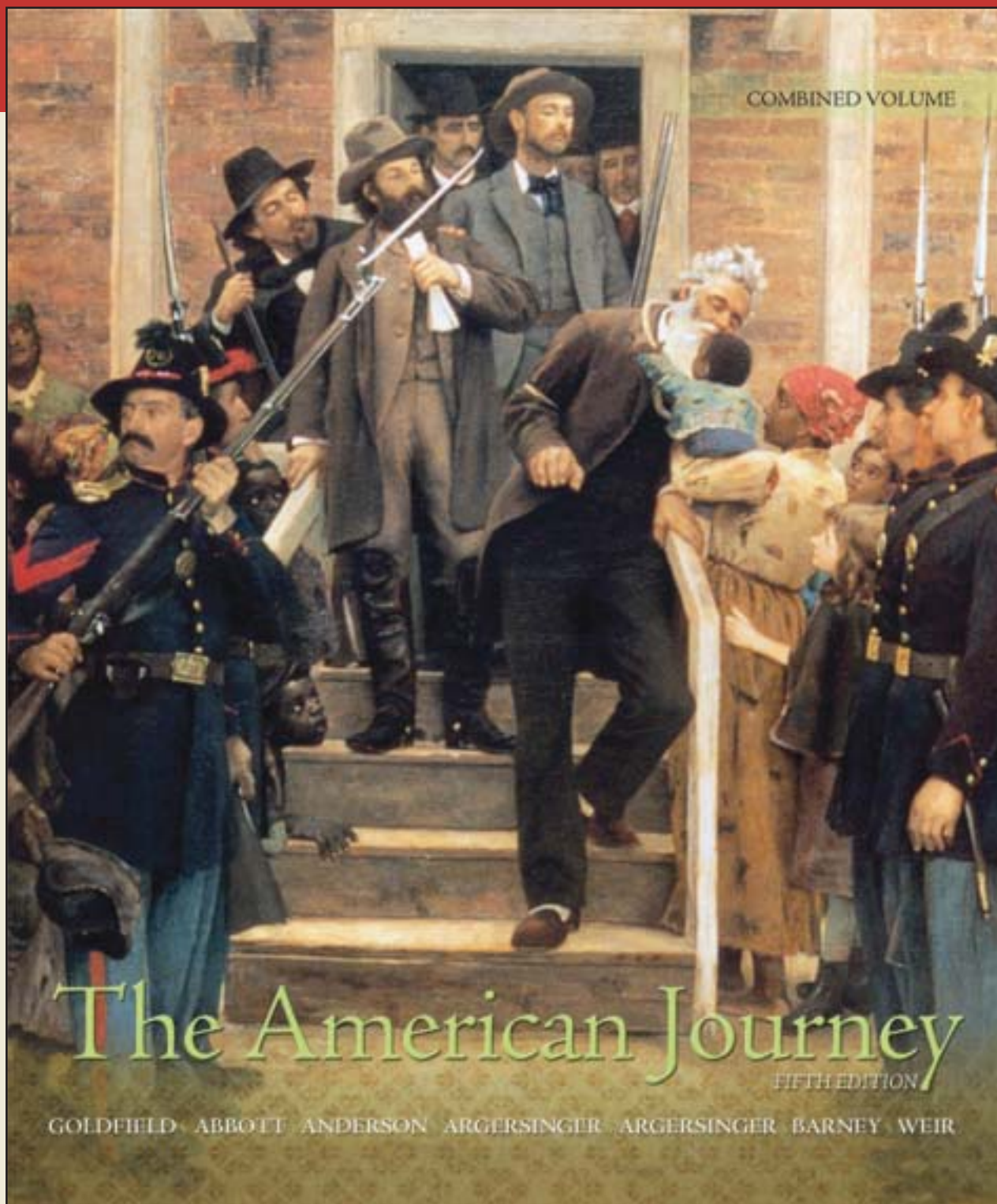
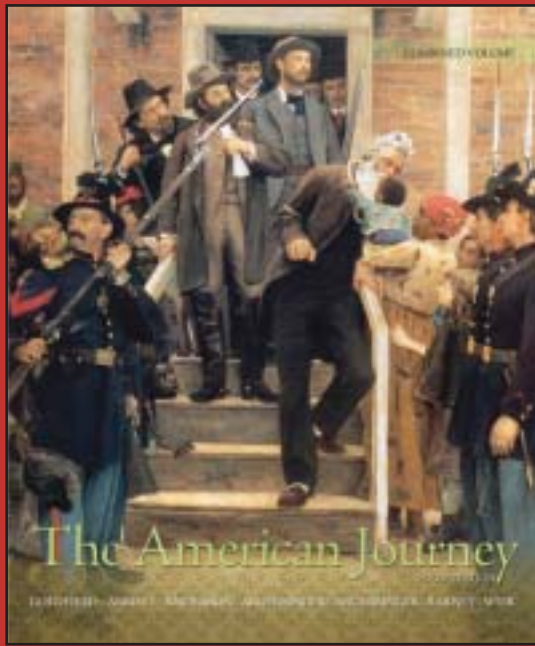


*An integrated blend of U.S.  
political and social history*





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Offering an integrated blend of political and social history, **THE AMERICAN JOURNEY** frames the history of the U.S. as an ongoing quest by the nation's citizens to live up to American ideals and emphasizes how this process has become more inclusive over time.

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George Washington's Tent. Plunkett Fleeson, a well-known Philadelphia upholsterer, made a set of three tents for Washington in 1776. One was for sleeping, one for dining, and one for baggage. This one, which measures 18 by 28 feet, could have served multiple purposes.

Smithsonian Museum.

**The Outbreak of War and the Declaration of Independence, 1774–1776**

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# The War for Independence

## 1774–1783

# 6

**Headquarters, Valley Forge**

January 14, 1778

I barely hinted to you my dearest Father my desire to augment the Continental Forces from an untried Source. . . . I would solicit you to cede me a number of your able bodied men Slaves, instead of leaving me a fortune. I would bring about a twofold good, first I would advance those who are unjustly deprived of the Rights of Mankind to a State which would be a proper Gradation between abject Slavery and perfect Liberty and besides I would reinforce the Defenders of Liberty with a number of gallant Soldiers. . . .

Headquarters, Valley Forge

February 2, 1778

My dear Father,

The more I reflect upon the difficulties and delays which are likely to attend the completing our Continental Regiments, the more anxiously is my mind bent upon the Scheme which I lately communicated to you. . . .

You seem to think my dear Father, that men reconciled by long habit to the miseries of their Condition would prefer their ignominious bonds to the untasted Sweets of Liberty, especially when offer'd upon the terms which I propose. . . . I am tempted to believe that this trampled people have so much human left in them, as to be capable of aspiring to the rights of men by noble exertions, if some friend to mankind would point the Road, and give them prospect of Success.

I have long deplored the wretched State of these men and considered in their history, the bloody wars excited in Africa to furnish America with Slaves. The Groans of despairing multitudes toiling for the Luxuries of Merciless Tyrants. I have had the pleasure of conversing with you sometimes upon the means of restoring them to their rights. When can it be better done than when their enfranchisement may be made conducive to the Public Good.

John Laurens

*Henry Laurens Papers*, vol. 12, pp. 305, 390–392.

**John Laurens** wrote these letters to his father, Henry, at one of the low points of the American Revolution, when victory seemed most remote. The letters reveal much, not only about the course of the war but also about the aspirations and limitations of the Revolutionary generation. Henry, a wealthy slaveholder from South Carolina, was president of the Continental Congress; his son John was an aide to General George Washington.

John, 23 years old in 1778, had been born in South Carolina but educated for the most part in Geneva and London, where he had been exposed to some of the most progressive currents of the Enlightenment. Among these were compassion for the oppressed and the conviction that slavery should be abolished. As the controversy between Britain and its colonies grew into war, John became increasingly impatient to enlist in a cause that appealed deeply to him.

The American version of republicanism combined a New Whig distrust of central authority with a belief in a government rooted in the public spirit of a virtuous citizenry. Clinging fervently to this ideology, Americans at first expected to defeat the British Army with a zealous citizens' militia. But as the war intensified, they learned that they could prevail only by developing a professional



## Personal Journeys Online

- Baikia Harvey, *Baikia Harvey to Thomas Baikie, Snowhill, South Carolina, December 30, 1775*. A new immigrant describes conditions in Georgia in 1775.
- Joseph Martin, *The Revolutionary Adventures of Joseph Plumb Martin, 1776–1783*. A Continental soldier remembers the Revolution.

fighting force. With vital French assistance, the new American army eventually overcame the enemy, but the Continental Army was often critically short of soldiers. During the summer of 1776, for example, Britain had 30,000 troops in New York City alone; at Valley Forge in 1777–1778, Washington had 8,200 men fit for duty.

Aware of this discrepancy in manpower, Laurens saw an opportunity to solve two problems at once when he returned to America in 1777. Enlisting slaves in the army would provide blacks with a stepping stone to freedom and American forces with desperately needed troops. His father, however, was a conditional emancipationist—though he detested slavery—and conditions were never quite right for him. John, however, tried and failed repeatedly to convince legislatures in the deep south to enroll black troops in exchange for their freedom.

John's idealistic quest for social justice ended on the banks of the Combahee River in South Carolina, where he died in one of the last skirmishes of the war. "Where liberty is," he once wrote, "there is my country." Americans won their independence, but eight long years of warfare strained and in some ways profoundly altered the fabric of American society, though not as much as Laurens had wished.

- ◆ Mounting tensions with Britain
- ◆ Declaring independence
- ◆ The contending forces
- ◆ The major campaigns of the Revolution
- ◆ The alliance with France
- ◆ The peace settlement
- ◆ The social effects of the war

## KEY TOPICS

## The Outbreak of War and The Declaration of Independence, 1774–1776

After the Boston Tea Party, both the British and the Americans knew that they were approaching a crisis. A British officer in Massachusetts commented in late 1774 that “it is thought by every body here” that British forces would soon have “to take the field.” “The people in general are very enraged,” he explained, and some would “defend what they call their Liberties” to the death. Many Americans also expected a military confrontation but continued to hope that the king would not “reason with us only by the roar of his Cannon.”

### Mounting Tensions

In May 1774, General Thomas Gage, the commander in chief of the British army in America, replaced Thomas Hutchinson as governor of Massachusetts. After Gage dissolved the Massachusetts legislature, the General Court, it defied him by assembling anyway. Calling itself the Provincial Congress, the legislature in October 1774 appointed an emergency executive body, the **Committee of Safety**, headed by John Hancock, which began stockpiling weapons and organizing militia volunteers. Some localities had already provided for the formation of special companies of **Minute Men**, who were to be ready at “a minute’s warning in Case of an alarm.”

Enforcing the Continental Association’s boycott of British goods, local committees sometimes assaulted suspected loyalists and destroyed their property. The increasingly polarized atmosphere, combined with the drift toward military confrontation, drove a growing wedge between American loyalists and the patriot anti-British American Whigs.

### The Loyalists’ Dilemma

Loyalists and Whigs began to part company in earnest during the fall and winter of 1774–1775 as the threat of war mounted. Like other Americans, the loyalists were a mixed group. Most were farmers, though officeholders and professionals were

## CHRONOLOGY

- 1775 April 19: Battles of Lexington and Concord.  
May 10: Second Continental Congress meets.  
June 17: Battle of Bunker Hill.  
December 31: American attack on Quebec.
- 1776 January 9: Thomas Paine’s *Common Sense* published.  
July 4: Declaration of Independence.  
September 15: British take New York City.  
December 26: Battle of Trenton.
- 1777 January 3: Battle of Princeton.  
September 11: Battle of Brandywine Creek.  
October 17: American victory at Saratoga.  
Runaway inflation begins.  
Continental Army winters at Valley Forge.
- 1778 February 6: France and the United States sign an alliance.  
June 17: Congress refuses to negotiate with British peace commissioners.  
July 4: George Rogers Clark captures British post in the Mississippi Valley.  
December 29: British capture Savannah.  
Death of the great French Enlightenment writer, François-Marie Arouet Voltaire.
- 1779 June 21: Spain declares war on Britain.  
Americans devastate the Iroquois country.  
September 23: John Paul Jones captures the British ship *Serapis*.
- 1780 May 12: Fall of Charleston, South Carolina.  
October 7: Americans win Battle of Kings Mountain.  
December 3: Nathanael Greene takes command in the South.
- 1781 January 17: Americans defeat British at Battle of Cowpens.  
March 15: Battle of Guilford Court House.  
October 19: Cornwallis surrenders at Yorktown.  
Influential German philosopher Immanuel Kant publishes his first major work, *The Critique of Pure Reason*.
- 1783 March 15: Washington quells the Newburgh “Conspiracy.”  
September 3: Peace of Paris signed.  
November 21: British begin evacuating New York.  
First manned balloon flight, in France.  
Quakers present first anti-slavery petition to the British parliament.
- 1784 United States vessel opens trade with Canton, China.
- 1788 Britain transports convicts to Australia.

overrepresented. Recent immigrants to the colonies, as well as locally unpopular minorities (Scots in the South, Anglicans in New England), often remained loyal because they believed the crown offered protection against more established Americans. Most loyalists thought, in short, that they had something to lose—including their honor—if America broke with Britain. During the War for Independence, about 19,000 American men would join British provincial units and fight to restore royal authority. (This compares with the perhaps 200,000 who served in some military capacity on the rebel side.) The loyalists numbered close to half a million men and women—some 20 percent of the colonies' free population. Of these, up to 100,000 would leave with the British forces at the end of the war.

### British Coercion and Conciliation

Britain held parliamentary elections in the fall of 1774, but if Americans hoped that the outcome would change the government's policy toward them, they were disappointed. North's supporters won easily. Angry and alarmed at the colonists' challenge to Parliament's sovereignty, they took a hard line. Under North's direction, in February 1775, Parliament resolved that Massachusetts was in rebellion and prohibited the New England colonies from trading outside the British Empire or sending their ships to the North Atlantic fishing grounds. Similar restrictions on most of the other colonies soon followed.

Meanwhile, in a gesture of appeasement, Parliament endorsed Lord North's **Conciliatory Proposition**, which pledged not to tax the colonies if they would voluntarily contribute to the defense of the empire. British officials, however, would decide what was a sufficient contribution. Parliament, as a result, would remain sovereign and the colonial legislatures strictly subordinate to it.

Had the Conciliatory Proposition specified a maximum colonial contribution, and had it been offered ten years earlier, the colonists might have found it acceptable. Now it was too late. North's government, in any case, had already sent orders to General Gage to take decisive action against the Massachusetts rebels. These orders triggered the first clash between British and American forces.

### The Battles of Lexington and Concord

Gage received his orders on April 14, 1775. On the night of April 18, he assembled 700 men on the Boston Common and marched them toward the little towns of Lexington and Concord, some 20 miles away (see Map 6-1). Their mission was to arrest rebel leaders Samuel Adams and John Hancock (then staying in Lexington)

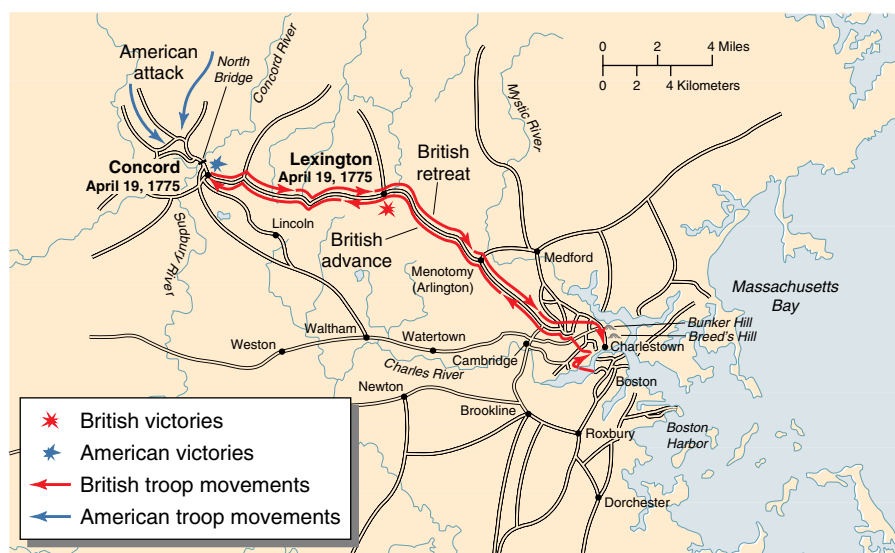
and to destroy the military supplies the Committee of Safety had assembled at Concord. Learning of the troop movements, patriots sent riders—one of them the silversmith Paul Revere—to spread the alarm. Adams and Hancock escaped.

When the British soldiers reached Lexington at dawn, they found about seventy armed militiamen drawn up in formation on the village green. Their precise intentions are not clear. Outnumbered ten to one, they probably did not plan to begin a fight. More likely, they were there in a show of defiance, to demonstrate that Americans would not run at the sight of a superior British force.

A British major ordered the militia to disperse. They were starting to obey when a shot from an unknown source shattered the stillness. The British responded with a volley that killed or wounded 18 Americans.

The British troops pressed on to Concord and burned what few supplies the Americans had not been able to hide. But when their rear guard came under fire at Concord's North Bridge, the British panicked. As they retreated to Boston, patriot Minute Men and other militia harried them from both sides of the road. By the time the column reached safety, 273 British soldiers were dead, wounded, or missing. The 4,000 Americans who had shot at them along the way suffered nearly 100 casualties.

News of the fighting at the **Battles of Lexington and Concord** spread quickly. Patriots in Providence, Rhode Island, knew of it by evening of the Wednesday on which it occurred. Rumors of the fighting had already reached New York by the time an express rider confirmed the stories at noon the following Sunday. The Philadelphia newspaper *Pennsylvania Packet* carried the story the next Monday. Williamsburg's *Virginia Gazette* printed an account on May 4, only two weeks after the event. South Carolinians knew by



MAP 6-1 The Battles of Lexington and Concord, April 19, 1775

This map shows the area around Boston, where in April 1775 British and American forces fought the first military engagements of the Revolution.



May 9, and Georgians probably soon after. The speed with which distant colonies heard about the outbreak of fighting suggests both the importance Americans attached to it and the extraordinary efforts patriots made to spread word of it. Everywhere, news of Lexington and Concord spurred Whigs into action.



Joseph Warren, Account of the Battle of Lexington

The shots fired that April morning would, in the words of the nineteenth-century Concord philosopher and poet Ralph Waldo Emerson, be “heard round the world.” They signaled the start of the American Revolution, which would help to inspire many revolutions elsewhere.

## The Second Continental Congress, 1775–1776

By the time the **Second Continental Congress** convened in Philadelphia on May 10, 1775, Gage’s troops had limped back into Boston from Lexington and Concord, and patriot militia had surrounded the city. American forces from Vermont and Massachusetts under, respectively, Ethan Allen and Benedict Arnold overwhelmed the British garrison at Fort Ticonderoga at the southern end of Lake Champlain on the very day Congress met. Rebel forces elsewhere seized arms and ammunition from royal storehouses.

Assuming leadership of the rebellion, the Congress in the succeeding months became, in effect, a national government. It called for the patchwork of local forces to be organized into the **Continental Army**, authorized the formation of a navy, established a post office, and printed paper continental dollars to meet its expenses. Denying Parliament’s claim to govern the colonies but not yet ready to declare themselves independent, the delegates sought to preserve their ties to Britain by expressing loyalty to the crown. In the **Olive Branch Petition**, addressed to George III on July 5, they asked the king to protect his American subjects from the military actions ordered by Parliament. The following day, Congress approved the **Declaration of the Causes and Necessity of Taking Up Arms**, asserting the resolve of American patriots “to die freemen, rather than to live slaves.” And at the end of the month, it formally rejected North’s Conciliatory Proposition.

## Commander-in-Chief George Washington

To take command of the patriot forces around Boston—the newly named Continental Army—Congress turned to George Washington who had been suggested by John Adams, a Whig leader from Massachusetts. Selecting the Virginian, Adams and others realized, would help transform a local quarrel in New England into a continental conflict involving all of British North America and—they hoped—attract recruits from Virginia, the most populous colony. Despite (or perhaps because of) his experience in the French and Indian War, Washington claimed to feel inadequate to the task, but by attending the Congress in military uniform, he seemed to be volunteering for it.

He was the ideal person for the job. Some of his contemporaries had quicker minds and broader educations; Washington, however, was blessed with good judgment, a profound understanding of both the uses and the limitations of power, and the gift of command. He soon realized that the fate of the patriot cause depended on the survival of the army. Early in the war, he almost suffered catastrophic military defeat at least twice, but he learned from his mistakes and thereafter did not risk lives unnecessarily. The troops in turn revered him.

## Early Fighting: Massachusetts, Virginia, the Carolinas, and Canada

General Gage, finding himself besieged in Boston after the fighting at Lexington and Concord, decided to seize and fortify territory south of Boston, where his cannons could command the harbor. But the Americans seized the high ground first, entrenching themselves on Breed’s Hill north of town. On June 17, 1775, Gage sent 2,200 well-trained soldiers to drive the 1,700 patriot men and boys from their new position. The British succeeded, but at the cost of more than 1,000 casualties. One despondent British officer observed afterward that another such victory “would have ruined us.” Misnamed for another hill nearby, this encounter has gone down in history as the Battle of Bunker Hill (see Map 6–2).

Washington, who arrived in Boston after the battle, took command of the American forces there in early July. Months of standoff followed, with neither side able to dislodge the other. During the winter of 1775–1776, however, the Americans dragged some sixty cannons—the largest weighing as much as a ton—300 miles through snow and over mountains from Fort Ticonderoga to Boston. In March 1776, Washington mounted the newly arrived guns to overlook Boston harbor, putting the British in an indefensible position. The British then evacuated Boston—which really had no strategic value for them—and moved their troops to Halifax, Nova Scotia. New England was for the moment secure for the patriots.

Fighting in the South also went well for the patriots. Virginia’s last royal governor, Lord Dunmore, fled the capital, Williamsburg, and set up a base in nearby Norfolk. Promising freedom to slaves who joined him, he succeeded in raising a small force of black and white loyalists and British marines. On December 9, 1775, most of these men died when they attacked a much larger force of 900 Virginia and North Carolina patriots at Great Bridge, near Norfolk. On February 27, a force of loyalist Scots suffered a similar defeat at Moore’s Creek Bridge in North Carolina. And in June 1776, patriot forces successfully repulsed a large British expedition sent to attack Charleston, South Carolina.

In contrast, an American attempt against Canada in 1775 failed, though one expedition quickly captured Montreal. Another, under Benedict Arnold, advanced through the Maine wilderness in the face of great hardships. They joined forces outside of Quebec and mounted a hasty attack on



MAP 6-2 Early Fighting, 1775–1776

As this map clearly reveals, even the earliest fighting occurred in widely scattered areas, thereby complicating Britain's efforts to subdue the Americans.

December 31 that failed. Canada accordingly remained a British province.

## Independence

The American forces' stunning early successes bolstered the patriots' confidence as attempts to promote reconciliation failed. In August 1775, King George III rejected the Congress's Olive Branch Petition, proclaimed the colonies to be in rebellion, and denied them his protection. In December,

Parliament barred all exports from the American colonies. These actions prompted many Whigs to think seriously of declaring full independence from Britain.

At this critical moment, Thomas Paine, a ne'er-do-well Englishman, recently arrived on American soil, made a historic contribution. A corsetmaker—and twice a fired tax collector—he was a man of radical ideas and forceful writing who used the everyday English of ordinary people. His pamphlet *Common Sense*, published in Philadelphia in January 1776, denounced King George and made the case for independence. Ridiculing the absurdity of “supposing a continent to be perpetually governed by an island,” Paine argued that America would be better off on every count if it were independent. The king, he said bluntly, was “the Royal Brute” whose tyranny should be thrown off. This assertion, which not long before would have shocked even Whigs, seemed self-evident now in light of the king's rejection of the Olive Branch Petition. Simple common sense, Paine concluded, dictated that “TIS TIME TO PART.”

*Common Sense*, which sold more than 100,000 copies throughout the colonies, helped predispose Americans toward independence. Tactical considerations also influenced patriot leaders. Formal separation from Great Britain would make it easier for them to gain desperately needed aid from England's rival France and other foreign countries. Declaring independence would also provide a better legal basis for American leaders' newly claimed authority. Accordingly, most of the states (as the rebellious colonies now called themselves) either instructed or permitted their delegates in the Congress to vote for independence.



Thomas Paine, *Common Sense*

On June 7, 1776, Virginian Richard Henry Lee introduced in the Congress a resolution stating that the united colonies “are, and of right ought to be, free and independent States.” Postponing a vote on the issue, the Congress appointed a committee to draw up a declaration of independence. “You can write ten times better than I,” John Adams is supposed to have told Thomas Jefferson; so the Virginian wrote the first draft. On June 28, after making revisions in Jefferson's proposed text, the committee presented the document to Congress. In the debate that followed, the South Carolina, Pennsylvania, and New



This fine portrait of George Washington appears in multiple versions depicting the victorious general against different backgrounds, including the battles of Princeton and Yorktown. The painter, Charles Willson Peale, served under Washington at Princeton, and the French commander at Yorktown, the Count de Rochambeau, took an appropriate version home with him in 1783.

York delegations initially opposed independence. As it became clear that the majority favored it, the Pennsylvania and South Carolina delegations switched sides, and the New York delegation decided to abstain. A few delegates—including the notable patriot leaders John Dickinson and Robert Morris of Pennsylvania—clung to the hope of remaining loyal to the crown. But when the Congress voted on the resolution for independence on July 2, 1776, all voting delegations approved it. After further tinkering with the wording, the Congress officially adopted the **Declaration of Independence** on July 4, 1776.



Congress intended the declaration to be a justification for America's secession from the British Empire and an invitation to potential allies. Jefferson later maintained that what he wrote was only what everyone was thinking. But his prose transformed a version of the

**contract theory of government** into one of history's great statements of human rights. Developed by the late-seventeenth-century English philosopher John Locke and others, the contract theory maintains that legitimate government rests on an agreement between the people and their rulers. The people are bound to obey their rulers only so long as the rulers offer them protection.

The Declaration of Independence consists of a magnificently stated opening assumption, two premises, and a powerful conclusion. The opening assumption is that all men are created equal, that they therefore have equal rights, and that they can neither give up these rights nor allow them to be taken away. The first premise—that people establish governments to protect their fundamental rights to life, liberty, and property—is a restatement of contract theory. (With a wonderful flourish reflecting the Enlightenment's optimism about human potential, Jefferson changed "property" to "the pursuit of happiness.") The second premise is a long list of charges meant to prove that George III had failed to defend his American subjects' rights. This indictment, the heart of the declaration, justified the Americans' rejection of their hitherto legitimate ruler. Then followed the dramatic conclusion: that Americans could rightfully overthrow King George's rule and replace it with something more satisfactory to them.

Historians have spilled oceans of ink debating Jefferson's use of the expression "all men." In practice, of course, many people were excluded from full participation in eighteenth-century American society. Women had no formal political rights and limited legal rights. Property-less white and free black men had similarly restricted rights, and slaves enjoyed no rights at all. (Although himself a slaveowner, Jefferson was deeply troubled by American slavery. He had wanted to include a denunciation of the slave trade among the charges against George III in the Declaration of Independence, but the Congress took it out, believing that to blame the king for this inhumane business would appear hypocritical.) But if the words "all men are created equal" had limited practical meaning in 1776, they have ever since confronted Americans with a moral challenge to make good on them.

## Religion, Virtue, and Republicanism

Americans reacted to news of the Declaration of Independence with mixed emotions. There was rejoicing as orators read the declaration to large crowds. Soldiers fired salutes, and candles illuminated the windows of public buildings. But even many who favored independence worried about how Americans would govern themselves. Most Whigs, animated by the political ideology known as **republicanism**, thought a republican government was best suited to American society.

John Adams once complained that republicanism was too shadowy a concept to define, and indeed it was a complex, changing body of ideas, values, and assumptions. Closely related to country (New Whig) ideology, republicanism was



In this painting of the Battle of Bunker Hill, the artist John Trumbull highlighted the death of Major General Joseph Warren of the Massachusetts militia. Like Trumbull, historians have traditionally emphasized prominent historical figures. More recently, however, they have focused on the common people, such as the militiamen, black and white, who appear at the margins of this picture but who composed the majority of the American forces fighting that day.

derived from the political ideas of classical antiquity, Renaissance Europe, and early modern England. It held that self-government—either directly by the citizens of a country or indirectly by their elected representatives—provided a more reliable foundation for the good society and individual freedom than did rule by kings. Thus, drawing on contract theory, as in the Declaration of Independence, republicanism called for government by consent of the governed. Drawing on country ideology, it was suspicious of excessively centralized government and insistent on the need for a virtuous, public-spirited citizenry. Republicanism therefore helped to give the American Revolution a moral dimension.

But other than a state that was not ruled by a hereditary king, what was a republic? And what were the chances that one would survive? Every educated person knew, of course, that ancient Rome and Athens had been republics. Classical political theory, beginning with the ancient Greek thinkers Plato and Aristotle, had insisted that republics could endure only as long as their citizens remained virtuous and self-sacrificing. Once individual citizens, greedy for wealth and power, began fighting among themselves, a republic would certainly collapse. Europe's three surviving republics in the eighteenth century—the Netherlands, Switzerland, and Venice—seemed to bear out this dismal picture: All were rather corrupt and uninspiring societies, and none of them was democratic.

But Americans had at hand a more recent example of a republic than ancient Athens or Rome, one more closely linked to their own history than the republics of eighteenth-century Europe. During the English Civil War of the mid-

seventeenth century, English Puritans had for a time replaced the monarchy with a republican “Commonwealth,” dedicated to advancing the “common weal,” or common good. Most eighteenth-century Americans thought of the Puritan Commonwealth as a misguided product of fanaticism that had ended in a military dictatorship. However, some New Englanders, spiritual descendants of the Puritans, considered the Commonwealth to have been a noble experiment. To them, the American Revolution offered another chance to establish a republic of the godly.

“When the mere Politician weighs the Danger or Safety of his Country,” warned one clergyman, “he computes them in Proportion to its Fortresses, Arms, Money, Provisions, Numbers of Fighting Men, and its Enemies.” But, he continued, the “Christian Patriot” calculates them “by its Numbers of Sinful or praying People, and its Degrees of Holiness or Vice.” Such language recalled the Great Awakening; it reached beyond the upper classes who had been directing the resistance to the British

and mobilized ordinary people for what their ministers repeatedly assured them was a just war against sin and despotism. Out of this fusion of republican theory (with which only the educated were familiar) and the religious heritage that all Americans understood, a common belief developed that God was on their side and that Americans must have “resolution enough to forgo Self gratification” and be willing to stake their all “upon the prospect of Securing freedom and happiness to future Generations.”

## The Combatants

At the outset of the American Revolution, republican fervor produced a spontaneous eruption of patriotism that to skeptical foreign observers looked like religious fanaticism. But this enthusiastic flocking to the colors eventually waned, and in any case, its results were often unsatisfactory.

Republican theory mistrusted professional armies as the instruments of tyrants. A free people, republicans insisted, relied for defense on their own patriotism. But militiamen, as one American general observed, had trouble coping with “the shocking scenes of war” because they were not “steed by habit or fortified by military pride.” In real battles, they often proved unreliable. Americans therefore faced a hard choice: Develop a professional army or lose the war. In the end, they did what they had to do. While state militias continued to offer support, it was the disciplined forces of the Continental Army that won the crucial battles.

# Global Perspectives

## American Independence Abroad

The main purpose of the Declaration of Independence was to announce to other nations that the United States had assumed a place among them and was therefore available as a trading partner and military ally. Most countries, however, at first took a wait-and-see approach. As one historian has observed, a “deafening diplomatic silence” greeted the American debut on the world stage.

Unofficial admiration and emulation were quicker and more widespread. As early as 1777, a German newspaper noted that American success would give “new life to the spirit of liberty,” and by 1790 at least 26 works on America had been published in three or more European languages. Elsewhere, slaves took direct action. In the West Indies, they celebrated Americans for meriting “Immortal Honour”

for “encountering death in every form rather than submit to slavery.” Jamaican bondsmen unsuccessfully revolted in 1776, and on islands off the southeastern coast of Africa, rebelling slaves explained their actions by observing that “America is free. Could not we be?”

The success of the American Revolution also had profound repercussions in the two most powerful nations of Europe. In France the American example and the depletion of the treasury during the war contributed to a revolution that overthrew the monarchy. In Britain the results were less dramatic but important. The loss of the North American colonies accelerated an eastward shift in British attention that would make India the crown jewel in the nineteenth-century empire. Whites also began settling Australia in 1788 when Britain started sending

convicts there because, unlike the colonies, an independent United States could—and did—refuse to accept them.

Even the abolition of slavery in the British Empire occurred when it did partly as a result of American independence. By tarnishing England’s reputation as the model of freedom, the American Revolution prompted a reaction in Britain that helped to stimulate a popular antislavery movement. In addition, the independence of the United States weakened the political influence of the West Indian planters by dividing them from their fellow slaveholders on the mainland. Thus, ironically, Great Britain was able to emancipate its slaves during the 1830s—a full generation before the United States took the same step in a bloody civil war.

### Professional Soldiers

Drawing on their colonial experience and on republican theory, the new state governments first tried to meet their military needs by relying on the militia and by creating new units based on short-term enlistments. Officers, particularly in the North, were often elected, and their positions depended on personal popularity. As a result, their orders sometimes sounded more like requests than commands, and rules were lax. Discipline became a major problem in both the militia and the new state units, and often volunteers had barely received basic training before their term of duty ended and they returned home.

Washington tightened things up in the new Continental Army. Eventually, he prevailed on Congress to adopt stricter regulations and to require enlistments for three years or the duration of the war. Although he used militia effectively, his consistent aim was to turn the Continental Army into a dis-

ciplined force that could defeat the British in the large engagements of massed troops characteristic of eighteenth-century European warfare, for only such victories could impress the other European powers and establish the legitimacy of the United States.

Many soldiers of fortune, as well as a few idealists, offered their services. Both Washington and Congress soon learned to regard most of them as nuisances, but several proved especially valuable in helping Washington forge a professional army. France’s 19-year-old Marquis de Lafayette was one of the youngest, wealthiest, and most idealistic. Two Poles, Tadeusz Kosciuszko, an engineer, and Kazimierz Pulaski, a cavalry commander who would be mortally wounded at the Battle of Savannah in 1779, also rendered good service. Johann Kalb, a bogus baron from Germany, became a general and died heroically at Camden, South Carolina, in 1780. Most useful of all, probably, was Baron von Steuben. His title,

# FROM THEN TO NOW

## Anti-War Churches

One of the thornier problems that confronts nations when they are at war is how to deal with people whose conscience tells them that a particular war—or any war—is wrong; and such persons often have a difficult time deciding what duties they owe to the state. During the Revolution, the Methodists, Moravians, Mennonites, and Quakers were among the peace churches; that is, in the words of one Quaker meeting, they generally believed “that the Setting up and Putting down Kings and Government is God’s Peculiar Prerogative [sic]... and that it is not our work or Business to have any hand or Contrivance therein. ...” Many of their members therefore refused to swear oaths of allegiance or join the militia. The states often responded by imposing stiff fines or extra taxes.

Since then, most of the wars in which the United States has been engaged—including the Vietnam War and the present war in Iraq—have prompted significant opposition at home. One recent example involved a church in Pasadena, California, whose former minister preached a sermon during the 2004 presidential campaign in which he imagined Jesus saying, “Mr. President, your doctrine of preemptive [sic] war is a failed doctrine.” The United States Internal Revenue Service responded by preparing to revoke the church’s tax exempt status on the grounds that exempt organizations such as churches and charities are not supposed to engage in political campaigns. “There’s much more at stake” here, the church’s current minister said. “I think it’s a defining moment about religious freedom in the United States.”

As Mark Twain is supposed to have observed, “history doesn’t repeat, but it does Rhyme.”

- How much dissent or criticism should a nation permit when it is at war? How should it decide where to draw the line between the permissible and the impermissible?

George F. Regas’ controversial sermon before the 2004 presidential election prompted the Internal Revenue Service to question the tax-exempt status of one of the largest Episcopal churches in the country. All Saints Church in Pasadena, California. He had been rector for twenty-eight years.



Anthony Benezet (1713–1784), a noted Pennsylvania Quaker, educator, and abolitionist, identified himself in his will, as in this picture, as “a leader of the Free School for the Black People in Philadelphia.”

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## From Then to Now Online

- 6-1 George F. Regas, *Extracts from sermon*, delivered October 31, 2004.
- 6-2 Anthony Benezet, *A Short Account of the People Called Quakers, Their Rise, Religious Principles and Settlement in America .... Philadelphia, Joseph Cruksbank, 1780.*
- 6-3 North Carolina, *An Act for Ascertaining what Property in this State shall be deemed Taxable Property...*, 1778.



Thomas Jefferson, author of the Declaration of Independence and future president of the United States. Mather Brown, an American artist living in England, painted this picture of Jefferson for John Adams while the two men were in London on diplomatic missions in 1786. A companion portrait of Adams that Jefferson ordered for himself also survives. Brown's sensitive portrait of a thoughtful Jefferson is the earliest known likeness of him.

too, was new, but he had experience in the Prussian army, Europe's best. He became the Continental Army's drillmaster, and thanks partly to him, Washington's troops increasingly resembled their disciplined European counterparts.



Letter from a Revolutionary War Soldier

The enemy British soldiers—and the nearly 30,000 German mercenaries (Americans called them “Hessians”) whom the British government employed—offered Americans the clearest model of a professional army. British regulars were not (as Americans, then and later, assumed) the “dregs of society.” Although most of the enlisted men came from the lower classes and from economically depressed areas, many also had skills. British officers usually came from wealthy families and had simply purchased their commissions. Only rarely could a man rise from the enlisted ranks to commissioned-officer status.

Most British troops carried the “Brown Bess” musket. With bayonet attached, it was almost 6 feet long and weighed over 16 pounds. It fired a lead ball slightly more than 1/2 inch in diameter, which might hit its target at up to 100 yards. Skilled troops could get off more than two rounds per minute

under combat conditions. In battle, soldiers usually stood close together in lines three deep. They were expected to withstand bombardment without flinching, fire on command in volleys, and charge with the bayonet.

Military life was tough. On the march, seasoned troops carrying 60-pound packs normally covered about 15 miles a day but could go 30 miles in a “forced” march. In most weather conditions, they wore heavy woolen uniforms dyed bright red for visibility on smoke-filled battlefields (hence their nickname “Redcoats”). In their barracks, British soldiers doubled up in a bed slightly over 4 feet wide; in the field, they were often wet, crawling with lice, and hungry. Under the best conditions, they ate mainly beef or salt pork and bread. They were frequently undernourished, and many more died of disease than of injury in battle. Medical care was, by modern standards, primitive.

Severe discipline held soldiers in line. Striking an officer or deserting could bring death; lesser offenses usually incurred a beating. Several hundred lashes, “well laid on” with the notorious cat-o'-nine-tails (a whip with multiple cords, each ending in a nasty little knot or a metal ball), were not uncommon.

Soldiers amused themselves with gambling (despite regulations against it) and drinking. As one officer lamented, America was a terrible country where one drank “to get warm, or to get cool, or ... because you get no letters.” Perhaps two-thirds of the Redcoats were illiterate, and all suffered from loneliness and boredom. Camaraderie and a legendary loyalty to their regiments sustained them.

After the winter of 1777–1778, conditions in the Continental Army came to resemble those in the British army. Like British regulars, American recruits tended to be low on the social scale. They included young men without land, indentured servants, some criminals and vagrants—in short, men who lacked better prospects. The chances for talented enlisted men to win an officer's commission were greater than in the British army. But Continental soldiers frequently had little more than “their ragged shirt flaps to cover their nakedness,” and their bare marching feet occasionally left bloody tracks in the snow.

The British and the Americans both had trouble supplying their troops. The British had plenty of sound money, which many American merchants and farmers were happy to take in payment for supplies. But they had to rely mostly on supplies shipped to them from the British Isles. The Continental Army, by contrast, had to pay for supplies in depreciating paper money. After 1780, the burden of provisioning the Continental Army fell on the states, which did little better than Congress had done. Unable to obtain sufficient supplies, the army sometimes threatened to seize them by force. This, in turn, increased the public's republican distrust of its own professional army.

Feeling themselves outcasts from an uncaring society, the professional soldiers of the Continental Army developed a community of their own. The soldiers were “as strict a band of brotherhood as Masons,” one later wrote, and their spirit kept

# American Views

## An American Surgeon Reflects on the Winter at Valley Forge, 1777–1778

Dr. Albigeance Waldo was a surgeon in the First Connecticut Infantry Regiment of the Continental Army while it was encamped at Valley Forge, Pennsylvania. His diary, from which the following excerpts are taken, reveals much about the attitudes of the soldiers as well as the conditions they faced. Waldo resigned from the service in 1779 because of illness but lived until 1794.

- How serious was Waldo in describing the reasons for the location of the soldiers' winter quarters?
- Did his griping reflect a serious morale problem?
- What do his remarks about the Indian soldier's death reveal about Waldo's values?

[December 13, 1777.—] It cannot be that our Superiors are about to hold consultation with Spirits infinitely beneath their Order, by bringing us into these [remote] regions. ... No, it is, upon consideration for many good purposes since we are to Winter here—1<sup>st</sup> There is plenty of Wood & Water. 2dly There are but few families for the soldiery to Steal from—tho' far be it from a Soldier to Steal. 4ly [sic] There are warm sides of Hills to erect huts on. 5ly They will be heavenly Minded like Jonah when in the Belly of a Great Fish. 6ly They will not become home Sick as is sometimes the case when Men live in the Open World—since the reflections which will naturally arise from their present habitation, will lead them to the more noble thoughts of employing their leisure hours in filling their knapsacks with such materials as may be necessary on the Journey to another Home.

December 14.—Prisoners & Deserters are continually coming in. The Army which has been surprisingly healthy hitherto, now begins to grow sickly from the continued fatigues they have suffered this Campaign. Yet they still show a spirit of Alacrity & Contentment not to be expected from so young Troops. I am Sick—discontented—and out of humour. Poor food—hard lodging—Cold Weather—fatigue—Nasty Cloaths—nasty Cookery—Vomit half my time—smoak'd out of my senses—the Devil's in't—I can't Endure it—Why are we sent here to starve and Freeze—What sweet Felicities have I left at home; A charming Wife—pretty Children—Good Beds—good food—good Cookery—all agreeable—all harmonious. Here all Confusion—smoke & Cold—hunger & filthiness—A pox on my

bad luck. There comes a bowl of beef soup—full of burnt leaves and dirt, sickish enough to make a Hector spue—away with it Boys—I'll live like the Chameleon upon Air. Poh! Poh! Crys Patience within me—you talk like a fool. Your being sick Covers your mind with a Melanchollic Gloom, which makes everything about you appear gloomy. See the poor Soldier, when in health—with what cheerfulness he meets his foes and encounters every hardship—if barefoot, he labours thro' the Mud & Cold with a Song in his mouth extolling War & Washington—if his food be bad, he eats it notwithstanding with seeming content—blesses God for a good Stomach and Whistles it into digestion. But harkee Patience, a moment—There comes a Soldier, his bare feet are seen thro' his worn out Shoes, his legs nearly naked from the tatter'd remains of an only pair of stockings, his Breeches not sufficient to cover his nakedness, his Shirt hanging in Strings, his hair dishevell'd, his face meager; his whole appearance pictures a person forsaken & discouraged. He comes, and crys with an air of wretchedness & despair, I am Sick, my feet lame, my legs are sore, my body cover'd with this tormenting Itch—my Cloaths are worn out, my Constitution is broken, my former Activity is exhausted by fatigue, hunger & Cold, I fail fast. I shall soon be no more! And all the reward I shall get will be—"Poor Will is dead."

December 21.—[Valley Forge.] Heartily wish myself at home, my Skin & eyes are almost spoil'd with continual smoke. A general cry thro' the Camp this evening among the Soldiers, "No Meat! No Meat!"—the Distant vales Echo'd back the melancholy sound—"No Meat! No



Meat!" Immitating the noise of Crows & Owls, also, made a part of the confused Musick.

What have you for your Dinners Boys? "Nothing but Fire Cake & Water, Sir." At night, "Gentlemen the Supper is ready." What is your Supper Lads? "Fire Cake & Water, Sir."

December 30.—Eleven Deserters came in to-day—some Hessians & some English—one of the Hesns took an Ax in his hand & cut away the Ice of the Schuylkill which was 1 1/2 inches thick & 40 Rod wide and waded through to our Camp—he was 1/2 hour in the Water. They had a promise when they engag'd that the war would be ended in one year—they were now tired of the Service.

[January 3, 1778.—] I was call'd to relieve a Soldier tho't to be dying—he expir'd before I Reach'd the Hutt. He was an Indian—an excellent Soldier—and an obedient good natur'd fellow. He engaged for money doubtless as others do;—but he has serv'd his country faithfully—he has fought for those very people who disinherited his forefathers—having finished his pilgrimage, he was discharged from the War of Life & Death. His memory ought to be respected, more than those rich ones who supply the world with nothing better than Money and Vice.

Source: "Valley Forge, 1777–1778. Diary of Surgeon Albigeance Waldo, of the Connecticut Line," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, 21 (1897): 306–07, 309, 315–16, 319.

them together in the face of misery. They grouched, to be sure—sometimes alarmingly. In May 1780, Connecticut troops at Washington's camp in Morristown, New Jersey, staged a brief mutiny. On January 1, 1781, armed units from Pennsylvania stationed in New Jersey marched to Philadelphia demanding their back pay. The Pennsylvania Executive Council met part of the soldiers' demands, but some of the men left the service. Washington ordered subsequent mutinies by New Jersey and Pennsylvania troops suppressed by force.

Occasionally, American officers let their disgruntlement get out of hand. The most notorious such case was that of Benedict Arnold, a general who compiled a distinguished record during the first three years of the war but then came to feel himself shabbily treated by Congress and his superiors. Seeking better rewards for his abilities, he offered to surrender the strategic fort at West Point (which he commanded) to the enemy. Before he could act, however, his plot was discovered, and he fled to the British, serving with them until the end of the war. Among Americans, his name became a synonym for traitor.

What was perhaps the most serious expression of army discontent—one that might have threatened the future of republican institutions and civilian government in the United States—occurred in March 1783, after the fighting was over. Washington's troops were then stationed near Newburgh, New York, waiting for their pay before disbanding. During the war, the Congress had promised officers a pension of half-pay for life (the custom in Great

Britain), but many veterans now demanded instead full pay for six years. When the Congress failed to grant real assurances that any pay would be forthcoming, hotheaded young officers called a meeting that could have led to an armed coup. General Washington, who had scrupulously deferred to civilian authority throughout the war, asked permission to address the gathering and, in a dramatic speech, subtly warned the men of all that they might lose by insubordination. A military coup



George Washington viewing troops at Valley Forge during the winter of 1777–78. This modern depiction is somewhat romanticized. While making a similar tour on foot, Washington once saw a soldier who was literally clothed in nothing but a blanket.

would “open the flood Gates of Civil discord” and “deluge” the nation in blood; loyalty now, he said, would be “one more distinguished proof” of their patriotism. With the fate of the Revolution apparently hanging in the balance, the movement collapsed. The officers and politicians behind the “conspiracy” were probably only bluffing, using the threat of a discontented army to frighten the states into granting the Congress the power (which it then lacked) to levy taxes so that it could pay the army. In any case, the Continental Army disbanded without further serious incidents.

### Women in the Contending Armies

Women accompanied many units on both sides, as was common in eighteenth-century warfare. A few were prostitutes. Some were officers’ wives or mistresses, but most were the married or common-law consorts of ordinary soldiers. These “camp followers” cooked and washed for the troops, occasionally helped load artillery, and provided most of the nursing care. A certain number in a company were subject to military orders and were authorized to draw rations and pay.

The role of these women found its way into American folklore in the legend of Molly Pitcher (perhaps Mary Ludwig Hays, the wife of a Continental artillery sergeant), who in 1778 heroically carried water to cool overheated men and guns at the Battle of Monmouth Court House. Other women also found themselves under fire. A British officer in New York, for example, reported discovering the bodies of three Americans—one a woman with cartridges in her hands. And a few women disguised as men even managed to serve in the Continental Army’s ranks.

### African American Participation in the War

Early in the war, as we have seen, some royal officials like Lord Dunmore recruited slaves with promises of freedom. But these efforts often proved counterproductive, frightening potentially loyalist slaveowners and driving them to the Whig side. Thus it was not until June 30, 1779, that the British commander in chief, Sir Henry Clinton, promised to allow slaves who fled from rebel owners to join the royal troops to “follow ... any Occupation” they wished. Hedged as this promise of freedom was, news of it spread quickly among the slave communities, and late in the war, African Americans flocked to the British army in South Carolina and Georgia.

Sharing prevailing racial prejudices, the British were often reluctant to arm blacks. Instead, they put most of the ex-slaves to work as agricultural or construction workers (many of the free and enslaved blacks accompanying American troops were similarly employed). However, a few relatively well-equipped black British dragoons (mounted troops) did see combat in South Carolina.

On the other hand, approximately 5,000 African Americans fought against the British and for American independence, hundreds of them in the Continental Army. Many were freemen from Massachusetts and Rhode Island. Several free

black men served among the defenders at Bunker Hill, and at least one distinguished himself sufficiently for his commander to commend him as “an experienced officer as well as an excellent soldier.”

But farther south, as discussed above, John Laurens, a young Carolina patriot, repeatedly but vainly tried to convince the South Carolina assembly to raise and arm black troops. (Instead, the legislature eventually voted to give slaves confiscated from loyalists to white volunteers as a reward for their service.) It is therefore scarcely surprising that, as one Whig put it, many African Americans were “a little Tory-fied,” especially in the South.

### Native Americans and the War

At first, most of the approximately 200,000 Native Americans east of the Mississippi River would probably have preferred to remain neutral, and both sides initially took them at their word. But Indians’ skills and manpower were valuable, and by 1776 both the British and Americans sought their assistance. Forced to choose, many Native Americans favored the British, hoping thereby to safeguard their lands. “Remember,” as a Cherokee chief once observed, the crucial “difference is about our land.”

Prewar experience convinced Native Americans that British officials would be more apt to protect them against white settlers, and the British could provide more trade goods and arms. Many Indians, including the Cherokees, Creeks, Choctaws, and Chickasaws, therefore decided to back the British, and Cherokee warriors accordingly raided the southern frontier starting in 1776. Virginians, North and South Carolinians, and ultimately Tennesseans countered with expeditions that repeatedly devastated Cherokee towns. But when older chiefs sought peace, Dragging Canoe (Tsi’yungunsi’ny) and the more militant younger men established new communities on the Chickamauga River in northern Georgia and continued to fight.

Pushed and pulled by the British and the Americans, other Indian groups also split. Among these was the powerful Iroquois Confederation in upstate New York. Under the leadership of Thayendanegea—known to whites as Joseph Brant—the Mohawks and some of the other Iroquois nations supported the British, while most of the Oneidas and Tuscaroras joined the Americans. Thus, after some Iroquois attacked the northern frontiers of New York and Pennsylvania in 1777 and 1778, another Iroquois guided the American expedition that retaliated in 1779. Brother, sometimes quite literally, killed brother.



Joseph Brant

In other cases, though, the war promoted greater unity among Native Americans. Despite factionalism, the Shawnees, Delawares, Miamis, Wyandots, and others in the Ohio Valley eventually forged an alliance to preserve their control of the area with British support. And a few Native American nations aided the Americans. Most of these were small groups, like the Catawbans of South Carolina, who lived in the midst of white settlements.



John Laurens, who hoped to raise black troops in South Carolina as a prelude to the general abolition of slavery, was the only member of George Washington's staff to be killed in battle. This commemorative portrait by Charles Willson Peale bears the Latin inscription "Sweet and proper it is to die for one's country."

In sum, the British had more Indian allies, but they seldom made unrestricted use of them. Because Native Americans pursued their own purposes, British control of them was frequently tenuous, and the result could sometimes be counterproductive. In one such incident, an Indian attack in the Hudson River Valley resulted in the mistaken scalping of Jane McCrae, the fiancée of a British officer. Whig propagandists exploited this tragedy to the fullest. Neither side, however, had a monopoly on atrocities; both the Americans and the British committed more than their share.

## The War in the North, 1776–1777

The Revolutionary War can be divided into three phases. In the first, from the outbreak of fighting in 1775 through 1777, most of the important battles took place in New England, New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania, while the Americans faced the British alone. But in 1778, France entered the war on the American side, opening the second phase of the war

in which fighting would rage from 1778 to 1781, mainly in the South, at sea, and on the western frontier. The third phase of the war, from late 1781 to 1783, saw little actual fighting. With American victory assured, attention shifted to the diplomatic maneuvering leading up to the Peace of Paris (1783).

### Britain Hesitates: Crucial Battles in New York and New Jersey

During the first phase of the war, the British concentrated on subduing New England, the hotbed, they believed, of "rebellious principles." Replacing General Gage, the government appointed Sir William Howe as commander in chief of British forces and his brother, Richard Howe, as admiral of the naval forces in North American waters. New York City had been the headquarters of the British army during the late colonial period, and the Howes made it their base of operations. To counter this move, Washington moved his forces to New York in the spring of 1776. In August 1776, the Howes landed troops on Long Island and, in the Battle of Brooklyn Heights, quickly drove the American forces deployed there back to Manhattan Island (see Map 6–3).

Following instructions to negotiate peace as well as wage war, Richard Howe then met with three envoys from Congress on Staten Island on September 11, 1776. The British commanders were prepared to offer fairly generous terms but could not grant independence. The Americans would accept nothing less. So the meeting produced no substantive negotiations.

In the ensuing weeks, British forces overwhelmed Washington's troops, driving them out of Manhattan and then, moving north, clearing them from the area around the city at the Battle of White Plains. But the Howes were hesitant to deal a crushing blow, and the Americans were able to retreat across New Jersey into Pennsylvania. The American cause seemed lost, however, and the Continental Army almost melted away. Realizing that without a success he would soon be without troops, Washington led his forces back across the icy Delaware and launched a successful surprise attack on a garrison of Hessian mercenaries at Trenton, New Jersey, on the morning of December 26. A week later, Washington overwhelmed a British force at Princeton, New Jersey. Thereafter,

both sides suspended operations until the spring.

"These are the times that try men's souls," Tom Paine wrote. "The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of his country; but he that stands it NOW, deserves the love and thanks of man and woman."

By raising morale, the victories at Trenton and Princeton probably saved the American cause, but why the Howes failed to annihilate the Continental Army while they had the chance is a bit more puzzling. Perhaps, as a favorite Whig ditty had it, it was because Sir William Howe was "snug" abed with his mistress in New York. More to the point, the Howes were seeking to restore peace as well as end the rebellion;





MAP 6-3 The War in the North, 1776–1777

Most of the fighting between the British and Americans during the first part of the war occurred in the North, partly because the British commanders assumed that the New England colonies were the most rebellious.

they wanted to regain loyal subjects, not alienate them. And a crushing defeat might have made the Americans permanent enemies of British rule. By the time it became apparent that this cautious strategy was not working, Britain had lost its best chance to win the war.

### The Year of the Hangman: Victory at Saratoga and Winter at Valley Forge

Contemporaries called 1777 the Year of the Hangman because the triple sevens suggested a row of gallows; and it was in fact a critical year for the American cause.

Mounting a major effort to end the rebellion, the British planned to send an army down the Hudson River from Canada. It would then link up with the Howes in New York City, isolate New England, and defeat the rebellion there. But there was little effort to coordinate strategy between the forces advancing from Canada and those in New York. Thus, the poorly planned and poorly executed campaign ended in disaster for the British.

Some 5,000 Redcoats and 3,000 German mercenaries assembled in Canada during the winter of 1776–1777. Ravaged by disease, the troops were unable to bury their dead until the frozen ground thawed in the spring. Under the command of the high-living and popular “Gentleman Johnny” Burgoyne, the army finally set off in June with 1,500 horses hauling its heavy artillery and ponderous supply train. A second, smaller column, supported by an Indian force under Thayendanegea (Joseph Brant) moved to the west to capture an American fort near Oriskany, New York, and then join up with Burgoyne’s main force. Crossing Lake Champlain, Burgoyne’s army made a splendid spectacle. Indians in canoes led the way, followed by row after row of boats filled with uniformed regulars. On July 5, Burgoyne’s army recaptured Fort Ticonderoga, but success eluded him after that.

Trouble began as the troops started overland through the woods at the southern end of the lake. Huge trees felled by American axmen blocked their way, and the army crawled along at only two or three miles a day. Early in August, the column sent to capture the American fort near Oriskany turned back to Canada. Burgoyne’s Indian allies under Joseph Brant likewise went home. Promised reinforcements never arrived. Ten days later, a Whig militia force wiped out a force of 800 men trying to gather supplies in Vermont.

By October 1777, Burgoyne’s army was down to less than 6,000 men and facing disaster. Nearly 3,000 Continentals and 9,000 American militia, commanded by General Horatio Gates, exerted relentless pressure on the increasingly dispirited invaders. Unable to break through the American lines, Burgoyne surrendered to Gates following the Battle of Saratoga on October 17, 1777.

Burgoyne’s defeat was a stunning reversal for the British. It would prove an important factor in convincing the French, eager for a way to strike back at their old enemy, the British, to join the fighting on the American side.

Meanwhile, General William Howe, rather than moving north to support Burgoyne, made plans to destroy Washington’s army and capture Philadelphia. In July 1777, Howe’s troops sailed from New York to Chesapeake Bay and from there marched on Philadelphia from the south. They met Washington’s army on the banks of Brandywine Creek, near the Pennsylvania–Delaware border. The Americans put up a good fight before giving way with a loss of 1,200 killed or captured (twice as many as the British).

Howe occupied Philadelphia, and his men settled down in comfortable winter quarters. The Congress fled to York, Pennsylvania, and the Continental Army established its own winter camp outside Philadelphia at Valley Forge. Here Washington

was joined by his wife, Martha, in a small stone farmhouse, surrounded by the log huts that his men built for themselves.

The Continental Army’s miserable winter at **Valley Forge** has become famous for its hardships. Suffering from cold, disease, and starvation, as many as 2,500 soldiers died. Meanwhile, some congressmen and a few unhappy officers plotted unsuccessfully to replace Washington with Gates as commander in chief. Yet despite the difficulties, the



Exploring  
the  
Geography  
of the  
American  
Revolution

Continental Army completed its transformation into a disciplined professional force. Under the watchful eye of General von Steuben, the soldiers drilled endlessly. And by spring, pleased observers felt that Washington at last had an army capable of meeting the British on equal terms.

## The War Widens, 1778–1781

Since late 1776, Benjamin Franklin and a team of American diplomats had been in Paris negotiating French support for the patriot cause. In the winter of 1777–1778, aware that a Franco-American alliance was close, Parliament belatedly tried to end the rebellion by giving the Americans everything they wanted except independence itself. A peace commission sailed to America with authorization to grant the former colonies full autonomy, including the exclusive right to tax themselves, in return for a resumption of allegiance to the crown. But France and the United States concluded an alliance on February 6, 1778, and Congress refused to negotiate with the British.

Foreign intervention transformed the American Revolution into a virtual world war, engaging British forces in heavy fighting not only in North America but also in the West Indies and India. In the end, had it not been for French assistance, the American side probably would not have won the clear-cut victory it did.

## The United States Gains an Ally

If the American victory at Saratoga had persuaded the French that the United States had a viable future, Washington’s defeat at Brandywine Creek suggested it was a fragile one. Hoping to get even with their old enemy, Britain, the French had already been secretly supplying some aid to the United States. They now became convinced that they needed to act quickly lest further reverses force the Americans to agree to reconciliation with Britain. France accordingly signed a commercial treaty and a military alliance with the United States. Both sides promised to fight together until Britain recognized the independence of the United States, and France pledged not to seek the return of lands in North America.

French entry into the war was the first step in the consolidation of a formidable alliance of European powers eager to see Britain humbled and to gain trading rights in the former British colonies. France then persuaded Spain to declare war on Britain in June 1779. Unlike France, Spain never recognized the independence of the United States and gave only minimal financial aid, though it did contribute important logistical

support. Much of the salt used to preserve American soldiers' provisions came from Spanish territories, and New Orleans became a base for American privateers. More important, the Spanish fleet increased the naval power of the countries arrayed against Great Britain.

Meanwhile, Catherine the Great of Russia suggested that the European powers form a League of Armed Neutrality to protect their trade with the United States and other warring countries against British interference. Denmark and Sweden soon joined; Austria, Portugal, Prussia, and Sicily eventually followed. Britain, which wanted to cut off Dutch trade with the united states, used a pretext to declare war on the Netherlands before it could join. Great Britain thus found itself isolated and even, briefly, threatened with invasion. In the spring of 1779, a joint Franco-Spanish fleet tried to ferry thousands of French troops across the English Channel but abandoned the effort after weeks at sea. These threats did not frighten the British leaders into suing for peace, but they forced them to make important changes in strategy.

Accordingly, in the spring of 1778, the British replaced the Howes with a new commander, Sir Henry Clinton, and instructed him to send troops to attack the French West Indies. To replace these troops, Clinton sought closer cooperation with Britain's Indian and loyalist allies. Knowing that he now faced a serious French threat, Clinton began consolidating his forces by evacuating Philadelphia and pulling his troops slowly back across New Jersey to New York.

On June 28, 1778, Washington caught up with the British at Monmouth Court House. For a while, it looked as if the now well-trained Americans might win the resulting battle, but a mix-up in orders cost Washington the victory. This inconclusive battle proved to be the last major engagement in the North. Clinton withdrew to New York, and Continental troops occupied the hills along the Hudson Valley north of the city. The war shifted to other fronts.

### Fighting on the Frontier and at Sea

Known as "a dark and bloody ground" to Native Americans, Kentucky became even bloodier after the British instructed their Indian allies to raid the area in 1777. Because the British post at Detroit coordinated these attacks, the Americans tried to take it in 1778. Three expeditions failed for various reasons, but the last, under a Virginian, George Rogers Clark, did capture three key British settlements in the Mississippi Valley: Kaskaskia, Cahokia, and Vincennes (see Map 6–4). These successes may have strengthened American claims to the West at the end of the war.

In 1778 bloody fighting also occurred on the eastern frontiers. During the summer, a British force of 100 loyalists and 500 Indians struck the Wyoming Valley of Pennsylvania. After Americans at Fort Mifflin surrendered on July 4, raiders killed its wounded and fleeing defenders. Four months later, a similar group of attackers burned farmsteads and slaughtered civilians at Cherry Valley, New York. Both raids became the stuff of legend and stimulated equally savage reprisals against the Indians. Congress authorized an expedition against the

Iroquois, and during the late summer of 1779 more than 4,000 Continental soldiers and state militia swept through the Finger Lakes region of New York, destroying 41 Indian villages and the crops that supported them. As a result, some 5,000 Iroquois sought refuge with the British at Fort Niagara.

The Americans and British also clashed at sea throughout the war. Great Britain was the preeminent sea power of the age, and the United States never came close to matching it. But in 1775 Congress authorized the construction of 13 frigates—medium-sized, relatively fast ships, mounting 32 guns—as well as the purchase of several merchant vessels for conversion to warships. By contrast, the Royal Navy in 1779 had more than a hundred large, heavily armed "ships of the line." The Americans therefore engaged in what was essentially a guerrilla war at sea. Their naval flag, appropriately, pictured a rattlesnake and bore the motto "Don't Tread on Me."

The country's first naval hero, Scottish-born John Paul Jones, was primarily a hit-and-run raider. Having gone to sea at age 12, he was originally known only as John Paul, but he took the name Jones as an alias after he killed another sailor during a mutiny. Offering his services to the Congress, he became the commander of the new vessel *Ranger*, and as such took news of the American victory at Saratoga to France in late 1777.

With Benjamin Franklin's help, Jones then obtained an old French merchant ship, which he armed and renamed the *Bon Homme Richard* in honor of Franklin's famous *Poor Richard's Almanac*. After a successful cruise, he encountered the formidable *H.M.S. Serapis* in the North Sea on September 23, 1779. Completely outgunned, Jones brought his ship close enough to make his small-arms fire more effective. Asked by the British if he were surrendering, Jones reportedly replied, "I have not yet begun to fight." Four hours later, the *Serapis* surrendered and Jones's crew took possession of the British vessel leaving the crippled *Bon Homme Richard* to sink.

The Congress and the individual states also supplemented America's naval forces by commissioning privateers. In effect legalized pirates, privateers preyed on British shipping. Captured goods were divided among the crew according to rank; captured sailors became prisoners of war. Some 2,000 American privateers took more than 600 British ships and forced the British navy to spread itself thin doing convoy duty.

### The Land War Moves South

During the first three years of the war, the British made little effort to mobilize what they believed to be considerable loyalist strength in the South. But in 1778, the enlarged threat from France prompted a change in strategy: Redcoats would sweep through a large area and then leave behind a Tory militia to reestablish loyalty to the crown and suppress local Whigs. The British hoped thereby to recapture everything from Georgia to Virginia; they would deal with New England later.

The British southern strategy began to unfold in November 1778, when General Clinton dispatched 3,500 troops to take control of Georgia (see Map 6–5). Meeting only light resistance, they quickly seized Savannah and Augusta and restored the old colonial government under civilian control.



**MAP 6-4** The War on the Frontier, 1778–1779

Significant battles in the Mississippi Valley and the frontiers of the seaboard states added to the ferocity of the fighting and strengthened some American claims to western lands.

After their initial success, however, the British suffered some serious setbacks. Spain entered the war and seized British outposts on the Mississippi and Mobile rivers while Whig militia decimated a loyalist militia at Kettle Creek, Georgia.

But the Americans could not beat the British army. In late September and early October 1779, a combined force of 5,500 American and French troops, supported by French warships, laid siege to Savannah. Moving too slowly to encircle the city, they allowed British reinforcements to get through. Then, impatient to get their ships away from the hurricane-prone coast, the French forced the Americans to launch a premature assault on the city on October 9. The assault failed, and the French sailed off.

The way was now open for the British to attack Charleston, the military key to the Lower South. In December 1779, Clinton sailed through stormy seas from New York to the Carolina coast with about 9,000 troops. In the Battle of Charleston, he

encircled the city, trapping the patriot forces inside. On May 12, 1780, more than 5,000 Continentals and militia laid down their arms in the worst American defeat of the war.

The British were now poised to sweep the entire South. Most local Whigs, thinking the Revolution over, at first offered little resistance to the Redcoats striking into the Carolina backcountry. At the South Carolina–North Carolina border, British troops under Colonel Banastre Tarleton overtook 350 retreating Virginia Continentals. When they tried to surrender, Tarleton’s men slaughtered most of them. The British success seemed so complete that Clinton tried to force American prisoners to resume their duties as British subjects and join the loyalist militia. Thinking that matters were now well in hand, Clinton sailed back to New York, leaving the southern troops under the command of Lord Cornwallis.

Clinton’s confidence that the South had returned securely to the loyalist camp was premature. Atrocities like Tarleton’s



**MAP 6-5** The War in the South, 1778–1781

During the latter part of the war, most of the major engagements occurred in the South. British forces won most of the early ones but could not control the immense territory involved and eventually surrendered at Yorktown.

“massacre” of the Virginians inflamed anti-British feeling. And Clinton’s decision to force former rebels into the loyalist militia backfired, infuriating real loyalists—who saw their enemies getting off lightly—as well as Whigs. Atrocities and reprisals mounted on both sides as Whigs continued to defy British au-

thority. “Tarleton’s Quarter” and “a Georgia parole” (a bullet in the back) became Whig euphemisms for “take no prisoners.”

### American Counterattacks

In the summer of 1780, Congress dispatched a substantial Continental force to the South under General Horatio Gates, the hero of Saratoga. Local patriots flocked to join him. But Gates was reckless. Pushing through North Carolina, his men tried to subsist on green corn. Weakened by diarrhea, they blundered into Cornwallis’s British army near Camden, South Carolina, on August 16, and suffered a complete rout. More than 1,000 Americans were killed or wounded and many captured. Gates—transformed from the hero of Saratoga into the goat of Camden—fled to Hillsborough, North Carolina.

American morale revived on October 7, 1780, when “over mountain men” (militia) from Virginia, western North Carolina, and South Carolina defeated the British at Kings Mountain, South Carolina. And in December 1780, Nathanael Greene replaced the discredited Gates, bringing competent leadership to the Continentals in the South.

Ever resourceful, Greene divided his small forces, keeping roughly half with him in northeastern South Carolina and sending the other half westward under General Daniel Morgan. Cornwallis ordered Tarleton to pursue Morgan, who retreated northward until he reached Cowpens, South Carolina. There, on January 17, 1781, Morgan cleverly posted his least reliable troops, the militia, in the front line and ordered them to retreat after firing two volleys. When they did as told, the British thought the Americans were fleeing and charged after them—straight into devastating fire from Morgan’s Continentals. Tarleton escaped, but his reputation for invincibility had been destroyed.

Cornwallis now badly needed a battlefield victory. Burning his army’s excess baggage, he set off in hot pursuit of Greene and Morgan, whose rejoined forces retreated northward ahead of the British. On February 13, 1781, Greene’s tired men crossed the Dan River into Virginia, and Cornwallis gave up the chase, marching his equally exhausted Redcoats southward. To his surprise, Cornwallis now found himself pursued—though cautiously—by Greene. On March 15, the opposing forces met at Guilford Court House, North Carolina, in one of the war’s bloodiest battles. Although the British held the field at the end of the





This wash drawing, which was published in Paris by Nicholas Ponce in 1784, depicts the explosion of a British powder magazine at Pensacola on the morning of May 8, 1781. That afternoon the British defenders surrendered to Spanish troops under Bernardo de Gálvez.

day, an Englishman accurately observed, “another such victory would destroy the British Army.” Cornwallis retreated to the coastal town of Wilmington, North Carolina, to rest and regroup.

By the late summer of 1781, British fortunes were waning in the Lower South. The Redcoats held only the larger towns and the immediately surrounding countryside. With their superior staying power, they won most major engagements, but these victories brought them no lasting gain. As General Greene observed, “We fight, get beat, and rise and fight again.” When the enemy pressed him too hard, Greene retreated out of reach, advancing again as the British withdrew.

Meanwhile patriot guerrilla forces, led by such colorful figures as “Gamecock” Thomas Sumter and “Swamp Fox” Francis Marion, disrupted British communications between their Charleston headquarters and outlying garrisons. Equally important, the loyalist militias that the British had hoped would pacify the countryside proved unequal to the task. Thus, although Greene never defeated the Redcoats outright, his campaign was a strategic success.

Disappointed and frustrated, Cornwallis decided to conquer Virginia to cut off Greene’s supplies and destroy Whig resolve. British forces, including units commanded by turncoat Benedict Arnold, were already raiding the state. Cornwallis marched north to join them, reaching Yorktown, Virginia, during the summer of 1781.

The final military showdown of the war was at hand. By now, French soldiers were in America ready to fight alongside the Continentals, and a large French fleet in the West Indies

had orders to support an attack on the British in North America. Faking preparations for an assault on British-occupied New York, the Continentals (commanded by Washington) and the French headed for the Chesapeake. Cornwallis and his 6,000 Redcoats soon found themselves besieged behind their fortifications at Yorktown by 8,800 Americans and 7,800 French. A French naval victory gave the allies temporary command of the waters around Yorktown. Cornwallis had nowhere to go, and Clinton—still in New York—could not reinforce him quickly enough. On October 19, 1781, the British army surrendered. When he learned the news in London, the British prime minister, Lord North, took it like “a ball in his breast.” “It is all over,” he groaned.

## The American Victory, 1782–1783

The British surrender at Yorktown marked the end of major fighting in North

America, though skirmishes continued for another year. In April 1782, the Royal Navy defeated the French fleet in the Caribbean, strengthening the British bargaining position. Although George III insisted on continuing the war because he feared that defeat would threaten British rule in Canada and the West Indies, the majority in Parliament now felt that enough men and money had been wasted trying to keep the Americans within the empire. In March 1782, the king accepted Lord North’s resignation and appointed a new prime minister, with a mandate to make peace.

## The Peace of Paris

The peace negotiations, which took place in Paris, were lengthy. The Americans demanded independence, handsome territorial concessions, and access to the rich British-controlled fishing grounds in the North Atlantic. The current British prime minister, Lord Shelburne, was inclined to be conciliatory to help British merchants recover their lost colonial trade. The French had achieved their objective of weakening the British and now wanted out of an increasingly costly worldwide war. Spain had not won its most important goal, the recovery of British-held Gibraltar, and thus gave the Americans no support at all.

The American negotiators, Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, and John Jay, skillfully threaded their way among these conflicting interests. With good reason, they feared that the French and Spanish might strike a bargain with the British at the expense of the United States. As a result, the Americans disregarded Congress’s instructions to avoid making peace unilaterally and secretly worked out their



Ki-On-Twog-Ky, also known as Corn Planter (1732/40–1836) was a Seneca Indian Chief who raided American settlements for the British, while he observed that “war is war, death is death, a fight is hard business.” He later presided over the surrender of much land to the United States.

own arrangements with the British. On November 30, 1782, the negotiators signed a preliminary Anglo-American treaty of peace whose terms were embodied in the final **Peace of Paris**, signed by all the belligerents on September 3, 1783.

The Peace of Paris gave the United States nearly everything it sought. Great Britain acknowledged that the United States was “free, sovereign and independent.” The northern boundary of the new nation extended west from the St. Croix River (which separated Maine from Nova Scotia) past the Great Lakes to what were thought to be the headwaters of the Mississippi River (see Map 6–6). The Mississippi itself—down to just north of New Orleans—formed the western border. Spain acquired the provinces of East and West Florida from Britain. This territory included parts of present-day Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Georgia. The treaty did not, however, provide the United States with access to the Gulf of Mexico, a situation that would be a source of diplomatic friction for years.

Several provisions of the treaty addressed important economic issues. Adams, on behalf of New Englanders, insisted on a provision granting American fishermen access to the waters off eastern Canada. The treaty also required that British forces, on quitting American soil, were to leave behind all American-owned property, including slaves. Another provision declared existing debts between citizens of Britain and the United States still valid, giving British merchants hope of collecting on their American accounts. Congress was to “recommend” that the states restore rights

and property taken from loyalists during the war. Nothing was said about the slave trade, which Jay had hoped to ban.

### The Components of Success

The War for Independence was over. In December 1783, the last British troops left New York. Despite the provisions of the peace treaty and the objections of southern planters, about 3,000 African Americans went with them. General Guy Carleton, who had replaced Clinton as commander in chief after Yorktown, refused to renege on British promises of freedom for slaves who fled rebel owners.

The Continental Army had already disbanded during the summer of 1783 (but not, as we have seen, before the incident at Newburg). On December 4, Washington said farewell to his officers at New York City’s Fraunces Tavern and later that month resigned his commission to the Congress. Like the legendary citizen-soldier Cincinnatus, who after defending the ancient Roman Republic gave up his power as dictator and went back to plowing his land, Washington went home to Mount Vernon. By now he had won the respect of friend and foe alike. Only a natural genius, even the British said, could have accomplished what he did. How else could one explain the victory of ragtag provincials over the world’s greatest military and naval power?

Washington’s leadership was just one of the reasons why the Americans won the Revolutionary War. French assistance played a crucial role. Indeed, some historians contend that without the massive infusion of French men and money in 1781, the Revolution would have failed. The British also contributed heavily to their own downfall with mistakes that included bureaucratic inefficiency, hesitant command, and overconfidence. British authorities consistently underestimated the enormous difficulty of waging war 3,000 miles from home in an era of slow and uncertain communications, against a people who were sparsely distributed over more than 1,500 miles from Maine to Georgia. British forces occupied, at one time or another, most of the important sea-ports and state capitals—Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Charleston, and Savannah—but patriot forces driven from these centers could simply regroup elsewhere. Finally, Great Britain had tried to solve a political problem by military means, but an occupying army is far more likely to alienate people than to secure their goodwill.

Yet it took 175,000 to 200,000 soldiers—Continental and militia troops—to prevent Great Britain from recovering the colonies. Of these, some 7,000 died in battle. Perhaps 10,000 more succumbed to disease while on active duty, another 8,500 died while prisoners of war, and nearly 1,500 were reported missing in action. More than 8,000 were wounded and survived. Those who served in the Continental Army, probably more than half of all who fought, served the longest and saw the most action. Their casualty rate—30 to 40 percent—may have been the highest of any war in which the United States has been engaged. In proportion to the population, these losses would be the equivalent of more than 2 million people in the United States today.



**MAP 6-6** North America after the Peace of Paris, 1783

The results of the American Revolution redrew the map of North America, confining Britain to Canada and giving the United States most of the area east of the Mississippi River, though Spain controlled its mouth for most of the next 20 years.

## War and Society, 1775–1783

Regular combatants were not the only ones to suffer during the struggle for independence. Eight years of warfare also produced profound dislocations throughout American society. Military service wrenched families apart, sporadic raids brought the war home to vast numbers of people, and everyone endured economic disruptions. As a forge of nationhood, the Revolution tested all Americans, whatever their standing as citizens.

### The Women's War

Women everywhere had to see their loved ones go off to fight and die. Like Mary Silliman in Connecticut, they waited, trying to stay calm until they knew “what tidings God” had for them. At first, with spirits still running high, Mary’s letters to her husband, Selleck, reveal an affectionate lightheartedness. “These cold nights make me shudder

for you,” she wrote, adding “Oh, King George, what hardships does thy tyranny put thy late subjects to!” Selleck responded with similarly suggestive banter. Later, the couple’s letters grew less playful. Then her husband was captured. The daily round of domestic duties helped to keep her going, but his extended absence increased her burdens and enlarged her responsibilities.

Such circumstances elevated women’s domestic status. Couples began referring to “our”—not “my” or “your”—property. Wives frequently became more knowledgeable about the family’s financial condition than their long-absent husbands. “What shall I do my Dearest? I wish I had Your Advice,” Selleck Silliman asked his wife after he had been released from captivity.

Women also assumed new public roles during the conflict. Some nursed the wounded. More wove cloth for uniforms. The Ladies’ Association of Philadelphia was



The surrender of Lord Cornwallis at Yorktown on October 19, 1781, led to the British decision to withdraw from the war. Cornwallis, who claimed to be ill, absented himself from the ceremony and is not in the picture. Washington, who is astride the horse under the American flag, designated General Benjamin Lincoln (on the white horse in the center) as the one to accept the submission of a subordinate British officer. John Trumbull, who painted *The Battle of Bunker Hill* and some 300 other scenes from the Revolutionary War, finished this painting while he was in London about 15 years after the events depicted. A large copy of the work now hangs in the rotunda of the United States Capitol in Washington, D.C.

John Trumbull (American 1756–1843), *Surrender of Lord Cornwallis at Yorktown, October 1781*, oil on canvas, 20 7/8 × 30 5/8 inches. Yale University Art Gallery, Trumbull Collection.

established in 1780 to demonstrate women's patriotism and raise money to buy shirts for the army. Though women might not be able to march "to glory by the same path as the Men," wrote the association's founder, "we should at least equal and sometimes surpass them in our love for the public good." Similar associations formed in other states.

Despite their increasing private responsibilities and new public activities, it did not occur to most women to encroach on traditional male prerogatives. When John Adams's wife, Abigail, urged him and the Second Continental Congress to "Remember the Ladies," she was not expecting equal political rights. What she wanted, rather, was some legal protections for women and recognition of their value and need for autonomy in the domestic sphere. "Remember," she cautioned, "all Men would be Tyrants if they could." Why not, then, make it impossible for "the vicious and lawless" to abuse women with impunity? "I will never consent to have our sex considered in an inferior point of light," she wrote.

Republican ideology, responding to the changing status of women, assigned them a role that was at once exalted and subordinate. Their job was to nurture wise, virtuous, and public-spirited men. It was this view of women that would prevail in the post-Revolutionary era.



Adams Family Letters

## Effect of the War on African Americans

In the northern states, where slavery was already economically marginal and where black men were welcome as volunteers in the Continental Army, the Revolutionary War helped to bring an end to slavery, although it remained legal there for some time (see Chapter 7). In the South, however, slavery was integral to the economy, and white planters viewed it as crucial to their postwar recovery. Thus, although British efforts to recruit black soldiers brought freedom to thousands and temporarily undermined slavery in the South, the war ultimately strengthened the institution, especially in the Carolinas and Georgia. Of the African Americans who left with the British at the end of the war, many, both slave and free, went to the West Indies. Others settled in Canada, and some eventually reached Africa, where Britain established the colony of Sierra Leone for them.



Patriots and Slaves  
Toppling Statue of George III

## The War's Impact on Native Americans

Survivors among the approximately 13,000 Native Americans who fought for the British did not have the option of leaving with them at the end of the war. How many died during the conflict is not known, but certainly many did. Not only the Iroquois but other groups lost much. The Americans repeatedly invaded the Cherokees' homeland in the southern Appalachian Mountains. "There was no withstanding them," recalled a Cherokee chief of the many frontiersmen who assaulted his people. "They dyed their hands in the blood of many of our Women and children, burnt seventeen towns, destroyed all our provisions," and spread famine across the land. Americans also attacked the Shawnees of Ohio. In one notorious incident, militiamen massacred peaceful Christian Indians at Gnadenhutten, Ohio.

In the peace treaty of 1783, Britain surrendered its territory east of the Mississippi, shocking and infuriating the Native Americans living there. They had not surrendered, and none of them had been at the negotiations in Paris. The Iroquois accordingly told a British commander that if the English really "had basely betrayed them by pretending to give up their Country to the Americans without their Consent, or Consulting them, it was an Act of Cruelty and injustice that Christians only were capable of doing." Because it enabled Americans to claim Indian territory by conquest, the Revolutionary War was a disaster for many Native Americans that opened the floodgates to a torrent of white settlers. During



Benjamin West's painting of the American commissioners who negotiated the Peace of Paris includes, from left to right, John Jay, John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, and Franklin's grandson, who served as the commissioners' secretary. A fourth American commissioner who arrived only at the end of the negotiations, Henry Laurens, stands in the background. The British commissioners, who would have occupied the blank space on the right, did not sit for their portraits. Chagrin at the outcome of the war probably contributed to their absence, but an apocryphal story attributed it to the reluctance of Richard Oswald, who was blind in one eye, to have his portrait painted.

Benjamin West, 1783, *American Commissioners of Preliminary Negotiations*. Courtesy Winterthur Museum.

1779 and 1780 alone, approximately 20,000 settlers streamed into Kentucky. Five years later, there were reportedly 2,200 squatter families in parts of Ohio where the United States government forbade settlement.

### Economic Disruption

The British and American armies both needed enormous quantities of supplies. This heavy demand disrupted the normal distribution of goods and drove up real prices seven- or eightfold; in addition, widespread use of depreciating paper money by the American side amplified the rise in prices and triggered severe inflation.

When the British did not simply seize what they needed, they paid for it in hard currency—gold and silver. American commanders, by contrast, had to rely on paper money because the Congress and the states had almost no hard currency at their disposal. The Continental dollar, however, steadily declined in value, and by March 1780, the Congress was forced to admit officially that it was worthless. (Not surprisingly, American farmers and merchants, whatever their political opinions, sometimes sold food to the British while their own forces went hungry.)

Necessity, not folly, drove Congress and the states to rely on the printing press. Rather than alienate citizens by

immediately raising taxes to pay for the war, the states printed paper money supposedly redeemable through future tax revenues. But because the quantity of this paper money rose faster than the supply of goods and services, prices skyrocketed, and the value of the money plunged. By April 1779, as Washington commented, “a wagon load of money will scarcely purchase a wagon load of provisions.” Those who had paper money tried to spend it before its value could drop further; whereas those who had salable commodities such as grain tended to hoard them in the hope that the price would go even higher. Prices also climbed faster than wages, leaving many working people impoverished.

The rampant inflation was demoralizing and divisive. Lucky speculators and unscrupulous profiteers could grow rich, while ordinary and patriotic people suffered. These conditions sparked more than thirty protest demonstrations. In October 1779, frustrated Philadelphia militiamen marched on the house of a local Whig leader, demanding better price controls. The confrontation left six people dead and achieved little. Freebooters—rovers in search of plunder—sailed Long Island Sound in boats with names such as *Retrieve My Losses*, ostensibly to harry the British but all too often to trade with them. As usual, war and its deprivations brought out

both the best and the worst in human nature.

Nevertheless, the successful outcome of the war and the stable peace that followed suggest that most Americans somehow managed to cope. But during the last years of the conflict, their economic and psychological reserves ran low. The total real wealth of private individuals declined by an average of 0.5 percent annually from 1774 to 1805, even with the returning prosperity of the 1790s. Such statistics suggest the true economic cost of the War for Independence. And the atrocities committed on both sides provide a comparable measure of the conflict's psychological cost.

### The Price of Victory

Most American and British commanders tried to keep hostilities “civilized”—if such a characterization can ever be applied to a war—but discipline sometimes broke down among regular troops. Controlling militias or civilians acting on their own was even more difficult. Residents of contested areas near British-occupied cities, such as New York and Charleston, were often in peril, as the following incident reveals. Sometime during 1779, roving Tories knocked on the door of a Whig militiaman in New Jersey. Entering his house, they announced that he was a dead man. While drinking his

# OVERVIEW

## Important Battles of the Revolutionary War

	Battle	Date	Outcome
Early Fighting	Lexington and Concord, Massachusetts	April 19, 1775	Contested
	Fort Ticonderoga, New York	May 10, 1775	American victory
	Breed's Hill ("Bunker Hill"), Boston, Massachusetts	June 17, 1775	Contested
	Great Bridge, Virginia	December 9, 1775	American victory
	Quebec, Canada	December 31, 1775	British repulsed American assault
	Moore's Creek Bridge, North Carolina	February 27, 1776	American victory
The War in the North	Brooklyn Heights, New York	August 27, 1776	British victory
	White Plains, New York	October 28, 1776	British victory
	Trenton, New Jersey	December 26, 1776	American victory
	Princeton, New Jersey	January 3, 1777	American victory
	Brandywine Creek, Pennsylvania	September 11, 1777	British victory (opened way for British to take Philadelphia)
	Saratoga, New York	September 19 and October 17, 1777	American victory (helped persuade France to form an alliance with United States)
	Monmouth Court House, New Jersey	June 28, 1778	Contested
The War on the Frontier	Wyoming Valley, Pennsylvania	June and July 1778	British victory
	Kaskaskia and Cahokia, Illinois; Vincennes, Indiana	July 4, 1778– February 23, 1779	American victories strengthen claims to Mississippi Valley
	Cherry Valley, New York	November 11, 1778	British victory
The War in the South	Savannah, Georgia	December 29, 1778	British victory (took control of Georgia)
	Kettle Creek, Georgia	February 14, 1779	American victory
	Savannah, Georgia	September 3–October 28, 1779	British victory (opened way for British to take Charleston)
	Charleston, South Carolina	February 11–May 12, 1780	British victory
	Camden, South Carolina	August 16, 1780	British victory
	Kings Mountain, South Carolina	Oct. 7, 1780	American victory
	Cowpens, South Carolina	January 17, 1781	American victory
	Guilford Court House, North Carolina	March 15, 1781	Contested
	Yorktown, Virginia	August 30–October 19, 1781	American victory (persuaded Britain to end war)



American soldiers at Yorktown in 1781 as drawn by a young officer in the French army, Jean-Baptiste-Antoine de Verger. The African American on the left is an infantryman of the First Rhode Island Regiment; the next, a musketeer; the third, with the fringed jacket, a rifleman. The man on the right is a Continental artilleryman, holding a lighted match used to fire cannons.

liquor and terrorizing his wife, they argued about how to execute him until one of the intruders abruptly resolved the dispute by shooting him. Whigs could be equally brutal. Late in the war, British sympathizers in the Lower South compiled a list of more than 300 loyalists who had been massacred by Whigs—some, the survivors claimed, while they slept.

Although the British were probably the worse offenders, both sides burned, plundered, and murdered. One can see the results in a returning refugee's description of the area around Beaufort, South Carolina, in the early 1780s: "All was desolation. ... Robberies and murders are often committed on the public roads. The people that remain have been peeled, pillaged, and plundered. Poverty, want, and hardship appear in almost every countenance ..., and the morals of the people are almost entirely extirpated."

## Conclusion

Despite the devastation and divisiveness of the war, many people in Europe and the United States were convinced that

it represented something momentous. The *Annual Register*, a popular and influential British magazine, commented accurately in 1783 that the American Revolution "has already overturned those favourite systems of policy and commerce, both in the old and in the new world, which the wisdom of the ages, and the power of the greatest nations, had in vain endeavored to render permanent; and it seems to have laid the seeds of still greater revolutions in the history and mutual relations of mankind."

Americans, indeed, had fired a shot heard round the world. Thanks in part to its heavy investment in the American Revolution, France suffered a financial crisis in the late 1780s. This, in turn, ushered in the political crisis that culminated in the French Revolution of 1789. The American Revolution helped to inspire among French people (including soldiers returning from service in America) an in-

tense yearning for an end to arbitrary government and undeserved social inequalities. Liberty also proved infectious to thousands of German troops who had come to America as mercenaries but stayed as free citizens after the war was over. Once prosperous but distant provinces of a far-flung empire, the North American states had become an independent confederation, a grand experiment in republicanism whose fate mattered to enlightened men and women throughout the Western world. In his written farewell to the rank and file of his troops at the end of October 1783, Washington maintained that "the enlarged prospects of happiness, opened by the confirmation of our independence and sovereignty, almost exceed the power of description." He urged those who had fought with him to maintain their "strong attachments to the union" and "prove themselves not less virtuous and useful as citizens, than they have been persevering and victorious as soldiers." The work of securing the promise of the American Revolution, Washington knew, would now shift from the battlefield to the political arena.

## Review Questions

1. Who were the loyalists, and how many of them were there? What attempts did the British and Americans make in 1775 to avert war? Why did these steps fail?
2. What actions did the Second Continental Congress take in 1775 and 1776? Why did it choose George Washington as the commander of its army? Why was he a good choice?
3. Why did Congress declare independence in July 1776? How did Americans justify their claim to independence?
4. What was republicanism, and why was the enthusiasm that it inspired insufficient to win the war?
5. Why were most of the early battles fought in the northern states? What effect did French entry into the war have on British strategy?
6. Why did the initial British victories in the South not win the war for them? Why did the United States ultimately win? What did it obtain by winning?
7. What were the effects of the war on Native Americans, African Americans, women, and American society in general?
8. What were some of the global effects of American independence?

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## Key Terms

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Battles of Lexington and Concord (p. 000)	Declaration of Independence (p. 000)	Peace of Paris (p. 000)
Committee of Safety (p. 000)	Declaration of the Causes and Necessity of Taking Up Arms (p. 000)	Republicanism (p. 000)
Conciliatory Proposition (p. 000)	Minute Men (p. 000)	Second Continental Congress (p. 000)
Continental Army (p. 000)	Olive Branch Petition (p. 000)	Valley Forge (p. 000)
Contract theory of government (p. 000)		

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## Recommended Reading

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Armitage, David. *The Declaration of Independence: A Global History* (2007). A wide-ranging account of the initial worldwide reception and later counterparts of the Declaration of Independence, with significant documents.

Buel, Joy D., and Richard Buel, Jr. *The Way of Duty: A Woman and Her Family in Revolutionary America* (1984). A readable and unusually full biography of Mary Fish of Connecticut, who lived from 1736 to 1818. Her experiences during the Revolutionary War while her husband, Selleck Silliman, was a prisoner of the British have become the subject of a good movie, *Mary Silliman's War* (1993).

Dann, John C. ed. *The Revolution Remembered: Eyewitness Accounts of the War for Independence* (1980). A collection of

79 narratives by veterans seeking pensions for their Revolutionary War service; sometimes poignant and frequently illuminating.

Ferling, John E. *Almost a Miracle: The American Victory in the War of Independence* (2007). A very readable account of the war.

Gross, Robert A. *The Minutemen and Their World* (1976). An example of “history from the bottom up” that provides a close look at the Minute Men of Concord from the late colonial period through the Revolution.

Shy, John. *A People Numerous and Armed: Reflections on the Military Struggle for American Independence* (1990). A collection of essays on various aspects of the American Revolution by a perceptive military historian; full of interesting ideas.



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## Where to Learn More

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- **Independence National Historical Park, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.** Independence Hall, where Congress adopted the Declaration of Independence, is the most historic building in Philadelphia. The informative website can be accessed through Links to the Past: National Park Service Cultural Resources' comprehensive listing of historic sites in the National Park system, [www.cr.nps.gov](http://www.cr.nps.gov).
- **Kings Mountain National Military Park and Cowpens National Battlefield, South Carolina.** Situated approximately 20 miles apart, these were the sites of two battles in October 1780 and January 1781 that turned the tide of the war in the South. Both have museums and exhibits. The official site is accessible through Links to the Past: National Park Service Cultural Resources, [www.cr.nps.gov](http://www.cr.nps.gov). But see also *Battles of the American Revolutionary War*, [www.ilt.columbia.edu/ki2/history/aha/battles.html](http://www.ilt.columbia.edu/ki2/history/aha/battles.html), for a brief description of the battles and their contexts.
- **Minute Man National Historical Park, Lexington and Concord, Massachusetts.** There are visitors' centers at both Lexington and Concord with explanatory displays. Visitors may also follow the self-guided Battle Road Automobile Tour. The official website is accessible through Links to the Past: National Park Service Cultural Resources, [www.cr.nps.gov](http://www.cr.nps.gov).
- **Yorktown Battlefield, Colonial National Historical Park, Yorktown, Virginia.** The park commemorates the great American victory here. Innovative exhibits enable visitors to follow the course of the war from a multicultural perspective. The official website is accessible through Links to the Past: National Park Service Cultural Resources, [www.cr.nps.gov](http://www.cr.nps.gov).

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## Study Resources

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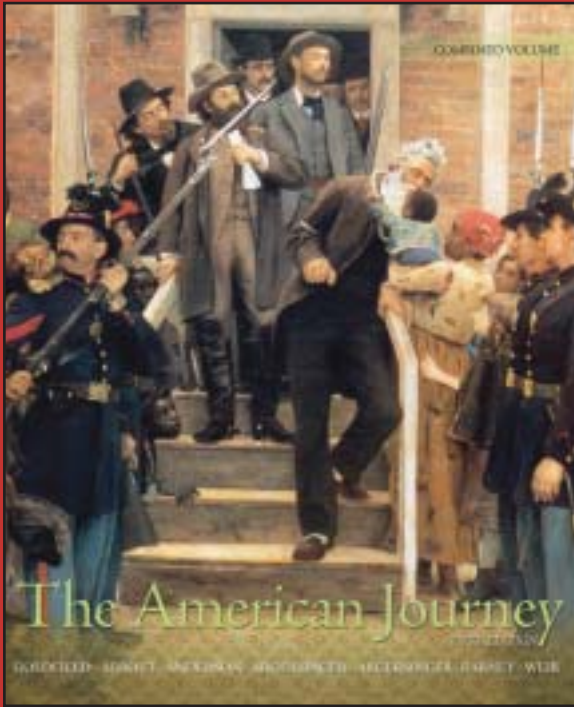
For study resources for this chapter, go to [www.myhistorylab.com](http://www.myhistorylab.com) and choose *The American Journey*. You will find a wealth of study and review material for this chapter, including pre- and post-tests, customized study plan, key term review flash cards, interactive map and document activities, and documents for analysis.

MyHistoryLab is an easy-to-use online learning management system that offers students and instructors a multitude of resources and tools to understand and reinforce the key concepts of the class. Among its many versatile features, MyHistoryLab provides students with a variety of learning tools that improve test scores and create more opportunities for success in the classroom. And, to save instructors time, most of MyHistoryLab's resources include assessments that automatically populate the instructor gradebook.

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- **Flashcards** that remind students of critical key terms to remember
- **The History Bookshelf**, which includes 50 of the most commonly assigned history readings in one convenient location

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