

OUTLINE

Chapter 5 The American Revolution, 1763-1783

This chapter describes the origins of the American Revolution and the War of Independence. The chapter covers events from 1763, when American colonists began to oppose new British policies, to 1776, when the thirteen colonies declared their independence. The chapter also examines the military confrontation between the British government and the Americans, which began in 1775, and ended in 1783 when the British signed a treaty accepting American independence.

INTRODUCTION

I. THE CRISIS BEGINS

II. THE ROAD TO REVOLUTION

III. THE COMING OF INDEPENDENCE

IV. SECURING INDEPENDENCE

INTRODUCTION

STORY:

On the night of August 26, 1765, a mob of Bostonians ransacked the home of Thomas Hutchinson who was lieutenant governor of Massachusetts colony. The destruction of Hutchinson's home was one of many actions taken by colonists opposed to new policies enacted by the British government following the French and Indian War. The attack is one example of how the American Revolution involved not only opposition to the Crown but also social tensions within colonial society. Professor Foner says that the attack on Hutchinson's home "revealed that revolution is a dynamic process whose consequences no one can anticipate."



THEMES:

1. The American Revolution unfolded between 1763 and 1776 as American colonists responded to new policies of the British government.
2. The idea of liberty was the rallying cry for those opposed to British policies, but the idea meant different things to different groups of colonials.
3. Opposition to British policies evolved slowly into a movement for independence.
4. The British government refused to accept American independence and fought a war with the Americans between 1775 and 1781.

I. THE CRISIS BEGINS

FOCUS QUESTION: What were the roots and significance of the Stamp Act controversy?

A. Consolidating the Empire

1. Prior to the Seven Years' War, London had loosely tried to regulate some of the colony's economy
2. After the Seven Years' War, London insisted that the colonists play a subordinate role to the mother country and help pay for the protection the British provided
3. Members of the British Parliament had virtual representation
4. Colonists argued London could not tax them because they were underrepresented in Parliament

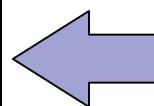


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virtual
representation

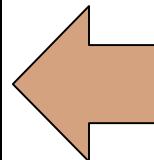
B. The Stamp Act Crisis

1. The Stamp Act of 1765 was a direct tax on all sorts of printed materials
2. The Act was wide reaching and offended virtually every free colonist
3. Opposition to the Stamp Act was the first great drama of the Revolutionary era and the first major split between colonists and Great Britain over the meaning of freedom
4. American leaders viewed the empire as an association of equals in which free settlers



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Stamp Act



STUDY HINT

Read this section carefully because the Stamp Act crisis was a key event.

overseas enjoyed the same rights as Britons at home

4. Stamp Act Congress met in 1765 to endorse Virginia's House of Burgesses' resolutions

C. Liberty and Resistance

1. No word was more frequently invoked by critics of the Stamp Act than liberty

- a. Liberty Tree
- b. Liberty Hall
- c. Liberty Pole

2. A Committee of Correspondence was created in Boston and other colonies to exchange ideas about resistance

3. The Sons of Liberty were organized to resist the Stamp Act and enforce a boycott of British goods

4. London repealed the Stamp Act, but issued the Declaratory Act

D. Land and Liberty

1. Settlers also cried "liberty" in regard to land disputes

2. The "Regulators" in the Carolinas used liberty to promote their cause

3. Land disputes were behind the creation of Vermont

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Sons of Liberty

II. THE ROAD TO REVOLUTION

FOCUS QUESTION: What key events sharpened the divisions between Britain and the colonists in the late 60s and early 1770s?

A. The Townshend Crisis

1. The 1767 Townshend Act imposed taxes on imported goods
2. By 1768 colonies were again boycotting British goods
 - a. Use of American goods came to be seen as a symbol of American resistance
 - b. Urban artisans strongly supported the boycott

STUDY HINT
In this section it is most important to remember the sequence of events.

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Townshend Act

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Boston massacre

B. The Boston Massacre

1. The March 1770 conflict between Bostonians and British troops left five Bostonians dead
2. The boycott ended after the Townshend duties were repealed, except for a tax on tea
3. The treatment of John Wilkes and the rumors of Anglican bishops being sent to America convinced many settlers that England was succumbing to the same pattern of political corruption and decline of liberty that afflicted other countries

C. The Tea and Intolerable Acts

1. The Tea Act was intended to bail out the

East India Company and help to defray the costs of colonial government

2. On December 16, 1773, colonists threw over 300 chests of tea into the Boston Harbor
3. London's response was swift and harsh with the Intolerable Acts
4. The Quebec Act granted religious toleration for Catholics in Canada

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Tea Act

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Intolerable Acts



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III. THE COMING OF INDEPENDENCE

FOCUS QUESTION: What were the key steps on the way to independence in the mid-1770s?

A. The Continental Association

1. To resist the Intolerable Acts, a Continental Congress convened in Philadelphia in 1774
2. The Congress adopted the Continental Association, which called for an almost complete halt to trade with Great Britain and the West Indies
3. Committees of Safety were established to enforce the boycotts
4. The Committees of Safety enlarged the “political nation”

B. The Seeds of Liberty

1. By 1775 talk of liberty pervaded the colonies
2. As the crisis deepened, Americans increasingly based their claims not simply on the historical rights of Englishmen but on the more abstract language of natural rights and universal freedom
 - a. John Locke
 - b. Thomas Jefferson

STUDY HINT

As with the previous section, it is important to remember the sequence of events described in this section.

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First Continental Congress

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Committees of Safety



C. The Outbreak of War

1. In April 1775, war broke out at Lexington and Concord
2. The Battle of Bunker Hill was a British victory, but the colonists forced General Howe from Boston by March 1776
3. The Second Continental Congress raised an army and appointed George Washington its commander

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Second
Continental
Congress

D. Independence?

1. That the goal of this war was independence was not clear by the end of 1775
2. Opinions varied in the colonies as to the question of independence

E. Common Sense

1. Thomas Paine penned Common Sense in January 1776
 - a. Called for a democratic system based on frequent elections and a written constitution
 - b. Paine tied the economic hopes of the new nation to the idea of commercial freedom
2. Paine dramatically expanded the public sphere where political discussion took place

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Thomas Paine

STUDY HINT
You should be able to describe the ideas set out in *Common Sense* and its impact on the movement for independence.

F. The Declaration of Independence

1. The Declaration of Independence declared that Britain's aim was to establish "absolute

tyranny” over the colonies and, as such, Congress declared the United States an independent nation

2. Jefferson’s preamble gave the Declaration its enduring impact

3. The Declaration of Independence completed the shift from the rights of Englishmen to the rights of mankind as the object of American independence

4. The “pursuit of happiness” was unique

G. An Asylum for Mankind

1. The idea of “American exceptionalism” was prevalent in the Revolution

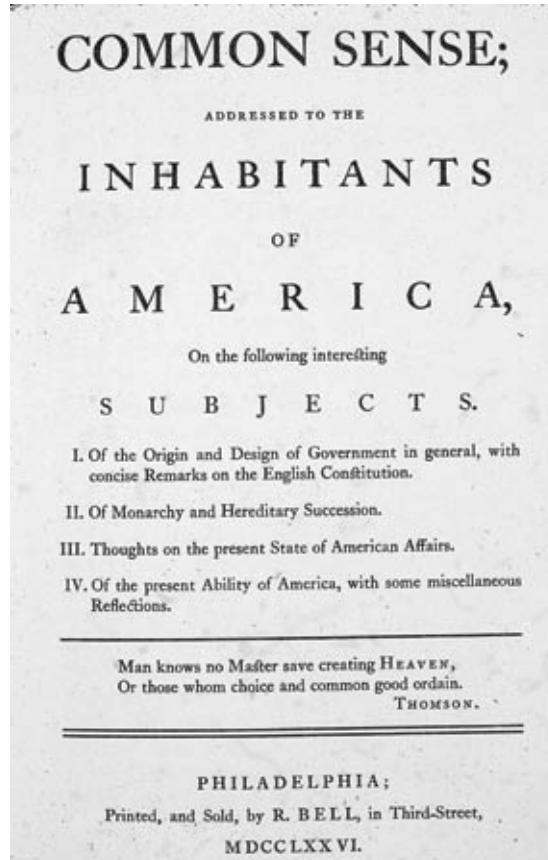
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Declaration of Independence



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American exceptionalism



IV. SECURING INDEPENDENCE

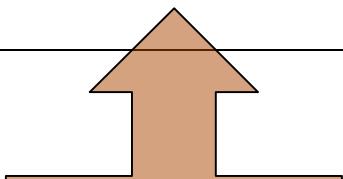
FOCUS QUESTION: How were American forces able to prevail in the Revolutionary War?

A. The Balance of Power

1. Britain had the advantage of a large, professional army and navy
2. Patriots had the advantage of fighting on their own soil and a passionate desire for freedom
3. British soldiers alienated Americans, while citizen-soldiers displayed great valor

B. The First Years of the War

1. The war went badly for George Washington
2. The Battle of Saratoga in October 1777 gave the patriots a victory and boost to morale
3. The victory convinced the French to aid the Americans in 1778
4. The War in the South
 - a. The focus of the war shifted to the South in 1778
 - b. British commanders were unable to consolidate their hold on the South



STUDY HINT

You should be able to identify the advantages and disadvantages on each side. You do not need to know the battles of the war.

C. Victory at Last

1. Washington and French troops surrounded General Cornwallis at Yorktown, where he surrendered in October 1781
2. The Treaty of Paris was signed in September 1783

