

American Revolution

At the end of the French and Indian War...

- a. British territorial claims greatly expanded in America, France loses territory, Migration to Louisiana (Cajuns)
- b. British debt grew – expect colonists to pay
- c. Resentment toward American colonists increased in Parliament due to those unwilling to financially support a war “on their behalf”
- d. Colonists unified for the first time against common enemy... “no taxation without representation”... unlike Franklin’s failed Albany Plan in 1754
- e. Colonial militias saw themselves as volunteers or a “people’s army” in contrast to the authoritarian and coercive British army
- f. Spirit of Enlightenment and experience in Great Awakening had been fueling a rebellious, individualistic spirit

Revolution Questions

- a. Necessary – Coming of Age/Time Had Come or America would have remained obedient had England not made mistakes?
- b. A true revolution or merely transfer of power from one wealthy group to another?
- c. Capitalist motivation to keep money in America instead of taxes going overseas?
- d. Inevitable or avoidable?

Decades before 1754 – proud to be Englishmen

- ...Colonists annoyed at Navigation Acts, Brits annoyed with chaotic legislatures
- ...Grown apart - could govern selves better than overseas, however most saw themselves as English subjects

1. **Causes**

- a. Economic - Because England was in debt from the French and Indian War, she imposed and was determined to collect various taxes.
 - i. Sugar Act: tax on sugar and coffee. Although no one questioned this act, vice-admiralty court trials for violators angered people.
 - ii. Stamp Act: tax on all legal documents (birth, death, marriages, real estate). Since this was an internal tax (not a tariff) the colonies resented it. "No taxation without representation."
 - iii. Declaratory Act: England repealed the Stamp Act, but claimed Parliamentary right to make laws for the colonies
 - iv. Townshend Duties: external tax on glass, lead, tea, paint, and paper. Americans boycotted British goods in response.
 - v. Tea Act and Coercive Acts (after Boston Tea Party)
- b. Political
 - i. England did not have effective leadership under King George III.
 - ii. Strong leadership in America: Washington, Sam Adams, Jefferson, and Franklin.
 - iii. Colonial institutions, having operated democratically and with limited interference since early 17th century, felt that England was acting regressively.
 - iv. Taxation without direct representation in Parliament angered colonists.
 - v. Original charters were being revoked.
- c. Violation of cherished legal rights as Englishmen
 - i. Writs of Assistance -- general search warrants violated cherished rights.
 - ii. Criminal trials judged in vice-admiralty courts rather than by jury of one's peers in district where crime was allegedly committed.
 - iii. Quartering Act -- broke tradition of not quartering troops in peacetime.
- d. Philosophical
 - i. Age of Enlightenment: John Locke (Right of revolution)
 - ii. Thomas Paine - "Common Sense"
- e. Emotional
 - i. Boston Massacre
 - ii. Boston Tea Party
- f. Other Irritants
 - i. America forced to take in British criminals
 - ii. Northern colonies that wanted to stop slave trade could not
 - iii. Royal governors looked down noses at colonists

2. **Beginning, Turning Point, and Ending Battles**

- a. Lexington and Concord, April 1775
- b. Saratoga (1777) America victory. Turning point in war as France agreed to ally with America. Gave military aid and troops.
- c. Yorktown (1781) Cornwallis surrendered to Washington

3. **Results**

- a. Independence of thirteen states
- b. Territory from Atlantic to Mississippi, but not Florida
- c. Nationalistic spirit
- d. Social reform: no entail or primogeniture, gradual emancipation of slaves in the North, elimination of religious requirements to vote, women began to receive more education.
- e. Influenced French Revolution in 1789 and colonial independence movements in the 19th and 20th centuries.

Critical Period – 1776-1789

1. State Constitutions
 - a. Kept some of old – provincial assemblies
 - i. Colonial self-government for 150 years
 - ii. “their just powers from the consent of the governed”
 - b. Methods – written constitutions
 - i. written by provincial assemblies
 - ii. Mass. – town meetings, state conventions
 - c. Format – DOI + citizen rights + executive/legislative
 - i. weaken powers of governor
 - ii. white males with property eligible to vote
 - d. Anti-slavery
 - i. DOI mentions slavery – South forced it out
 - ii. Mass. 1783 – slave sued “all men are created equal” – freed
2. Continental Congress
 - a. 1777 – **Articles of Confederation** – ratified in 1781
 - b. Until ratified – Continental Congress governed
 - Lost power as war progressed – most talented returned to state
 - c. Successes – army, navy, marines, appointed George Washington, supplied army
 - d. Failure – financing war – taxes optional, money worthless - “not worth a Continental”
3. Articles of Confederation - failures
 - a. States jealous of others/competitive – 9 of 13 states to pass
 - b. Taxes voluntary
 - c. Fear of strong executive – no one to enforce laws
 - d. Individual trade agreements w/ foreign nations & states – nobody wants to trade with U.S. – fearful of stability
 - e. Still left England in possession of frontier
4. Articles of Confederation – successes
 - a. Precedent – something to work with
 - b. Northwest Ordinance
 - land-locked states feared other states would get too big
 - Easily pay war debts – too much representation
 - Maryland refuses – leads protest
 - Virginia finally gives land claims to federal gov’t – others follow
 - Land could be sold to make money for fed gov’t
 - Add-A-State Plan – Northwest Ordinance 1787
 - Population + legislature + 60,000 men can + religious freedom
 - c. Peace treaty with England
5. **Shay’s Rebellion** – 1787 – debtors can’t pay and rebel – proved to wealthy that something must be done – catalyst for Constitutional Convention
 - a. Post-war depression made life worse
 - b. Jefferson – “a little rebellion every now and then is a good thing”
6. **Constitutional Convention** – 55 delegates meet in Philadelphia – Washington Presided
 - Great Compromise** – House + Senate
 - Virginia Plan** – large state plan – representation based on population
 - New Jersey Plan** – small state plan – every state receives equal rep
 - Slaves = 3/5 of the population for House rep counting purposes (**3/5 Compromise**), **20 year** limit on importation of slaves
 - Electoral College**
 - Bill of Rights** – citizens rights to prevent oppressive gov’t - 1791
 - Hesitancy to ratify – **Anti-Federalists** believe states should have more power – (Bill of Rights, esp. 10th Amendment)
 - Federalists** believe strong executive necessary (“necessary and proper” clause)
 - Federalist Papers** convince New York/Virginia – Rhode Island last to ratify