

Chapter Eight: The American Revolution

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Chapter Eight: The American Revolution

8.1 INTRODUCTION

The American Revolution is generally considered one of the most important revolutions in human history due not only to the founding of the United States but also to its influence on other countries who later fought for the right to Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness. The American Revolution, grown out of the colonies' frustration with British rule, has been seen by historians as an encouragement to others to throw off the burdens of colonialism or an oppressive government. Yet, the American Revolution proved difficult. Not all Americans wanted to be independent of Great Britain. The war brought suffering to many, both to soldiers on the front lines and to their families back home. Our Founding Fathers could agree, after much debate, on the need to break from Britain, but then found themselves in disagreement as to what the new nation should be. Their struggles over conflicting ideas shaped our nation.

8.1.1 Learning Outcomes

After completing this chapter, you should be able to:

- Explain the reasons that by 1775 war between the mother country and the colonies was inevitable.
- Analyze the motives of both the mother country and colonial leaders as the year 1775 progressed.
- Analyze the motives of those who argued for and against independence.
- Explain the activities of the Second Continental Congress and analyze the need for a central government once the war began.
- Analyze the relative military strengths and weaknesses of England and the colonies during the war.
- Explain why the Americans won their independence.
- Analyze the content of the Treaty of Paris and its impact on future diplomacy for the new United States.
- Explain the impact of the war for independence on loyalists, women, and blacks.
- Explain the impact of Indian participation in the war on both colonial and British strategies.

8.2 THE SECOND CONTINENTAL CONGRESS, 1775-1781

When the Second Continental Congress convened on May 10, 1775, the first job of the delegates was to address the *Conciliatory Proposition* sent to the colonies from Lord North earlier in May. Thomas Jefferson wrote the response to this *Proposition* that was entered into the records of the Congress in July 1775. Britain's *Conciliatory Proposition* had suggested that taxes would be used only for the purposes of regulating trade, an idea that had once been acceptable to the colonies, and that any taxes collected internally would be given to the colony itself, provided that the colony in question would help defray expenses for its protection. But the petition was too little, too late. The recent conflict at Lexington and Concord was on everyone's mind, and those who assembled in Philadelphia in May were well aware of Patrick Henry's outburst at a meeting of Virginia leaders in March. The colonies, he insisted, "have done everything that could be done to avert the storm which is now coming on. It is vain...to cry 'peace, peace'...The war is actually begun!"¹ Even John Dickinson, author of the *Letters from a Pennsylvania Farmer* and a supporter of reconciliation, was pessimistic, musing "what topics of reconciliation are now left for men who think as I do? To recommend reverence for the monarch, or affection for the mother country?...No. While we revere and love our mother country, her sword is opening our veins."²



Figure 8.1 Patrick Henry | Patrick Henry, first and sixth governor of Virginia after Independence, is perhaps most well-known for his remarks in March 1775: "Almighty God! I know not what course others may take; but as for me: Give me Liberty, or give me Death!"

Authors: George Bagby Matthews, Thomas Sully
Source: U. S. Senate Collection

As was the case with the First Continental Congress, the delegates to the Second Congress were a distinguished group of colonial leaders. John Hancock, a wealthy Bostonian, was chosen president of the Congress. Thomas Jefferson was present, as was Benjamin Franklin, who had come to the opinion, after months of trying to achieve conciliation in London, that independence was the only solution to the impasse between colonies and mother country. Georgia was represented at the Congress, though marginally at first, as only one delegate, Lyman Hall, attended. Despite the convictions of Patrick Henry, Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, and Benjamin Franklin, winning the majority to the cause of

independence was an uphill battle, and in June the Congress decided to make one last effort at reconciliation. The *Olive Branch Petition* drafted that same month suggested that the colonists either be given free trade and taxes equal to those levied on citizens living in the mother country, or no taxes at all and strict trade regulations. The petition was approved on July 5, and taken to London by William Penn later that month. The king was less than gracious, especially in light of the battle of Bunker's Hill. He refused to see Penn and, on August 23, issued a proclamation that declared the colonies to be in "open and avowed rebellion."³ This did not persuade the colonials of the good intentions of the mother country, nor did a rumor circulating as early as January 1775 that a member of Parliament had derived a method of "humbling the aristocratic" Virginia planters by calling for general emancipation. Then in November, Virginia's royal governor, John Murray, fourth earl of Dunmore, released a proclamation from on board the British warship *Fowey* on which he had taken refuge, declaring martial law in Virginia and promising that any "indentured Servants [or] Negroes free...that are able and willing to bear Arms, they joining His MAJESTY'S troops."⁴

Even before the *Olive Branch Petition* was drafted, Congress set about preparing for war. Proclaiming that "the colonies are reduced to a dangerous and critical situation" by "hostilities that have already commenced in Massachusetts Bay," the delegates warned the colonies that they should begin arming themselves, and the first week in June voted to borrow £6,000 for the purchase of gunpowder. On June 14 and 15, Congress created a continental army "to defend the Lives, Liberties and Immunities of the Colonists" and adopted a comprehensive set of military regulations designed to govern the troops.⁵ George Washington was appointed commander-in-chief. A week later, on June 22, the delegates approved the release of \$1 million in bills of credit (paper currency). Proclaiming that it was doing so in "defense of American liberty," Congress authorized another \$1 million in July. By the end of 1775, Congress had authorized a total of \$6 million in bills of credit.⁶

The body adjourned in early August, and when it reconvened in September, it continued mobilizing for war and began to look for help from European countries. Meanwhile, Parliament had been at work, passing early in 1776 the *Prohibitory Act*, which warned all American vessels that they were subject to confiscation by the British Royal Navy. In March, the Congress responded with a warning of its own. In light of the fact that the British had encouraged "Savages to invade the Country" and "Negroes to murder their Masters," not to mention the most recent act for the confiscation of American ships, Congress specified that any British ship sailing in American waters could be seized and its merchandise considered "lawful prize."⁷

8.2.1 Movement toward Independence, 1775-1776

While John Dickinson was drafting the *Olive Branch Petition*, he was also on a committee with Thomas Jefferson that was drafting *The Causes and Necessities of Taking Up Arms*. Adopted by Congress just two days before the *Olive Branch Petition*, *The Causes of Taking up Arms* admonished Parliament for attempting “to effect their cruel and impolitic purpose of enslaving these Colonies by Violence, and have thereby rendered it necessary for us to close with their last Appeal from Reason to Arms.”⁸ The proclamation insisted: “Our cause is just. Our union is perfect. Our internal resources are great, and, if necessary, foreign assistance is undoubtedly [sic] attainable.”⁹ Although the document was approved in July, 1775, it would be a year before independence was declared.

By spring 1776, however, opposition to independence had disappeared from the records of Congress. In part, this change of sentiment was influenced by the publication of Thomas Paine’s *Common Sense*. Paine, a native of Britain, wrote about what had already been said in the preceding months in Congress, provincial assemblies, and colonial newspapers. What Paine did was to offer “simple facts, plain arguments, and common sense” about the condition of the American colonies.¹⁰ Also, members of Congress were exploring the possibility of securing aid from foreign countries, and beginning in early May, the body took an important step: on May 10 it recommended to the colonies that they adopt state governments to replace the colonial structures. Later that month, it appointed a committee consisting of John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Roger Sherman, Robert Livingston, and Thomas Jefferson to prepare a declaration of independence for possible use; on July 4, this *Declaration of Independence* was released to the Congress and approved. Only New York withheld approval until July 15.

The Second Continental Congress was the only governing body in the American states other than the state legislatures until the approval of the *Articles of Confederation* in 1781. During the course of most of the war, the Congress attempted to maintain the colonial army, create coherent diplomatic policies, and direct military strategy. A committee, meanwhile, was working to draft a document uniting the states into one government; the Congress approved the Articles of Confederation in 1777 and released it to the states for ratification.

8.2.2 The Declaration of Independence

The Declaration of Independence is the most important document to emerge from the Second Continental Congress. It consists of five parts: the introduction, the preamble or a statement of principles, the body of the document which consists of two parts, and the conclusion.

The Sections	Annotation
<p>The Introduction</p> <p><i>When in the Course of human events it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature...entitle them...a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes that impel them to the separation...</i></p>	<p>The introduction explains that at various times in history it has been necessary for one body to separate itself from another. When this occurs, it is “decent” that the reasons for the separation be stated.</p>
<p>The Preamble</p> <p><i>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... 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...</i></p>	<p>The preamble includes a list of principles based on the theories of English political philosopher, John Locke, who wrote 100 years earlier. According to Locke, humans living in what he called a “state of nature,” in other words, before the existence of governments, held certain “natural” rights, which he specified as life, liberty, and property. In order to better protect these rights, humans had created contracts between themselves and a ruler, which implied that, in exchange for protecting their natural rights, a ruler would receive the obedience and support of the people. If, however, their natural rights were not protected, they had the right to rebel, replacing one government with another.</p> <p>Notice two things about the preamble. One is that Jefferson, a slave holder himself, included the statement that “all men are created equal.” Some controversy arose at the time over whether this statement should be put in the document, as it might be construed as hypocritical in a society in which slavery was widespread. Historian Robert Middlekauff, however, points out that there is no evidence that the inclusion of the equality of humankind created immediate public outcry or even discussion.¹¹</p> <p>Second, Jefferson does not include property as one of the natural rights; rather, he substitutes “pursuit of happiness.” Although Locke did not include the latter in his list of natural rights, he did write in the <i>Essay Concerning Human Understanding</i> (1693) that “the highest perfection of intellectual nature lies in a careful and constant pursuit of true and solid happiness.”</p>

The Sections	
<p>The Body of the Document</p> <p><i>Obstructed the Administration of Justice by refusing his Assent to Laws for establishing Judiciary powers;</i></p> <p><i>Made Judges dependent on his Will alone;</i></p> <p><i>Kept among us, in times of peace, Standing Armies without the Consent of our legislatures;</i></p> <p><i>Quartered large bodies of armed troops among us;</i></p> <p><i>Protected [British officials] from Punishment for any Murders which they should commit on the inhabitants of these States;</i></p> <p><i>Imposed taxes upon us without our consent...</i></p>	<p>The body of the Declaration consists of two parts. The first part contains a lengthy list of the misdeeds of king and Parliament. Included in this list are grievances that had been stated before in the Resolves of the Stamp Act Congress and the various colonial petitions to George III. The king, the document insisted, had performed the deeds listed in the body.</p> <p>In all, there are around thirty grievances enumerated; in this list can be seen many of the themes that were obvious during the colonial protests of the 1760s and 1770s: taxation must come only from bodies in which the taxed were represented, armies should not be maintained in times of peace and no troops should be arbitrarily quartered in the homes of colonials, and Royal officials should not be allowed to return to England for trial, especially when the charge was murder against colonists.</p> <p>The second section of the body explains the endeavors the colonists had taken in the past, short of outright rebellion, to right these wrongs: “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.”</p>
<p>The Conclusion</p> <p><i>WE THEREFORE, the Representatives of the UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, in General Congress, Assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world...do, in the Name and by Authority of the good People of these Colonies, solemnly publish and declare that these United Colonies are, and of Right ought to be FREE AND INDEPENDENT STATES...</i></p>	<p>And so, the document concludes, only one action remains open to the American colonists: they must declare their independence from Great Britain and become “free and independent states.”</p>

The *Declaration* was released from committee and read into the records of the Continental Congress on July 4, 1776. After accepting its text and signing the manuscript, Congress released the document first as a broadside that was distributed *en masse* to the public; unfortunately, this first manuscript copy of the *Declaration* has been lost. The document that is usually thought to be the actual *Declaration of Independence* is the copy that was signed on August 2, 1776 and is currently housed in the National Archives in Washington, D.C.

8.2.3 Before You Move On...

Key Concepts

The Second Continental Congress gathered in May, 1775 to consider the response of George III to the petition drafted by the First Continental Congress in 1774. A month before they assembled, the skirmishes at Lexington and Concord had taken place, and Congress decided to try one last time at reconciliation with the mother country. It soon became obvious, however, that it was too late to patch up the differences that had been building for over 100 years. Slowly, Congress came to the conclusion that independence was the only option for the American colonies; therefore a committee was created to draft a statement for independence. The committee released the *Declaration of Independence* to Congress on July 4, 1776, and it was soon released to the new states. No longer would the Americans fight for a “redress of grievances,” but rather for their independence from the mother country.

Test Yourself

1. The rationale that Jefferson used in the Declaration of Independence came primarily from the theories of John Locke.
 - a. True
 - b. False
2. Which of the following documents was NOT one drafted by the Second Continental Congress?
 - a. The Prohibitory Act
 - b. The Declaration of Independence
 - c. The Olive Branch Petition
 - d. The Causes and Necessity of Taking Up Arms

3. In the Conciliatory Proposition, the mother country gave in to most of the demands of the American colonists.
 - a. True
 - b. False

4. The Declaration of Independence consists of _____ sections:
 - a. One
 - b. Two
 - c. Three
 - d. Four
 - e. Five

[Click here to see answers](#)

8.3 REVOLUTIONARY WAR BATTLES

Most engagements, large and small, during the American Revolution took place in the Thirteen Colonies in revolt, a few in Canada, and some notable encounters at sea. The first engagement of the war, at Lexington and Concord, occurred before the Americans even had an official army or commander-in-chief. The colonials, who had hoped to avoid war, found themselves pushed into it. A shot rang out at Lexington, fired by an unknown person, and the war began almost as an accident. The war ended six years later at Yorktown, not with a great battle, but rather with the ultimate surrender of the British who found themselves in a natural trap. Between Lexington in 1775 and Yorktown in 1781, hundreds of engagements occurred. Early in the war, the area around Boston and New York were the focus of the military efforts. But after three years of fighting, the British had made no great progress against George Washington and his Continental Army. Indeed, Washington's army had grown into a stronger, more cohesive force as they gained experience with each battle. The British turned their attention to the South in what is known as the "Southern Strategy," where they hoped that a combination of British and Loyalist forces together would be able to make headway in the war effort that had not been possible in the North. In 1778 the British captured Savannah, Georgia and began moving slowly northwards from there. Charleston fell to the British in 1780, giving the British control of the two major southern ports. The American forces were not idle in the South and had success against the British further inland, preventing the British from achieving the victories they needed to win the war. The following is a selection of some of the more notable engagements of the war, beginning just after Lexington and Concord and ending with Yorktown.

8.3.1 Bunker Hill

- **Date:** June 16, 1775
- **Location:** Charlestown, Massachusetts Bay
- **American Commanders:** Dr. Joseph Warren, General Israel Putnam, General William Prescott
- **British Commander:** Major General Sir William Howe
- **American Force:** 2,400
- **British Force:** 3,000
- **American Losses:** 115
- **British Losses:** 226
- A British Victory

Following Lexington and Concord, Gage found himself trapped in Boston. His troops that had retreated to Charlestown with Percy had been brought back to Boston and more reinforcements had arrived from Britain, leaving Gage with an army stuck in the middle of a harbor while the mainland was in the control of the colonists in revolt. Gage needed to get out of Boston.

Gage and his generals devised a plan to break out in June, 1775. To succeed, they would need to gain control of Charlestown, which they had essentially abandoned after bringing their troops back to Boston following Lexington and Concord. Charlestown was important because of its hills, Breed's Hill and Bunker's Hill. These hills offered a view of Boston and the harbor, making them strategically important and excellent locations for artillery batteries and observation posts.

In a replay of the preparations for Concord, once again Gage's plans became known to the colonists before Gage could carry them out. On the night of June 16, General Prescott set out with 1,500 American troops to take Bunker's Hill. Instead, for unknown reasons, Prescott took and fortified Breed's Hill, creating an impressive earthwork overnight. The British were taken by surprise but determined to go ahead with their plan to take Charlestown.

Major General Sir William Howe was given command of the British force. The Americans continued to work on their fortifications as the British prepared for their main attack. Americans were on both Breed's Hill and Bunker's, with the main concentration of troops and fortifications on Breed's. The British Navy in the harbor began a bombardment of Breed's Hill that was not particularly effective but did discourage more Americans from moving into positions there. The Americans were still working out the details of being an army, and so their force suffered from chain-of-command issues and organizational problems, resulting in units not being where they were most needed.

As the Americans watched, Howe landed with 1,500 troops. He had believed that taking the hill would be a simple matter, so he planned a direct attack. After landing and seeing Americans on both hills, he asked for more reinforcements, bringing his total of men up to 3,000. The British began their attack in mid-afternoon. Just as at Lexington and Concord, the Americans had some troops firing independently from cover. They could not match the large numbers of British, but they could harass the British troops and unsettle them. Many of the colonists seemed to be around the town of Charlestown, so the British Navy set the little town on fire to drive the Americans out.

The first two British assaults on Breed's Hill were repulsed. The Americans, despite their difficulties, proved they could stand and fight. As the British approached in formation, the Americans opened fire, causing heavy casualties among the British, who retreated. The British had also fired, but the Americans had the advantage of fortified positions that gave them some cover. Howe had intended to use artillery on the American positions, but the British also suffered their share of organizational problems: they had brought the wrong ammunition for the cannon. Howe called up reinforcements and launched his third attack directly at the center of the Americans. Among the officers involved in the charge was Major Pitcairn, who had been wounded in the retreat from Concord. He was killed in the third assault on Breed's Hill as the British again took casualties. The Americans began the day short on ammunition and paid for it with the third assault. Unable to fire, they could not prevent the British from overrunning their position. The British fixed bayonets and attacked the Americans, who had their guns but no shot and few swords or bayonets of their own. The Americans were forced to abandon Breed's Hill. As they fell back, Joseph Warren, an important member of the revolutionary committee, was killed. The British pressed their advantage and drove the Americans from Bunker's Hill and the Charlestown peninsula. The Americans retreated back to the mainland and Cambridge. About thirty Americans were captured by the British, and of these, twenty died in captivity, but not due to mistreatment. All those captured had been terribly wounded and so were left behind by the retreating Americans.

This battle, which has long held the misnomer of Bunker's Hill when it should be called Breed's Hill, proved to the Americans that they could stand and face what was considered one of the best armies in the world. For the British, the cost of victory was terribly high. While they lost only 226 soldiers, they had over 800 wounded, including many officers. Technically the British won because they achieved their objective of driving the Americans out of Charlestown. However, the battle was a boost to American confidence while devastating to the British forces. As a result of this battle, the British

government's confidence in General Gage was lost, and he was removed from command. Somewhat ironically, the officer who would eventually be given Gage's command was General Howe, who was responsible for the high casualty rate among the British by ordering frontal assaults against fortified positions.

8.3.2 Quebec

- **Date:** December 31, 1775
- **Location:** Quebec, Quebec, Canada
- **American Commanders:** Colonel Benedict Arnold, Lieutenant Colonel Daniel Morgan, Brigadier General Richard Montgomery
- **British Commanders:** Captain William DeLaPlace, General Sir Guy Carleton
- **American Force:** 1,200
- **British Force:** 1,800
- **American Losses:** 48
- **British Losses:** 5
- A British Victory

As the war progressed, the Americans sought to find new allies and reduce British options in North America. To this end, they invaded Canada and attempted to capture Quebec (the city, capital of Quebec the province). The British and the French had both sought to colonize Canada, with the British eventually succeeding. Still, many French remained and formed the Province of Quebec. Although under British control, the French Canadians of Quebec remained resoundingly French. To the Americans, these French Canadians appeared to be the perfect allies, as they had no love for the British. With that in mind, Colonel Benedict Arnold planned to capture Quebec and form an alliance with the French Canadians against the British.

General George Washington supported the plan and assigned over 1,000 men for the campaign. Brigadier General Richard Montgomery and Colonel Arnold were in charge. They took two different routes to Quebec, with Montgomery traveling by Lake Champlain and Arnold coming through Maine. Each had to fight against British forces at points along the way as well as suffer from the journey through the wilderness before joining up at Quebec and preparing for the December attack.

By December, the British forces at Quebec were isolated due to the weather; the St. Lawrence River was frozen. General Sir Guy Carleton knew of the impending attack, but with the frozen river could not expect reinforcements. Instead, he had to fortify Quebec and organize a defense

with the few soldiers he had on hand. Montgomery had arrived in early December but did not have the resources to lay a proper siege. Still, he did what he could and sent demands for the surrender of the city, demands which were rejected. Even if the Americans had had enough supplies, time was against them. Arnold's men were enlisted only to the end of December; then they would be free to leave. Even if they were convinced to stay, once spring came, reinforcements for the British would surely arrive as well. Montgomery felt he had to take Quebec in December if he was to take it at all.

Montgomery and Arnold planned to attack Quebec from two different directions at the same time so as to force the defenders to divide and thereby weaken themselves. Montgomery attacked from the north while Arnold attacked the lower parts of the city. They hoped for a snowstorm to provide cover; instead, they got a blizzard that made advancing difficult. Montgomery led his men against the defensive works and managed to enter the city. As he led his men through Quebec, the defenders opened fire. Montgomery was killed with a shot to the head. Several of his men were also shot, so his troops quickly retreated back out of the city.

Arnold had no way of knowing what happened to Montgomery while he was attacking a different area of the town. Arnold also was able to penetrate the defenses and enter Quebec. As he led his men through the town, Arnold was shot in the ankle when the defenders opened fire. His wound was so serious that he was unable to continue, a failure which turned out to be lucky for him. Command of Arnold's men fell to Lieutenant Colonel Daniel Morgan, who led the men further into town. They found shelter where they were able to regroup but were soon trapped. Morgan was forced to surrender himself and his men. Arnold escaped, having been sent back due to his injury and was able to continue the siege of Quebec until March, despite the loss of men who were either captured or had deserted. The siege had little impact on Quebec, which was well supplied. Arnold was sent back to Montreal.

The attempt to take Quebec was a failure. Not only did the Americans fail to take the city, they also failed to convince the French Canadians to join their cause. Arnold was promoted and given other commands before his personal conflicts would lead him to become the most famous traitor in American history.

8.3.3 Long Island, also known as Brooklyn Heights

- **Date:** August 27, 1776
- **Location:** Brooklyn, New York

- **American Commander:** General George Washington, Israel Putnam, William Alexander
- **British Commanders:** Lord Charles Cornwallis, Sir Henry Clinton, Sir William Howe
- **American Force:** 10,000
- **British Force:** 20,000
- **American Losses:** 300
- **British Losses:** 64
- A British Victory

New York City's location, large harbor, access to the Hudson River, infrastructure, and other resources made it a point of strategic importance in the Revolution. Holding New York City would give either side greater flexibility in troop and supply movements. Because of the city's strategic importance, General George Washington had begun to prepare New York City's defenses as soon as the British were driven from Boston in 1775.

The American effort was hampered by lack of manpower and continued organizational difficulties. The Continental Army, as the American forces were called, drew units from all colonies, each bringing their own ideas on how to run an army. In addition, there were discipline problems with this army of unprofessional soldiers. Equipment shortages made it impossible to uniformly equip the soldiers. Only some had bayonets; others even lacked muskets. The uniforms varied from unit to unit and even within units. A Continental soldier might be found wearing a coat of some shade of blue, green, black, brown, even red or, instead of a coat, a hunting shirt of brown, buff, or purple. Bringing unity and discipline to the Continental Army and finding supplies and equipment were ongoing challenges at this point in the war.

Realizing that the British would target New York City sooner or later, the Continentals set about constructing forts, entrenchments, and other fortifications at strategic points, particularly on Long Island. They also created obstacles in the water to reduce the threat from the formidable British Navy. But all the preparations were for naught. First the British fleet arrived with over 100 ships under the command of Admiral Richard Howe, the brother of the British commanding general, Sir William Howe. The sight of so many British naval vessels naturally caused concern, even panic, in the city. Then the British troops began arriving, landing first on Staten Island where they met little opposition. On August 22 the British moved to Long Island, which was well fortified and guarded, with the exception of the Jamaica Pass, which inexplicably was practically abandoned with only a token guard. To make matters worse, the information Washington received of the nature and number of the British force was completely inaccurate.

Based on this poor intelligence, Washington did not grasp the true intentions of the British and did not prepare adequately for their attack.

By August 26, the British had landed their full force of British and German mercenaries, known as Hessians, and prepared to attack the Americans. While about 4,000 British and Hessian troops maneuvered around the front of the American lines, convincing the Americans that they were the main British force, General Howe led the majority of the British troops through the Jamaica Pass by night with the intent to flank the Americans. Howe's plan worked. The fighting on every front was brutal, but for most of the day the Americans had no idea where the main British force was attacking. By using his forces in separate but coordinated attacks, Howe was able to catch the Americans between his forces, pinching them and cutting them off from the rest of the Continentals and possible aid. The Continentals were forced to retreat towards the Brooklyn Heights. Howe's army had essentially herded the Continentals. The advantage of Brooklyn Heights was its height, making it an excellent place for fortifications. Properly prepared and staffed, it would be a costly place to take by force. The disadvantage, however, was that getting off Brooklyn Heights could be just as difficult. Howe's troops extended their lines to cut off Brooklyn Heights by land, laying siege to the Continental position. On the opposite side was the water of the East River—where the British Navy under Admiral Howe waited. Washington and most of his army had fallen into a trap.

Both Washington and Howe realized Washington was trapped. Howe was content to settle down and have his men work steadily on trenches that would allow them to move closer to the American lines without taking unnecessary risks. Howe had every reason to believe time was on his side. Washington was still able to communicate with his forces over on Manhattan Island and requested reinforcements. Troops from Pennsylvania were sent in response. After a consultation with his officers, Washington's bold plan involved having the new troops essentially pretend to be his entire army. In the dark and rain of the evening, Washington's army prepared to leave in utter silence. The men were not allowed to speak; anything that might make a noise, including wagon wheels, was wrapped to muffle the sound. Stealth was of the utmost importance, and everyone in Washington's army maintained unusual cooperation. The campfires were kept lit so the British would think the Americans were right where they should be; the British had used the same trick when they began their march to Jamaica Pass. The Pennsylvanians manned the battlements, making it appear that Washington's troops were staying alert and in place. By morning, the rain turned to fog, making it difficult for the British to see the American positions. As the sun rose and burned away the fog, the British began to notice a lack of Americans watching them from the fortifications. By the time the British

realized Washington was gone, he and his entire army of 9,000 soldiers were in Manhattan.

As remarkable as Washington's retreat was, it was still a retreat. The British had driven the Americans from Long Island and captured their fortified positions. The British celebrated their victory; nevertheless, their best chance of capturing Washington and ending the war had slipped away in the night after General Howe failed to press the attack when he had the chance. Still, Howe was hailed a hero and British confidence in a successful war rose.

8.3.4 Battle of Trenton

- **Date:** December 26, 1776
- **Location:** Trenton, New Jersey
- **American Commander:** General George Washington
- **British Commander:** Colonel Johann Rall of Hesse-Cassel
- **American Force:** 2,400
- **British Force:** 1,500 Hessians
- **American Losses:** 2
- **British Losses:** 22
- An American Victory



Figure 8.2 George Washington Crossing the Delaware | Emanuel Leutze's famous painting of George Washington Crossing the Delaware prior to his attack on the Hessians at Trenton on December 25, 1776, was a great success in America.

Artist: Emanuel Leutze
Source: Library of Congress

In a bold move, General George Washington crossed the Delaware, a miserably icy river, and landed near Trenton. The weather was so terrible that not all the American troops managed the crossing. Washington and his troops then marched approximately nine miles to Trenton. The Hessians had thought themselves safe from attack due to the bad weather. They were caught by surprise when Washington personally led his troops into Trenton. The Hessians fell back, but Washington had stationed troops to cut off their retreat before he advanced into Trenton. The Hessians fought with great discipline but were let down by their weapons when in several instances their guns would not fire. Washington's troops kept up the pressure, following the Hessians through the street in house-to-house fighting. Colonel Rall, the commander of the Hessians, was mortally wounded, and all of the other Hessian colonels were killed during the battle. With the end of the battle, Washington captured not only the Hessian forces, but also much-needed supplies, weapons, and ammunition.

The news of Washington's victory at Trenton spread quickly throughout the colonies, boosting American morale at a time when it was most needed. The war had been going very badly for the Americans; victory was a welcome relief.

8.3.5 Battle of Saratoga, NY

- **Date:** September 19-October 17, 1777
- **Location:** Saratoga County, New York
- **American Commander:** Major General Horatio Gates and Brigadier General Benedict Arnold
- **British Commander:** Major General John Burgoyne
- **American Force:** 12,000
- **British Force:** 6,600
- **American Losses:** 90
- **British Losses:** 440
- An American Victory

Major General John Burgoyne developed a plan to invade New England from his base in Canada. The purpose was to cut off New England from the rest of the colonies and subdue the region. After taking New England, the British would then be in a better position to take control of the rest of the rebellious colonies. Burgoyne intended to take Albany, New York, and with it control of the upper Hudson River, the lower Hudson already being under the control of the British at New York City.

Nothing went as Burgoyne had planned. The success of his campaign depended on two British columns coming in from Canada, one of which he would command. The other column became engaged in facing American forces and so was unable to move down the Hudson. He had expected to have support from Indians; they abandoned Burgoyne. Men who were supposed to bring in supplies from Vermont encountered American forces and lost. Burgoyne's own column was delayed in the wilderness, as he had not considered the difficulty of the terrain.

The Americans under Major General Gates knew Burgoyne was coming down the Hudson River Valley, and Burgoyne's troubles, which delayed his progress, gave Gates time to bring his own army to meet him. On September 19, the two armies collided unexpectedly. Americans had seen British troops moving across a nearby farm and attacked, thinking they were attacking skirmishers, not the main British force. Fighting continued throughout the day as more units became engaged in the battle. In the end, the Americans retreated, leaving Burgoyne the victor, but due to the heavy British losses and the Americans still holding control of the Hudson, it proved a hollow victory.

Burgoyne decided to dig in. Instead of retreating or advancing, he pulled his army together and fortified his position. He was facing a larger American force, but he anticipated relief coming from General Henry Clinton at New York City. The relief never came; Clinton did move out, but he became occupied with other targets and never reached Saratoga. On October 3, Burgoyne cut the rations for his troops, as his supplies were now desperately short. On October 7, Burgoyne, having given up hope of Clinton's arrival, tried to break away from the Americans with a flanking maneuver but failed and suffered great losses from the American counter-attack. Burgoyne pulled back to his fortified position. The American army continued to grow and moved to surround Burgoyne. With no relief coming, many wounded in need of care, his rations almost gone, and outnumbered by more than two-to-one, Burgoyne surrendered.

The defeat of Burgoyne raised American morale across the colonies. Further, this American victory convinced the French to support the Americans both financially and militarily. For these reasons, Saratoga is often considered a turning point in the war. With French involvement in the war, the British were forced to turn their attention to both to the West Indies and Europe, distracting them from their previous focus on the now-independent American states.

Saratoga has one other point of significance in American history. Benedict Arnold's personal morale took a blow at Saratoga. Arnold had been passed over for command and felt that he was not being given credit for his achievements, his glory instead stolen by others. At Saratoga, Gates had

planned to sit and wait for Burgoyne to come to him. Arnold had insisted on sending out men, including the ones that first encountered Burgoyne's troops, yet Arnold was not mentioned in Gates's report to Congress about the actions of September 19. Arnold reacted poorly, shouting at Gates, and was relieved of command. He then sat in his tent until he joined the action on October 7 without authorization from Gates. Arnold was wounded in the leg and spent months recovering from his injury, during which time he became increasingly embittered. After he recovered, Washington made Arnold the military governor of Philadelphia. Again Arnold fell into controversy, but he also fell in love and married a woman from a Loyalist family. Feeling continually slighted by Americans and associating increasingly with Loyalists, Arnold crossed the line and committed treason.

8.3.6 Siege of Charleston

- **Date:** March 29-May 12, 1780
- **Location:** Charleston, South Carolina
- **American Commander:** Major General Benjamin Lincoln
- **British Commander:** General Sir Henry Clinton
- **American Force:** 5,466
- **British Force:** 13,500
- **American Losses:** 76
- **British Losses:** 92
- A British Victory

General Clinton sailed from New York, determined to take Charleston, an important American harbor in the Southern colonies. Clinton knew Charleston's harbor was well fortified; the defensive works there had been decades in the making. So, instead of a direct assault, Clinton planned to take Charleston by going overland rather than by sailing directly into the harbor.

His forces landed a few days' march south of Charleston on February 11 and began the trek to their target. The fleet sailed back up the coast, coming in to provide supplies to the forces on land. Once Clinton's force reached the Charleston area, they set about attacking and occupying strategic locations around the harbor and the rivers that flow into it.

The British fleet began moving into the harbor on March 20 in coordination with the movements of the army units on land. The American naval commander, seeing the size of the British fleet, sank his own ships near the entrance of the Cooper River. This action created a water hazard and prevented the British from taking the American ships.

By April 14, the British successfully cut Charleston off from the rest of the state. No relief for the Americans was expected, yet still the Americans held out a few days longer. Then on April 21, the American commander, Major General Benjamin Lincoln, offered to surrender with honor. Clinton refused. His forces had Charleston under control and time was on his side. Over the next several days, the Americans would try again to surrender with honor and again be refused. Finally, on May 11, Clinton ordered an artillery barrage using “hot shot”—cannon balls that have been heated so that they can cause fires when they hit flammable material, such as a wooden building. Lincoln surrendered without condition only hours after the barrage began.

The Siege of Charleston may well be the best designed and executed plan by the British during the war. The victory was complete, marking the worst defeat for the Americans of any engagement in the war. Charleston would prove to be a high tide mark for the British in the South. After this, while they would still win some battles, the campaign would be long and difficult, eventually ending at Yorktown.

8.3.7 Cowpens

- **Date:** January 17, 1781
- **Location:** Cowpens, Spartanburg County, SC
- **American Commander:** Brigadier General Daniel Morgan
- **British Commander:** Lieutenant Colonel Banastre Tarleton
- **American Force:** 1,912
- **British Force:** 1,150
- **American Losses:** 25
- **British Losses:** 110
- An American Victory

Cowpens, as the name suggests, was a large cow pasture of approximately 500 square yards in size. This wide open pasture was kept clear of brush, weeds, and grass by cattle, making it a good site for a battle. Brigadier General Morgan and his men were being pursued by Lieutenant Colonel Tarleton. Morgan reached Cowpens and set up camp. The nearby Broad River was running high due to recent rains, making it difficult to cross. Morgan’s army had its flank to the Broad River and turned to face Tarleton’s oncoming forces. On paper, Morgan would appear neatly trapped. In fact, Morgan had worked out a careful plan to use the terrain to his advantage. In some battles, inexperienced troops panicked and fled. His had nowhere to run, thanks to the river. He knew that Tarleton was an experienced and very aggressive officer, and he knew that, while his own army had a chance to rest

while waiting for Tarleton, Tarleton was pushing his troops hard. By the time Tarleton reached Cowpens, his army was hungry and exhausted. Tarleton, hearing of Morgan's position against the river, did exactly as Morgan expected and formed up, focused on Morgan's center. Morgan deployed his least experienced troops first and then had them fall back, letting his more experienced soldiers deal with the British when they approached close to his position. Morgan's riflemen intentionally targeted the British officers, creating confusion in the British lines. As the Americans maneuvered, pulling units back, the British pressed forward only to encounter other Americans they had not expected and were forced to fall back themselves. Once the British had been pulled out of position, Morgan went on the offensive. The colonists charged with bayonets, catching the British by surprise. More American units engaged, and the British lines broke. By this point, Tarleton was widely hated by the Americans because it was believed that he intentionally killed Americans who had already surrendered. Some at Cowpens sought revenge, bayoneting British soldiers who surrendered, in a move called "Tarleton's Quarter." The American officers stepped in and stopped it as best they could. Tarleton and the remains of his army retreated back to the main British force under Cornwallis.

8.3.8 Yorktown

- **Date:** September 28-October 19, 1781
- **Location:** Yorktown, Virginia
- **American Commander:** General George Washington
- **British Commander:** Lieutenant General Lord William Cornwallis
- **American Force:** 11,133 and 7,800 French
- **British Force:** 8,885
- **American Losses:** 23 and 65 French
- **British Losses:** 156
- An American Victory

Following the brutal battle of Guilford Courthouse, Lord Cornwallis moved his army to Yorktown and Gloucester Point, Virginia with the intention of securing a port and having his troops removed by the British Navy. His army needed relief after their long campaign in the South, so, after reaching Yorktown, they settled in, built defensive works, and waited for the British Navy. To reach Cornwallis, the British Navy needed to sail into the Chesapeake Bay, then up the York River to Yorktown, located on a peninsula formed by the York River on the north, the Chesapeake Bay on the east, and the James River on the south. Gloucester is on the opposite side of the York River.

Cornwallis believed that General Washington was occupied at New York and that the other American and French forces were not a significant threat. He did not know until too late that a French fleet was sailing to the Chesapeake Bay, nor did he know that Washington, having been informed of Cornwallis's location at Yorktown, was bringing his army with all speed to meet him. For these reasons, Cornwallis maintained his position at Yorktown, allowing his army to be trapped instead of moving to a position further west, which would have allowed him to maneuver away from an advancing enemy force.

The French and British fleets met and the British were defeated, leaving the French in control of the bay and able to blockade the York River.

The American and French armies combined at Williamsburg, Virginia. On September 28, they marched down the peninsula to Yorktown and laid siege to Cornwallis's army, effectively blocking Cornwallis from moving west. His army was trapped on the peninsula. His small force at Gloucester was also surrounded. Relief from Lieutenant General Henry Clinton had been promised, but in Cornwallis's view would not arrive in time. On October 16, Cornwallis planned a breakout that would move his army across the York River to Gloucester Point, but the plan, his last hope, failed. Washington offered terms of surrender, and Cornwallis accepted, officially surrendering his army on October 19, 1781. This battle was the last major action of the American Revolution.



Figure 8.3 Surrender of Cornwallis | The siege of Yorktown was the last major action of the Revolutionary War. The British defeat led to surrender and the end of the War.

Artist: John Trumbull
Source: Architect of the Capitol

8.3.9 Before You Move On...

Key Concepts

The Americans began the war without a professional army and ended it by defeating one of the finest militaries of the age. Mistakes and acts of cruelty were committed by both sides. The conditions for the soldiers were often brutal, particularly when fighting in winter. One factor of paramount importance to the American victory was the diplomatic alliance between the American states and the French. Coming into the war on the side of the Americans after the Battle of Saratoga, the French forces offered much-needed relief to the American troops and turned the American War into one with a global scope. This participation would have a crucial impact on France as the war debt and resulting fiscal depression would lead in less than ten years to the French Revolution and the end of the old regime in Europe.

Test Yourself

1. One of the most important results of the American victory at Saratoga was
 - a. the Hessian removal from the British force.
 - b. the French participation in the war on the side of the British.
 - c. the French participation in the war on the side of the Americans.
 - d. the end of the war.
2. The siege of Charleston was well conducted.
 - a. True
 - b. False
3. Famous for leading his troops against the Hessians at Trenton, New Jersey was
 - a. General George Washington.
 - b. Brigadier General Daniel Morgan.
 - c. Major Benedict Arnold.
 - d. Major General Benjamin Lincoln.
4. Benedict Arnold is America's most famous traitor.
 - a. True
 - b. False

[Click here to see answers](#)

8.4 THE IMPACT OF WAR

The Revolution changed the lives of Americans in ways that were both expected and unforeseen. The emotional and physical toll of the war affected everyone living in the colonies no matter which side they supported. The movement of troops proved detrimental to those civilians in their path because it led to the flight of refugees, epidemic disease, confiscation of supplies, plundering of property, and the possibility of physical assault. The Revolution disrupted normal patterns of life as the economy faltered, men went off to fight, women stayed home to tend farms and business, and slaves attempted to pursue their freedom.¹² While American battlefield victories helped secure independence, the challenges on the home front called into question the meaning of that independence.

Prior to the war, and one of the issues leading to it, was the feeling of many Americans that they were in fact British citizens living in the colonies, whereas to those in England, the Americans were something other than truly English. They were subjects of His Majesty and living in British colonies, but they were not English, not in the way that those born, raised, and living in London were English citizens. Worse, in not being truly English, the Americans were somehow less than equal. The idea of some English that Americans did not merit the same considerations as proper English would persist into the early nineteenth century and the War of 1812. For the Americans, however, the need to be accepted and treated as English ended with the Revolution. They were now Americans, more specifically Virginians, Georgians, Pennsylvanians, and so on. Whether Americans were indeed primarily Americans, or identified first with their states and then with their country, would continue as an issue until the Civil War.

After the Revolution, just as before, American society was multi-layered with the wealthy landed gentry at the top, the landless citizens below, and slaves at the bottom. Merchants, farmers, traders, and artisans of all types formed the middle class. Government and politics before the war had been the business of the upper class. With the Revolution, people in the middle were drawn into playing a larger part in the running of their colonies, political activities, and service in the military; they were no longer willing to leave the decisions in the hands of the gentry. More than ever before, they became active participants in the political process. These changes also led to new questions about the rights of loyalists, slaves, free blacks, women, and Indians.

8.4.1 The Cost of Supporting the Patriot Cause

Wars also have definite impact on the economy of a country, with soldiers needing to be fed and equipped. As military technology improved

over time, the cost of equipping soldiers only increased. The Continental Congress resisted taxing the citizens to pay for the war effort especially because questions about the right to tax contributed to the desire for independence. While Congress relied on the states for some assistance, lack of funds forced it to print \$200 million during the war. That amount did not factor in how much the states printed and how much counterfeit money the British spread in an effort to destabilize the American financing effort. Therefore, the value of the “continental” as the currency was depreciated rather quickly. Congress also borrowed money from other nations and from wealthy patriots through interest-bearing loan certificates. In dire times, both the British and the American armies simply took what they needed from the civilian population. They entered homes to confiscate food and clothing, and even furniture they could burn to keep warm. Military leaders on both sides tried to stop such looting, but they did not always succeed.¹³

The cost of supporting the patriot cause did not just come in the form of public debt. Economically speaking, the war impacted the combatants and their families. The government’s decision to print money caused inflation, especially as goods became scarce in British-occupied cities. According to historian Harry M. Ward, goods imported from the West Indies like rum and sugar increased over 500 percent. Even worse, beef cost \$.04 a pound in 1777 and \$1.69 a pound in 1780, which amounted to about a 4,000 percent increase in the price. Because so many men left home to serve in the army, wages also went up for farm hands and laborers. However, they did not keep pace with the prices. Moreover, those serving in the military often did not receive their pay on time and sometimes not at all. Thus, all people on the home front struggled to get by, but the poor suffered most. Congress as well as the individual states experimented with wage and price controls, but that did little to improve the situation for most Americans. Frustration led to at least forty food and price riots during the conflict, led mostly by women. For example, in 1777, Boston’s women assaulted wealthy merchant Thomas Boylston for refusing to sell coffee at a fair price. To deal with the worst of the war’s economic consequences, private organizations and sometimes local governments coordinated relief efforts because the Continental Congress seemed unwilling to help.¹⁴

In 1783, when the war finally ended, the public debt was approximately \$43 million and the new government had difficulty in paying all of its obligations, including those to the very men who had fought in the war. Many veterans were not fully compensated for their service. Some were promised grants of land in lieu of payment during the conflict, only to lose their grants due to mishandling, unwieldy government regulations, and speculator’s schemes. Many veterans applied for pensions in the years following the wars, tracking down former comrades to certify that they had indeed served, only to be

denied their pension on a technicality, such as not proving six month's continuous service, or for no clear reason at all. For many veterans who had suffered economically by neglecting their farms and businesses to serve, and then who were never properly paid for their trouble, being denied their rightful pensions was a painful loss—one that would cause problems for the new American government by the end of the 1780s.

8.4.2 The Struggle of the Loyalists

Not all people living in colonies at the time of the Declaration of Independence chose to support the patriot cause. Loyalists, or Tories as the patriots called them, accounted for about one-third of the American population (though estimates vary). Neutralists, who remained ambiguous about their allegiance, accounted for another one-third of the population. Loyalists and neutralists came from a variety of backgrounds. Some were American-born and some were European-born. They tended to live in urban centers, especially the port cities, although some people in the frontier regions supported the British. Overall, loyalists tended to be slightly older than their patriot counterparts and were often members of the Anglican Church. Loyalists in many cases saw the revolution as a threat to their personal political, social, and economic rights. Historian Robert Middlekauf suggests the loyalists were often a minority in their communities and as such were dependent on the royal government. Therefore, they opted to support that government during the war. For example, Highland Scots and Germans feared they might lose land granted by the crown if they sided with the revolutionaries. Merchants and shippers feared the economic consequences of terminating their relationship with Britain. Frontier farmers relied on the British army to protect them from the Indians.¹⁵

Generally speaking, loyalists and neutralists shared many of the same concerns about a break with Britain. Loyalists feared the consequences of break with Britain more than they disliked living under Parliament's rules. In the years before independence, some loyalists joined in the calls for greater representation. Colonial governors, like William Franklin of New Jersey, sympathized with the residents. However, he thought an armed rebellion would not produce the desired result, and when it came he tried to keep New Jersey out of the conflict. The colonists' concerns seemed legitimate, but to some loyalists constitutional ties and mutual interests bound them to the British Empire. Others took a more negative view of the situation; they feared the mob rule and lack of respect for the public good that would come from independence. Some neutralists shared these concerns, but for fear of their safety they did not vocalize them, or they professed to support the patriot cause even if they did not. At the same time, many pacifists objected

to war on principle and chose not to fight for either side. Other neutralists simply hoped to avoid the consequences of the war and declared loyalty to one side or the other when it suited their needs.¹⁶

Loyalists helped the British cause in a variety of ways. They served in the British army and loyalist militia units to help fight the war. They engaged in crowd action such as when tenants on Livingston Manor led an uprising against their patriot landlords to distract the American forces and possibly gain titles to the land they farmed. While most of the uprisings did not accomplish their goals, they did demonstrate that not all Americans supported the patriot cause. The loyalists also helped the British procure much-needed supplies during their occupations of Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and Charleston. And finally, they helped gather intelligence on American activities. For example, Ann Bates, a schoolteacher from Philadelphia, used passes from Benedict Arnold to travel into Washington's encampments around New York City and pass information on the weapons his army possessed onto the British in 1778.¹⁷

The patriots deemed the Tories enemies of the cause, so loyalists faced potentially severe consequences for their choice. As Harry Ward observes, "war and independence...tolerated no dissent." The Continental Congress left it up to the states to find and punish those loyalists suspected of malfeasance. Most states took quick action to expel European-born loyalists from their states. However, they found it much more difficult to deal with American-born loyalists.¹⁸ They created committees to maintain public safety to expose loyalists. They also required all citizens to pledge an oath of loyalty; those who refused faced disarmament, heavy bonds in exchange for their freedom, or imprisonment. Loyalists often lost their right to vote or to travel freely. Loyalists who seemed determined to promote the British cause faced even more severe consequences. States defined most overt loyalist activities, such as enlisting in or providing supplies to the British army, as treason. Punishment could be the death penalty, but states realized executing loyalists would not necessarily build support for the cause. So, more often than not, the government confiscated the property of the guilty, which also provided a source of revenue for the government. Government action tended to keep individual attacks in check, but some loyalists found themselves the victims of angry patriot attacks.¹⁹

When the war finally ended, some 80,000 loyalists opted to evacuate with the British largely because Parliament agreed to fund their relocation. Most exiles stayed in British North America, but some went to England. The terms of the Treaty of Paris suggested that the American government should treat loyalists who chose to stay fairly. The Confederation Congress resolved to return confiscated property in 1784, but many states chose not

to comply. Loyalists living in the United States spent several years trying to regain their property. Only in the late 1780s did they successfully manage to do so.²⁰

8.4.3 The Role of Women

For American women, religious customs and social conventions made them second class citizens in their own homes. They could not vote and had little access to education, and yet, when their husbands went off to serve the Revolution, the women were left to raise their children and run their homes, farms, and in some cases their husbands' businesses by themselves. The war led to anxiety and opportunity. For women, personal and political factors motivated their response to the conflict. On the personal level, they wanted to aid their husbands, sons, fathers, and brothers who joined in the military effort. On the political level, they hoped the war might just remedy some of the inequality they faced. Patriot women had the opportunity to make more of a conscious decision to support their cause than did loyalist women. Therefore, they tended to cope better with the emotional and physical costs of war. While both groups suffered because of the war, once a loyalist husband vocalized his feelings, his wife faced isolation, confiscation, and evacuation.²¹

Whether they became patriots or loyalists, women worried about the fate of their husbands, sons, fathers, and brothers who fought in the war. For most women, the departure of their loved ones left them quite lonely. Ipswich, Massachusetts resident Sarah Hodgkins wrote to her husband Joseph regularly during the war about how much she longed to see him and how she prayed he would survive the war. She could barely hide her opposition when he decided to reenlist, noting "I have got a Sweet Babe almost six months old but have got no father for it."²² On the other hand, a few women saw the departure of their husbands as a blessing. Grace Growden Galloway, whose loyalist husband was in London, wrote in her journal that "Liberty of doing as I please Makes even poverty more agreeable than any time I ever spent since I married." For several years she resisted his calls to come to London.²³ Still other women wrote to their husbands about their behavior while away from home. Preston, Connecticut resident Lois Crary Peters heard reports of the loose morals of many Continental Army soldiers. She wrote then to her husband, Nathan, about the rumors that he "Did not Care for your wife and family at home." He denied the accusation and she in return said the accounts had not really troubled her.²⁴

Women also went to great lengths to support the war effort. Mary Fish Silliman was a reluctant patriot until the night she witnessed loyalists kidnap her husband and son from their home in Fairfield, Connecticut in

1779. Gold Selleck Silliman served as a brigadier general in the Connecticut militia and the loyalists took him to have a prisoner to exchange of equal rank to someone the patriots held. Mary Silliman then worked diligently to secure the release of her husband. Frustrated by the pace of negotiations, she enlisted several friends to kidnap Thomas Jones, a noted loyalist living on Long Island. After five months, the British and the Americans finally worked out terms of exchange and the men returned to their respective families.²⁵

Not all women went to the lengths that Mary Silliman did, but women avidly supported the war effort in a variety of ways. They formed spinning societies to make homespun cloth for their families; moreover, they sewed shirts and knitted socks for members of the army. They also collected scrap metal and pewter to be turned into ammunition and they donated spare household liners to be turned into bandages. Women also supported fund drives. The patriot women of Philadelphia, for instance, canvassed door-to-door to raise money to make the lives of the soldiers better. All told, they turned over about \$7,500 in specie (coin money) to General Washington. The coordinator of the drive, Esther DeBerdt Reed, requested that the funds be used supplement the soldiers' pay. Worried that the supplement would make soldiers aware of how woefully underpaid they were, Washington put the money toward purchasing new shirts. Women in other cities quickly followed suit in an attempt to show support for the patriot cause.²⁶

In spite of their trepidation about being left to fend for themselves, many women found they were more than capable in running their husbands' farms and businesses while also carrying for their children. The effort of course was never easy, but not only did they persevere, many prospered. Meanwhile, their husbands continued to direct their efforts; in time, however, most women found the advice more of a hindrance than a help. When her husband Ralph became trapped in Boston, Elizabeth Murray Smith Inman of Cambridge set about managing the farm, and she made a tidy profit when the crop of hay came in. When the patriots interred her pacifist husband Thomas in Virginia, Sally Logan Fisher of Philadelphia at first despaired about how she would manage without him. Increasingly though, her diary entries suggested a renewed spirit in her ability to support her family. When her husband Josiah went to Philadelphia to serve in the Continental Congress, Mary Bartlett worried she would not be up to the task of maintaining the family business. However, within a couple of years she began to write him of "our business," not "his business," showing how the war blurred the line between the public and private spheres.²⁷

After the war was over and the men returned home, they expected their wives to resume their subservient past. Women attempted to resist such efforts, but found little support for their rights inside or outside of the

home. For many political leaders, women's contributions to the war actually reinforced the idea that a women's place was in the private sphere caring for the family. Still, in the 1780s, women gained some additional social and legal rights. As the Church of England lost control in many of the states, divorce proceedings fell into the realm of civil authorities instead of religious authorities. While it was by no means simple to obtain a divorce, it became easier. Most states retained the practice of coverture, whereby the husband retained legal control over the person, property, and choices of his wife. Single women and widows gained greater property rights, but that did not in most cases lead to the political rights that property conferred (such as the right to vote). Discussion of the role of women during and after the war led to small improvements in the status of women. In the postwar years, many men and women subscribed to the concept of "Republican motherhood." Women had a public duty to educate their children to become virtuous citizens and as such they needed to have more education to successfully mold good Americans.²⁸

8.4.4 The Future of Slavery

The ideas of liberty and equality which helped to ignite the Revolution also brought to mind questions of liberty and equality for blacks—both slave and free. For slaves, the fight for independence raised questions about their future because in a republic based on the premise "all men are created equal," many people wondered whether slavery should continue to exist. Many slaves looked to use the war to secure their own freedom. For free blacks, questions about slavery also played a role in their wartime experience. Most recognized that if states maintained the institution of slavery even though they had their freedom, they would not be able to achieve equality. In 1775, Benjamin Franklin had founded the first abolitionist society in America, the Society for the Relief of Free Negroes Unlawfully Held in Bondage. After that, the abolitionist ideas spread to other states. During and after the war, many northern states embraced gradual emancipation; however, most southern states renewed their commitment to the use of race-based slavery.

Slavery had been part of American life since the seventeenth century when the first Africans arrive in Jamestown in 1619. For years it existed alongside indentured servitude as the primary mode of labor on tobacco and rice plantations in the South. However, in the North people also purchased slaves to work in their fields and homes. In 1760, somewhere around 350,000 blacks were enslaved. Around 145,000 lived in Virginia and Maryland, 40,000 lived in South Carolina and Georgia, and the rest lived in the northern colonies, especially New York and New Jersey. Thus, slavery at the time of the American Revolution was a national institution,

not a southern institution. While only one-quarter of the population owned slaves, slavery became a key component of the successful American economy. Slaveholders found it to be the most cost effective form of labor. At the same time, many non-slaveholders, including merchants, ship builders, and their employees, benefited from the side effects of the international slave trade.²⁹

Many slaves grudgingly accepted their life of servitude while also looking for ways to gain their freedom. Some liberated themselves by running away, but others were emancipated by their owners. The free black community grew slowly in the prewar years; however, by virtue of their freedom they became speakers of their race and increasingly called for widespread emancipation. As the American colonists increasingly vocalized a desire to be free from their imperial masters, many slaves used similar rhetoric to call for emancipation. In 1773, Felix, a Boston slave, sent Lieutenant Governor Thomas Hutchinson a petition on behalf of his fellow slaves asking for help to redress “their unhappy state” and trusting in the governor’s “wisdom, justice, and goodness” to help them. Other such petitions followed and became increasingly forceful in their requests for an end to slavery.³⁰

Some white colonists also began to speak out against slavery before the Revolution, most notably among the Quaker communities in Pennsylvania and New Jersey. Quakers John Woolman and Anthony Benezet argued that the sin of slavery was a sign that the Friends had become negligent of their faith. They called on the Quakers to condemn the slave trade and free their slaves. In time, their sentiments spread beyond the Quaker community. While ministers from other faiths continued to condemn slavery as a sin, James Otis linked the cause of independence with the cause of emancipation, noting the irony of pursuing one and not the other. As his argument spread, several Massachusetts towns instructed their delegates to the colonial legislature to pass a law banning the importation of slaves. Elsewhere in the colonies, talk of ending slavery ensued; Arthur Lee, son of a prominent Virginia slaveholder, noted “freedom is unquestionably the birth-right of all mankind, of Africans as well as Europeans.” Of course, not all colonists supported such a move; fellow southerners widely denounced Lee’s essay.³¹

When the revolution began, blacks—slave and free—looked for opportunities to use the conflict to gain their freedom. After Lord Dunmore’s Proclamation in 1775, southern slaves sought to take advantage of the offer to fight for the British and receive their freedom. Only about 300 slaves managed to respond because Virginia slaveholders made it quite difficult for slaves to escape. Later, General Clinton made a similar request, calling blacks to defend the crown in exchange for their freedom. Over the course of the war, blacks served in British units and provided needed support services; however, exact numbers have been hard to come by. Colonel Tye, a runaway, led a band of black loyalists in terrorizing the New York and

New Jersey patriots in 1778 and 1779. Boston Kin managed to escape twice, first from his master and then from a band of loyalists who tried to sell him back into slavery, in order to serve the British. Other slaves, especially women, took advantage of the chaos brought on by the war to flee to the British in hopes of gaining their freedom.³²

Northern slaves and free blacks more often than not enlisted in the Continental Army; throughout the course of the war, over 5,000 served the patriot cause. More might have served, but the Continental Congress succumbed to pressure from southern representatives to bar slaves from service so the government would not have to compensate their owners. In spite of the obstacles, free blacks and some slaves continued to enlist. The promise of the Declaration of Independence inspired them to join in the battle for American freedom, which they hoped would translate into personal freedom. Moreover, they provided much-needed manpower. Rhode Island, so desperate for soldiers, recruited an all-black regiment, as did Massachusetts and Connecticut; the other states integrated blacks into regular units. During the course of the war, black soldiers served with distinction: Peter Salem, Salem Poor, and Prince Whipple all won praise for their contribution to the campaign in Massachusetts in 1775.³³

During and after the war, many Americans, especially in the North, embraced emancipation and worked to end slavery within their borders. As Robert Middlekauf suggests, “the irony of white Americans claiming liberty while they held slaves did not escape the revolutionary generation.” Pennsylvania and Vermont banned slavery in their state constitutions in the 1770s. Massachusetts and New Hampshire significantly curtailed slavery through court action. Connecticut and Rhode Island passed laws providing for gradual emancipation in the early 1780s; New York and New Jersey also adopted policies of gradual emancipation but not until the late 1790s. Southerners, for a variety of reasons, resisted the shift toward statewide emancipation, though some slaveholders did free their slaves on an individual basis. However, by the early 1800s the practice of manumission fell out of use. The failure to end slavery on the national level caused slavery to become a southern phenomenon sometimes called the “peculiar institution” and the number of slaves there increased dramatically after the invention of the



Figure 8.4 Salem Poor Stamp | Commemorating Black Patriots—Salem Poor was one of the more than 5,000 blacks who joined in the patriot cause during the American Revolution. In 1975, the United States Postal Service honored his service as part of their Gallant Soldier series.

Author: U.S. Postal Service
Source: Wikimedia Commons

cotton gin in the 1790s. Meanwhile, the free black population continued to grow, but they faced continued prejudice and discrimination. For blacks—slave or free—the revolution failed to live up to their expectations.³⁴

8.4.5 Indians and the American Revolution

Throughout the colonies and the American frontier, Indians debated foreign policy, weighed their options, and chose sides in the American Revolution. Indian participation in colonial wars was certainly not a new development. Many of the native peoples of North America had participated in colonial wars, such as Queen Anne's and King William's Wars; the French and Indian War was the most important example of native interests in European colonial conflicts.

At the outset of the American Revolution, many tribes chose to remain neutral in the conflict. Unlike the French and Indian War and other wars of the previous hundred years, this war did not concern many nations. The nascent American government fully supported this neutrality. The Second Continental Congress wrote to the Iroquois Confederacy on the matter, stating,

We desire that you will hear and receive what we have now told you, and that you will open a good ear and listen to what we are now going to say. This is a family quarrel between us and old England. You Indians are not concerned in it. We don't wish you to take up the hatchet against the King's Troops. We desire you to remain at home, and not join either side, but keep the hatchet buried deep.³⁵

Although the Second Continental Congress claimed that the war did not concern native people, as the conflict escalated, many tribes quickly concluded that there was much at stake for the Indian population. From a native point of view, the Revolution was a contest for Indian lands. Protecting and securing lands against encroaching American settlement inspired many, both as individuals and as tribes, to abandon neutrality and choose a side in the fight. For the majority of Indians, fighting for the British cause made the most sense. The British supported the Proclamation Line of 1763. Although not meant to be a permanent measure, it provided some degree of security against expansion. Although most groups supported the British, some native peoples did side with the Americans. Indian support for the American cause was strongest in New England, where the populations had lived closely with their colonial neighbors for the longest period of time.

Although both the Americans and the British initially desired for Indians to remain neutral, once the war broke out, each side abandoned this policy and cultivated native allies. The powerful Iroquois Confederacy was one of the most important potential native alliances. For more than one hundred

years, the Iroquois had been a major political force in the Northeast. In 1775, the Iroquois Confederacy declared itself to be neutral in the war. However, the decision was not unanimous. Each of the six nations had freedom in determining its individual war policy. In a series of meetings from 1776 to 1777, the Iroquois nations debated their involvement in the American Revolution. Mohawk Joseph Brandt (Thayenadanega) was a key figure who argued for forming an alliance with the British. Brandt had been educated at a Christian Indian school and worked as a translator for the British. He helped to bring four of the six Iroquois nations into an alliance with the British, these four being the Mohawk, Cayuga, Seneca, and Onondaga. The remaining two nations, the Oneida and Tuscarora, allied with the Americans in the war. Ultimately, the Iroquois Confederacy underwent a major political split over the issue of the American Revolution.

Brandt and the British-allied Iroquois nations conducted a series of successful campaigns against American frontier settlements in the Mohawk Valley, devastating many villages. In retaliation, Washington ordered General John Sullivan to lead an expedition into Iroquois lands with the objective of ending frontier warfare in the region and capturing Fort Niagara. In the summer of 1779, Sullivan's forces entered the Mohawk Valley. The campaign saw only one major battle, which the American forces decisively won; however, they ultimately failed to capture Fort Niagara. The major effect of the campaign was Sullivan's scorched earth policy, which resulted in the total destruction of dozens of Iroquois villages. Moreover, rather than quelling frontier war and Iroquois involvement, Sullivan's expedition against Iroquois lands inspired many Oneida and Tuscarora to reconsider their American alliance and switch to fighting for the British.

In the South, the Creek, Chickasaw, and Choctaw fought with the British; the Catawba fought on the American side. Cherokee elders favored neutrality in the war, but the younger generations, having seen tremendous land loss over the course of their lives, tended to favor allying with the British in an attempt to prevent further encroachment. The most important leader of the faction of younger Cherokee was Dragging Canoe (ᎠᎵᎠ ᎠᎵᎠᎵᎠ), son of famed warrior Attakullakulla. In the summer of 1776, Dragging Canoe led a series of successful raids in Eastern Tennessee and soon broadened the scope of the frontier battles to Kentucky, Virginia, Georgia, and North Carolina. The colonial forces retaliated by taking the war into Cherokee lands, destroying more than fifty towns, killing hundreds and selling hundreds more Cherokee into slavery. The conflict continued throughout the American Revolution and for ten more years after the war's end; for this reason, the Cherokee war within and beyond the American Revolution is referred to as the Chickamauga Wars (1776-1794).

8.4.6 Before You Move On...

Key Concepts

The American Revolution impacted the lives of Americans in more ways than simply a political independence from Great Britain. Americans had come to think of themselves in new ways and suffered new and unexpected economic hardships. While the Continental Congress struggled to meet their financial obligations, the soldiers and their families faced rampant inflation and constant shortages of goods; the end of the war brought little relief from their economic suffering. Americans who did not support the patriot cause, the loyalists or Tories, chose to aid the British war effort in a variety of ways. They often suffered physical and economic consequences at the hands of the patriot governments in their communities.

The lofty rhetoric of the Declaration of Independence also inspired many women to fight for greater political and economic rights and blacks to fight for an end to slavery and real equality. Women found themselves more than capable of managing their families' farms and businesses in the absence of their husbands and fathers. When the war came to an end, they hoped to retain some of that economic freedom and expand their political rights. However, most men refused to listen to their calls. Meanwhile, blacks—slave and free—sought to use the revolution to end bondage and inequality. Southern slaves flocked to the loyalist cause in hopes of securing freedom; northern slaves and free blacks, on the other hand, tended to support the patriot cause. While the war led to the end of slavery, on a gradual basis, in the northern states, the same was not true in the southern states, where it continued to grow.

The presence of Indians in North America complicated alliances during the American Revolutionary War. Although both the colonists and the British would have preferred that the tribes remain neutral, many did not. Neutrality was declared by the Iroquois Confederacy, but the decision was not unanimous and individual tribes proceeded to create alliances, mostly with the British. In the South, the majority of the tribes that became involved sided with the British; only the Catawba of North Carolina fought on the side of the Americans. And while most Cherokee elders favored neutrality, younger tribal members rallied against the colonials and wreaked havoc on Tennessee, Kentucky, North Carolina, and Georgia.

Test Yourself

1. Revolutionary war soldiers were well rewarded for their service.
 - a. True
 - b. False

2. Many women found themselves incapable of handling the burdens of war when their husbands and fathers went off to fight.
 - a. True
 - b. False

3. Benjamin Franklin established the first abolitionist society in America.
 - a. True
 - b. False

4. Most Indian tribes and nations supported the British because they feared that an American victory would mean a greater loss of land through expansion.
 - a. True
 - b. False

5. All of the tribes in the Iroquois Confederacy maintained neutrality during the Revolutionary War.
 - a. True
 - b. False

[Click here to see answers](#)

8.5 THE TREATY OF PARIS, 1783

For the British, the American Revolution was but one of several conflicts taxing the resources of the British military in 1783. Not only were the American colonists in revolt, aided by Britain's long-standing enemy, France, but there were conflicts with the Spanish and Dutch and a separate issue with the French as well. Diplomatic negotiations known as the Peace of Paris saw the signing of several treaties that put these conflicts to rest, at least for the moment.

The Treaty of Paris, 1783, was the treaty that dealt specifically with the American Revolution. For the Americans, John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, and John Jay led the negotiations and signed the treaty for the United States. David Hartley, British MP signed as the representative of King George III. The treaty laid out the terms for peace between the United States and Great Britain in ten straightforward articles. The French had hoped to keep the Americans from signing a separate treaty with the British. Keeping the British occupied with a war against their own colonies was to the French

advantage, as it tied up resources, both financial and military, that the British might use in a conflict with France. The American negotiators realized though that prolonging the war was not in the best interests of their fledgling nation: it drained them financially and of human life. With this in mind, the Americans made their separate peace.

Article I

In Article I, Britain promised to recognize sovereignty of the United States, listing each of the former colonies by name: New Hampshire, Massachusetts Bay, Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia. All British claims to the United States were relinquished.

Article II

The borders of the United States as recognized by Great Britain were established. The intention was particularly to define the borders between the United States and those North American colonies still loyal to Britain in Canada. This treaty did not deal with the issue of Florida, which was settled between Great Britain and Spain in a separate treaty.

Article III

Article III covered fishing rights, particularly the rights to fish the Grand Banks off of Newfoundland and the Gulf of St. Lawrence. In 1783, they were important to the economy of Canada and New England as well as Europe.

Article IV

Before the Revolution, colonial merchants and planters were heavily involved with British banking houses and merchants. This article guaranteed the rights of people in both countries to collect their debts. Although the right to collect debts was recognized, collecting international debts in 1783 was not always easy or even possible.

Article V

Article V was concerned with the rights of British subjects and Loyalists. With Article V, the United States promised that Congress would make an effort to encourage the various state legislatures to protect the property

rights of British subjects and Loyalists who had their property seized during the war. It is worth noting that while this article promised that Congress would encourage the legislatures to respect the property rights of Loyalists, nowhere in the article does it actually guarantee that those property rights would be respected. In other words, Congress was bound by this treaty to bring the matter to the attention of the various legislatures, but the legislatures, in turn, were free to do as they pleased.

Article VI

This article continues with the issue of Loyalists who remained in the United States. With this article, the United States essentially promised to protect Loyalists from further harassment, either by having property seized or being charged with crimes. Further, any Loyalist who was imprisoned at the time of the ratification of the treaty would be immediately released.

Article VII

Article VII promised a tidy end to the war. The British were to remove their troops and property from the United States as soon as they could without any theft, including of slaves that belonged to the Americans. All prisoners on both sides were to be released, and any documents or records of importance to Americans that were in British hands were to be returned.

Article VIII

Article VIII promised that both Americans and British subjects would always be allowed to travel the full length of the Mississippi River, "...from its source to the ocean..." In 1783, the end of the Mississippi where it pours into the Gulf of Mexico was well-known. However, the actual source was not, to Americans and Europeans alike. Not until 1806 would it be known that there definitely was no Northwest Passage, and not until 1832 would the area of the headwaters of the Mississippi River be discovered and explored by non-Indians.

Article IX

Article IX promised that if any American territory fell into British hands, or British territory fell into American hands during the Revolution, the territory would be returned to its proper owner without any difficulties.

Article X

A ratification deadline of six months from the date of signing was specified with this article.

8.5.1 Before You Move On...**Key Concepts**

Although the Treaty of Paris promised the best intentions of both sides, in the end, it was just a piece of paper. It signaled the end of the war and the beginning of a new period of peace between the United States and Great Britain, but the articles of the Treaty, particularly those that required the obedience of the states, were not always followed. In addition, the British were slow in some cases to actually move out of the areas they were to vacate and the emotions that led to the persecution of Loyalists during the war did not instantly subside. While the treaty addressed several issues, it failed to mention Indian tribes which had fought on both sides and so had a stake in the outcome of the war. Even the most important provision of the treaty, that Britain would recognize the sovereignty of the United States, would be imperfectly applied, leading to increasing abuse by the British of American shipping. The perhaps inevitable conflict less than thirty years later was known as the War of 1812.

Test Yourself

1. For all practical purposes, the Treaty of Paris ignored the American Indians.
 - a. True
 - b. False
2. Both the Americans and the British gave up claims to the Mississippi for the sake of peace.
 - a. True
 - b. False
3. Loyalists were protected by the treaty and well treated after it was signed.
 - a. True
 - b. False

[Click here to see answers](#)

Sidebar 8.1: How Revolutionary Was the Revolution?

Just how “revolutionary” was the American Revolution? Certainly the English colonials won their independence, and the system of government they would eventually adopt would not be a monarchy; neither was it a full-fledged democracy, a reality later reflected in the Constitution of 1789.

Historians are generally divided into two camps in their interpretation of the American Revolution. Some historians argue that the Revolution was primarily a colonial rebellion whose aim was simply independence from Britain. According to these historians, colonial society was essentially a democratic society, and the Revolution sought to maintain the status quo. Other historians take a more radical view of the Revolution, seeing it as a violent social upheaval that was the result of a class conflict in which the lower classes of colonial society attempted to implement a greater degree of democracy and attain greater equality.

Historians who wrote in eras when nationalism was an important ideal or issue tend to view the Revolution as a radical event which helped to forge greater unity among the colonists and a greater degree of liberty. George Bancroft’s *History of the United States*, written in the period between the Jacksonian era and the Civil war, is an example of a work which tended to emphasize the unity of the colonists in their quest for liberty against the tyrannical policies of the British.

The Imperial School of Historians

In the twentieth century, historians began to look more critically at nationalistic views, such as those of Bancroft. The so-called “imperial” school of historians, represented by the work of George Beer, Charles Andrews, and Lawrence Gipson, argued that the American Revolution should be understood within the context of the British Empire as a whole. Gipson’s multi-volume *The British Empire before the American Revolution*, published between the 1930s and the 1960s, argued forcefully that British taxation of the colonies was justified, as the mother country had defended the colonies with soldiers and money during the French and Indian War (1754-1763). The imperial school of historians argued that conflicts over constitutional issues were at the heart of the Revolution; while the mother country sought greater control over her empire, the colonies were moving toward self-government. Essentially, the Revolution, for the imperialist historians, represented a conflict between two incompatible societies.

The Progressive School of Historians

On the other hand, the school of progressive historians, who wrote in an age dominated by concern about concentration of power in the hands of a few elite, argued that social and economic issues were the root cause of the Revolution. Carl Becker argued that the American Revolution was not one revolution but two: an external revolution against Britain caused by a conflict of economic interests, and an internal revolution of one class in American society against another to determine “who should rule at home” (*The History of Political Parties in the Province of New York, 1760-1776*, 22). In *The American Revolution Considered as a Social Movement*, J. Franklin Jameson spelled out in great detail the radical social and economic reforms achieved in the Revolution. Loyalist estates were confiscated and sold in smaller plots

to farmers. Land ownership was more widespread than it was in England, there were no titles of nobility or any of the other trappings of monarchy, and religious freedom was guaranteed in most state constitutions and in the Constitution of 1789. Property qualifications for voting were lowered, slavery was abolished in some of the states, some slaves received their freedom in return for service in the war, and the Anglican Church was disestablished. The progressive historians, then, saw the Revolution as a radical turning point in American history, in which the dispossessed lower classes advanced their cause and attained greater rights and equality.

The Neoconservative School of Historians

Since World War II, however, the “neoconservative” historians have challenged the radical view of the Progressives. Historians such as Robert E. Brown have challenged the Progressive view that colonial America was undemocratic. Brown and others argue that very few colonists, for example, were disenfranchised as voters based on property qualifications; his study of *Middle-Class Democracy and the Revolution in Massachusetts* suggested that the vast majority of adult males in colonial America owned enough property to vote. Similarly, Daniel Boorstin argued in *The Genius of American Politics* that the American revolutionaries fought not to achieve a radical new social order, but only to defend the traditional order against British intrusions. According to this school of thought, the Revolution was an ideological movement concerned with preserving rights, as opposed to a radical movement that sought sweeping social, economic, and political changes. Sometimes referred to as the “consensus school” of historians, these critics downplayed class conflict within colonial society and instead depicted the “patriot” element of society as having essentially the same goals and aspirations, regardless of social class.

Ideology and the Revolution

Beginning in the 1960s, a new focus fell on the intellectual underpinnings of the American Revolution, taking the discussion of the event in a new direction. Beginning with Bernard Bailyn’s *Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*, historians stressed ideas as the cause of the Revolution, rather than social and economic factors. They asserted that the colonists, impacted by Whig politics in England and the earlier tradition of anti-authoritarian thought promulgated in the Glorious Revolution, truly came to believe their liberties were in danger.

New Left Historians

During the 1960s, another group of historians, referred to as the “New Left,” criticized earlier historians’ focus on colonial elites and began to assert that the revolution was influenced by the desires of the “lower sort” in colonial society. Referred to as “bottom up” history, the work of scholars such as Alfred E. Young and Edward Countryman has redirected a great deal of research to non-elite groups such as militia members and artisans.

The Debate Continues

Few topics in American history have elicited such a wide range of interpretations from historians. The Revolution is still a very active area of research today. More recent works, such as Gordon Wood’s *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*,

have returned to older themes of colonial class dynamics, while incorporating New Left perspectives of examining changing attitudes and lifestyles among everyday Americans. Wood's focus turns to the social changes wrought by the revolution, and in the end, as the title implies, asserts that the political changes brought on by the Revolution in creating a republic radically altered American society. The Revolution, according to Wood, shifted colonial society from a people tied to an old world culture of deference and tradition to a modern, liberal, and democratic people. Wood's work immediately resulted in a new debate over the merits of this perspective. Undoubtedly, further examinations of this momentous event will continue to emerge in the years to come.

8.6 Conclusion

The social unease which led to the American Revolution did not automatically ignite a violent conflict between Great Britain and her American colonies. Many on both sides hoped for a peaceful solution, reconciliation, or amicable agreement that would have addressed the grievances of the colonists while preserving the colonial relationship. This was not to be. Instead, tensions mounted and the quiet plans made by General Gage in Boston to diffuse the situation unintentionally ignited the war at Lexington. The Second Continental Congress met in Philadelphia at first to consider reconciliation and then to move on to form the government of colonies in revolt. They created and sent the Declaration of Independence to Britain, announcing to all the fateful decision to seek true independence and the reasons for it. On the home front, the Congress attempted to create a government that would be able to support an army to fight for independence. George Washington of Virginia became the Commander of the American forces. He faced the challenge of taking men from all over the colonies with diverse backgrounds, few with military experience, and molding them into a fighting army, often without proper weapons, uniforms, or other equipment and supplies. From 1775 to 1781, the two main armies and other smaller forces clashed from Canada to South Carolina, finally ending in Yorktown, Virginia where the main British force under Lord Cornwallis was cornered and forced to surrender to Washington. Although the military conflict was over, the revolution did not officially end until the ratification of the Treaty of Paris. The American Revolution was a time not just of military battles, but also of social upheaval for the civilians, men and women, whites and blacks, both free and slave, and Indians as all together they faced an uncertain future. No colony, no level of society, was left untouched. In the end, the American Revolution led to the founding not just of a new nation, but of a new national model of democracy that would have influence around the world in the centuries to follow.

8.7 CRITICAL THINKING EXERCISES

- Why do you think that the Continental Congress created an army and began preparing for war before George III had given a response to the *Olive Branch Petition*?
- Why would delegates to the Second Continental Congress hope that the colonies and the mother country could be reconciled? Why did they ultimately change their minds?
- Why do you think that Thomas Jefferson and those on the committee that drafted the Declaration of Independence decided to use the “pursuit of happiness” instead of John Locke’s “property” as a natural right?
- Why would simple farmers and shopkeepers train as soldiers and risk their lives fighting a professional army as at Lexington and Concord?
- What could the British have done to prevent violence at Lexington and Concord?
- How did the ideas of the revolution inspire abolitionists such as Benjamin Franklin?

8.8 KEY TERMS

- John Adams
- Samuel Adams
- Benedict Arnold
- Artillery
- Articles of Confederation
- Joseph Brandt
- John Burgoyne
- Chickamauga Wars
- Henry Clinton
- *Common Sense*
- Charles Cornwallis
- *Conciliatory Proposition*
- Dragging Canoe
- *Declaration of Independence*
- *Declaration of the Causes of Taking up Arms*
- John Dickinson
- “Firm League of Friendship”
- Fortifications
- Benjamin Franklin
- Thomas Gage
- Horatio Gates
- Hessians
- House of Commons
- William Howe
- Hudson River Valley
- Thomas Jefferson
- Benjamin Lincoln
- John Locke
- Locke’s theory of revolution
- Militia
- Daniel Morgan
- Natural Rights
- *Olive Branch Petition*
- Thomas Paine
- Preamble
- *Prohibitory Act*
- Paul Revere
- Second Continental Congress
- Spy
- Sullivan Expedition
- Banastre Tarleton
- Tarleton’s Quarter
- George Washington

8.9 CHRONOLOGY

The following chronology is a list of important dates and events associated with this chapter.

Date	Event
1775	Fort Ticonderoga captured by Ethan Allen and the Green Mountain Boys; Battle of Bunker/Breeds Hill; Second Continental Congress convened; Olive Branch Petition Presented to George III
1776	<i>Common Sense</i> published; Declaration of Independence adopted by Second Continental Congress; Battle of Long Island/Brooklyn Heights; Battle of Trenton
1777	Second Battle of Trenton; Battle of Princeton; British occupy Philadelphia; Battles of Saratoga; Surrender of British army under General Burgoyne; Articles of Confederation adopted by Second Continental Congress; Continental Army wintered at Valley Forge
1778	Treaty of Alliance signed with France; British occupation of Philadelphia ended
1780	Battle of Charleston; American General Benjamin Lincoln surrendered to the British
1781	Articles of Confederation ratified; Battle of Cowpens; Battle of Guilford Court House; British surrendered at Yorktown
1782	British government officially recognized American independence
1783	Treaty of Paris brought an end to the American Revolutionary War

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- 2 Quoted in Robert Middlekauff, *The Glorious Cause: The American Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), 378-379.
- 3 *Proclamation of King George III For suppressing Rebellion and Sedition*, Massachusetts Historical Society, The Coming of the American Revolution, <http://www.masshist.org/revolution/congress2.php>.
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- 9 *Causes and Necessities*.
- 10 Paine quoted in Robert Middlekauff, *Glorious Cause*, 318-19.
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- 12 Robert Middlekauff, *The Glorious Cause: The American Revolution, 1763-1789* (New York: Oxford University Press), 544-545; Mary Beth Norton, *Liberty's Daughters: The Revolutionary Experience of American Women, 1750-1800* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), 195.
- 13 Middlekauff, *The Glorious Cause*, 552-553, 614-616; Ben Baack, "The Economics of the American Revolutionary War," *EH.Net Encyclopedia*, ed. Robert Whaples, October 1, 2012, <http://eh.net/encyclopedia/article/baack.war.revolutionary.us>; Louis Jordan, "Colonial Fiscal Documents," *Colonial Currency*, University of Notre Dame, Department of Special Collections, October 1, 2012, <http://www.coins.nd.edu/ColCurrency/CurrencyText/FiscalDocsUS.html>.
- 14 Harry M. Ward, *The War for Independence and the Transformation of American Society* (London: UCL Press, 1999), 149-157.
- 15 Ward, *The War for Independence and the Transformation of American Society*, 35; Middlekauff, *The Glorious Cause*, 564-565.
- 16 Ward, *The War for Independence and the Transformation of American Society*, 37-38; William H. Nelson, *The American Tory* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964), 7, 105.

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- 17 Ward, *The War for Independence and the Transformation of American Society*, 40-44.
- 18 Ward, *The War for Independence and the Transformation of American Society*, 38.
- 19 Middlekauff, *The Glorious Cause*, 566-567.
- 20 Ward, *The War for Independence and the Transformation of American Society*, 45, 48.
- 21 Norton, *Liberty's Daughters*, 212-213.
- 22 Sarah Hodgkins quoted in Middlekauff, *The Glorious Cause*, 546.
- 23 Grace Growden Galloway quoted in Norton, *Liberty's Daughters*, 217-218.
- 24 Lois Crary Peters quoted in Middlekauff, *The Glorious Cause*, 549.
- 25 Middlekauff, *The Glorious Cause*, 547-548.
- 26 Ward, *The War for Independence and the Transformation of American Society*, 148; Norton, *Liberty's Daughters*, 179-181.
- 27 Norton, *Liberty's Daughters*, 217-221.
- 28 Ward, *The War for Independence and the Transformation of American Society*, 164-166, 169.
- 29 "Revolution, 1750-1805 (Narrative)," *Africans in America*, PBS, October 3, 2012, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part2/narrative.html>; Gary B. Nash, *The Unknown American Revolution: The Unruly Birth of American Democracy and the Struggle to Create America* (New York: Viking, 2005), 33.
- 30 "Revolution, 1750-1805 (Narrative)," *Africans in America*; Felix's Petition, 6 January 1773, *Africans in America*, PBS, October 3, 2012, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part2/2h22t.html>; Nash, *The Unknown American Revolution*, 126-127. Historians are not entirely sure "Felix" wrote the petition since literacy rates were low among the enslaved population; some speculate that Boston slave and poet Phillis Wheatley drafted the statement. See, Nash, *The Unknown American Revolution*, 127.
- 31 Nash, *The Unknown American Revolution*, 41-42; 62-63; Arthur Lee quoted in Nash, *The Unknown American Revolution*, 115.
- 32 Ward, *The War for Independence and the Transformation of American Society*, 180-182; Nash, *The Unknown American Revolution*, 230-231; "Revolution, 1750-1805 (Narrative)," *Africans in America*.
- 33 Ward, *The War for Independence and the Transformation of American Society*, 178-180; Nash, *The Unknown American Revolution*, 223-229; Middlekauff, *The Glorious Cause*, 570-571.
- 34 Middlekauff, *The Glorious Cause*, 571-572; Ward, *The War for Independence and the Transformation of American Society*, 186-187.
- 35 Vine Deloria, Jr., and Raymond J. DeMalle, *Documents of American Indian Diplomacy: Treaties, Agreements, and Conventions, 1775-1979* (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999), 38.

ANSWER KEY FOR CHAPTER EIGHT: THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

Check your answers to the questions in the Before You Move On Sections for this chapter. You can click on the questions to take you back to the chapter section.

Correct answers are **BOLDED**

Section 8.2.3 - p336

- The rationale that Jefferson used in the Declaration of Independence came primarily from the theories of John Locke.
 - TRUE**
 - False
- Which of the following documents was NOT one drafted by the Second Continental Congress?
 - THE PROHIBITORY ACT**
 - The Declaration of Independence
 - The Olive Branch Petition
 - The Causes and Necessity of Taking Up Arms
- In the Conciliatory Proposition, the mother country gave in to most of the demands of the American colonists.
 - True
 - FALSE**
- The Declaration of Independence consists of _____ sections:
 - One
 - Two
 - Three
 - Four
 - FIVE**

Section 8.3.9 - p351

- One of the most important results of the American victory at Saratoga was
 - the Hessian removal from the British force.
 - the French participation in the war on the side of the British.
 - THE FRENCH PARTICIPATION IN THE WAR ON THE SIDE OF THE AMERICANS.**
 - the end of the war.
- The siege of Charleston was well conducted.
 - TRUE**
 - False
- Famous for leading his troops against the Hessians at Trenton, New Jersey was
 - GENERAL GEORGE WASHINGTON.**
 - Brigadier General Daniel Morgan.
 - Major Benedict Arnold.
 - Major General Benjamin Lincoln.
- Benedict Arnold is America's most famous traitor.
 - TRUE**
 - False

Section 8.4.6 - p363

- Revolutionary war soldiers were well rewarded for their service.
 - True
 - FALSE**

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2. Many women found themselves incapable of handling the burdens of war when their husbands and fathers went off to fight.
 - a. True
 - B. FALSE**
3. Benjamin Franklin established the first abolitionist society in America.
 - A. TRUE**
 - b. False
4. Most Indian tribes and nations supported the British because they feared that an American victory would mean a greater loss of land through expansion.
 - A. TRUE**
 - b. False
5. All of the tribes in the Iroquois Confederacy maintained neutrality during the Revolutionary War.
 - a. True
 - B. FALSE**

Section 8.5.10 - p367

1. For all practical purposes, the Treaty of Paris ignored the American Indians.
 - A. TRUE**
 - b. False
2. Both the Americans and the British gave up claims to the Mississippi for the sake of peace.
 - a. True
 - B. FALSE**
3. Loyalists were protected by the treaty and well treated after it was signed.
 - a. True
 - B. FALSE**