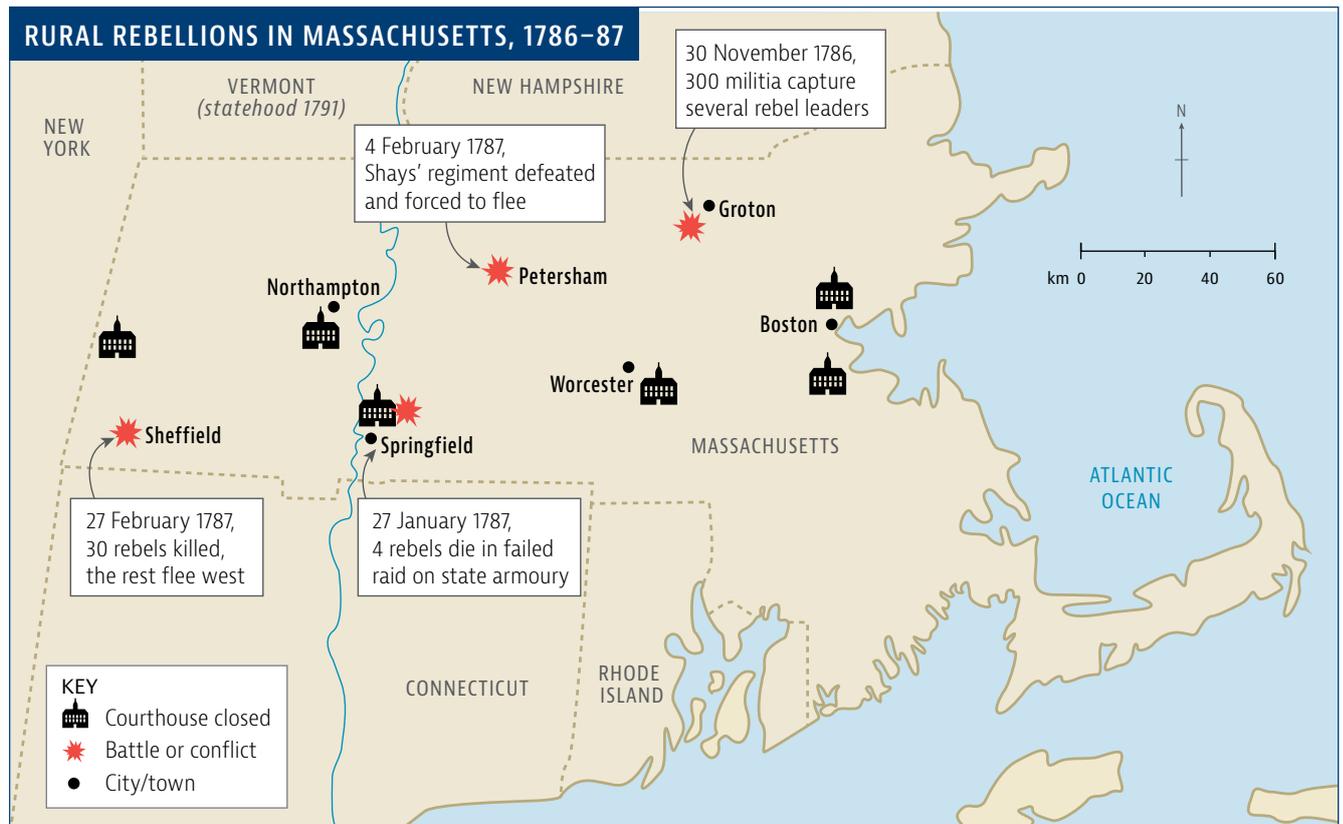
ACTIVITY

ETHICAL DIMENSIONS

Discuss whether Daniel Shays, Judah Marsh and others were right to challenge the new regime. What were their grievances, and were they justified?

↑ **Source 8.27** ‘The Confession of Judah Marsh’, *Hampshire Gazette*, 21 February 1787.

↓ **Source 8.28**





ACTIVITY

POLITICAL CHALLENGES—SHAYS' REBELLION

Was Jefferson's view that 'a little rebellion now and then is a good thing' true in relation to Shays' Rebellion? To what extent do you agree with Marion Starkey's comment that it is hard to get an accurate picture of the rebellion because its history has been written by Shays' enemies?

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 Why was Daniel Shays leading protests?
- 2 How significant a crisis was Shays' Rebellion?
- 3 What were the consequences of Shays' Rebellion?

➔ **Source 8.29** David Szatmary, *Shays' Rebellion* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1980), 119–120.

➔ **Source 8.30** 'To James Madison from Thomas Jefferson, 30 January 1787,' *Founders Online*, National Archives, founders.archives.gov/documents/Madison/01-09-02-0126

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF SHAYS' REBELLION

While Shays was not openly rebelling against the state as such, would economic repression and taxes lead to another revolution?

The Shays' incident contributed to further uprisings in Massachusetts and nearby states, and prompted fears that state assemblies would be affected. With public opinion on the side of the rebels, politicians found themselves under considerable pressure, and:

- the plight of some debt-stricken farmers was taken into account
- taxes were lowered
- laws relating to repayments and defaulters were relaxed.

In extreme cases, outstanding debts were cancelled. This was good for debtors, but for creditors—the people who were owed money—it seemed that the threat of mob violence was threatening property rights and social order. Stephen Higginson notes in December 1786, 'I never saw so great a change in the public mind on any occasion as had lately appeared in this State, as to the expediency of increasing the powers of Congress, not merely to commercial objects, but generally.'

Some historians have interpreted Shays' Rebellion as a spirited last gasp of revolutionary sentiment; others as evidence of the incompetence of national and state governments, and as one of a long string of small rural uprisings in the 1700s. Others believe it reflected class struggle—city against country, rich against poor—and differed from the revolution itself. Marion Starkey suggests Shays' Rebellion 'did bear some resemblance to a class war', maintaining it is hard to gain a sense of the 'intimate histories' of the people involved, since 'like most Indians, their history is recorded by their enemies'.²² David Szatmary places it in a broader context of socioeconomic changes occurring in America before, during and after 1776:

David Szatmary

The uprising ... has a historic significance much deeper than that of a regional chronicle. The crisis atmosphere engendered by [rural] discontent strengthened the resolve of the nationalists and shocked some reluctant localists into accepting a stronger national government ... Shaysite anti-federalism [also] represented an attempt to save a [basic farming] way of life from the penetrating edge of a commercial society.

Writing from France, Thomas Jefferson was keen to find out more about Shays' Rebellion. He wrote the following to fellow Virginian James Madison in words that seem to echo Enlightenment philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

Letter from Thomas Jefferson to James Madison, January 1787

... I am impatient to learn your sentiments on the late troubles in the Eastern states. ... they do not appear to threaten serious consequences. Those states have suffered [from] the stoppage of ... their commerce ... This must render money scarce and make the people uneasy. This uneasiness has produced acts [from the people that are] absolutely unjustifiable, but I hope they will provoke no severities from their governments ...

I hold it that a little rebellion now and then is a good thing, as necessary in the political world as storms [are] in the physical. Unsuccessful rebellions ... generally [reveal] encroachments on the rights of the people ... An observation of this truth should render honest republican governors so mild in their punishment of rebellions, [so] as not to discourage them too much. [They are] a medicine necessary for the sound health of government

CHAPTER 8 REVIEW

KEY SUMMARY POINTS

- The first years of the United States were years of disappointment and unfulfilled promise with a severely weakened economy.
- Soldiers had returned from the Revolutionary War with their pockets empty. This almost led to mutiny in Morristown and Newburgh.
- The 1783 Treaty of Paris brought a formal end to the war and western lands to the United States.
- Settlers and speculators sought to claim the new western lands only to find their ambitions blocked by Native Americans and foreign powers.
- George Washington resigned from the Continental Army, highlighting the need to find a successor for his leadership.
- Native Americans suffered under false treaties and seized land in the north-west.
- Loyalists were deprived of their rights and property, many fleeing to Canada.
- The domestic economy collapsed from debt, inflation and a slump in exports.
- Shays' Rebellion showed the government was powerless to enforce its policies.

ACTIVITY

HISTORICAL SOURCES

Using Source 8.31 and your own knowledge, respond to the following:

- 1 Identify four symbols of America or the American Revolution in the representation.
- 2 Compare the depictions of Britain (*Britannia*) and America (Liberty). How are their differing fortunes portrayed?
- 3 Explain the likely meaning of the ships in the centre of the representation.
- 4 Evaluate the image in the context it was created. To what extent was America 'triumphant' in the 1780s? In your answer refer to historical interpretations of the period.

Britannia a female figure symbolising Great Britain, commonly associated with liberty, justice and strength

Source 8.31 *America Triumphant and Britannia in Distress*, 1782.



CONTINUITY AND CHANGE—FLOW CHARTS

Examine the Timelines for Section A and B of this book. Identify trends in the types of change evident before, during and after the American Revolution. For example, to what extent was America still in the throes of military conflict by 1787?



CONSOLIDATING AND COMPROMISING

(1787)

'We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.'

—The Preamble to the United States Constitution, 1787

By 1786, people in favour of a stronger government talked about having a Constitutional Convention. Representatives met in Maryland in September, and committed to a larger gathering of delegates in Pennsylvania the following summer. Unrest in Massachusetts and smaller uprisings elsewhere in New England lent added urgency.

The delegates who met in Philadelphia between May and September 1787 were the political architects of the modern United States of America. They abandoned the Articles of Confederation and drafted a whole new Constitution.

The debates and compromises led to a federal system, involving three branches of government, shared powers, a powerful president and a strengthened Congress. However, compromise limited certain rights—especially when the debate came to slavery.

KEY QUESTIONS

- How did key individuals such as Thomas Jefferson, Alexander Hamilton and James Madison contribute to the new society?
- What were the changes in conditions that influenced leaders to compromise?
- How did the key individuals come to compromise during debates on federal and state rights, separation of powers, individual rights and slavery?
- What are the key features of the Constitution?

KEY EVENTS

- **May 1787**
The Philadelphia Convention
- **July 1787**
The Northwest Ordinance
- **May–September 1787**
The Philadelphia or Constitutional Convention
- **September 1787**
Constitution sent to state conventions for ratification



CHAPTER 9



KEY SOURCE

Source 9.01 *Scene at the Signing of the Constitution of the United States* by Howard Chandler Christy, 1940. George Washington is featured at the right on the rostrum. Delegates are featured throughout, based on contemporary portraits. Benjamin Franklin, is seated in the centre with Alexander Hamilton commenting in his ear. The painting is brighter and more impressionistic than most images of this type.

THE ARTICLES OF CONFEDERATION

Albert Bushnell Hart (1898): 'The Continental Congress had been a head without a body; under the Articles of Confederation, Congress was a body without a head.'

The Articles of Confederation had been compiled at the time of the Declaration of Independence and were hotly debated for more than six weeks. Congress was so divided over their content, and whether such a confederation was even workable, that the matter was put on hold in August 1776. Their primary concern was winning the war. The Articles were not raised for discussion again until April 1777, and a final draft was not approved by the Congress until 17 November 1777. Before passing into law, the Articles had to be distributed, discussed and ratified by the thirteen states.

stile an old spelling of 'style', meaning 'title'

confederacy a loosely bound group of states

jurisdiction authority

➔ **Source 9.02** United States, Henry Laurens, Alexander Purdie and Continental Congress Broadside Collection, *Articles of confederation and perpetual union between the states of New Hampshire, Massachusetts Bay, Rhode Island, and Providence plantations, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia* (Williamsburg, 1777), www.loc.gov/item/rbpe.17802600/

Extract from Articles of Confederation, November 1777

Article I

The **Stile** of this **Confederacy** shall be 'The United States of America.'

Article II

Each state retains its sovereignty, freedom, and independence, and every power, **jurisdiction** and right, which is not by this confederation, expressly delegated to the United States, in Congress assembled.

Article III

The said States ... enter into a firm league of friendship with each other, for their common defence, the security of their liberties, and their mutual and general welfare, binding themselves to assist each other, against all force offered to, or attacks made upon them, or any of them, on account of religion, sovereignty, trade, or any other pretense whatever.

Article IV

i) ... the free inhabitants of each of these States ... shall be entitled to all privileges and immunities of free citizens in the several States, and the people of each State shall have free [entry to and exit from] any other State, and shall enjoy therein all the privileges of trade and commerce ...

ii) If any person guilty of, or charged with, treason, felony, or other high misdemeanor in any State, shall flee from justice and be found in any of the United States, he shall, upon demand of the Governor or executive power of the State from which he fled, be delivered up and removed to the State having jurisdiction of his offense.

...

The Articles of Confederation established the United States of America as a 'firm league of friendship'. As with most confederations, the thirteen states retained sovereign power and the right to govern themselves—except in the matters of national importance outlined in the Articles. The document contained thirteen separate articles outlining:

- the form and structure of government
- responsibilities of the states
- voting procedures
- sources of revenue
- matters of law, foreign affairs and defence.

It created a Congress of the Confederation to represent the states on the basis of one vote per state. A majority of three-quarters—meaning nine out of thirteen states—was required for the passing of new laws. Critically, a unanimous vote was needed for amendment of the Articles themselves.

ACTIVITY

DISCUSSION

Read the Articles of Confederation and discuss their meaning with classmates. In what ways are they similar to the Australian federal system of government?

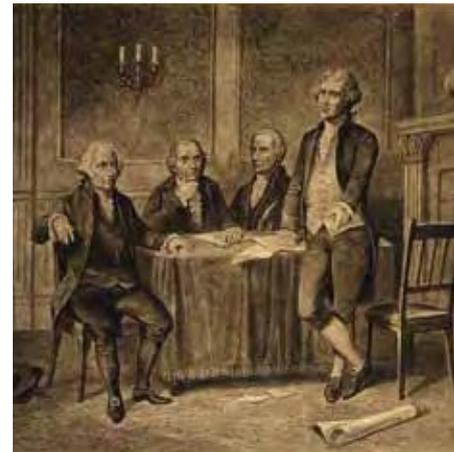
A BETTER SYSTEM? KEY DEVELOPMENT

From the very beginning there were concerns about this new mode of government. John Adams, writing to his wife Abigail in late July 1776, voiced the most common doubt when he asked, ‘If a confederation should take place, one great question is how we shall vote. Whether each colony shall count [as] one, or whether each shall have a weight in proportion to its wealth or number of exports and imports, or a compound ratio of all.’ The larger and more powerful states like Massachusetts, Virginia and New York felt entitled to more of a say than smaller states like Delaware and Rhode Island. The small states, in contrast, were concerned that they would be dominated by their larger neighbours.

These concerns were reflected in the time it took the states to ratify the Articles of Confederation. By July 1778, eight of the thirteen states had signed up, including:

- Massachusetts
- New York
- Pennsylvania
- Virginia.

However, it would take almost three years for the remaining five states to follow suit. These final endorsements were mainly held up by negotiations over western land claims. For example, the smaller states of Delaware and Maryland refused to ratify the Articles while their powerful neighbour Virginia was manoeuvring to double its size. Maryland was the last state to ratify, on 1 March 1781. The draft Dickinson had written in July 1776 had taken almost five years to gain formal acceptance—which shows the complexity of a federal system of government based on cooperation and consensus between the states.



Source 9.03 *Leaders of the Continental Congress* by A. Tholey, c. 1894. John Adams, Robert Morris, Alexander Hamilton and Thomas Jefferson are shown at the adoption of the Articles of Confederation in November 1777.

POWERS UNDER THE ARTICLES OF CONFEDERATION

CONGRESS	STATES																										
Conducting foreign policy 	 Dealing with all other matters Could refuse requests from Congress for money or troops																										
Waging war 	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tbody> <tr><td style="background-color: #003366; color: white; padding: 2px;">NH</td><td style="padding: 2px;">New Hampshire</td></tr> <tr><td style="background-color: #003366; color: white; padding: 2px;">VT</td><td style="padding: 2px;">Vermont</td></tr> <tr><td style="background-color: #003366; color: white; padding: 2px;">MA</td><td style="padding: 2px;">Massachusetts</td></tr> <tr><td style="background-color: #003366; color: white; padding: 2px;">CT</td><td style="padding: 2px;">Connecticut</td></tr> <tr><td style="background-color: #003366; color: white; padding: 2px;">RI</td><td style="padding: 2px;">Rhode Island</td></tr> <tr><td style="background-color: #003366; color: white; padding: 2px;">NY</td><td style="padding: 2px;">New York</td></tr> <tr><td style="background-color: #003366; color: white; padding: 2px;">NJ</td><td style="padding: 2px;">New Jersey</td></tr> <tr><td style="background-color: #003366; color: white; padding: 2px;">DE</td><td style="padding: 2px;">Delaware</td></tr> <tr><td style="background-color: #003366; color: white; padding: 2px;">MD</td><td style="padding: 2px;">Maryland</td></tr> <tr><td style="background-color: #003366; color: white; padding: 2px;">VA</td><td style="padding: 2px;">Virginia</td></tr> <tr><td style="background-color: #003366; color: white; padding: 2px;">NC</td><td style="padding: 2px;">North Carolina</td></tr> <tr><td style="background-color: #003366; color: white; padding: 2px;">SC</td><td style="padding: 2px;">South Carolina</td></tr> <tr><td style="background-color: #003366; color: white; padding: 2px;">GA</td><td style="padding: 2px;">Georgia</td></tr> </tbody> </table>	NH	New Hampshire	VT	Vermont	MA	Massachusetts	CT	Connecticut	RI	Rhode Island	NY	New York	NJ	New Jersey	DE	Delaware	MD	Maryland	VA	Virginia	NC	North Carolina	SC	South Carolina	GA	Georgia
NH	New Hampshire																										
VT	Vermont																										
MA	Massachusetts																										
CT	Connecticut																										
RI	Rhode Island																										
NY	New York																										
NJ	New Jersey																										
DE	Delaware																										
MD	Maryland																										
VA	Virginia																										
NC	North Carolina																										
SC	South Carolina																										
GA	Georgia																										
Running the postal service 																											
Borrowing money 																											

*** Confederation Congress** (aka Continental Congress)

- One chamber
- One vote per state
- Needed 9 of 13 states voting ‘yes’ to pass a law

Charles Inglis, an Anglican Loyalist in New York, had rejected earlier calls for a republic, favouring what he called a 'limited monarchy'.

➔ **Source 9.04** Gordon S. Wood, ed. *The American Revolution: Writings from the Pamphlet Debate 1773–1776*, vol. 2 (New York: Library of America, 2015).

ACTIVITY

HISTORICAL SOURCES

Using Source 9.04 and your own knowledge, respond to the following:

- 1 Identify the tone and perspective of the author. What does he mean when he says that 'Britain has not exerted her power' until now?
- 2 What, according to the extract, will be the result of America declaring independence?
- 3 According to Inglis, how might the conflict best be resolved?
- 4 Using your knowledge, explain whether or not you agree with Inglis that a 'limited monarchy' would have been more 'favourable to liberty' in America than a republic.

➔ **Source 9.05** *The Papers of George Washington*, Confederation Series, vol. 4, 2 April 1786–31 January 1787, ed. W. W. Abbott (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1995), 212–213.

Charles Inglis, 'The True Interest of America Impartially Stated', 1776

Devastation and ruin must mark the progress of this war along the sea coast of America. [Until now] Britain has not exerted her power. Her number of troops and ships of war here at present is very little more than she judged [necessary] in time of peace—the former does not amount to 12,000 men—nor the latter to 40 ships, including frigates. Both she and the colonies hoped for and expected an [agreement]; neither of them has lost sight of that desirable object. The seas have been open to our ships; and although some skirmishes have unfortunately happened, yet a ray of hope still cheered both sides that, peace was not distant. But as soon as we declare for independence, every prospect of this kind must vanish. Ruthless war, with all its aggravated horrors, will ravage our once happy land—our seacoasts and ports will be ruined, and our ships taken. Torrents of blood will be spilt, and thousands reduced to beggary and wretchedness ...

Limited monarchy is the form of government which is most favourable to liberty ... although here and there among us a crack-brained zealot for absolute democracy or absolute monarchy may be sometimes found. Besides the unsuitableness of the republican form to the genius of the people, America is too extensive for it. That form may do well enough for a single city, or small territory; but would be utterly improper for such a continent as this ...

By mid-1786 criticism of the political structure of the new nation had reached a crescendo. Opposition to the Articles of Confederation was nothing new. Some leaders were condemning the looseness and inadequate powers of the Confederacy even while the Articles were being drafted. Congress proposed amendments to the Articles in 1784 and 1785 to strengthen its ability to negotiate trade abroad, but both failed to draw support from more than a couple of states. As agreement from all states was necessary, amending the Articles seemed impossible. George Washington, writing to fellow revolutionary John Jay, complained about the lack of national power and the behaviour of men in local and state governments:

George Washington, letter to John Jay, 15 August 1786

Your sentiments, that our affairs are drawing rapidly to a crisis, accord with my own ... We have errors to correct. We have probably had too good an opinion of human nature in forming our confederation. Experience has taught us that men will not adopt and carry into execution measures calculated for their own good, without the intervention of a coercive power. I do not conceive [that] we can exist long as a nation without having lodged somewhere a power which will pervade the whole union ... What astonishing changes a few years are capable of producing! I am told that even respectable characters speak of a monarchical form of government without horror

On Washington's last point, there is evidence to suggest that some leaders engaged in a half-hearted search for a potential 'King of the United States'. Both Nathaniel Gorham, then president of Congress, and von Steuben approached Prince Heinrich, an ambitious member of the Prussian royal family and younger brother of Emperor Frederick the Great, to see if he wanted to be king. The prince politely declined. Members of the French royal family were also considered, while King George III's second son Frederick was nominated by a group of Loyalists and merchants. However, these ideas and rumours aroused public suspicion, and Congress was forced to publicly declare that it had no intention of seeking a monarch.

THE ARTICLES OF CONFEDERATION: HISTORICAL INTERPRETATIONS

Did the Articles of Confederation, which upheld the sovereignty and independence of the thirteen states, contribute in any way to America's political instability in the 1780s? Historian Merrill Jensen contends that 'the fact that the Articles ... were supplanted by another constitution is no proof either of their success or of their failure. Any valid opinion as to [their] merits must be based on a detailed and unbiased study of the confederation period.'¹ Also, another cause of the instability was the economic recession that plagued America during and after the Revolutionary War. While the Articles have frequently been blamed for this economic strife, it is feasible that other factors were equally responsible.

Most historians of the first decade of the United States have been critical of the Articles, arguing that they failed to build a sense of national unity or to provide central controls over trade, currency, credit or banking. As long as these controls lay in the hands of thirteen different states, rivalry and self-interest would have prevailed. Albert Bushnell Hart, writing in the 1890s, contends that:

Albert Bushnell Hart

The first and fundamental defect of the government was in the organisation of Congress. The Continental Congress had been a head without a body; under the Articles of Confederation, Congress was a body without a head. A single assembly continued to be the source of all national legislative, executive and judicial power. As though to prevent the country from getting the benefit of experience, no man could remain a member of Congress for more than three years in succession ... On important questions the approval of nine States was necessary, and often less than that number had voting representatives on the floor. Amendment was impossible, except by consent of all the State legislatures.

The Forging of the Union by Richard Morris is one of the best-known studies of the Confederation period. Published in 1986, the book closely explores post-war economics. Morris maintains that the United States suffered economically during 1783–1787 because British trade policies sabotaged its post-war recovery, while the states acted in their own interests, with little regard for national concerns. The Articles of Confederation failed to provide the national government with sufficient muscle to deal with these critical problems.

Historian Charles Beard (1874–1948) suggests that the idealism of the revolution lessened at the end of the war, and was replaced instead with commercial interests. The withdrawal of the British threat saw a power shift: the revolution's political philosophers like Jefferson, Paine and Samuel Adams were replaced by men of property, trade and finance. Their main interests were not in states' rights, decentralised power or individual liberties, but in:

- building commerce
- re-establishing national credit
- stabilising the currency
- securing the rights of lenders.



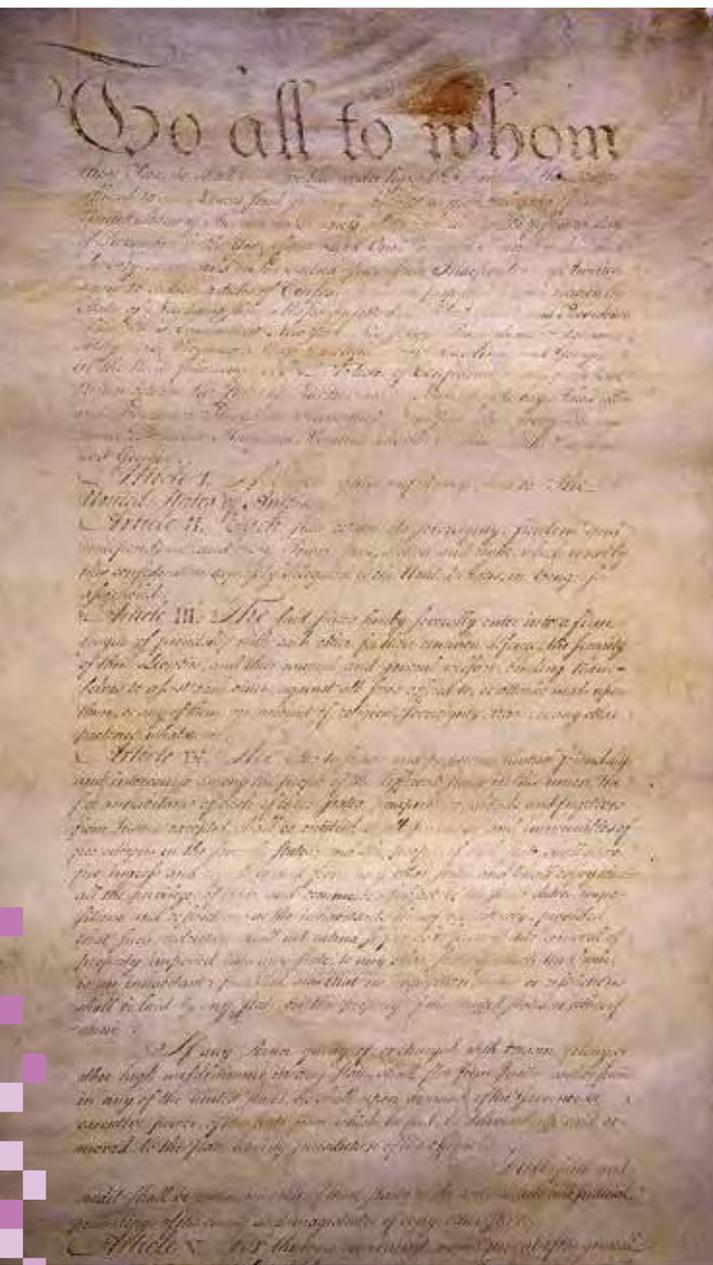
↑ Nathaniel Gorham of Massachusetts, president of the Confederation Congress during the unrest of 1786.

← **Source 9.06** Albert Bushnell Hart, *Formation of the Union* (London: Longmans Green & Co., 1898), 105–106.

CONTINUED ...

Federalist a person or group supporting the US Constitution and the newly strengthened federal government created by it

↓ The first page of the Articles of Confederation.



Many of these men were political conservatives who had disliked taxes and regulations in the 1760s–1770s, yet had no desire to dismantle the British political structures that existed in America.

Merrill Jensen, tracking the Articles of Confederation from their origins, observes that the Articles encountered opposition from the start, even as they were being ushered through Congress and passed around the states. The **Federalists** who wanted trade and currency regulation pushed for the states to grant Congress stronger national controls. When that failed, they began to poison public perceptions of the Articles, in the hope that they might later be discarded. '[They] undertook to convince their countrymen of the inadequacies of the Articles of Confederation. They pictured the Confederation period as one of chaos, born solely of the existing form of government.'²

In the essay, 'Rethinking the Articles of Confederation', H. A. Scott Trask suggests that the economic depression of the 1780s had little to do with the nation's government. In fact, it was unavoidable regardless of which political system was in place. America had just endured a costly war, incurred massive public debt, severe inflation and gross disruption to foreign trade—these were the compelling factors, not the Articles of Confederation. Trask also notes that the national economy was showing clear signs of improvement by late 1786. He suggests that criticism of the Articles was largely the work of fearmongers and Federalist propagandists.

H. A. Scott Trask

The period of the Articles of Confederation was not characterised by chaos and increasingly bad economic times, as historians tend to assume. Rather, the Articles proved themselves to be a perfectly viable structure for a free society, encouraging trade and prosperity and adherence to the highest ideals of 1776. [The problems of the 1780s] involved economic imbalances and debts left over from the war with Britain.

↑ **Source 9.07** H. A. Scott Trask, 'Rethinking the Articles of Confederation,' Mises Institute, mises.org/library/rethinking-articles-confederation

ACTIVITY

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 Which features of the Articles of Confederation were useful for states to govern and which were difficult for the new nation?
- 2 What were some key ideas on how to improve the system of government?

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

Which historians' views on the Article of Confederation do you most agree with? Use evidence to support your response.

REVISING THE ARTICLES: THE ANNAPOLIS CONVENTION

The Resolution of the Annapolis Convention (1787): ‘... There are important defects in the system of the Federal Government is acknowledged by ... those States which have [come to agreement] in the present meeting ...’

The first formal moves towards changing the Articles of Confederation began in Annapolis, Maryland, over four days in September 1786. Instigated by powerful Virginian interests, the Annapolis summit was only attended by eleven representatives from five states:

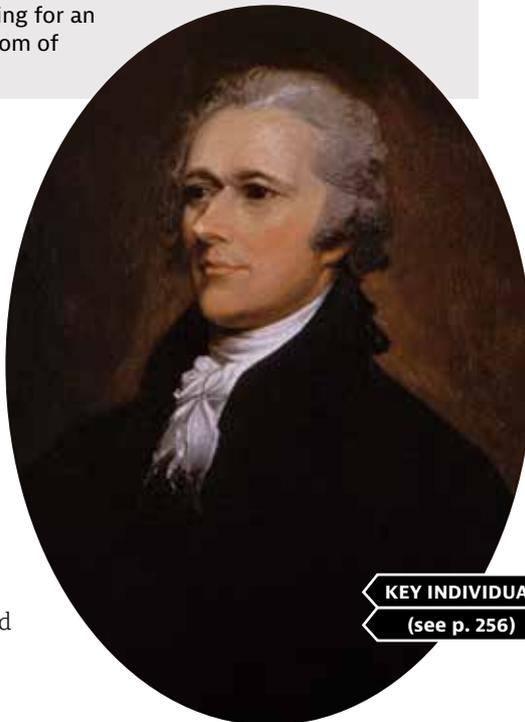
- Virginia
- Pennsylvania
- New York
- New Jersey
- Delaware.

However, although there were only eleven representatives, there were some influential figures among them. Alexander Hamilton was a West Indies-born lawyer and an aide to Washington during the war. He had long dreamed of the great potential for America, if government power could only be strengthened. James Madison—a softly spoken Virginian with a detailed knowledge of political theory and philosophy—was another advocate of federal power. Hamilton, Madison and the other delegates in Annapolis agreed unanimously that the Articles of Confederation were in need of urgent reform.

Extract from the Resolution of the Annapolis Convention

That there are important defects in the system of the Federal Government is acknowledged by ... those States which have [come to agreement] in the present meeting. The defects, upon a closer examination, may be found greater and more numerous than even these [resolutions] imply ... They are, however, of a nature so serious ... as to render the situation of the United States delicate and critical, calling for an exertion of the united virtue and wisdom of all the members of the confederacy.

The Annapolis delegates drafted a recommendation to Congress that a ‘grand convention’ of the states be held the following summer. Congress acted upon the suggestion by calling for state delegates to gather in Philadelphia in May 1787, ‘for the sole purpose of revising the Articles of Confederation and reporting to Congress and the several legislatures such alterations and provisions therein as shall, when agreed to in Congress and confirmed by the States, render the federal Constitution adequate to the [pressing needs] of government and the preservation of the Union’.³



KEY INDIVIDUAL

(see p. 256)



↑ The Maryland State House, site of the Annapolis Convention.

← **Source 9.08** ‘Annapolis Convention. Address of the Annapolis Convention, 14 September 1786,’ *Founders Online*, National Archives, founders.archives.gov/documents/Hamilton/01-03-02-0556.

← Alexander Hamilton.

CREATING THE AMERICAN CONSTITUTION

Thomas Jefferson on the delegates at the Constitutional Convention (1787):
'An assembly of demi-gods ...'

THE PHILADELPHIA CONVENTION, 1787 **KEY DEVELOPMENT**

There was support for the Convention from several states, particularly in the wake of Shays' Rebellion. Twelve states sent between two and eight delegates each, making a total of fifty-five delegates; Rhode Island refused to participate. Several key revolutionary leaders did not attend the gathering:

- Richard Henry Lee and Patrick Henry from Virginia refused their invitations, Henry because he 'smelled a rat in Philadelphia, tending toward monarchy'⁴
- Samuel Adams was in poor health, as well as being suspicious of the Convention
- John Adams and Thomas Jefferson were abroad on diplomatic duties (although both had limited correspondence with delegates).

The Philadelphia Convention involved some of the finest political minds in America. George Washington was the most prominent figure and the obvious candidate to chair proceedings. Most of those involved in the Annapolis Convention were present, including Alexander Hamilton and James Madison. Robert Morris, the former superintendent of finances and John Dickinson, author of *Letters from a Farmer* and the failed Olive Branch Petition were present. Roger Sherman, a member of the committee responsible for the Declaration of Independence, was eager to participate. Benjamin Franklin also attended, though at eighty-one years of age his hearing was poor and he spoke only occasionally during debates.

The first of the fifty-five delegates arrived in Philadelphia at the start of May, taking rooms in the city's hotels, boarding houses and private rooms. It took another three weeks before seven states were represented, which gave a quorum—the minimum number needed to start a meeting—so that discussions could begin.

After unanimously electing Washington as chairman, the delegates moved that their meetings be entirely secret, with no public access and no release of minutes, records or information while the proceedings were underway. Members swore an oath of secrecy and guards were posted at the doors to prevent eavesdropping. Confident that they could speak honestly and openly, the delegates began discussing the future of the nation.

KEY INDIVIDUAL
(see p. 258)



↑ James Madison.

ACTIVITY

CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

Would the 'secrecy' of the Philadelphia Convention be allowed today? If so, under what circumstances? Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of conducting such an important meeting without public scrutiny or official records.

TO REVISE OR START ANEW?



The first challenge confronting the Philadelphia Convention of 1787 was what to do about the Articles of Confederation. Should they be modified or scrapped altogether? A consensus emerged that it would be easier to write a framework document anew rather than attempt to improve the Articles, which were viewed as fundamentally flawed. There was nevertheless a verbal agreement that the spirit of the Articles and the nature of the Confederacy be reflected in the new piece. John Dickinson summed up the views of most present when he addressed the convention on 30 May:

John Dickinson

The Confederation is defective [and] all agree that it ought to be amended. We are a nation, although consisting of parts or states—we are also confederated, and [we] hope we shall always remain confederated. The enquiry should be: [1] What are the legislative powers which we should vest in Congress? [2] What judiciary powers? [3] What executive powers? We may resolve therefore, in order to let us into the business, that the confederation is defective; and then proceed to the definition of such powers as may be thought adequate to the objects for which it was instituted.

Most agreed that the national government must be strengthened and given powers over matters such as taxation, currency, trade and foreign affairs. But the Americans had just fought a revolution against a powerful central government they believed was taxing them heavily while denying their political rights. The key dilemma was: how to achieve a powerful government that was unable to develop into a tyrannical government?

Their answer was to revisit the separation of political powers with modifications to make it more effective. Having separate branches of government was nothing new. British government had been balanced between the monarchy, two Houses of Parliament and an independent judiciary. The French Enlightenment philosopher Montesquieu had written extensively about *separation of powers* in his 1734 work *The Spirit of the Laws*.

What was revolutionary about the American proposal was that separation of powers was incorporated into a republican model. It was explicitly defined by checks and balances, and the system was articulated and enshrined in a written Constitution. Regardless of how the document operates in practice, its theoretical basis was one of the key political innovations of the modern era.

National government as a whole would be strengthened, but it would be divided into three distinct branches:

- executive—the presidency
- legislative—Congress
- judicial—the courts.

Each branch would have considerable power in its own right, but this power would be checked (or limited) by the powers of the other two branches. The three branches of government would exist in a state of equilibrium (or balance)—no branch on its own would be able to control the government.

← Independence Hall, where the Second Continental Congress met many times, as did the Philadelphia Convention.

← **Source 9.09** Cited in Joseph Morton, *Shapers of the Great Debate at the Constitutional Convention* (Santa Barbara: Greenwood Press, 2005), 77.

separation of powers the division of powers among several branches of government—usually the executive, legislature and judiciary—in order to prevent any one branch from abusing its power

POLITICAL CHECKS AND BALANCES

KEY DEVELOPMENT



↑ The US Supreme Court.

DID YOU KNOW?

Only three US presidents—Andrew Johnson, Bill Clinton and Donald Trump—have faced **impeachment** under Article II of the Constitution. Johnson and Clinton were tried before the Senate and found not guilty—Johnson by just one vote. Richard Nixon resigned from the presidency before impeachment proceedings began. Trump was found not guilty because his party, the Republican Party, had the majority vote in the Senate.

impeachment a process outlined in the US Constitution in which a public figure, such as a president, politician or judge, can be placed on trial for high crimes and misdemeanours

The American political system includes the following checks.

Checks on the power of the president

- The president can be impeached by the Senate
- Presidential appointments must be approved by the Senate
- The Supreme Court can declare presidential orders unconstitutional and invalid
- The president cannot declare war without Congressional approval
- The president cannot raise revenue without Congressional approval.

Checks on the power of Congress

- The president can veto (disallow) legislation passed by Congress
- The president, not Congress, is commander-in-chief of the military
- The president may summon emergency sessions of Congress
- The Supreme Court can deem legislation unconstitutional and invalid
- The bicameral (two-house) nature of Congress means it is 'self-checking'.

Checks on the power of the Supreme Court

- The president appoints Supreme Court justices
- The president can issue pardons
- The Senate must approve judicial appointments
- The Congress can impeach Supreme Court and lower court justices
- The Congress can alter the size of the Supreme Court.

ACTIVITY

CAUSE AND CONSEQUENCE—DIAGRAM

Construct a diagram or concept map showing how the various 'checks and balances' of the American political system might come into play in one or more of the following situations.

- The president wants to declare war on another country.
- The House of Representatives passes a bill the president disagrees with.
- The Senate does not approve of a Supreme Court justice nominated by the president.

What are some of the positive and negative consequences of a system based on checks and balances?

DECIDING ON A MODEL OF GOVERNMENT

Benjamin Franklin (1787): ‘The diversity of opinion turns on two points ...’

Having concluded that the national government should be strengthened and made up of three branches, the 1787 Philadelphia Convention set to work on the detail, particularly the composition of the Congress.

Individuals and state delegations began tabling their own schemes. The Virginia Plan, the New Jersey Plan, the Hamilton Plan and the Dickinson Plan were raised, among others. Each plan was explained, queried, discussed and hotly debated in the chamber. Scenarios were created to test how each model might operate in practice. The legal implications of each plan were considered to ensure that each proposal would stand up to challenges. Fortunately, most of the delegates were educated in law, and many were practising lawyers.

By mid-June the Convention had seriously considered two proposals: the Virginia Plan and the New Jersey Plan.

THE VIRGINIA PLAN

The Virginia Plan—sometimes called the Large States Plan—created a political system with three branches of government: executive (government), legislative (parliament) and judicial (courts), plus a legislature that contained two houses.

Under this plan the legislature would be dominant. It would:

- appoint individuals to the executive and judicial branches
- rule on the constitutional validity of laws
- regulate overseas trade.

The legislature would be elected on a proportional basis—meaning that the states with the highest populations would be better represented, and have greater power and influence than the states with the smallest populations.

THE NEW JERSEY PLAN

The New Jersey Plan was different. Where the Virginia Plan was prepared beforehand, the New Jersey proposal was hammered out in Philadelphia by delegates from small states, desperate for an alternative. It was also known as the Small States Plan or the Paterson Plan, after its chief architect, William Paterson.

In this proposal, the legislature or parliament also had significant powers, including the appointment of an executive committee for a one-year term. However, the legislature contained only one elected house with all states represented equally, as in the Articles of Confederation. Not only would ‘whales’ (big states) and ‘minnows’ (small states) have equal voting rights, but the national government would continue to rely on the states for its revenue.

COMPROMISE IS SOUGHT

With the Convention in an apparent deadlock, some delegates began to search for middle ground that would satisfy both parties. Benjamin Franklin did not speak often in debates but attracted the full attention of those present when he did.

ACTIVITY

RESEARCH AND PROPOSE

In groups or pairs, look at the the Virginia Plan and New Jersey Plan. In addition, research the Hamilton and Dickinson Plans. Which proposal does your group believe would best serve the United States of the 1780s, or of today? Should there be room for compromise?

➔ **Source 9.10** Cited in Ellen Frankel Paul, *Liberty, Property and the Foundations of the American Constitution* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 33.

ACTIVITY

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 What was the consequence of the Annapolis Convention?
- 2 Why were some states suspicious of the Philadelphia Convention?
- 3 What were some of the most significant conflicts at the Philadelphia Convention? Which was the most critical?
- 4 How did the states settle on a model of government?

Benjamin Franklin

The diversity of opinion turns on two points. If a proportional representation takes place, the small States contend that their liberties will be in danger. If an equality of votes is to be put in its place, the large States say their money will be in danger. When a broad table is to be made and the edges of the planks do not fit, the artist takes a little from both, and makes a good joint. In this manner here both sides must part with some of their demands, in order that they may join in some accommodating proposition.

In this way, compromise became an important feature of the United States Constitution. Its mechanisms and clauses sought to strike a balance between:

- large states and small states
- northern states and southern states
- state and federal powers.

'THE GREAT COMPROMISE'

A solution to the July 1787 impasse in Philadelphia came from Connecticut delegates, who put forward a model later called the Great Compromise. Based on the Virginia Plan, its most obvious compromise was in the composition of the Congress. The legislature would have two houses, as in the Virginia Plan, but the representation in each house would be different.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

The House of Representatives would be the lower house, or 'people's house', with:

- members elected every two years
- seats allocated on the basis of population ('one member for every 40,000 inhabitants')
- majority of seats held by states with larger populations.

THE GREAT COMPROMISE

THE NEW JERSEY PLAN

- One-house legislature (unicameral)
- Representation equal for each state
- Favoured by the states with small populations

THE VIRGINIA PLAN

- Two-house legislature (bicameral)
- Representation in both houses based on population
- Favoured by the states with large populations

GREAT COMPROMISE: TWO HOUSES OF CONGRESS

House of Representatives

- Representation based on population
- Voted into office by voters in each state
- Members elected for two-year terms of office
- Tax and revenue laws initiate here

Senate

- Two senators for every state
- Nominated by state legislatures
- Senators served six-year terms of office
- Power to confirm appointments and treaties

THE SENATE

The Senate would exist as the upper house or ‘states’ house’ with:

- two senators per state, regardless of population—meaning each state would be represented equally
- senators nominated by state legislatures
- senators serving six-year terms.

As a ‘house of review’, the Senate would operate in a more stable and deliberative manner than the House of Representatives. Edmund Randolph described the function of the Senate as one of ‘keeping up the balance, and to restrain, if possible, the fury of democracy’.⁶

Under the provisions of the Great Compromise, legislation would need to pass through both houses of Congress, to make sure it had the approval of both the ‘people’ and the states. Each house was allocated specific powers and responsibilities within the legislature:

- bills raising revenue could only originate in the House of Representatives
- the power to confirm treaties and presidential appointments was given to the Senate.

The delegates in Philadelphia debated this model for almost two weeks before voting to accept it (five votes to four) on 16 July 1787.

ACTIVITY

BRAINSTORM

In a chart, list the components of the Virginia Plan, the New Jersey Plan and Connecticut’s Great Compromise. Note down the advantages and limitations of each proposal. For example, which one would be more likely to produce stable government?

DID YOU KNOW?

The Australian federal parliament is similar to the US Congress. House of Representatives seats are allocated according to population, whereas each state is represented equally in the Senate regardless of population—currently six senators per state and two per territory.

↓ The US House of Representatives.



SLAVERY AND THE ‘THREE-FIFTHS CLAUSE’

KEY DEVELOPMENT

The 1787 delegates to Philadelphia included references to slavery in two sections of the Constitution:

- the ‘three-fifths clause’ regarding representation in the Congress
- a **sunset clause** for slave importations.

Both measures were significant compromises to the southern states, whose delegates refused to consider any move to prohibit slavery or end the slave trade. Historians still debate whether the Founding Fathers genuinely tried to end the ‘peculiar institution’ of slavery.

The three-fifths clause was conceived during debates about representation and taxation. The clause revolved around two key points.

- If the House of Representatives was based on population alone, then southern states such as Georgia and the Carolinas, with their much smaller numbers of free white voters, would be disadvantaged.
- If taxation was based on population, and slaves were included in the population count, the southerners would be disproportionately taxed.

sunset clause a part of a law or contract that states when or how it will end

Southern delegates pushed for a compromise, which resulted in the following clause:

➔ **Source 9.11** 'The Constitution of the United States,' Article I, Section II, www.archives.gov/founding-docs/constitution-transcript

Constitution of the United States, Article I, Section II

Representatives and direct taxes shall be apportioned [allocated] among the several states which may be included within this Union, according to their respective numbers, which shall be determined by adding to the whole number of free persons, including those bound to service for a term of years [indentured servants], and, excluding Indians not taxed, three fifths of all other persons [slaves].

James Madison actively supported the three-fifths clause in Philadelphia, for which he has been criticised by some historians. However, historian Drew McCoy suggests that Madison's defence of the three-fifths clause was more complicated than often perceived, and that Madison supported the clause in order to bring slaves into the legal and political mainstream. Madison said they should be 'considered, as much as possible, in the light of human beings and not as mere property', so that they would be 'acted upon by our laws and have an interest in our laws'.⁷



ACTIVITY

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

Using Source 9.11 and your own knowledge, respond to the following:

- 1 What would be the rule for deciding the following:
 - how many representatives each state could have in the national Congress?
 - how much each state would be taxed?
- 2 Would indentured servants and 'Indians' be counted?
- 3 What did 'all other persons' refer to, and how would they be counted?
- 4 Would those counted as 'three-fifths' also receive three-fifths of a vote?
- 5 To what extent were Madison's views on the clause ethical or reasonable for the time?

abolitionist an individual or group that seeks to ban slavery and free the slaves

➔ **Source 9.12** 'The Constitution of the United States,' Article I, Section IX, www.archives.gov/founding-docs/constitution-transcript

Constitution of the United States, Article I, Section IX

The Migration or Importation of such Persons as any of the States now existing shall think proper to admit, shall not be prohibited by the Congress prior to the year One Thousand Eight Hundred and Eight, but a tax or duty may be imposed on such importation, not exceeding ten dollars for each Person.

This measure can be viewed in two ways:

- first, it limited future slave-trading in the United States
- second, it allowed the slave trade to continue—and perhaps encouraged it.

Historian John Patrick reveals that 'most delegates at the convention were sufficiently distressed by their bargains on human bondage that they contrived to keep the words

“slave” and “slavery” out of the Constitution ... the clauses on slaves euphemistically included such terms as “other persons”.”⁸

The ‘fugitive clause’ of the Constitution (Article IV, Section III) stated that nobody ‘held to service or labour’ in one state could claim freedom if they escaped to another state. This enabled owners of runaway slaves to retrieve their ‘property’ from other states without legal restriction.

Whatever their private misgivings, many of the Founding Fathers seemed content that a cap had been placed on the importation of slaves, even if it had been deferred by two decades. ‘The slave business’, said George Washington, ‘has at last been put to rest and will scarce awake’.⁹

A PRESIDENT OR A KING?

A more controversial element of the Constitution was the office of president.

The men who framed the Constitution recognised that the federal government would need day-to-day administration and decision-making powers in cases of war, threat or emergency. They came up with a strong executive presidency; the president has considerable power to defend the nation, enforce laws and uphold the Constitution—but in most cases cannot act without the approval of Congress.

Even the title ‘president’ was not as formal as it could have been. Article II of the Constitution defines the president’s powers thus:

Constitution of the United States, Article II

The executive power shall be vested in a President of the United States of America. He shall hold his office during the term of four years ... together with the Vice-President chosen for the same Term ... The President shall be commander in chief of the Army and Navy of the United States ..., he may require the opinion, in writing, of the principal officer in each of the executive Departments ... [H]e shall have power to grant reprieves and pardons for offenses against the United States, except in cases of impeachment. He shall have power, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate, to make treaties ... and by and with the advice and consent of the Senate shall appoint ambassadors, other public ministers and consuls, judges of the Supreme Court, and all other Officers of the United States, whose Appointments are not herein otherwise provided for

← **Source 9.13** ‘The Constitution of the United States,’ Article II, www.archives.gov/founding-docs/constitution-transcript

The most controversial aspect of the Constitution was the president’s status as commander-in-chief of the military—a role without Constitutional limits or boundaries. Many Americans were concerned about this, especially given their experience of permanent armies and military oppression before the revolution. Edmund Randolph—who was one of three Philadelphia delegates who would later refuse to sign the Constitution—reportedly declared the executive presidency to be ‘a foetus of monarchy’.

ACTIVITY

COMPARE AND CONTRAST

Compare and contrast the role and powers of the president of the United States with those of a constitutional monarch, such as a British king or queen. Which system do you think is preferable?



➔ **Source 9.14** The first Seal of the President of the United States, which was originally used to seal official orders and correspondence with wax. The stars represent the thirteen states, while the Latin motto *E Pluribus Unum* means 'Out of many, one!'



However, the Founding Fathers didn't actually trust the general population to vote for the president. So they added a process called the Electoral College, noted by the United States National Archives as 'a process not a place'.¹⁰ This can also be seen as a compromise between state rights and federal rights. Voters don't have a direct vote for the president. Instead, they have an indirect vote. Each state appoints electors who will cast ballots. When the Constitution was written, state assemblies chose their electors who would then vote for the president. Currently, these electors vote for the president based upon the popular vote in their state based on political

parties; however, this process even varies by state. This formal procedure of the casting of ballots occurs several weeks after the national election every four years.

Using indirect voting gave the states more balance—and also made sure that only the elite could decide who would become president. Until the Seventeenth Amendment in 1913, even the Senate was not elected by the general population. The Electoral College has changed the fate of several elections—notably in 2000 and 2016, when the candidate who received the majority of votes in the country did not win the Electoral College.

A DRAFT TO DIVIDE THE COUNTRY

Whatever the innovations and benefits of the American Constitution, it could not be enacted without the approval of the state and Congress. And getting approval would be quite a feat, given the failure of attempts to reform the Articles of Confederation.

The Philadelphia Convention knew the difficulties involved in national reform, so they gave the Constitution its own ratification process, spelled out in two critical elements of Article VII. Ratification would be decided by state conventions and not by state legislatures. Critically, the document could be enacted upon ratification by nine states (a two-thirds majority) rather than by all thirteen.¹¹

On 17 September 1787, the Philadelphia Convention was dissolved. Three days later the draft Constitution was read to the Confederation Congress. By October it had been distributed and released for public examination.

The next ten months brought heated debate, propaganda and ideological combat. According to historian John Vile the ratification process 'divided the country almost as strongly as had the earlier fight for independence'.¹² Two main camps emerged: the Federalists and the Anti-Federalists.

ACTIVITY

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 What were the features of the Great Compromise? Was one side more successful than the other?
- 2 What was contentious about the compromise on slavery?
- 3 How did the delegates decide the role of the president?

CHAPTER 9 REVIEW

KEY SUMMARY POINTS

- The Articles of Confederation did not allow for a strong national government, and the post-war United States suffered as a result.
- Delegates from a majority of states met at the Annapolis Convention in Annapolis, Maryland, to try to solve the problems of the Articles of Confederation.
- Delegates drafted the United States Constitution in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, creating a new federal method of government.
- They decided upon a system of government based on checks and balances, with a separation of powers.
- The Great Compromise allowed for northern and southern states—as well as small and large states—to feel as though they had equal say in the federal system.
- The president would have a limited term of office with checked powers.
- The US Constitution had to be approved by the conventions in a majority of the states to be ratified.
- Slavery was allowed to continue because of the three-fifths compromise, and the international slave trade was allowed to continue for another twenty years. Slavery would not be illegal throughout the United States until 1865.

ACTIVITY

COMPARING DOCUMENTS

- Examine the key rights granted by the Articles of Confederation and the United States Constitution, as noted in this chapter.
- Create a Venn diagram comparing the similarities and differences between the two documents.
- Evaluate which is a more effective document. Provide evidence for your response.

TYPES OF CHANGE—TIMELINES

Create a mind map or flowchart of events leading to key decisions in creating elements of the Constitution from 4 July 1776.



FORGING AMERICA

(1787-1789)



Source 10.01 *Washington taking the oath* by Ezra Augustus Winter, early twentieth century. Washington takes the oath from the balcony of Federal Hall in New York City.

CHAPTER 10

'The preservation of the sacred fire of liberty, and the destiny of the Republican model of Government, are justly ... entrusted to the hands of the American people.'

—George Washington, 1789

By September 1787, the Philadelphia Convention had hammered out an impressive new document based on compromise. However, the real battle was not creating the United States Constitution—it was persuading people and the states to accept it.

The ratification process of 1787–88 saw a lot of debate and public discussion as the population divided into two loosely formed groups:

- the Federalists—who favoured the Constitution
- the Anti-Federalists—who opposed the Constitution.

It seemed that key civil liberties—including those they had fought against the British for—did not appear to be enshrined in the Constitution.

As the United States considered its political future, some issues that had sparked the Revolution resurfaced, such as rights and representation.

KEY QUESTIONS

- How did the nation agree to compromise on revolutionary ideals?
- What was the extent of continuity and change in political, social, cultural and economic conditions in the new nation by 1789?
- What led to a Bill of Rights?
- How did the American Revolution affect the experiences of different social groups, such as the Continental Army, women, slaves and African Americans?
- To what extent were the Patriots successful in achieving their aims and goals by 1789?
- To what extent were the American people better off than they were in 1754?

KEY EVENTS

October 1787

The first editions of the Federalist appear

December 1787

Delaware first to ratify the Constitution

March 1788

Rhode Island becomes the first state to vote against ratification

June 1788

Virginia results in a close vote in favour of ratification

July 1788

New York votes for ratification; the US Constitution is enacted by Congress (with a nine-state majority)

March 1789

The new Congress meets for the first time

December 1791

Bill of Rights is ratified



DEBATES BETWEEN FEDERALISTS AND ANTI-FEDERALISTS

KEY DEVELOPMENT

Alexander Hamilton in the Federalist Papers No. 1 (1787): ‘The crisis at which we are arrived may be regarded as the era in which that decision is to be made, and a wrong election ... may, in this view, deserve to be considered as the general misfortune of mankind.’

FEDERALISTS: SUPPORTERS OF THE CONSTITUTION AND A STRONG CENTRAL GOVERNMENT

The Federalists who supported the Constitution and the system it would create included some of America’s brightest minds, such as James Madison, Alexander Hamilton, Benjamin Franklin, John Jay and John Adams.

These men were well educated and politically astute, and they used pamphlets and public meetings to ‘sell’ the advantages of Federalism. Their most significant weapon was the Federalist Papers, a series of essays written by ‘Publius’—who was actually Madison, Hamilton and Jay writing under a pen-name. The first Federalist Papers essay, written by Hamilton and published in New York in October 1787, gave readers the impression they were at a turning point—both for the nation and for world history:

➔ **Source 10.02** ‘The Federalist No. 1, 27 October 1787,’ *Founders Online*, National Archives, founders.archives.gov/documents/Hamilton/01-04-02-0152

Alexander Hamilton, *The Federalist Papers*, No. 1, 1787

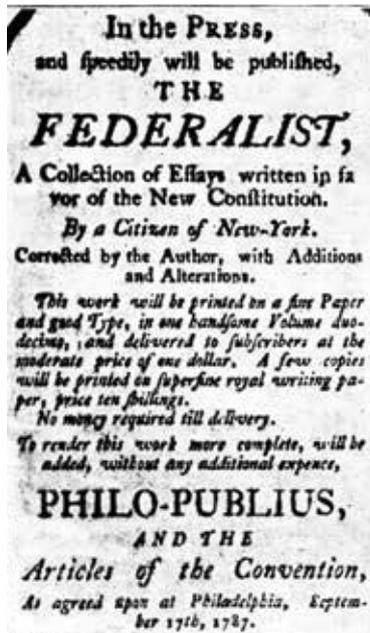
... You are called upon to deliberate on a new Constitution for the United States of America. The subject speaks its own importance; comprehending in its consequences nothing less than the existence of the Union, the safety and welfare of the parts of which it is composed, the fate of an empire [which is] in many respects the most interesting in the world. It has been frequently remarked that it seems to have been reserved to the people of this country, by their conduct and example, to decide the important question: whether societies of men are really capable or not of establishing good government from reflection and choice, or whether they are forever destined to depend for their political constitutions on accident and force ... The crisis at which we are arrived may be regarded as the era in which that decision is to be made, and a wrong election ... may, in this view, deserve to be considered as the general misfortune of mankind.

Another eighty-four Federalist Papers were published between October 1787 and August 1788, a rate of one every three or four days. Each essay addressed a particular element of concern, acting as both an ‘instruction guide’ for the Constitution and a rebuttal of Anti-Federalist criticisms.

The Federalist Papers defined the Constitution as the supreme law of the land, which would be above all governments and prevent the rise of potential tyrants. The authors:

- highlighted the idea that a whole people could rule a nation—known as ‘popular sovereignty’—and that the new government would be answerable to the people
- explained the system of checks and balances that made military oppression, restriction of liberties and excessive taxation unlikely under the Constitution—if not impossible.

The support of George Washington was critical to the Federalist cause. Washington had been Chairman at the Philadelphia Convention, and had not often participated



in debates. However, he announced his strong support for ratification early on.

Washington's enormous popularity was a considerable asset for the Federalists. Although he was not a vigorous campaigner for the Constitution like Madison and Hamilton, Washington defended the Constitution in public and in private. In a letter to the United Baptist Churches of Virginia, Washington wrote that if he believed the Constitution 'might possibly endanger the religious rights of any ecclesiastical society, certainly I would never have placed my signature to it'.¹

Other strong Federalists were the farmers and small businessmen who had endured the economic hardships of the 1780s. They blamed the Articles of Confederation and the 'weak' Confederation Congress for failing to

restore prosperity after the Revolution. Some farmers and businessmen were tired of the bickering and small-mindedness of state assemblies, and yearned for strong leadership. One man spoke out in favour of the Constitution:

Jonathan Smith

I am a plain man and get my living by the plough... I have lived in a part of the country where I have known the worth of good government by the [lack] of it. There was a black cloud that rose in the east last winter, and spread over the west. It brought on a state of anarchy and that led to tyranny. I say, it brought anarchy. People that used to live peaceably, and were before good neighbours, got distracted, and took up arms against government. Our distress was so great that we should have been glad to snatch at anything that looked like a government. Had any person that was able to protect us come and set up his [flag], we should all have flocked to it, even if it had been a monarch, and that monarch might have proved a tyrant... When I saw this constitution, I found that it was a cure for these disorders.

← An advertisement for the collected essays, published in 1788 as *The Federalists*.

← **Source 10.03** Jonathan Elliot (ed.), *The Debates in the Several State Conventions of the Adoption of the Federal Constitution*, vol. 2 (1827), 102, [memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/hlaw:@field\(DOCID+@lit\(ed0024\)\)](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/hlaw:@field(DOCID+@lit(ed0024)))

ACTIVITY

HISTORICAL SOURCES

Using Source 10.03 and your own knowledge, respond to the following:

- 1 What is Smith's occupation? How would you describe his use of language?
- 2 Which event, or series of events, is Smith referring to when he speaks of a 'black cloud' that 'rose in the east last winter' and 'spread over the west'?
- 3 Describe an example of 'anarchy' from the period, and say why people might have been 'glad to snatch at anything that looked like a government' afterwards.
- 4 Explain why Federalists such as Smith believed the Constitution would be a 'cure' for America's 'disorders'. To what extent were they accurate?

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

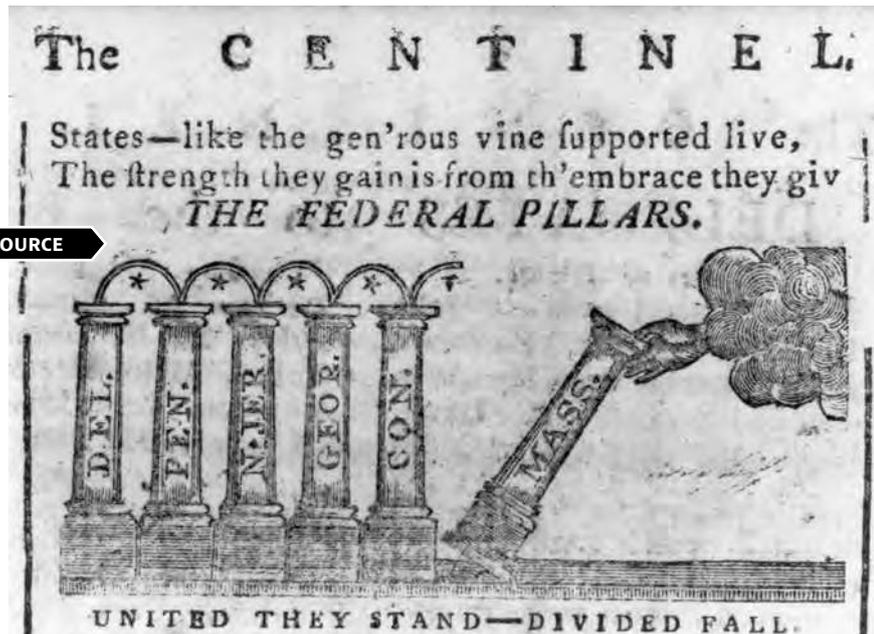
Find a perspective on the Constitution that contrasts with Smith's view. What fears did Anti-Federalists raise about the Constitution?

ANTI-FEDERALISTS: WARY OF THE CONSTITUTION, SUPPORTERS OF INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS

Patrick Henry (1788): 'Such a government is incompatible with the genius of republicanism.'

KEY SOURCE

➔ **Source 10.04** The federal pillars.



The Anti-Federalists were a broader and more diverse group than the Federalists. They boasted fewer well-known names. Among their leaders were Virginians Patrick Henry, Richard Henry Lee and George Mason.

The majority of Anti-Federalists were plantation owners and small businessmen rather than city-based merchants or financiers. Like their Federalist opponents, many had been active in state government as governors or legislators. However, according to historian Gordon S. Wood, the Anti-Federalists 'tended to lack the influence and education of the Federalists, and often they had neither social nor intellectual confidence'.²

Anti-Federalist objections to the Constitution centred on four main points. Federalism would:

- increase national power to unacceptable levels
- diminish state power and sovereignty
- provide no explicit protection for individual rights
- involve having a standing federal army under the control of a powerful president.

The Anti-Federalist preference was for small, localised government which would be—by definition—closer to the people it represented. Tyranny would be impossible in a system where power was decentralised and shared by the states of the union.

Patrick Henry became the figurehead of the Anti-Federalist movement—although he was not exactly willing. Henry defined ratification as a simple choice between two ambitions:

- economic and military power
- true happiness and freedom.

Referring back to the mother country he had once criticised for being dictatorial, Henry suggested that what had made Britain's empire great was not its power, but its concern for liberty. He encouraged Americans to select wisely in this choice between 'liberty and empire'.

Patrick Henry, 'Shall Liberty or Empire be Sought?', 1788

We are descended from a people whose government was founded on liberty; our glorious forefathers of Great Britain made liberty the foundation of everything. That country is a great, mighty and splendid nation, not because their government is strong and energetic, but because liberty is its direct end ... We drew the spirit of liberty from our British ancestors [and] by that spirit we have triumphed over every difficulty. But now the American spirit, assisted by the ropes and chains of consolidation, is about to convert this country into a powerful and mighty empire. If you make the citizens of this country agree to become the subjects of one great consolidated empire of America, your government will not have sufficient energy to keep them together. Such a government is incompatible with the genius of republicanism. There will be no checks, no real balances, in this government

The Anti-Federalists were sharply criticised—and, in some cases, personally attacked—for opposing ratification. They were said to be:

- paranoid about the institution of government
- lacking faith in the wisdom of the people
- blind to the faults of the Articles of Confederation
- prepared to sacrifice national progress in favour of self-interest and states' rights
- afraid of change
- blocking the great potential of the United States.

These criticisms may have been true of some individuals in the Anti-Federalist movement, but most of them were committed to keeping a Confederacy of thirteen unified states under a republican government—it was just that they preferred national power in a decentralised form. Anti-Federalists thought of themselves as representatives of **yeoman farmers**, small businessmen and craftsmen, and were against small, elite governing groups (known as oligarchies) and trade that was dominated by one corporation (known as a monopoly). They did not accept that America had to become an imperial power to flourish economically, as Patrick Henry insisted:



← **Source 10.05** Cited in David Wootton (ed.), *The Essential Federalist and Anti-Federalist Papers* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2003), 33.

← George Clinton of New York is believed to have written the Anti-Federalist essays published under the pen-name 'Cato'. Clinton later overcame his objections to the Constitution, and served as vice-president under presidents Jefferson and Madison.

yeoman farmer someone who cultivated their own small plot of land—in contrast to a 'tenant farmer', who rented the land they farmed

Patrick Henry, 5 June 1788

We are come hither to preserve the poor Commonwealth of Virginia, if it can possibly be done: Something must be done to preserve your liberty and mine. The Confederation, this same despised government, merits in my opinion, the highest [praise]: It carried us through a long and dangerous war: It rendered us victorious in that bloody conflict with a powerful nation: It has secured us a territory greater than any European monarch possesses: And shall a government which has been thus strong and vigorous, be accused of [stupidity] and abandoned for want of energy?

← **Source 10.06** Jonathan Elliot (ed.), *The Debates in the Several State Conventions of the Adoption of the Federal Constitution*, vol. 3 (1827), 46, [memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/hlaw:@field\(DOCLID+@lit\(ed0024\)\)](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/hlaw:@field(DOCLID+@lit(ed0024)))



ACTIVITY

POSTER

Construct a poster persuading Americans not to ratify the new Constitution. Use the arguments and propaganda of the Anti-Federalists, as well as some of your own.

DEBATE

As a class, debate the topic below. Imagine it is September 1788, and the draft Constitution has just been circulated. Appoint three affirmative and three negative speakers, plus a timekeeper. Each speaker has three minutes to make their case. The rest of the class should vote on the most convincing team.

Topic: 'The American Constitution will safeguard the people's rights and liberties.'

DEBATES ON RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS

civil liberties freedoms, personal or human rights

The most divisive distinction between Federalists and Anti-Federalists was **civil liberties**.

The draft Constitution had no explicit protections or guarantees of personal rights, such as freedom of speech, movement, assembly and religion. Other buffers against oppressive government power that were overlooked, included:

- freedom of the press
- the right to a fair trial
- limitations on search warrants.

Since a lack of these rights had been a major grievance during the Revolution, many people felt the Constitution should explicitly protect these rights.

Bill of Rights a formal declaration of the legal and civil rights of the citizens of any state, country or federation

The push for a **Bill of Rights** was particularly strong in Virginia, where the Anti-Federalist leadership was strongest. Back in 1776, almost a month before Congress endorsed the Declaration of Independence, the Virginian Assembly had passed its own sixteen-point Declaration of Rights—which was a strong, clear expression of individual liberties. Much of it had been written by George Mason, who was a friend and neighbour of George Washington. Mason had been present at the Philadelphia Convention of 1787 and was an active contributor to its debates. However, Mason and two other delegates had refused to sign the Constitution—because it failed to spell out individual rights.

As the call for a Bill of Rights grew louder, some Federalists accepted the idea. Others denied that such a measure was necessary, because:

- rights were policed and protected by the lower courts, not by Constitutions
- the preamble to the Constitution contained a number of implied rights
- if rights were stated explicitly in the new Constitution, it would actually limit them—as they would become the only rights that individuals would possess.

Alexander Hamilton argued against the inclusion of a rights-based amendment, believing that the Constitution in its current form provided adequate protection:

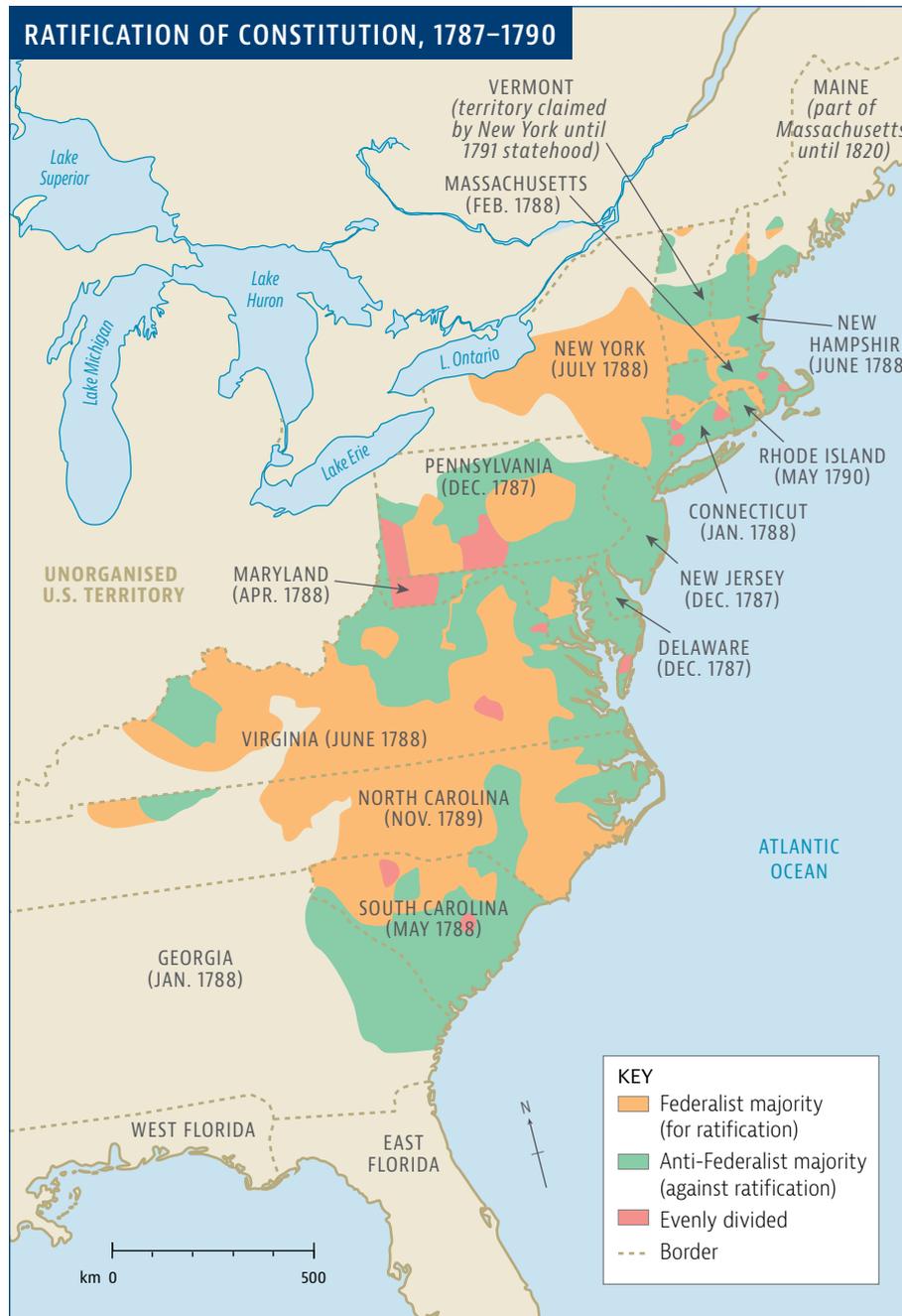
➔ **Source 10.07** *The Federalist Papers*, No. 84, The Avalon Project: Documents in Law, History and Diplomacy, avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/fed84.asp

Alexander Hamilton, *The Federalist Papers*, No. 84

[Under the Constitution] the people surrender nothing, and as they retain every thing [sic.], they have no need of particular reservations. 'We the people of the United States, to secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this constitution for the United States of America.' Here is a better recognition of popular rights than volumes of those sayings that make up several of our state bills of rights, and which would sound much better in a treatise of ethics than in a constitution of government.

However, Hamilton’s view was dwarfed by a broad consensus that a bill of rights was needed.

In their struggle against the British, the American revolutionaries had made much of the principles established and protected in landmark legal and political documents such as the Magna Carta (1215) and the English Bill of Rights (1689). Many of the great tracts of the revolution, such as Paine’s *Common Sense* and the Declaration of Independence, had been directly concerned with natural rights. The thirteen states and their dozens of counties had drafted clauses on rights in their countless resolves, declarations and Constitutions. So it didn’t make much sense if the Constitution remained silent about the individual rights of American citizens.



← **Source 10.08** Although support for the Constitution was regional, there were great differences within states based on local needs. This map shows which regions in each state sided with the Federalists or the Anti-Federalists.

Virginia and New England (Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Connecticut and Rhode Island) had differing factions. Delegates to the state ratifying conventions were largely chosen by the people. Counties or large towns were invited to elect one or more delegates to consider and vote on the Constitution on their behalf.

In preparation for the Convention:

- **Delaware’s** three counties elected ten delegates each, a total of thirty
- **New Jersey’s** thirteen counties elected three delegates each, a total of thirty-nine
- **Georgia’s** eleven counties elected twenty-nine delegates
- **Connecticut** voted by town rather than by county, and elected 168 delegates.

FEDERALISTS AND ANTI-FEDERALISTS: HISTORICAL INTERPRETATIONS

On Federalists

➔ **Source 10.09** David Harrell Junior, *Unto a Good Land* (Cambridge: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2005), 211.

David Harrell Jnr

In the battle for public opinion, labels can be as important as logic, perhaps more so. And those who favoured ratification of the Constitution got the jump on their opponents by seizing the name 'Federalist' to represent their position. 'Nationalist' would have been a more accurate label, but a less winning one, for it suggested a degree of unity so high that it might fatally weaken the power of the states.

➔ **Source 10.10** Samuel Eliot Morison et al., *A Concise History of the American Republic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 119.

Samuel E. Morison, Henry S. Commager and William E. Leuchtenburg

The Federalists... had the assets of youth, intelligence, something positive to offer and, absolutely invaluable, the support of Washington and Franklin... The warmest advocates of the Constitution were eager young men such as the thirty-two-year-old Rufus King. [They] believed that the slogans of 1776 were outmoded; that America needed integration, not state rights; that the immediate peril was not tyranny but disorder or dissolution; that the right to tax was essential to any government.

➔ **Source 10.11** James Ely, *The Guardian of Every Other Right* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 49.

James Ely

Economic reform was a major Federalist priority. Supporters of the Constitution blamed inadequate government under the Articles of Confederation for loss of credit, lower land values and decay of commerce during the 1780s. Throughout the ratification debates, the Federalists stressed the economic advantages of a strong central government. They argued that ratification... would facilitate the restoration of credit and would encourage commerce and manufacturing.

➔ **Source 10.12** Gary B. Nash et al., *The American People* (New York City: Longman, 2006), 187–188.

Gary B. Nash et al.

The Federalists had persuaded themselves that America's situation had changed dramatically since [the Declaration of Independence had been adopted in] 1776. They eagerly embraced the idea of nationhood and looked forward with anticipation to the development of a rising 'republican empire' based on commercial development and led by men of wealth and talent... Power, they argued, was not the enemy of liberty but its guarantor. Where government was not sufficiently 'energetic' and 'efficient' (these were favourite Federalist words) disorganisers and demagogues [politicians who exploit fears and prejudices] would do their nefarious work.

On Anti-Federalists

Jack Greene

[Anti-Federalists were] a *disparate* group... largely united only by their fear of the Constitution. They feared that the states would be swallowed up, that the interests of their respective localities would be sacrificed to those of others, and that the people would lose control over the distant national government which would eventually transmute itself into an irresponsible aristocracy ...

disparate dissimilar, different

← **Source 10.13** Jack Greene, *Colonies to Nation 1763–1789* (New York City: W. M. Norton, 1975), 557.

Herbert Storing

Was there [ever] a single Anti-Federal position? In the most obvious sense there surely was not. The Federalists claimed that the opposers of the Constitution could not agree among themselves, that they shared no common principles, that their arguments cancelled each other out. This is an exaggeration, for there was more agreement about many points of opposition to the Constitution than might appear at first glance.

← **Source 10.14** Herbert Storing, *What the Anti-Federalists Were For* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1981), 5.

Joseph Murray

The Anti-Federalists agreed that the Articles of Confederation had weaknesses and flaws but thought that they could be solved with amendments to the existing articles ... [They] considered that republics were most likely to succeed as small political entities where the government could consist of delegates selected from the people, were well known by the people and intimately knowledgeable of the wants and needs of the people.

← **Source 10.15** Joseph Murray, *Alexander Hamilton: America's Forgotten Founder* (New York: Algora, 2007), 107.

John Dilulio

The Anti-Federalists cannot be ignored or dismissed as cranks or crackpots. Nor can [they] be pigeon-holed as men united by narrow regional interests (they drew leaders from every state), by selfish economic interests (though some had land and financial capital, many had very little) or by [support] for slavery (abolition-leaning Anti-Federalists, both north and south, would bloody any nose that dared to suggest as much).

← **Source 10.16** John Dilulio, *Godly Republic* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 42.

ACTIVITY

HISTORICAL INTERPRETATIONS

Referring to Sources 10.09–10.16 and this chapter, write a 250–300-word response to the following question: How did Federalism and Anti-Federalism differ, and what were the main arguments made by each side? Which was more convincing?



RATIFICATION OF THE CONSTITUTION

Patrick Henry on Constitutional rights (1788): ‘Guard with jealous attention the public liberty.’

Each state had a ratifying convention, where rights were vigorously debated.

PENNSYLVANIA

In Pennsylvania, one Anti-Federalist urged the ratifying convention to put up ‘a permanent landmark by which [our leaders] may learn the extent of their authority’.³ The Pennsylvanians voted to ratify (46–23), but on the condition that the new Congress be ‘encouraged’ to pass a rights-based amendment to the Constitution.

MASSACHUSETTS

Massachusetts was the sixth state to ratify. The vote was very close (187–168), and came only after several noted Anti-Federalists—including revolutionary figureheads Samuel Adams and John Hancock—changed their position. Enough votes were mustered for ratification by engineering a compromise motion that called for a Bill of Rights.

MARYLAND AND SOUTH CAROLINA

Maryland voted to ratify (63–11), and South Carolina voted to ratify (149–73), becoming the seventh and eighth states to ratify.

NEW HAMPSHIRE

Things were not so comfortable at the New Hampshire Ratifying Convention, where delegates quibbled over a long list of individual rights they believed should be added to the Constitution. The New Hampshire vote was narrow (57–47), but succeeded on the back of a motion that the newly formed Congress initiate a Bill of Rights.

VIRGINIA

Virginia ratified by a slim margin (89–79), but only after fierce debates. Patrick Henry spoke against ratification, but reserved his strongest speech for the lack of Constitutional rights:

Patrick Henry, speech to the Virginian Ratifying Convention, 5 June 1788

I am happy to find that the [gentleman] on the other side declares [that my fears are] groundless. But suspicion is a virtue as long as its object is the preservation of the public good ... There are many on the other side, who possibly may have been persuaded to the necessity of these measures, which I conceive to be dangerous to your liberty. Guard with jealous attention the public liberty. Suspect every one who approaches that jewel. Unfortunately, nothing will preserve it but downright force. Whenever you give up that force, you are inevitably ruined.

Under the terms of Article VII, the Constitution was officially enacted with the ratification of the ninth state, New Hampshire. It was scheduled to come into effect the following spring, with the election and investiture of the Congress and the president.

NORTH CAROLINA

By the end of July 1788, only North Carolina and Rhode Island had still not ratified. North Carolina held its Convention the following month, but put off voting until there was evidence of movement towards a Bill of Rights. By November, when they finally saw some progress on the issue, the North Carolinians finally voted to ratify.

➔ **Source 10.17** Cited in David Wootton (ed.), *The Essential Federalist and Anti-Federalist Papers* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2003), 26.

RHODE ISLAND

Rhode Island was the smallest of the thirteen states and the only one not to send delegates to Philadelphia in 1787. Rhode Island was deeply suspicious of both the Constitution and the federal system. Isolated and under pressure from its powerful neighbours, Rhode Island finally relented in May 1790, becoming the last state to ratify the Constitution.

ACTIVITY

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 What were the key concerns of the Federalists? Who led them?
- 2 What were the key concerns of the Anti-Federalists? Who led them?
- 3 How significant were the debates as a consequence of the Revolution?
- 4 Why would the US Constitution affect both states rights and individual rights?
- 5 How difficult was the ratification process?
- 6 Were any compromises granted to ensure the passage of the Constitution?

THE BILL OF RIGHTS KEY DEVELOPMENT

Preamble to the United States Bill of Rights (1789): ‘The Conventions of a number of the States, having at the time of their adopting the Constitution, expressed a desire, in order to prevent misconstruction or abuse of its powers, that further declaratory and restrictive clauses should be added. And as extending the ground of public confidence in the Government, will best ensure the beneficent ends of its institution.’

Out of the ratification process came a consensus that the Constitution should contain a Bill of Rights.

One of the priorities of the first United States Congress in March 1789, when it sat for the first time, in New York City, was to develop amendments that would reflect the recommendations of state ratifying conventions.

The task of drafting a charter of rights fell largely to James Madison, by then widely acclaimed for his role in developing the Constitution. Madison was originally opposed to the inclusion of a Bill of Rights, but considered it a better option than having another Constitutional Convention. He knew that action might undo the delicate compromises achieved in Philadelphia. Madison’s aim was to protect individual rights while keeping the structure of the Constitution intact—in other words, making compromises for the greater good of stability.

Madison had plenty of material to draw upon when drafting his charter of rights. He was familiar with Enlightenment philosophers Locke, Rousseau and Voltaire, as well as American revolutionary tracts by Dickinson, Paine and Jefferson. Madison had worked closely with George Mason on the Virginia Declaration of Rights in 1776, and had studied the recommendations of the state conventions. In addition, Congress had received hundreds of public submissions suggesting contents for a bill of rights.

Drawing upon all this material—and especially upon the Virginian Declaration of Rights—Madison devised his proposed changes and tabled them before Congress on 8 June 1789. However, it would take more than two years of negotiations between states before there was final agreement on the form and content of the Bill of Rights.



↑ The United States Bill of Rights.

DID YOU KNOW?

Patrick Henry, angry at Madison for his role in creating the Constitution, used his influence in the Virginia Assembly to block Madison’s appointment to the Senate, which was his preferred position. Instead, Madison ran for and won a seat in the House of Representatives.

CREATING A POLITICAL SYSTEM: THE BILL OF RIGHTS

Today the Bill of Rights is considered one of the cornerstones of American democracy, along with the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. It has protected the liberties of American citizens, articulating their freedoms and guaranteeing their legal rights.

However, the Bill of Rights has had its controversies, particularly the Second Amendment—the right to bear arms—which has contributed to America’s high rate of private gun ownership when it is actually referring to a national guard. The Bill of Rights clearly aligns with the revolutionary civil liberties envisaged by the Patriots.

United States Bill of Rights, 1789 [After Preamble]

KEY SOURCE

Amendment I

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

Amendment II

A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed.

Amendment III

No Soldier shall, in time of peace be quartered in any house, without the consent of the Owner, nor in time of war, but in a manner to be prescribed by law.

Amendment IV

The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated, and no Warrants shall issue, but upon probable cause, supported by Oath or affirmation, and particularly describing the place to be searched, and the persons or things to be seized.

Amendment V

No person shall be held to answer for a capital, or otherwise infamous crime, unless on a presentment or indictment of a Grand Jury, except in cases arising in the land or naval forces, or in the Militia, when in actual service in time of War or public danger; nor shall any person be subject for the same offence to be twice put in jeopardy of life or limb; nor shall be compelled in any criminal case to be a witness against himself, nor be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor shall private property be taken for public use, without just compensation.

Amendment VI

In all criminal prosecutions, the accused shall enjoy the right to a speedy and public trial, by an impartial jury of the State and district wherein the crime shall have been committed, which district shall have been previously ascertained by law, and to be informed of the nature and cause of the accusation; to be confronted with the witnesses against him; to have compulsory process for obtaining witnesses in his favor, and to have the Assistance of Counsel for his defence.

Amendment VII

In Suits at common law, where the value in controversy shall exceed twenty dollars, the right of trial by jury shall be preserved, and no fact tried by a jury, shall be otherwise re-examined in any Court of the United States, than according to the rules of the common law.

Amendment VIII

Excessive bail shall not be required, nor excessive fines imposed, nor cruel and unusual punishments inflicted.

Amendment IX

The enumeration in the Constitution, of certain rights, shall not be construed to deny or disparage others retained by the people.

Amendment X

The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people.

 **Source 10.18** National Archives, 'The Bill of Rights: A Transcription', *America's Founding Documents*, www.archives.gov/founding-docs/bill-of-rights-transcript



ACTIVITY

SOURCE ANNOTATION

Using Source 10.18 and your own knowledge, respond to the following:

- 1 Photocopy or print the complete document.
- 2 Using a colour code, highlight the following:
 - general rights and freedoms
 - legal rights and processes
 - protections
 - powers.
- 3 Create a text box corresponding with each of the four bullet points (using appropriate colours). In each text box write examples of British actions and laws that infringed these rights prior to the American Revolution.
- 4 Find two or more historical interpretations of the United States Bill of Rights. What are the historians' views about the document?

THE NORTHWEST ORDINANCE: A GRAND PLAN FOR EXPANSION

The Northwest Ordinance of 1787: 'The said territory, and the States which may be formed therein, shall forever remain a part of this Confederacy of the United States of America, subject to the Articles of Confederation, and to such alterations therein as shall be constitutionally made; and to all the acts and ordinances of the United States in Congress assembled ...'

While the new Constitution was being conceived in mid-1787, the Confederation Congress was busy adopting an important measure.

The Northwest **Ordinance**, passed in July, regulated the vast territory between the Appalachian Mountains and the Mississippi and Ohio rivers, outlining how this land would be settled, governed and admitted to the Union. Some of the most vexing questions of the Revolutionary era were dealt with in this single law, including:

- expansion
- state rivalries
- territorial claims.

The Northwest Ordinance would shape how the new nation would unfold from thirteen small coastal states into the fifty-state federation of United States today.

At the beginning of the American Revolution, most states had existing claims on land in the West. Most of these claims were still in place after the revolution and became a source of heated dispute, and even of minor border conflicts. An unresolved question was whether the expansive western territory should be governed by the existing states—most of which were on the coast and separated from the western lands by mountain ranges and expansive terrain. It would make sense, it was argued, to admit new states rather than enlarge the existing ones.

Earlier, back in 1784, Thomas Jefferson had suggested carving the western territory into seventeen equally sized rectangular blocks, each to become a new state of the union. Jefferson's proposal provided a basis for the Northwest Ordinance three years later.

ordinance a law or decree made by a government or body of authority, usually setting down regulations or procedures for the public good

The challenge faced by the Confederation Congress was convincing the states to surrender their pre-revolution claims on the western territory in the interests of national expansion and future development. Some states gave up their claims willingly; others were pressured by Congress, or bribed with offers to pay their war debts.

With state claims removed, Congress passed the Northwest Ordinance in July 1787. New settlements in the west would be regulated by the Congress, which would be responsible for appointing territorial governors, administrators and judges. Once the population in any new settlement reached:

- 5000 free male adults—it was entitled to form a territorial assembly
- 60,000 free men—the territorial assembly had the option of applying to become a state.

The Ordinance also specified individual and civil rights that should be respected and upheld in the new territories, which foreshadowed the Bill of Rights that would follow four years later:

➔ **Source 10.19** Northwest Ordinance, July 13, 1787; (National Archives Microfilm Publication M332, roll 9); Miscellaneous Papers of the Continental Congress, 1774–1789; Records of the Continental and Confederation Congresses and the Constitutional Convention, 1774–1789, Record Group 360; National Archives.

Northwest Ordinance

No person, demeaning himself in a peaceable and orderly manner, shall ever be [harassed] on account of his mode of worship or religious sentiments, in the said territory ... The inhabitants of the said territory shall always be entitled to the benefits of ... trial by jury ... Religion, morality, and knowledge, being necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind, schools and the means of education shall forever be encouraged.

➔ **Source 10.20**



The Ordinance also instructed that the ‘utmost good faith shall always be observed towards the Indians; their land and property shall never be taken without their consent’—a decree that would be rarely honoured. More controversially, the Ordinance prohibited slavery in all new territories and states. This measure was supported by figures such as Washington, Jefferson and Madison, who wanted the institution of slavery to fade and disappear from American life.

Northwest Ordinance

There shall be neither slavery nor involuntary servitude in the said territory, otherwise than in the punishment of crimes whereof the party shall have been duly convicted ... Any [slave] escaping into the said territory, from whom labor is lawfully claimed in any one of the original States, may be lawfully reclaimed [and returned].

← **Source 10.21** Northwest Ordinance, July 13, 1787; (National Archives Microfilm Publication M332, roll 9); Miscellaneous Papers of the Continental Congress, 1774–1789; Records of the Continental and Confederation Congresses and the Constitutional Convention, 1774–1789, Record Group 360; National Archives.

However, the ban on slavery angered southerners who wanted to move West and take their slaves with them to provide labour. It also angered pro-slavery and states’ rights politicians in the South, who argued that Congress had no authority to impose such restrictions on the rights or decisions of future states.

ACTIVITY

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 What were the key individual rights granted in the Bill of Rights?
- 2 How did the Bill of Rights appease Federalists and Anti-Federalists?
- 3 What were the key features of the Northwest Ordinance?
- 4 How significant was the Northwest Ordinance in shaping the new nation?

CHANGES FOR DIFFERING SOCIAL GROUPS AND CULTURES

DIPLOMACY WITH NATIVE AMERICANS

Howard Zinn (1980): ‘Americans now assumed that the Indians land was theirs.’

The Revolution and its aftermath might have energised the anti-slavery movement, but there were very few benefits for Native Americans. The tribes and their confederacies—which were allied to either France or Britain—had enjoyed some confidence prior to the revolution, playing roles in trade, land claims and colonial wars. Although they were often exploited, they at least had recognition from European powers.

The Revolutionary War had removed British authority from much of the continent and Native Americans, despite being overlooked in the Treaty of Paris in 1783, now hoped for fair treatment at the hands of their former enemies.

Some members of the new United States government favoured diplomatic generosity to native nations in the west, evidenced by the many treaties signed in the mid- to late-1780s. However, in many cases, Congressional delegates used intimidation to convince native negotiators to sign away rights to land without fully understanding what they were signing.

The United States considered the treaties as virtual bills of sale for ‘Indian land’, which they now considered theirs. Many Native Americans, possibly still hoping for the return of their British allies, rejected the treaties they had signed and refused to acknowledge American sovereignty.

But the settlers and land speculators on the frontier were not interested in negotiation, and they found it quicker to use guns to drive Native Americans from their land rather than engage in slow and difficult treaty talks. Such a heavy-handed approach, plus constant westward movement of settlers, led to many skirmishes. In turn the skirmishes led to more Native American confederacies, a defensive attitude—and a state of undeclared war along much of the frontier.

Over the next century, as American settlers pushed further and further west, Native Americans were confronted with four options:

- fight
- flee
- negotiate
- assimilate.

Dozens of so-called ‘Indian Wars’—from the Northwest Indian Wars of the 1780s to the Battle of Wounded Knee in 1890—were evidence that many Native American nations preferred to fight for their own sovereignty, once they realised they had been placed in a powerless position. Effectively, it was their own war of independence.

➔ **Source 10.22** Daniel Richter, *Facing East from Indian Country* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 190–191.

Whose independence?

There were at least two wars of independence—one Indian and one White. And both traced their origins to [the Royal Proclamation of] 1763 ... It would take more than fifty years for White Americans to win, and Indian Americans to lose, their respective wars for independence, for events on the battlefield, in the conference hall, and on the treaty ground to recast eastern North America conclusively as a White rather than an Indian country. But the increasingly powerful idea that the continent must become one or the other—and nevermore both—was the cultural legacy of 1763.

➔ **Source 10.23** Painting of the 1795 Treaty of Greenville, completed by a member of the expedition, circa 1795.



However, according to historian Jane Merritt, ‘despite dispossession and dislocation, the Revolutionary War did not usher in the “total destruction” of Native America. Indians’ ability to survive ran deep.’⁴ The different tribes continued to negotiate their way in invaded land and worked with resources to maintain what they could.

Nevertheless, the new regime had not given much thought to the needs of Native Americans, and the kind of future they might have.

CONDITIONS FOR AFRICAN AMERICANS

Christopher Leslie Brown (2015): ‘If the War of Independence left slavery as a new kind of problem for the Revolutionary generation, it neither prepared them nor compelled them to chart a new course for the future.’

The slave trade did not wither as many hoped—instead, it actually flourished in the generation following ratification. As the Constitution prevented Congress from legislating to ban the slave trade until 1808, it was left to the states to develop their own policies on the matter. Some states allowed—and even encouraged—slave-trading to continue.

This is not so surprising, as slave-trading was one of the few successful commercial enterprises in America in the 1780s. After 1788, Rhode Island and South Carolina were frequent importers of African slaves. Some other New England ports were also slave-trading hubs. British companies played a role by exporting ‘fresh’ slaves to American ports.

In 1790, the first census of the United States revealed that Massachusetts was the only state that had no slaves.⁵ Further, many white citizens in southern states feared what freed slaves could do to their society. They made sure that the rights of freed slaves were limited. Freed slaves were forbidden to:

- vote
- serve on a jury
- join a militia
- own a gun (with a few exceptions).⁶

Despite the resurgence of both the demand for slaves and the slave trade in the 1790s, the revolution weakened the institution of slavery in America in the North. Although slavery was never a cause or a direct concern of the Revolutionary War, the recruitment of free and bonded Africans by both armies undoubtedly brought slavery to the fore.

African American veterans either earned their freedom or believed they should; others took advantage of the disruption of war to make their escape. The rhetoric of liberty and natural rights undermined slavery in most of the northern states, where it was already weakening prior to the revolution. Slavery was an agenda item at key gatherings of revolutionaries. It was discussed by the Second Continental Congress, the Confederation Congress, state assemblies and the Philadelphia Convention. Some Founding Fathers went on the record to say that slavery should have a limited place in America’s future; a few went so far as to say it should end.

The outlawing of slavery and indentured servitude in the Northwest Ordinance of 1787 showed a change in what would become northern states, as well as a precedent that would be followed well into the nineteenth century. However, the line in the Ordinance about how ‘any [slave] escaping into the said territory ... may be lawfully



KEY GROUP

Source 10.24 Mum Bett, aka Elizabeth Freeman, aged 70. Painted by Susan Ridley Sedgwick, c. 1811. Elizabeth Freeman was a slave who sued for her freedom after hearing a reading of the 1780 state constitution. She was the first slave in Massachusetts to do so and won emancipation in 1781. This inspired further lawsuits and the eventual end to slavery in the state by 1790.



ACTIVITY

PRESENTATION

Investigate the abolitionist (anti-slavery) movement that emerged in Pennsylvania. Who were its leaders and what influence did they have on politics and law up to 1789? Present a summary of your findings.

CONSEQUENCES OF REVOLUTION

In a paragraph of 200–300 words, evaluate the consequences of the American Revolution for the slave trade in America. In your response, refer to evidence, as well as the views of two or more historians.

➔ **Source 10.25** Ira Berlin, *Generations of Captivity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 100.

reclaimed' complicated the issue, and showed that the Ordinance was biased towards slave-owners.

Anti-slavery groups were encouraged by the ideas that came out of the revolution, and gained more members and became more vocal. The revolution was fertile ground for such campaigners; the mid-1770s saw the creation of several new groups, including the Pennsylvania Abolition Society—of which Benjamin Franklin became president in 1785. Other key revolutionaries were noted campaigners against slavery, such as Thomas Paine, who in 1775 called for the abolition of slavery in all states. While abolitionism did not reach its peak until just before the American Civil War (1861–65), the seeds for the abolition of slavery were sown during the American revolutionary period.

However, the most notable impact of the revolution was to make slavery less acceptable in social and political circles. Slave-owners—and those who allowed slavery to continue—found it more difficult to support the institution. As hereditary power gave way to republican democracy, and state autonomy yielded to the federal power, the slave-owning classes found it increasingly difficult to justify their position. As historian Ira Berlin explains:

Ira Berlin

The War for American Independence and the revolutionary conflicts it spawned throughout the Atlantic gave slaves new leverage in their struggle with their owners. Shattering the unity of the planter class and compromising its ability to mobilise the metropolitan state to the defence of slavery, the revolutionary era offered slaves new opportunities to challenge both the institution of chattel bondage and the allied structures of white supremacy. In many instances the state ... turned against the master class. Yet slaveholders did not surrender their power easily. In most places, they recovered their balance ... At the end of the revolutionary era there were many more black people enslaved than at the beginning. Even then, however, slaveowners could not recreate the status quo ... The shock of revolution profoundly altered slavery.

Despite this, the international slave trade was allowed to continue for another twenty years, and slaves were counted for the purpose of representation but not for their own rights—and even then only as 'three-fifths' of a person, according to the US Constitution.

EXPERIENCES FOR WOMEN

Abigail Adams to John Adams when discussing the Declaration of Independence (1776): 'Remember the ladies.'

To what extent did the revolution change the lives of women? Women played a role in revolutionary action. They supported the struggle against British policy by:

- being active in non-importation societies
- raising funds for the Continental Army
- following their husbands to war and then working in military encampments as cooks, tailors and nurses
- working on the home front—running farms and businesses while men were away fighting.

Despite these contributions, women remained politically invisible. A few women dared to query how the grand rhetoric of liberty and freedom might apply to them as

well as to men. Abigail Adams wrote to her husband John Adams, asking him to ‘remember the ladies’ when he was dealing with political rights—but no rights for women appeared in legislation.



The political status of women did not improve in the decades following the outbreak of the Revolutionary War. Despite the revolution, there was no change in women’s voting rights, and it wasn’t until 1918 that all American women gained the right to vote. The exception was New Jersey. In 1776, the Constitution of New Jersey gave voting rights to ‘all inhabitants’ of the colony. In theory, this gave women the right to vote—although they still had to show that they independently owned property worth at least £50. Married women couldn’t own property, so only a few wealthy widows voted—but even this ended in 1807, when voting was restricted to tax-paying white men.

← Abigail Adams.

Elsewhere, women were subject to the same ‘virtual representation’ that had angered colonial men before the Revolution when they felt they were not represented in British Parliament. No woman held office in state or national government, practised law or enrolled for a college education. Although many women were successful in commercial ventures, very few engaged in public debate about the revolution or the new nation, with the notable exception of writer and playwright Mercy Otis Warren.

The consensus in the new United States was that women remained the gentle sex, and needed protection and guidance from their husbands. The role of women—just as it had been in colonial America—was confined to marriage, motherhood and household management. Benjamin Rush, who was one of the signatories to the Declaration of Independence, talked about education for women—but only in relation to manners, gentility and the fine arts. Other men could not imagine a situation where women might pursue academic interests. When it was put to Timothy Dwight, the president of Yale University, that women might be permitted to attend his college, he said, ‘[But] who will make our puddings?’⁷ However, divorce was more readily available to women in the states following the Revolutionary War, which allowed some sense of control.

Some historians have described the post-revolutionary era as one of gradual improvement in status for American women. Gordon S. Wood argues that the commercial expansion of America allowed for women to attain greater financial freedom by selling handcrafts and foodstuffs from home; they would later build on this with jobs outside the home such as nursing, teaching and factory work. Wood and other historians also speak of a quaint state called ‘republican motherhood’, where women fulfilled the critical functions of raising and educating families that would participate in the new democratic republicanism of the United States.

Gordon S. Wood

Republicanism also enhanced the status of women. It was now said that women, as wives and mothers, had a special role in cultivating in their husbands and children the moral feelings—virtue and social affection—necessary to hold a sprawling and competitive republican society together. [Yet] at the same time that a distinct sphere of domestic usefulness was being urged on women, they were becoming more economically important and independent.

ACTIVITY

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 How did the new nation’s laws affect the Native Americans?
- 2 How significantly were African Americans and slaves impacted by changes in the 1780s? Use evidence to support your answer.
- 3 How were American women impacted by changes in the 1780s?

← **Source 10.26** Gordon S. Wood, *The Great Republic* (Lexington: DC Heath, 1985), 240–241.



ACTIVITY

CONTINUITY AND CHANGE—ESSAY

Write a 600–800-word essay on one of the topics below. Your essay should include an introduction, paragraphs supported by relevant evidence from primary sources and historical interpretations, and a conclusion.

- ‘The more things change, the more they stay the same.’ Was this true of the post-evolutionary period in America?
- ‘The American Revolution brought little change or benefit to women, Native Americans or African Americans.’ Do you agree? Discuss one or more groups in detail.
- What compromises were made to revolutionary ideals to accommodate vested interests?

primogeniture the right of the eldest son to inherit the family estate

meritocracy a society governed by people selected according to their merit or qualities, rather than their family ties

AMERICAN SOCIETY REMADE?

One question asked about every revolution is: To what extent did it bring change to society?

This question is harder to answer for the American Revolution than for other revolutions, particularly those that involved communist uprisings. Most of the goals of the American Revolution were legal and political, rather than socioeconomic and ideological.

- There was no class war. The revolution was largely waged against an external power, focusing on procedural matters like representation, taxation and individual rights.
- There was no call for social upheaval, armed struggle or redistribution of wealth.
- The changes were gradual rather than sudden, making it hard to observe direct changes that ‘remade’ or ‘recast’ American society at the time.

The social ideals and reforms of the American Revolution would take years—maybe even decades—to be fully realised.

SOCIAL CHANGES

Alan Taylor (2016): ‘Because republics depended on a broad electorate, American leaders felt compelled to reform the morals and manners of citizens.’

Before the revolution, under British law, the eldest son inherited the family estate—which was known as **primogeniture**. Another law, known as ‘entail’, restricted the division of family estates. After the revolution, laws related to primogeniture and entail were overturned in most US states. All male heirs had equal inheritance rights, and estates could be divided between them. This, along with a relaxation of parental controls, saw arranged marriages decline. Relationships were increasingly based on personal choice, rather than profit and social advancement.

The structure of American society continued to change after the revolution. The departure of Loyalists, separation from Britain and abandonment of many European social customs prompted the rise of what many historians describe as a **meritocracy**. Aristocracy was part of the Old World. In the New World, individuals would be judged not on their family name or landed assets, but on their merit, which could be judged by their:

- skill
- knowledge
- commercial success
- contribution to the community.

Self-made men from humble backgrounds, such as Benjamin Franklin and John Adams, became models of this new republican meritocracy.

Such a society would of course be reliant on education and the arts, both of which expanded rapidly after the revolution. A republican democracy and an emerging meritocracy needed good schools and colleges to:

- provide voters with civic instruction
- equip businessmen and workers to build prosperity.

New schools sprang up, especially in the northern states, as counties, towns and smaller communities raised funds and labour to construct their own facilities. In Pennsylvania,

the proportion of children receiving an education more than doubled, from one-third in the early 1770s to over two-thirds (70 per cent) after 1787. However, many of the new colleges were privately run and expensive to attend, and were beyond the reach of many Americans.

One of the pioneers of American educational reform was Noah Webster. Webster was an educator who set out to create an ‘Americanised’ form of English. In 1788, Webster criticised wealthy families who sent their children to the schools and colleges of Europe. He argued that American children should be educated at home, in order to secure their loyalty and build a distinctly American culture.

Noah Webster

... Sending boys to Europe for an education, or sending to Europe for teachers—that this was right before the revolution will not be disputed ... but the *propriety* of it ceased with our political relation to Great Britain. Our honour as an independent nation is concerned in the establishment of literary institutions, adequate to all our own purposes; without sending our youth abroad or depending on other nations for books and instructors.

← **Source 10.27** Noah Webster, *The American Magazine* (May 1788): 370.

propriety a sense that an activity is right or just

CULTURAL CHANGES

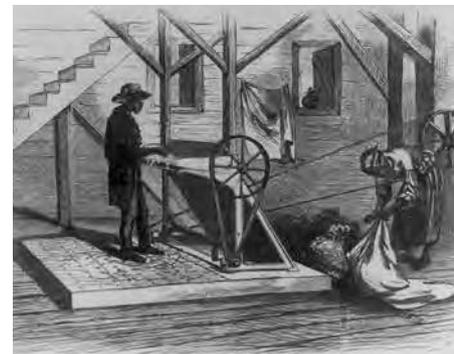
Entrepreneurs and artists such as Charles Wilson Peale and John Trumbull maintained that the arts could educate society and, in turn, unify the young republic. The creation of galleries, museums and painting rooms was designed to encourage this,⁸ and the principles were extended to architecture and urban planning. Thomas Jefferson began sketching ideas for the new capitol building for both Virginia and the United States in 1785 using Roman motifs. Meanwhile Congress commissioned a new federal capital based on designs from ancient Rome. Both projects consciously linked the new nation with a triumphant period of history—that of the Roman Republic. As Martha J. McNamara notes, ‘The art and architecture of the early republic reflect a new nation’s search for cultural authority.’⁹ Even common farmhouses began to add columns to their structures.

ECONOMIC RECOVERY TURNING POINT

Tim McNeese (2009): ‘Hamilton’s broad-based program foresaw an America in which the country would become more industrialized, its cities would become larger, and the nation would become less rural. He could not have predicted better.’

The post-ratification period in America was one of economic rebuilding and recovery. As the negotiation of foreign trade links was slow and delicate, the American economy had to be revitalised from within. Fortunately, a number of factors made this possible.

- Immigration remained high through the 1780s, bringing workers and people with entrepreneurial skills.
- People such as Samuel Slater arrived and set up small but profitable industries, mainly in New England and the Northeast. His plans enabled America to become industrialised.
- In the South, the invention of Whitney’s cotton gin boosted cotton production and gave birth to America’s biggest export crop of the nineteenth century.



↑ An example of Eli Whitney’s cotton gin, a device for rapidly and effectively processing raw cotton. This invention led to dramatic economic growth in the southern states, and to an increase in demand for slaves to sow, tend and hand-pick crops.

An important feature of the new economy was the growth of corporations. The British Government had been unwilling to grant corporate charters—documents that turned a business into a legal company—as it preferred to restrict the number of business and to limit them to British ownership.

Freed from British control, the American states set out to increase the number of corporate charters:

- 1781–1785: eleven charters were granted
- 1786–1790: twenty-two charters were granted
- 1791–1795: 114 charters were granted.

These charters allowed state governments to organise or target specific needs, such as buildings, schools and colleges, infrastructure, banks, and so on.

For most Americans, the years following ratification were better than the years before it. Life on the frontier and in remote settlements remained difficult and dangerous, but in the cities, towns and rural settlements there were considerable opportunities for intrepid businesspeople.

➔ The First Bank of the United States in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Established largely by Alexander Hamilton, and modelled on the Bank of England, it acted as a reserve bank, issuing and regulating currency.



The federal government, encouraged by Alexander Hamilton, Secretary of the Treasury, encouraged the development of manufacturing industries by giving subsidies and tax breaks. As a result of Hamilton's efforts, in 1791 the Bank of the United States was founded, which helped to stabilise the economy. The financial climate recovered sufficiently for farmers to survive and, in time, make a profit.

A NEW PRESIDENT: WASHINGTON'S LEGACY

Charles A. and Mary R. Beard (1913): 'The first President was a military hero—the commander in chief of the Revolutionary army. But he was not to become a Caesar or Napoleon and put a crown on his own head.'

It was no surprise that George Washington was elected the first president of the United States—as the men who had 'crafted' the presidency had built it with him in mind.

Washington was elected almost unanimously, receiving votes from every member of the Electoral College. The real question was which of his nine fellow nominees would be elected vice-president. That honour went to John Adams who defeated, among others, John Jay and John Hancock.

Washington's inauguration took place in New York City on 30 April 1789. When leaving his home in Mount Vernon a fortnight beforehand, Washington recorded his feelings of reluctance about the task in front of him. He took the oath of office before the newly elected Senate and House of Representatives, and in his inaugural speech he celebrated America's peaceful and orderly progress towards independence and a new system of government:

George Washington, Inauguration speech, 30 April 1789

No people can be bound to acknowledge and adore the invisible Hand which conducts the affairs of men, more than the people of the United States. Every step by which they have advanced to the character of an independent nation seems to have been distinguished by some ... providential agency, and in the important revolution just accomplished in the system of this united government, the tranquil deliberations and voluntary consent of so many distinct communities from which the event has resulted, cannot be compared with the means by which most governments have been established.

As the first president of the United States, Washington recognised that his actions would establish conventions and *precedents* for those who would later hold the office. He decided that his conduct and bearing should strike a balance between the dignity and reserve of a hereditary monarch, but with the approachability of an elected republican president. He preferred people to bow or curtsy rather than shake his hand, but asked to be called ‘Mr President’ rather than ‘His Highness’ or ‘His Excellency’. Washington hosted weekly social gatherings he called ‘levees’, where he would meet all attendees. He was determined that the federal government should be as visible and accessible as possible, and travelled to all thirteen states during his first term of office—which was quite a difficult feat in the late 1700s.

Washington established political and ceremonial conventions. He disliked political parties and factions—he considered them bad for democracy and regularly criticised both. The Constitution stated that Washington should seek the advice of the Senate to select his departmental secretaries—but he found the Senate too political to be trustworthy. Instead he decided to personally select the members of his cabinet, and surrounded himself with advisors loyal to the president rather than to a particular faction. He avoided the politicised Congress and upheld the separation of the executive and legislative branches. Washington did not interfere with legislation, nor did he veto bills simply because he disagreed with their content.



← **Source 10.28** National Archives and Records Administration, ‘Washington’s Inaugural Address of 1789: A Transcription’, www.archives.gov/exhibits/american_originals/inaugtxt.html

precedents actions or decisions that can be used later as an example or model

ACTIVITY**CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING**

- 1 How did American society change as a consequence of the revolution?
- 2 What changes occurred to the American identity and culture as result of the revolution?
- 3 How and why did the American economy show signs of improvement at the end of the 1780s?
- 4 What were some lasting elements and traditions from Washington’s presidency?

← **Source 10.29** George Washington taking the oath of office at Federal Hall.

DID YOU KNOW?

Perhaps the most famous precedent established by Washington was his decision to retire from office in 1797 after serving two four-year terms. Only one president served three terms: Franklin D. Roosevelt. The 22nd Amendment to the Constitution now explicitly prevents serving three terms.

WAS THE CONSTITUTION A COUNTER-REVOLUTION? HISTORICAL INTERPRETATIONS

A charge sometimes levelled against the United States Constitution is that it was a counter-revolution by committee. There is some evidence to support this claim. The men who met in Philadelphia in summer 1787 had been given no authority to dispense with the Articles of Confederation nor to completely reconstruct national government. The Convention was held in secret with no public involvement or press reporting, and there are few official records.

The resulting Constitution:

- reimposed central government, coercive national power and the authority to levy taxes
- ignored the spirit of the 1776 Declaration of Independence by paying little attention to rights.

Some historians paint the Founding Fathers and Federalists as motivated by economic self-interest because of their:

- attacks on the Articles of Confederation
- support for the Constitution.

Merchants, exporters, businessmen and nationalists recognised that without a strong national government exercising control and protection over trade, the United States could never compete with Britain, France or Spain. In other words, the Constitution was mainly a way of making America more stable and attractive for domestic capital and foreign investors.

There was also the question of democracy in the new republic. Most state governments had been relatively democratic, and were elected every one or two years. People were close to the government whose decisions affected them most, and were well represented by it.

The Constitution replaced this system, diluted the powers of the states and installed a national government with wide powers to tax and coerce—and the government was even located in an arbitrarily chosen capital that was a long way from most Americans. The Constitution left voting rights up to the states—most of which required voters to own substantial amounts of property. The president—the most powerful individual in the land—would be elected by a limited proportion of the population in a two-tiered system of direct and voting in the Electoral College. It was a system with many undemocratic and anti-democratic features—but that was the idea, as Woody Holton notes:

DID YOU KNOW?

The Constitution allowed the states to decide who voted in state and federal elections. Most states continued to restrict voting to those who owned a certain amount of property—in the 1789 Congress elections more than half of all free white men in at least seven states were excluded from voting.

➔ **Source 10.30** Woody Holton, *Unruly Americans and the Origins of the Constitution* (New York: Hill & Wang, 2007), 5.

Woody Holton

What these men were saying was that the American Revolution had gone too far. Their great hope was that the federal convention would find a way to put the democratic genie back in the bottle. Alexander Hamilton, the most ostentatiously conservative of the convention delegates, affirmed that many Americans—not just himself—were growing 'tired of an excess of democracy'. Others identified the problem as 'a headstrong democracy,' a 'prevailing rage of excessive democracy,' a 'republican frenzy' [and] 'democratical tyranny' ...

Even James Madison, the slave-owning ‘father of the Constitution’, was no democrat. Knowledgeable about all the great republics since Athens, Madison believed that giving too much power to too many people was as dangerous as giving it to a few. His Virginia Plan was therefore constructed to pit competing interests against each other and to keep the people at arm’s length from real political power: Madison privately said that ‘*Divide et impera* [divide and conquer]... is under certain qualifications, the only policy, by which a republic can be administered on just principles’¹⁰

Some historians consider the motives of the Founding Fathers to have been informed by self-interest as much as political generosity. Charles Beard, in his landmark 1913 study *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States*, focused on the socioeconomic background of each Philadelphia delegate, considered their assets, investments, business interests and social connections. Beard concluded that the Constitution aimed to maintain the *status quo* (or keep things as they were) while providing expansion and commercial opportunities.

Beard’s view has long sustained criticism. When his work was published, he was accused of attacking great men and having socialist sympathies. However, Beard’s arguments are more complex than that: he does not ‘accuse’ the Philadelphia Convention of a conspiracy or an intentional counter-revolution—but he does suggest that their decisions were moulded by their own values and expectations. Nor does he criticise their self-interest, since it ultimately benefited the nation as a whole or, as he put it: ‘the bee sometimes fertilises the flower it robs’.

Charles Beard

Whoever leaves economic pressures out of history, or out of the discussion of public questions, is in mortal peril of substituting mythology for reality and confusing issues instead of clarifying them. It was largely by recognising the power of economic interests in the field of politics and making skilful use of them that the Fathers of the American Constitution placed themselves among the great practising statesmen of all ages and gave instructions to succeeding generations in the art of government.

Some historians have gone further in their criticisms. Howard Zinn’s *A People’s History of the United States* echoes Beard’s view, but also suggests that the men who drafted the Constitution wanted to

- maintain aristocracy
- limit democracy
- impose coercive power through the rule of law.

H. A. Scott Trask contends that many among the Philadelphia Convention and the Federalists wanted to go back to the old order, and recreate the core elements of the British imperial rule they had spent the previous decade removing from American life. Trask says that they were ‘ideologically attached to protectionist and nationalist theories’, that they ‘exploited both real and false fears’ and that ‘the strong central



↑ Historian Charles A. Beard. In 1913, Beard suggested that the constitution was influenced by the economic self-interest of its creators.

← **Source 10.31** Charles Beard, *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States* (New York: The Free Press, 1913), xvii.

CONTINUED ...

ACTIVITY

HISTORICAL INTERPRETATIONS

In a paragraph of 200–300 words, explain why some historians suggest that the United States Constitution was a 'counter-revolution'. To what extent do you agree?

authority they created would in time reproduce every statist feature of the British system—political corruption, perpetual debt, debilitating taxation, consolidated power, and a global empire. Such was not the promise of the revolution.¹¹

Despite this critical analysis, there is no doubt that the US Constitution has achieved one of its main aims: stability. Its fundamental principles have endured, providing order and durability for the United States for more than two centuries. The Constitution contained several brand new ideas:

- the development of a written Constitution
- separation of powers
- Federalism
- balancing competing interests and forms of representation.

These ideas have been admired and imitated elsewhere, not least in the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Australia. As historian Hugh Brogan notes, the political framework set down in 1787–91 contained enough of the old order to provide continuity, with enough innovation to reflect the new world being created in North America:

➔ **Source 10.32** Hugh Brogan, *The Penguin History of the USA* (London: Penguin Books, 1985), 214.

⬇ **Source 10.33** George Washington is received by a crowd at New York Harbor on the day of his presidential inauguration, 1789.

Hugh Brogan

The Constitution as it emerged between 1787 and 1791 crowned the American Revolution and provided a safe compass for the future ... It strongly represented the old order to which Americans, as inheritors of English traditions and settlers in a wilderness, were accustomed; but it had eliminated from that order all those features which seemed obsolete or unjust in the New World. The political thought on which it was based was realistic, accepting that men were not angels, but that their aspirations were mostly legitimate, and it was the business of the political framework to give them scope. Liberty and law were its two inescapable guiding lights; as understood by the Founding Fathers they have served America pretty well.



CONTINUITY AND CHANGE BROUGHT TO AMERICAN SOCIETY, 1754–1789

The leaders of the new federal United States embarked on the first generation of nationhood with:

- a new political system
- a budding economy
- a dynamic, fast-growing society
- a range of territorial prospects in the western lands.

What had begun over twenty-five years earlier with debates over taxes had culminated in the birth of a new nation, one that would later grow, develop and transform into an empire and then into a superpower. Concepts such as revolution, independence and a new nation based upon state unity would have been laughable in 1754—yet they were a reality thirty-five years later. Perhaps the most remarkable feature of the American Revolution was the speed at which it was conceived, conducted and brought to a conclusion.

However, the consequences of the revolution were not positive for everyone. There were grand opportunities for many, yet for others, the new society contained similar divisions and prejudices to the one it replaced. Economic improvements and growth did not end divisions of wealth and class. The new nation's fascination and preoccupation with liberty often came at the expense of:

- Loyalists
- women
- Native Americans
- African Americans
- slaves
- common people
- members of the Continental Army.

The United States, like the American colonies, became as much an economic and commercial entity as an ideological one. Yet despite these contradictions, America's cornerstones—the Declaration of Independence, the United States Constitution and the Bill of Rights—were sufficiently optimistic and open-ended to shape the future, rather than just becoming historical relics. These foundation documents have preserved some of the optimism of the revolution and provided a model of rights that has made a significant mark on the world at large.

ACTIVITY

CONTINUITY AND CHANGE—COMPARISON CHART

Copy and complete the chart below. Use your notes from Section A and Section B and key knowledge, as well as historical perspectives and interpretations, to reveal the continuity and change of the nation from 1754 to 1789.

ELEMENTS OF SOCIETY	1754	1776	1789
Economic conditions			
Political conditions			
Cultural aspects			
Women			
African Americans			
Slaves			
Patriots/members of the Continental Army			
Loyalists			
Native Americans			

- 1 Which elements of society changed?
- 2 Which elements changed for the better? Which for the worse?
- 3 Which elements of society did not change, or showed only slightly different changes?

CONTINUITY AND CHANGE—EXTENDED RESPONSE

Noting the chart, write an extended response on the degree of change from 1754–1789 for the following groups:

- Patriots
- the economy
- Native Americans
- African Americans and slaves
- women
- culture and society
- the political system
- Loyalists.



ACTIVITY

CONTINUITY AND CHANGE—CREATIVE PIECE

Create a song, poem, drawing or painting that portrays the changes in society following the American Revolution. You may find it helpful to choose a particular event, person or conflict as your subject. Present your piece to the class.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES—PRESENTATION

Adopting the perspective of one of the individuals listed below in the period 1787–1789, research and deliver a short presentation addressing the question: ‘What are the urgent priorities of the new United States?’:

- a Loyalist who has fled to Canada
- a Native American of the Northwest Territory
- an educated slave in Virginia
- Benjamin Franklin
- Abigail Adams
- James Madison
- Patrick Henry
- Alexander Hamilton
- George Washington.

KEY INDIVIDUALS—EXTENDED RESPONSE

Write 250–300 words on each of these individuals. How did they contribute to the change in society from 4 July 1776 to 1789? Use evidence to support your argument.

- James Madison
- Patrick Henry
- Alexander Hamilton
- George Washington.

KEY EVENTS—MEMORY TASK

Copy the chapter overviews and dates for Section B and memorise the key events in the period July 1776–1789. Create cue cards or use Quizlet to ensure that you can retain key points from your studies.

HISTORICAL INTERPRETATIONS—SOCIAL CHANGE

Examine Source 10.34. Find a contrasting interpretation and evaluate which one you find most convincing.

Joan Hoff Wilson

The American Revolution produced no significant benefits for American women. The same generalization can be made for other powerless groups in the colonies: native Americans, blacks, probably most propertyless white males and indentured servants. Although these people together with women made up the vast majority of the colonial population they could not take advantage of the overthrow of British rule to better their own positions as did the white, propertied males who controlled economics, politics and culture.

 **Source 10.34** Joan Hoff Wilson, ‘The Illusion of Change,’ in *The American Revolution*, (ed) A. F. Young (DeKalb, Illinois: Northern Illinois University Press, 1976), 387.

CONSTRUCTING AN ARGUMENT—ESSAY

Write a 600–800-word essay on one of the topics below. Your essay should include an introduction, paragraphs supported by **relevant** evidence from primary sources and historical interpretations, and a conclusion.

- To what extent was society changed and revolutionary ideas achieved in America (July 1776–1789)?
- How did the American Revolution (July 1776–1789) affect a range of people? To what extent did it deliver on its promise to promote ‘life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness’?

CHAPTER 10 REVIEW

KEY SUMMARY POINTS

- The Federalists supported a centralised, federal system of government and a Constitution that would replace the Articles of Confederation.
- The Anti-Federalists feared centralised authority and were concerned that the proposed Constitution lacked individual freedoms.
- The debates between the Federalists and Anti-Federalists were published in a series of articles at the time of ratification.
- The ratification process for the US Constitution was successful, but only after compromises were made.
- The Bill of Rights secured fundamental civil liberties for all Americans—these are the first ten amendments to the Constitution.
- The Northwest Ordinance of 1787 organised how to expand the nation.
- Native Americans secured treaties; however, they also lost much of their autonomy and land in the expansion of the United States.
- African Americans and slaves gained little in the Constitution; however, the abolitionist movement gained support because of the debates.
- Society and culture changed to incorporate more egalitarian ideas linking back to ancient Greece and ancient Rome; however, these ideas were centred on the white male population.
- Some women gained greater access to divorce, education and property. However, they were largely excluded from the political sphere.
- The United States displayed considerable growth in its economy at the end of the 1780s, with the planned banking system and greater trading options.
- George Washington's presidency set the model for the office and his leadership galvanised the office in its formative years.
- Continuity and change from 1754 showed significant progress for the civil liberties of white men and a framework for trade within the former colonies—but little change for many social groups in the new nation.

ACTIVITY

MULTIMEDIA REVISION

- 1 Watch the film *Hamilton: An American Musical* (or listen to the soundtrack). Which songs provide insight into the actions of Alexander Hamilton and other key individuals? Write an additional song or rap that presents further information about the American Revolution.
- 2 Listen to episodes of Mike Duncan's *Revolutions* podcast that references the American Revolution. Does it concur with what you have found? What is different? Try to create a mini-podcast using your notes from this book and other resources.



SECTION C

ADDITIONAL MATERIAL

KING GEORGE III, 1738–1820

Despite being known as ‘the king that lost America’, George III is still considered to be one of England’s greatest monarchs.

The infant George was born eight weeks premature—and was not expected to survive. He was the first Hanover king born in Britain—the Hanoverians were a royal family with German origins—and he was the first to receive a completely British upbringing, and the first to speak English as his native language.

George was educated in classical languages and literature, politics, sciences and history. Some people thought that George was a shy boy—although others viewed him as withdrawn. He became king in 1760, when he was twenty-two. He had an innovative mind, and encouraged scientific investigation and developments in industry, agriculture and astronomy. However, he was a conservative in politics and believed that the Crown and British Parliament should have firm control over the British Empire.

George considered the dispute between Britain and the American colonies to be an issue of principle—if the colonies became independent, it could disrupt the rest of the British Empire. Maintaining the Empire—or ‘imperial integrity’—was of primary importance to George—whereas issues such as natural rights, representation and self-government were secondary, abstract ideas.

Ultimately, King George III and his ministers overestimated the strength of Loyalist support in America—and underestimated the capacity of Americans to wage war. He rejected the idea of American independence, and did not believe that the United States and its republican experiment would last.

➔ King George III, as depicted by Johann Zoffany in 1771.



KEY POINTS

- Became king at twenty-two
- Politically conservative
- Believed in strong control by the Crown and Parliament over the British Empire
- Saw the dispute with the American colonies as a challenge to his authority as king
- Underestimated the will of the Americans to fight a war.

GEORGE WASHINGTON, 1732–1799

George Washington is known as America's most famous revolutionary and its first president—but before the 1770s no one would have thought he would lead a rebellion.

He was born and raised in Virginia, and became powerful in his colony as a politician and plantation owner. In 1754, the twenty-two-year-old Washington was granted a commission in the Virginia militia, and ordered to drive French settlers from the upper Ohio River valley (near modern-day Pittsburgh). He was defeated by the French at Fort Necessity, in what is viewed as the start of the French and Indian War. Washington returned home, where he was involved in local government, and from 1758 he was a member of the Virginia House of Burgesses.

Washington's revolutionary views did not emerge until the mid-1770s. He had spoken against the Stamp Act in 1765 and against the Townshend duties in 1767. However, records suggest that Washington was loyal to Britain in that era, and that he believed the disputes with Great Britain over taxation and representation were only temporary. When the customs duties—or Townshend duties—were repealed by Great Britain in 1770, Washington considered that the end of the matter. But in 1774 he was enraged by the Coercive Acts—and was among those men calling for an American inter-colonial summit to discuss the issue. He attended both Continental Congresses.



→ George Washington, as portrayed by Charles Willson Peale in 1772.

When war with Great Britain broke out, Washington was appointed commander-in-chief of the newly created Continental Army. It was in this role that Washington contributed to the success of the American Revolution—perhaps more than any other individual.

The Continental Army was made up of a few thousand undisciplined militia—and they were up against well-equipped, well-trained, battle-hardened British soldiers. With time, good luck and help from experienced military men, such as Baron von Steuben and the Marquis de Lafayette, Washington turned the Continental Army into a competent fighting force. He recognised that the survival of both the army and Congress were essential to the survival of the revolution so, rather than acting aggressively, he wore the British down with his tactics of retreating, evading and ambushing.

Washington begged, pestered and roared at Congress, the states and the people of America so that the Continental Army could get the food and resources it needed to survive. Throughout the war, he conducted himself with the behaviour and manners of a gentleman—even when he might have wanted to act otherwise. Most people who met Washington respected and admired him.

Washington resigned his command at the end of the war, and retired from public life. However, the political and economic troubles of his new nation in the 1780s led him to again take a public role in shaping the United States. In 1787, he attended the Philadelphia Constitutional Convention and was elected its chairman. He presided over discussion rather than participating in it. He gave his support to the US Constitution and the Federalists, and his popularity was perhaps the greatest asset of the Federalist movement.

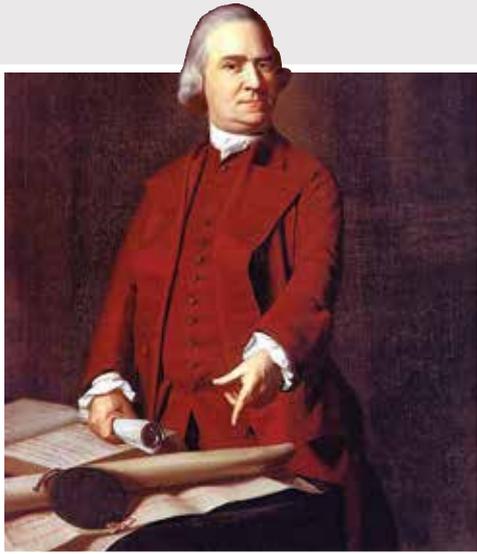
In 1789, the Electoral College voted unanimously for him to become the first president of the United States. He served two four-year terms as president—and then refused to stand again. He decided that eight years was long enough for any individual to be president, and this set a precedent that lasted almost 150 years. Washington retired to his plantation at Mount Vernon and lived two more years, dying in 1799 at the age of sixty-seven. His death prompted weeks of mourning throughout the new nation that he had helped to forge.

George Washington has consistently been considered one of the most influential historical figures in American history, by both historians and the American public. Most historians of the American Revolution and the early United States consider him to have been the key figure in leading the Continental Army, and they rank him second only to Abraham Lincoln as the most influential president of the United States. In part, this is because he set the tone for what it meant to be the president. He used his moral authority for the good of the country, not for personal or political gain. Every president that followed him has been measured against his example, both by the public and by historians.

KEY POINTS

- Early military disgrace during the French and Indian War
- Important local plantation owner and politician in Virginia
- Became a patriot after the Coercive Acts
- Attended both Continental Congresses
- Appointed commander-in-chief of the Continental Army
- Turned untrained militia into a unified army, often in difficult circumstances
- Elected chairman of the Philadelphia Constitutional Convention of 1787
- Served as first president of the United States
- Inspired the confidence of the soldiers and politicians he led.

SAMUEL ADAMS, 1722–1803



↑ Samuel Adams, painted by John Singleton Copley in about 1772.

Samuel Adams arguably contributed more to the development of rebellion against the British in Boston than any other individual. He was described by a British governor as ‘the most dangerous man in Massachusetts, dedicated to the perpetration of mischief’.

Adams was born in Boston, to a religious family of Puritan stock. He entered Harvard College with the aim of becoming a minister, but found politics and law more interesting. From a young age, he expressed his opposition to—and resentment of—British interference in American matters. This might be because his father was almost driven bankrupt after British legislation dissolved his sizeable mortgage business.

After Harvard, Adams tried his hand at several professions—all of them unsuccessfully—including mercantile accounting, malt production and tax collecting. He was better at politics, and became the leader of one of Boston’s largest political factions. When British Parliament passed the Sugar Act and the Stamp Act, it gave Adams a platform for his constitutional theories and anti-British writings and speeches, and he became quite well known, especially among people at the lower levels of Boston society.

He was friendly with members of the Loyal Nine, and approved of gangs harassing and intimidating customs and taxation officials. Adams was a member of the Boston Sons of Liberty, and strongly objected to the increase of British troops in Boston in 1768.

There is no evidence that Adams organised the mob riot that led to the Boston ‘Massacre’—but he certainly exploited the shootings to further his cause. He wrote the famous 1772 ‘Massachusetts Circular Letter’, which led British Parliament to suspend the Massachusetts Assembly. Adams started Committees of Correspondence to spread information and revolutionary ideas. He was a leading figure during the 1773 customs crisis, which ended with the Boston Tea Party. Adams was elected to both Continental Congresses, but took a back seat to his cousin John, who was a more confident public speaker. He served on several congressional committees and worked behind the scenes to lobby other delegates to vote for independence.

KEY POINTS

- Led political opposition to British control of Boston and Massachusetts throughout the 1760s and 1770s
- Was a member of the Sons of Liberty
- Exploited events like the Boston Massacre and Boston Tea Party to incite further unrest and rebellion against Britain
- Wrote the 1772 Circular Letter claiming that import duties passed by British Parliament were illegal
- Elected to both the First and Second Continental Congresses.

JOHN HANCOCK, 1737–1793

John Hancock was one of the richest men in America in the mid-1700s. He was a Boston merchant who later became famous as the first person—and the person with the largest signature—to sign the Declaration of Independence.

Hancock was born in Massachusetts, and studied at Harvard College at the same time as John Adams, and then went on to work in his uncle's shipbuilding business. Part of his training included working in England for two years, where he built networks of clients and suppliers. He returned to America in 1762, inherited the shipbuilding business after his uncle died, and went on to become a Boston selectman (or town councillor).

Hancock's company was known for smuggling goods and dodging customs duties—a practice that John had learnt from his uncle. On Hancock's instructions, his ships and agents smuggled more than 1 million gallons (about 3.8 million litres) of molasses each year. They bought it cheaply from French merchants in the Caribbean, then bribed customs officials to turn a blind eye. Hancock's company avoided more than £30,000 of duty each year, and paid customs officials bribes that amounted to about 10 per cent of that amount. Hancock was not concerned about the British imposing any new trade duties—because he had no intention of paying them. Between 1766 and 1768, British customs officials began to target Hancock's ships with stop-and-search orders—with the most notable being the seizure of his ship *Liberty*.

Initially, Hancock was a moderate who pledged loyalty to Britain, but over time he became an outspoken opponent of the Sugar Act, the Navigation Acts—and any other British policy that affected his business. He became supportive of people like Samuel Adams and, in 1766, entered the Massachusetts Assembly. Hancock served in the Second Continental Congress and, in May 1775, he was elected its president. He carried out this task with skill, moderating often quarrelsome debates. Hancock also contributed a large share of his own fortune to the war effort.



↑ John Hancock, as depicted by John Singleton Copley in 1765.

KEY POINTS

- One of the richest men in colonial America
- Merchant and smuggler in Boston
- Opposed British import duties and their enforcement because they affected his business
- Served as president of the Second Continental Congress
- Noted signer of the Declaration of Independence
- Contributed a large amount of his own money to fund the Continental Army.

JOHN ADAMS, 1735–1826



↑ Portrait of John Adams by John Singleton Copley, 1783.

John Adams was born the son of a farmer, in rural Massachusetts. He attended Harvard College, worked briefly as a teacher, then decided upon a career in law. He became a practising lawyer in 1758, and established his own law firm in Boston.

Adams was observant, articulate and ambitious—qualities that led to his success as a lawyer. But he could also be obnoxious, combative and sarcastic—qualities that sometimes held up his progress. As a lawyer, Adams observed many controversial cases in the lead-up to the American Revolution, such as James Otis' challenge against British search warrants—which made Adams want to challenge abuses of government power.

He was an outspoken critic of the Stamp Act, and argued that as Massachusetts had no political representation in Parliament, it should therefore not be taxed by Parliament. Adams became well known in 1770 because of the Boston 'Massacre'. Despite the risk to himself and his business, Adams agreed to represent the eight British soldiers at their trial. He did so impartially yet forcefully, and convinced the Boston courtroom that the victims of the shootings were drunken brawlers who were spoiling for a fight. His arguments were successful: six of the eight soldiers were acquitted of murder charges; two were convicted of manslaughter, but received only light punishment.

Despite his defence of British soldiers Adams made it clear that he was opposed to the policies of Great Britain. He expressed this opposition in essays and pamphlets, notably his *Novanglus* essays (1772). Massachusetts nominated Adams as a delegate to both the First and Second Continental Congresses, where he pushed for separation and—if necessary—war with England. He nominated George Washington as commander-in-chief and sat on the subcommittee that drafted the Declaration of Independence.

Adams was later sent to both France and the Netherlands as a diplomatic representative of the new United States. In 1785 he became the first US ambassador to Great Britain—where he had a polite but awkward audience with King George III. He returned to America in 1788, pledged his support for the Constitution and ran against Washington for the presidency. Adams was beaten but, under the electoral system of the day, was appointed Washington's vice-president. In 1797, after Washington declined to stand for president a third time, Adams was elected president.

KEY POINTS

- Lawyer who represented the British soldiers in the trial over the Boston 'Massacre'
- Representative from Massachusetts at both the First and Second Constitutional Conventions
- Diplomatic representative for the United States to France and the Netherlands during the war
- First US ambassador to Great Britain
- Supported the Federalists in the debate over ratification of the Constitution.

THOMAS PAINE, 1737–1809



Thomas Paine arrived in America just before the Revolutionary War. In his native England, Paine had worked unsuccessfully as a tax collector, a schoolteacher, a tobacco seller, and as a maker of ladies' underwear. His two marriages had ended unhappily: his first wife, Mary, had died during childbirth; and he abandoned his second wife, Elizabeth, to move to London.

← Portrait of Thomas Paine by Laurent Dabos, painted about 1792.

It was in London in 1774 that Paine had a chance meeting with Benjamin Franklin. Franklin must have seen some potential in Paine—who was then thirty-seven years old—and gave him a written reference and suggested he move to America.

A month later Paine was on his way to Philadelphia. He survived a near-fatal dose of typhoid fever on the voyage and arrived in America in late November. In America, Paine quickly found his place—as a writer and publisher. He spent most of 1775 as editor of *Pennsylvania Magazine*, and built up a small but loyal readership.

Paine was fascinated by the revolution—and surprised by the strength of Loyalist sentiment. In late 1775, Paine started writing a pro-independence pamphlet called 'Plain Truth'. He showed a draft to Benjamin Rush—his friend and fellow advocate for independence—who suggested that Paine change the title to *Common Sense*.

At the time, the American colonies were awash with essays and editorials for and against independence. Nobody could have anticipated the impact *Common Sense* would have—least of all Paine, whose writings had only had limited success. *Common Sense* became the most influential pamphlet of the revolution. While encamped with the struggling Continental Army in 1776, Paine began work on another series of inspirational essays called *The American Crisis*.

Paine never sat in the Continental Congress, but was recruited onto one of its committees. However, this ended with his dismissal for revealing secret information. Intrigued by the revolution unfolding in France, Paine travelled there in 1790. He was celebrated in France, and granted citizenship; he later returned to America to discover that he had been forgotten, and died in poverty and obscurity.

KEY POINTS

- Migrated to America in 1775
- Wrote the influential pro-independence pamphlet *Common Sense*
- Also wrote *The American Crisis*, urging Americans to support the war.

THOMAS JEFFERSON, 1743–1826

Thomas Jefferson was a true figure of the Enlightenment—he had an active mind and a thirst for knowledge. Jefferson’s talents as a writer are on display in the inspiring words of the Declaration of Independence, which he was mostly responsible for drafting.

Born into a prominent Virginian family, Jefferson was privately tutored at first, then undertook studies at the William and Mary College—where he excelled in mathematics, philosophy, French, Greek, classical studies and music. He later went on to study law and became a lawyer.

Jefferson entered the Virginia House of Burgesses in 1769. In 1774 he won acclaim with his first published work, *A Summary View of the Rights of British America*, in which he argued that the Coercive Acts breached the natural rights of colonial Americans. These ideas were too radical for Jefferson to be nominated to attend the First Continental Congress, but he was selected for the Second Continental Congress.

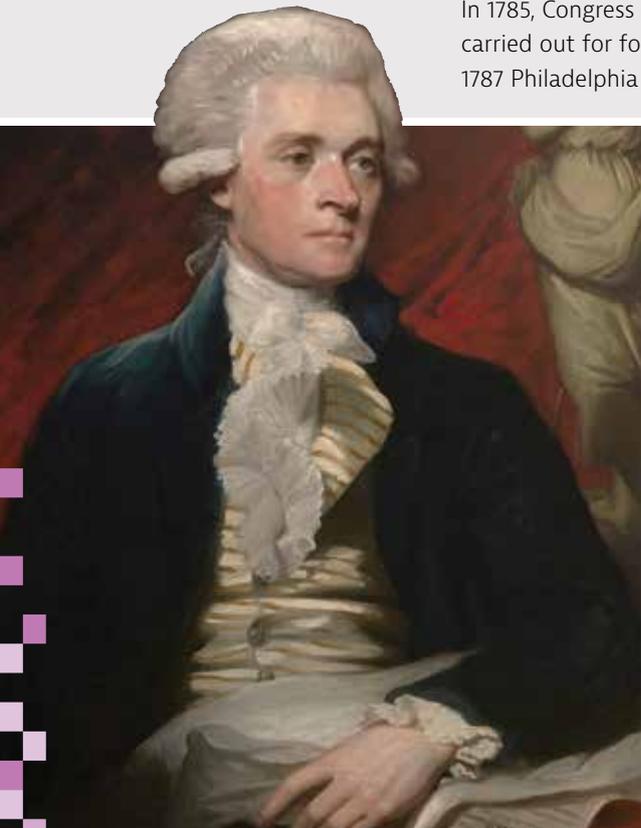
Jefferson was reserved and softly spoken; he lacked the confidence to make strong speeches, and played a limited role in congressional discussion. However, the other delegates were aware of his natural ability with the quill, and appointed him to the five-man committee that was writing the Declaration of Independence.

After independence, Jefferson returned to Virginia, where he concerned himself with state matters, including educational reforms, changes to inheritance laws and bills codifying the freedom of religion. He also served a three-year term as governor of Virginia 1779–1781.

In 1785, Congress invited Jefferson to act as US minister in France, which was a role he carried out for four years. Because of his foreign duties, Jefferson was not present at the 1787 Philadelphia Convention, but he maintained regular correspondence with many of the attendees and gave the Constitution his cautious support.

Jefferson returned to America to serve as Washington’s first secretary of state. He clashed constantly with fellow cabinet member Alexander Hamilton—usually over matters of finance or states’ rights. Jefferson ran unsuccessfully against John Adams in the presidential election of 1796 but defeated him four years later to become the third American president.

Portrait of Thomas Jefferson by Mather Brown, 1786.



KEY POINTS

- Enlightenment thinker, lawyer, and politician
- Opposed Coercive Acts using Enlightenment arguments about natural rights
- Virginia delegate to the Second Continental Congress
- Drafted the Declaration of Independence
- United States minister to France 1785–1789
- Anti-Federalist who believed in strong states’ rights and a weak central government.

PATRICK HENRY, 1736–1799

Patrick Henry was born in Virginia to parents who had migrated from Scotland. Henry's willingness to say the unsayable made him a powerful speaker, although historians are divided about the true content of his speeches.

Henry began his working life as a businessman, then became a planter, but failed at both—and in 1760 he decided to become a lawyer. He achieved some celebrity three years later with the 'Parson's Cause' case, in which he defended the state of Virginia against the church. His arguments included some radical attacks on Anglican priests and King George III himself—which were unusual for the courtrooms of colonial Virginia.

Henry was elected to fill a casual position in the Virginia legislature during the Stamp Act crisis. After barely a week in the assembly, he introduced the Virginia Resolves—a set of resolutions against the Stamp Act—and spoke strongly for the bill, allegedly delivering the comment, 'if this be treason, make the most of it!'. The content of this speech was not transcribed, but the Resolves are on record and contain some of the strongest anti-British sentiment of the time. The Resolves passed, largely because Henry had waited until the more conservative members of the assembly were absent. The Resolves caused a sensation and brought Henry to public prominence.

Ten years later he delivered his signature 'give me liberty or give me death!' speech, made in support of military preparations against future British aggression. There is little evidence that Henry issued these exact words, although it is clear that he spoke strongly—and with hatred—against the British Government and military. Henry was a delegate to both Continental Congresses. From 1776 to 1779 he served as governor of the newly independent state of Virginia.

As governor, Henry was not able to lead troops in the field, but he supplied men from Virginia for the Continental Army, as well as for the state militia. Following the Treaty of Paris in 1783, Henry remained active in Virginian state politics, and served another three-year term as governor (1784–1786). He became the strongest and most prominent opponent of the Constitution. As an Anti-Federalist, he criticised the Constitution as a return to monarchy, an attack on states' rights and a threat to individual liberty. His arguments, in part, led to the adoption of the Bill of Rights—the first ten amendments to the Constitution.

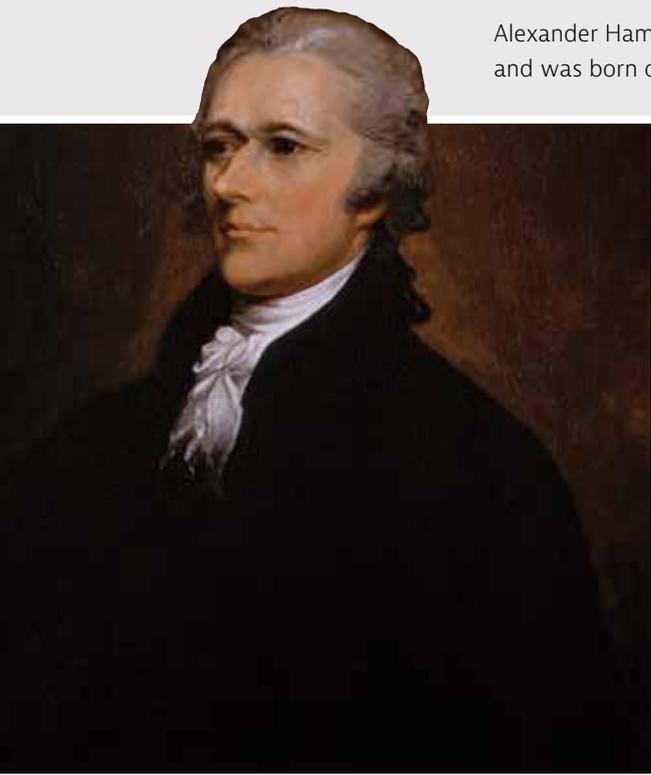


↑ Portrait of Patrick Henry by George Bagby Matthews, after Thomas Sully, c. 1891.

KEY POINTS

- One of the most famous and fiery speakers in favour of American independence
- Introduced what became known as the Virginia Resolves—a set of resolutions against the Stamp Act
- Well known for two comments made ten years apart:
 - » 'If this be treason, make the most of it!' (1765)—speaking in favour of the Virginia Resolves
 - » 'Give me liberty, or give me death!' (1775)—speaking in favour of rebellion against Great Britain
- Served as governor of Virginia 1776–1779 and again 1784–1786
- The most well-known Anti-Federalist, Henry criticised the proposed Constitution as a threat to individual liberty and states' rights.

ALEXANDER HAMILTON, 1755?–1804



↑ Alexander Hamilton by John Trumbull, 1806.

Alexander Hamilton was the illegitimate son of a Scottish father and a French mother, and was born on the British island of Nevis in the West Indies in either 1755 or 1757.

He became an orphan, and at sixteen was sent to school in Boston, then to New York City for further study at Kings College (later Columbia University). He became interested in imperial and colonial politics, and began writing pamphlets that criticised the Quebec Act and other British policies.

At first Hamilton condemned acts of destruction and violence against Loyalists, and emphasised the importance of social order. But after the battles of Lexington and Concord, he joined the colonial militia, where he was commissioned as a lieutenant and given the command of a small unit. He took part in the early fighting around New York, as well as in Washington's victory at the Battle of Trenton.

In 1777, Hamilton was promoted to lieutenant-colonel and served on Washington's staff, where he worked with Washington to prepare, draft and review orders and correspondence. He remained in this role for most of the war, briefly obtaining a field command in the lead-up to the 1781 Battle of Yorktown. Hamilton advised Washington during the Newburgh conspiracy in 1783, and worked to secure the financial authority of Congress.

Hamilton saw the great potential of the new United States—but he also realised that it needed a strong, central government. He was elected to the Confederation Congress but resigned after eight months, frustrated at the self-interest of the states and the inability of Congress to get anything done.

He was an eager participant at the Annapolis and Philadelphia conventions that discussed revising the Articles of Confederation. Although Hamilton strongly preferred a centralised model for government—including a president with a life term and an absolute veto—he accepted the Constitution and during the ratification period he wrote fifty-one of the eighty-five essays that became known as *Federalist Papers*—more essays than written by Madison and Jay combined. Washington chose Hamilton as the first secretary of the treasury, and over the next six years he played an important role in the financial reconstruction of the United States.

Some historians view Hamilton as a reactionary conservative economist—because at first he wanted an executive that could rule the United States with almost authoritarian powers. However, he also wanted to abolish slavery and provide support for orphans—positions that were radical in that era.

Hamilton was shot in a duel with then Vice-President Aaron Burr in Weehawken, New Jersey, and died from his injuries on 11 July 1804.

HIP-HOP HAMILTON

Of all of the Founding Fathers, the least likely to have a musical written about him—let alone a hip-hop musical—is Alexander Hamilton.

But that's exactly what happened in 2015, when Puerto Rican-American Lin-Manuel Miranda wrote *Hamilton: An American Musical*. Miranda looked with fresh eyes at the contradictory choices made by the 'young, scrappy and hungry' officer and politician—and saw an orphaned and brilliant immigrant who wanted to make his way in the world.

In the musical, Hamilton meets a rapping Lafayette, as well as a self-assured Aaron Burr (who would go on to kill him in a duel on 11 July 1804). Besides exploring the nature of historical and personal significance, legacy and memory, Miranda explores the birth of party politics, loyalty with France and the big questions surrounding democracy and the fate of the new nation.

Many theatre actors today are selected using a process called 'blind casting', where they are cast with no consideration for their ethnicity, skin colour or body shape. *Hamilton: An American Musical* took the opposite approach, and used *enforced multicultural* casting to make sure that African Americans, Asian Americans and Latino Americans would get most of the parts. Miranda declared: 'It's a way of pulling you into the story and allowing you to leave whatever cultural baggage you have about the founding fathers at the door.'¹ This has opened up the history to a new audience.

Some people might scoff at the idea of a hip-hop musical written about an economist who wanted an executive group to rule the United States with almost authoritarian powers, but Hamilton's progressive stances on the abolition of slavery and support for orphans were radical at the time.

Hamilton: An American Musical has won Tony Awards on Broadway and the Pulitzer Prize, along with Olivier Awards in London's West End and other prestigious awards. The 2020 film version and expansion into Australia in 2021 ensures the show will, as a song in the musical puts it, 'Turn the World Upside Down'.



↑ The cast and crew of *Hamilton: An American Musical* meet President Obama.

KEY POINTS

- Hamilton served as Washington's chief of staff for most of the Revolutionary War, and helped Washington with correspondence and strategy
- Hamilton was on the battlefield at the battles of Trenton and Yorktown
- Delegate to both the Annapolis and Philadelphia conventions
- Supported a strong federal government and a powerful executive branch
- Wrote most of the *Federalist Papers*—Hamilton informed the debate and helped ensure that the US Constitution was ratified
- Was instrumental in improving the finances of the new nation as its first Secretary of the Treasury; also established the banking system.

¹ M. Paulsen, 'Hamilton' Heads to Broadway in a Hip-Hop Retelling', *The New York Times* (12 July 2015).

JAMES MADISON, 1751–1836



↑ Portrait of James Madison by Charles Wilson Peale, 1783.

In 1751, James Madison was born into a prominent planter family that had a tobacco plantation in Port Conway, Virginia. He excelled in his studies, and graduated from the College of New Jersey—later Princeton University—in 1771. When he returned to Virginia, he turned to public affairs: in 1774 he joined the Committee of Safety (a group set up to warn of British troop movements), and in April 1776 was a delegate to the Virginia Convention, which is where he met Thomas Jefferson.

Madison was appointed a Virginia delegate to the Continental Congress 1779–1783, and he was its youngest member. At the Congress, Madison argued for a stronger national government, and wanted to amend the Articles of Confederation so that Congress could levy tariffs to support the war effort. He supported America having a stronger alliance with France, as well as the idea of westward expansion.

He was elected to the Virginia House of Delegates 1784–1788, where he worked to make sure that Jefferson's Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom was passed. This statute guaranteed freedom of religion to everyone in Virginia, and was a continuation of his work on separating the church and the state that he had worked on since the 1770s.

Madison's chance to change the Articles of Confederation came in 1786, when delegates at the Annapolis Convention in Maryland called to have a Convention in Philadelphia the following year to revise the Articles of Confederation.

Madison was a delegate to both conventions. He is commonly referred to as the 'Father of Constitution' for his work at the Philadelphia Constitution, where he transcribed many of the debates, drafted the Virginia Plan, agreed to the Great Compromise, and was the 'architect' of the final document. Madison aligned himself with other southern delegates, but his attitude towards slavery set him apart—he detested slavery on economic and moral grounds.

Along with other Federalists, Madison wrote many of the essays that came to be known as the *Federalist Papers*. His Federalist No. 10 was very influential—in it, Madison argued for representative democracy and explained how the balance of powers would operate. His passionate speeches in Virginia led to the state's ratification of the Constitution.

Madison was not selected as a senator, and ran for the House of Representatives to make sure that the Constitution would survive, thus serving in the first US Congress. He held the position of US representative for eight years. In 1789, Madison sponsored and was principal writer of the Bill of Rights, which established freedom of religion, speech and the press.

In 1792, Madison and Thomas Jefferson created the Democratic-Republican Party—forerunner of today's Democratic Party. Madison served as Jefferson's Secretary of State, and later became the fourth president of the United States. His wife Dolley Madison is known as one of the most influential First Ladies.

He died on 28 June 1836 at his home in Virginia.

KEY POINTS

- Advocated for separation of church and state, and for freedom of religion
- Wanted a strong federal government beyond that of the Articles of Confederation
- Known as the 'Father of the US Constitution'
- Virginia delegate to the Annapolis and Philadelphia Conventions. He took notes, created the Virginia Plan, agreed to the Great Compromise, 'architect' of the final document
- His essays for the Federalist Papers guided the Federalist and Anti-Federalist debates and led to ratification of the Constitution
- Supported the Constitution in Virginia, and helped get it ratified
- Principal author of the Bill of Rights
- Served as one of the first US representatives
- Fourth president of the United States.

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ABIGAIL ADAMS, 1744–1818



The wife of Massachusetts lawyer and politician John Adams, Abigail Adams was one of the most influential women of the revolutionary era. She has been the subject of many studies by historians, largely because of the letters she penned, mainly to her husband, which reveal her to have been an astute and articulate woman. In 1776 Abigail Adams famously urged her husband, then sitting in the Second Continental Congress, to 'remember the ladies' when framing laws for the new society; she was also passionately opposed to slavery and other forms of servitude. Abigail Adams became more outspoken in social and political matters when her husband became the second United States president. She is remembered as one of America's most intellectually acute 'first ladies'.

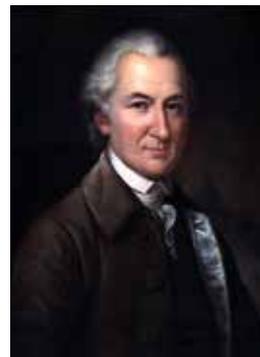
CHARLES CORNWALLIS (LORD CORNWALLIS), 1738–1805



A British general of noble birth, Lord Cornwallis was educated at Eton and decided to make a career in the military. He served as a mid-ranking officer during the Seven Years' War (the European arm of the French and Indian War) and saw action mainly on the continent. Cornwallis was elected to the House of Commons in 1760; two years later he took his father's seat in the House of Lords. Although in parliament he had opposed both the Stamp Act and the Declaratory Act, Cornwallis nevertheless volunteered for service upon the outbreak of fighting in America. Distrustful of colonials but able to inspire

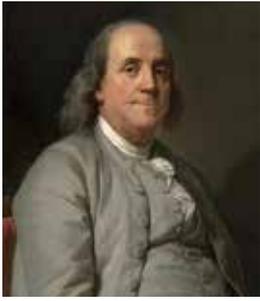
respect from his own soldiers, Cornwallis acquitted himself well as a general and, in 1779, was appointed commander of British operations in the southern colonies. His aggressive policies there targeted patriot families and businesses, sought to recruit local loyalists and promised freedom for slaves who volunteered to take up arms against the revolution. Cornwallis is best remembered as the British general who surrendered at the Battle of Yorktown (1781), the last significant battle of the Revolutionary War.

JOHN DICKINSON, 1732–1808



Though sometimes portrayed as a soft moderate because of his support for the 'Olive Branch Petition' of 1775, much of John Dickinson's political life was spent defending colonial rights and supporting the revolution. A native Philadelphian and a lawyer by training, Dickinson's star rose in 1767–1768 with the publication of twelve essays entitled 'Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania'. In these anonymously published letters Dickinson attacked the Townshend duties as unconstitutional because they aimed to raise revenue rather than regulate commerce. He was selected to represent Pennsylvania at both Continental Congresses; at the second one he joined forces with Thomas Jefferson to pen the Declaration of the Causes and Necessities for Taking up Arms. Dickinson opposed independence in 1776, not because he objected to the principle but because he felt more time was needed to prepare for war, secure foreign allies and finalise systems of government. He served briefly in the war as a brigadier-general before retreating to Pennsylvania state politics. Dickinson was a keen participant at the Philadelphia convention and a strong supporter of the constitution.

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN, 1706–1790



At the time of the American Revolution, Benjamin Franklin was the most famous American in the world. He was born into relative poverty, as the tenth son of a candle-maker, and earned wealth and respect from his work as a printer and a writer.

An intelligent and curious man, Franklin was also a scientist, a philosopher and an inventor. One of his most famous experiments was flying a kite during a thunderstorm to find out if lightning was a form of electricity. Franklin invented the lightning rod, bifocal glasses and a new type of woodstove. Franklin's achievements in so many fields meant that he was known around the world, particularly in France—the hub of the Enlightenment.

In 1762–1763 Franklin bought land west of the Appalachian Mountains, which he hoped to later subdivide and sell for a profit. In 1764, he went to London to act as agent for the state of Pennsylvania. He did not approve of the Stamp Act—but once it was passed by British Parliament he eagerly chased the contract to sell stamp paper in Pennsylvania. He even recommended a friend in Pennsylvania for the lucrative job of distributing tax stamps.

Franklin came to support the American Revolution slowly and gradually—and only after witnessing how British politicians ignored pleas and petitions from the colonies. After several years spent trying to work for understanding between the colonies and the British Government, Franklin left London in March 1775, convinced that the separation of England and America was inevitable. He arrived back in America in time to represent Pennsylvania in the Second Continental Congress, and to sit on the committee responsible for drafting the Declaration of Independence.

Franklin was nominated as a diplomatic representative to the French Government and spent the years 1776–1785 abroad, performing official duties and enjoying 'hero' status. Though by now eighty-one years old and hard of hearing, he sat in the Philadelphia Constitutional Convention as an elder statesman, attentive and available for consultation—but not participating in debates. Franklin gave his support to the Constitution and, in the final years of his life, devoted considerable energy to the abolition of slavery in America.

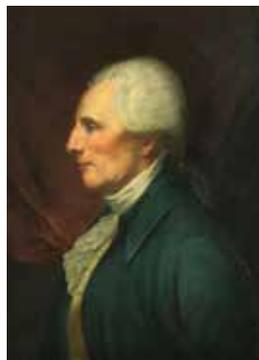
THOMAS GAGE, 1719–1787



Born to a family of minor nobles in Sussex, England, Thomas Gage attended the Westminster School before taking up a commission in the British army. He fought competently but without distinction during the French and Indian War; but his keen mind for administration and governance led to his 1760 appointment as military governor of Montreal. In 1763 Gage

was promoted to major-general and commander-in-chief of the British army in North America—initially a difficult role given the unfolding of Pontiac's Rebellion and a number of rural uprisings. Gage returned to Britain in mid-1773; however, with the passing of the Coercive Acts the following year he was again summoned to serve in America, this time as military governor of Massachusetts. The general took to the job with his usual professionalism and attention to detail, yet privately considered that it would be near-impossible to subdue the rebels of Massachusetts and avoid war. He was involved in the 'Powder Alarms' and the imposition of martial law. In late 1775 Gage was recalled to England, where the press savaged him, in many ways unfairly, and he never returned to America.

RICHARD HENRY LEE, 1732–1794



Sometimes referred to as one of America's 'forgotten founders', Richard Henry Lee was a merchant, planter and politician who made the motion to declare independence from Britain at the Second Continental Congress in 1776. After working as justice of the peace in Virginia, Lee became a member of the House of Burgesses (1758–1775) and a US senator (1789–1792). He

represented Virginia at the two Continental Congresses and was president of Congress in 1784. Lee was a controversial figure who was the subject of a number of rumours, including one that he and others were trying to remove George Washington from the role of commander-in-chief of the Continental army, and another that he was trying to devalue Virginia's wartime currency by refusing to accept paper money from his tenants. In 1792 Lee is said to have retired from public life on account of exhaustion; he died two years later.

JAMES OTIS, 1725–1783



The son of a prominent lawyer and attorney-general of Massachusetts, James Otis was himself a formidable lawyer and advocate for colonial rights. The brother of Mercy Otis Warren, he graduated from Harvard College in 1743 and carved an enviable reputation at the bar. His best-known case was a 1756 challenge to British writs of assistance (general search warrants allocated to customs officials), during which Otis delivered a four-hour presentation on why such writs were unlawful and unconstitutional. Otis lost the case when it was dismissed by Thomas Hutchinson (at that time chief justice), but it ultimately won Otis acclaim and blackened Hutchinson's reputation. Otis was a strong opponent of the various revenue acts and reportedly coined the phrase 'taxation without representation is tyranny'. His contribution to revolution was cut short when he was punched senseless in a fight with a customs official, sustaining injuries that apparently led to his becoming mentally unwell. He was eventually killed when struck by lightning.

MERCY OTIS WARREN, 1728–1814



Mercy Otis Warren chronicled the events of the revolution as they unfolded around her. Some consider her the revolution's first historian; others describe her as 'the conscience of the revolution'. Born and raised in a family bursting with revolutionary sentiment, Warren's father was a noted Massachusetts lawyer and assemblyman, while her brother, lawyer James Otis, was allegedly responsible for the catchphrase 'taxation without representation is tyranny'. She married James Warren, a wealthy merchant who, in 1754, also entered colonial politics, further exciting her interest in the affairs of Massachusetts specifically and America generally. Mercy Otis Warren corresponded regularly with figureheads of the revolution: George and Martha Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Samuel Adams, John Hancock, Patrick Henry and John and Abigail Adams.

The latter wrote to her husband that 'God Almighty ... has entrusted [Warren] with Powers for the good of the World, which he bestows on few of the human race ... it would be criminal to neglect them'. (Warren later fell out with John and Abigail.) Warren's writing ranged from the explanatory and analytical to the creative and satirical. She wrote several poems and dramatic pieces concerned with colonial politics and the revolution, while a final compilation of her historical writings, *History of the Rise, Progress and Termination of the American Revolution*, was released in 1805 when Warren was seventy-five. She took an unashamedly Anti-Federalist position, as suggested by her description of the US Constitution as 'doubtful in its origin, dangerous in its aspect'.

PAUL REVERE, 1735–1818



Though immortalised in legends that are both exaggerated and misleading, Paul Revere was nevertheless a significant revolutionary figure, an important propagandist and a grass-roots organiser. Born in Boston to a French father and American mother, Revere apprenticed as a silversmith before fighting briefly during the French and Indian War.

He returned to Boston and took ownership of his father's silversmith business, earning a good reputation for his artisanship. Revere became interested in politics but never ran for office. His rise to prominence came in the aftermath of the 'Boston Massacre', of which Revere constructed several engravings including the grossly inaccurate 'The Bloody Massacre perpetrated in King Street'. This and other Revere engravings, such as 'The Able Doctor, or America swallowing the bitter draught', were little more than copies of other people's ideas, though this did not lessen their impact. Revere was active in the Sons of Liberty, possibly being present at the Boston Tea Party, as well as the local Committees of Safety that monitored British troop activity. It was in the latter role that Revere carried out his famous 'midnight ride' in April 1775, to warn locals on the road to Lexington that British soldiers were on their way. This event was commemorated in an 1861 poem by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow which exaggerates Revere's role in delivering this warning. Revere later served in the war as a militia officer, before returning to his business interests in Boston.

GLOSSARY

A

abolitionist

An individual or group that seeks to ban slavery and free the slaves.

absolutism

A form of government in which a single monarch or ruler wields power without limits.

aldermen

Members of a town's lawmaking body.

amity

Friendship.

aristocracy

A system of government or social hierarchy marked by the existence of a wealthy and powerful elite. From the Greek *aristokratia* meaning 'rule of the best'.

artillery

Large calibre guns; in eighteenth-century warfare this mainly referred to cannons.

assembly

A group of individuals that gather to make decisions and pass laws.

assimilated

To become a part of a group of people and take on their language and customs.

atheist

A person who believes God does not exist; being declared an atheist in the eighteenth century could lead to social isolation.

austerity

Severity; lacking any luxuries.

B

Bill of Rights

A formal declaration of the legal and civil rights of the citizens of any state, country or federation.

borne

Carried; sustained without yielding.

boycott

Withhold money from a particular nation or group, or refuse to trade with them; could be a protest or an attempt to exert pressure.

broadside

Propaganda in the form of a large poster-sized sheet, usually containing scathing criticism of a particular person, group or policy.

Britannia

A female figure symbolising Great Britain, commonly associated with liberty, justice and strength.

bullionism

Belief that a nation's wealth was determined by the amount of gold, silver and foreign coin stored in its treasury.

C

charter

A document granted to an individual, company or colonial assembly by an imperial power, allowing it to make decisions on behalf of the government.

charter company

A group of people given a license from a king or queen to form a company for exploration or trade.

civil liberties

Freedoms, personal or human rights.

civil war

An armed conflict between organised groups or sections within a single nation. The aim is usually to determine which group controls the entirety of the nation.

Coercive Acts

Passed in response to the Boston Tea Party, the Coercive Acts were imposed on Massachusetts in 1774 to set an example to other colonies. They comprised the Boston Port Act, Massachusetts Government Act, Administration of Justice Act and Quartering Act.

colony

A foreign territory claimed or seized by an imperial power for settlement or economic exploitation.

confederacy

Loosely bound group of states.

confederation

A loose union of states or nations, with each state keeping its independence and the right to govern itself. The central government of a confederation has little power over the member states.

congress

A formal meeting between representatives of different states. In modern America, Congress consists of the House of Representatives and the Senate.

conquistador

Spanish word meaning 'conqueror'; used to describe Spanish explorers, soldiers and sailors who invaded and occupied parts of South America between the 1400s and 1800s.

Constitution

The foundation for a political system, outlining institutions, processes and limits of power.

corporate

A colony owned by a company (group of investors) through a grant of charter; also known as joint stock.

county

An area of local government administration within a colony.

crown

A royal power.

D**Daughters of Liberty**

Similar to the Sons of Liberty, Daughters of Liberty groups were established in 1765 and were particularly known for their 'spinning bees' and 'homespun' fabric which sought to undermine the Townshend Duties.

democracy

A political system where the people participate in decision-making, either directly or through their elected representatives. From the Greek demos, meaning 'the people'.

desertion

When an enlisted soldier abandons his post during war and flees; generally punishable by death.

destitute

Poor, impoverished.

disparate

Dissimilar, different.

E**effigy**

A crude dummy, scarecrow or mannequin representing a specific person, often set alight as a public show of intimidation or criticism.

Enlightenment

Period of intellectual curiosity and development from the mid-1600s to the late 1700s; it spawned new philosophical, political and scientific ideas and theories, particularly concerning the importance of reason and rationality.

F**factions**

People grouped according to their religious or political beliefs.

Federalism

A political system where power and responsibility are shared between a central government and other units, such as states and local governments.

Federalist

A person or group supporting the US Constitution and the newly strengthened federal government created by it.

franchise

People allowed by law to vote.

frontier

A border area, usually the outermost fringe of settlement—the 'edge of civilisation'.

fundamentalism

A movement or attitude requiring strict and literal following of a set of basic beliefs.

furlough

Temporary unpaid leave.

G**geopolitical**

Relating to national power, frontiers and the possibilities for expansion.

governor

A person appointed to manage colonial government on behalf of the monarch; the highest authority in the colony.

guerilla tactics

Small groups of soldiers fighting against larger forces, using irregular fighting strategies.

H**Hessians**

Colloquial American term for professional soldiers hired by the British from the royalty of provinces in modern-day Germany, especially the province of Hesse.

I**impeachment**

A process outlined in the US Constitution in which a public figure, such as a president, politician or judge, can be placed on trial for high crimes and misdemeanours.

imperial

Connected with an empire.

imperialism

System based upon maintaining and expanding an empire, where a 'mother country' governs and draws economic benefit from a number of colonies.

indentured labour

A system where people were bound by contract to work for a set number of years without payment.

infantry

The largest component of the army in the eighteenth century, mainly made up of foot soldiers.

inflation

Economic phenomenon caused either by rising prices or excess production of paper money, leading to a drop in its real value.

J

joint stock company

A group of people who put in money for a share of ownership (stock) to form a company, usually for exploration or trade.

jurisdiction

Authority.

L

legislative assembly

A group of individuals elected to make the laws for the colony.

legislature

A group of individuals elected or appointed to pass laws, e.g. British Parliament, American colonial assemblies, US Congress.

liberty

Broadly interpreted as meaning 'freedom', in the eighteenth century it referred to freedom from government control or interference in one's life.

Liberty Tree

A symbol of freedom, based on a large elm tree in Boston Common that was a meeting place for various Sons of Liberty activities; other American towns had their own 'liberty trees'.

lobbying

Attempting to influence a politician in return for some reward or favour.

Lobsterback

An insulting term for British soldiers, based on the red scars on their backs from floggings.

Loyalist

An American who remained loyal to Great Britain before, during or after the revolution.

M

marginalised

Make a group of people less important.

martial law

Military government, involving the suspension of ordinary law.

mercantilism

Economic system where colonies existed only to enrich the 'mother country' with a supply of raw materials and purchases of manufactured goods.

mercenary

A soldier who will fight for anyone who will pay them, even a foreign army.

merchant

Person who engages in buying, selling, importing and exporting goods for profit.

meritocracy

A society governed by people selected according to their merit or qualities, rather than their family ties.

Middle Colonies

The states of New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Delaware.

militia

A group of civilians who drill and train in preparation for conflicts and emergencies.

monarchy

A system of government in which a single figure, usually part of a hereditary dynasty, rules as head of government and state. The most common European political system in the 1700s.

mutiny

An uprising, insurrection or refusal to obey orders in a military unit; often a response to poor conditions, lack of supply or incompetent leadership.

N

nationalist

A person or group that seeks to strengthen their nation through stronger government, improved trade and cultural expressions of nationhood and patriotism.

Native Americans

Term used when describing indigenous peoples of the United States as a whole. If discussing a particular tribe, their specific name should be used.

natural rights

An Enlightenment belief that all individuals are born with certain rights, such as the right to life and freedom from oppression.

non-combatant

Person not taking part in the fighting.

non-importation

A pact or agreement in which individuals refuse to import, buy or accept goods from a foreign power.

O

ordinance

A law or decree made by a government or body of authority, usually setting down regulations or procedures for the public good.

P

Patriot

An individual or group that supported independence from Great Britain.

petition

A document sent to a leader or government requesting or urging a particular course of action, such as the repeal of an existing policy or the implementation of a new policy.

policy

A course of action decided upon and implemented by a government, such as new taxation, legislation or regulation.

precedents

Actions or decisions that can be used later as an example or model.

president

The elected leader, often the head of government or head of state.

primogeniture

The right of the eldest son to inherit the family estate.

privateer

A sailor or ship captain given authority during wartime to attack and plunder private and merchant shipping owned by the enemy. Seized cargo was usually shared between privateers and their government.

proclamation

A new law or regulation issued by a monarch and announced publicly. A proclamation carries the same weight as legislation.

propaganda

Political materials—such as pamphlets, posters or cartoons—that carried a political message; often exaggerated or distorted.

property qualification

A way to determine who was entitled to vote in an election; it was decided by property ownership or the amount of tax paid.

proprietary

A colony owned by an individual through a grant of a charter.

propriety

A sense that an action is right or just.

protectorate

A state controlled and protected by another.

provincial

Regional or local.

Puritanism

A strict form of Christianity practised in Britain and the north-east colonies of America.

R**radical**

A group, individual or idea that is considered extreme, unsettling or dangerous for its time.

ratified/ratification

The process by which a proposal or suggested reform is passed into law.

Redcoat

Common name for a regular British soldier in eighteenth-century America.

redress

Setting right what is wrong.

repeal

The act of legally reversing an act of parliament.

representation

Process where citizens vote for a deputy to act for them in shaping legislation and government policy.

republicanism

System of government based upon popular sovereignty, a degree of democracy and an elected president rather than a hereditary monarch.

requisition

A formal request for money, goods or other necessities, usually made by or on behalf of a government; the request is not legally binding and can be ignored or refused.

resolutions

Formal proposals that are usually voted on at a meeting.

resolves

A set of resolutions or determinations to follow a particular course of action, usually made by a committee or assembly.

restitution

Compensation for something taken wrongly.

revenue

Money collected by governments in the form of taxes or duties.

rhetorical

Using writing or speaking as a way of persuading.

royal

Established by a king or queen, or operating on their behalf.

S**satire**

A form of writing or cartooning using ridicule as a form of political and social criticism; common in eighteenth-century England.

secretary

Government minister.

selectmen

A board of officials elected in towns in the New England colonies to enforce the law.

separation of powers

The division of powers among several branches of government—usually the executive, legislature and judiciary—in order to prevent any one branch from abusing its power.

scorched earth

Military tactic that destroys the land and crops of the enemy, leaving nothing behind.

skirmish

A small or insignificant battle.

slavery

The practice of kidnapping human beings and forcing them to work without payment. ‘Chattel slaves’ were considered the personal property of their masters.

social hierarchy

A structure with several classes, distinguished by their wealth, social status and behaviour.

Sons of Liberty

An influential group of Patriots dedicated to securing America’s independence from Britain. The Boston group was founded in 1765, primarily in response to the Stamp Act, and was known for its slogan ‘no taxation without representation’. Sons of Liberty groups gradually grew into more formal organisations, such as the Committees of Safety.

sovereignty

The right of a people, or a government acting on its behalf, to make decisions, form laws and exercise power within its own borders.

specie

Metallic currency such as gold or silver coin; also called ‘hard money’.

speculation

Claiming or acquiring large tracts of land, in order to subdivide and sell the land for profit later.

speculators

People who buy and sell land in the hope of making a profit.

‘Stars and Stripes’

Common name for the American flag.

Stile

An old spelling of ‘style’, meaning ‘title’.

subjects

Individuals who are under the authority of and ruled by a king.

suffrage

The right to vote.

sunset clause

A part of a law or contract that states when or how it will end.

T

tarring and feathering

A type of 'mob justice' or vigilantism, emanating from medieval Europe, whereby the victim is stripped of clothing, doused with molten tar or pitch, then coated with feathers.

tenant farmers

Farmers who rent their land from large landowners, often paying the rent in a share of their crops.

Tory

A person of conservative political views; in this context an individual or group opposing the American Revolution.

trade deficit

The difference between exports and imports; the greater the deficit, the greater the number of imports compared with exports.

treason

An idea or action that threatens or undermines the ruling monarch or government; in most cases it is a serious criminal offence punishable by death.

treaty

A document written and signed in negotiation between two or more warring parties; used to finalise the terms for peace, territorial ownership, agreed borders, access to waterways, etc.

tyranny

Excessive power, or the abuse of power.

tyrant

An oppressive and cruel ruler.

W

Westminster system

The British system of government; it is called the Westminster system after the Palace of Westminster, where parliament meets.

Whig

A member of the progressive faction in eighteenth-century British politics, or a supporter of the American Revolution.

Y

Yankees

Term originally for New Englanders, but in this case for a colonist from the United States. In the American Civil War (1861-1865), it became a term for Northerners.

yeoman farmer

Someone who cultivated their own small plot of land—in contrast to a 'tenant farmer', who rented the land they farmed.

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