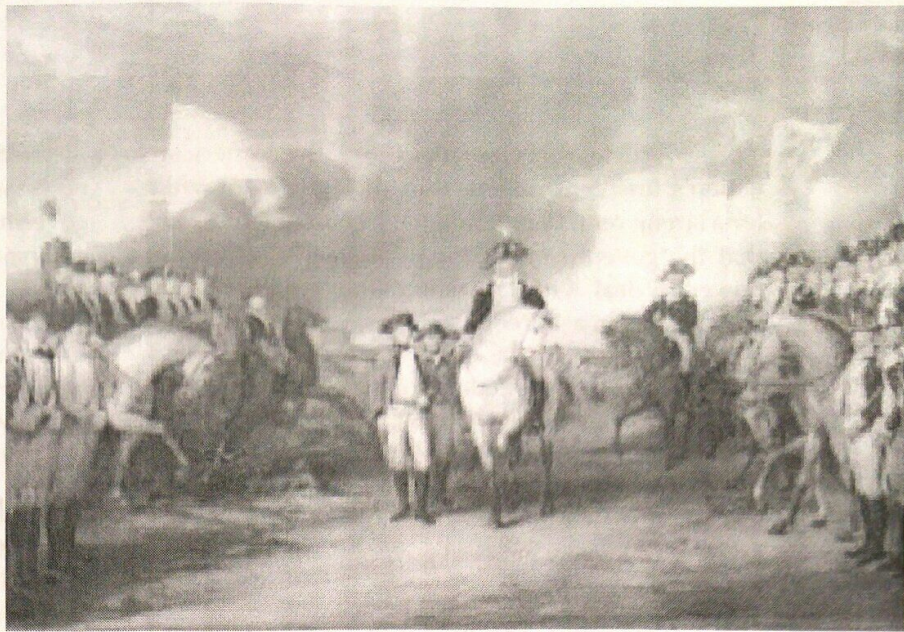


## The American Revolution

After the Seven Years' War, British leaders wanted to get new revenues from the colonies. These revenues would be used to cover war costs, as well as to pay for the expenses of maintaining an army to defend the colonies.

In 1765, the Parliament imposed the Stamp Act on the colonies. The act required that certain printed materials, such as legal documents and newspapers, carry a stamp showing that a tax had been paid to Britain. Opposition was widespread and often violent, and the act was repealed in 1766. The crisis was over, but the cause of the dispute was not resolved.



*Lord Cornwallis surrendering to George Washington (left of the American flag)*

**The War Begins** Crisis followed crisis in the 1770s. To counteract British actions, the colonies organized the First Continental Congress, which met in Philadelphia in September 1774. Outspoken members urged colonists to “take up arms and organize militias.”

Fighting finally erupted between colonists and the British army in April 1775 in Lexington and Concord, Massachusetts. The Second Continental Congress met soon afterward and formed an army, called the Continental Army, with George Washington as commander in chief. Still, the colonists did not rush headlong into war. After the fighting in Lexington and Concord, more than a year passed before the decision was made to declare independence from the British Empire.

On July 4, 1776, the Second Continental Congress approved a declaration of independence written by Thomas Jefferson. A stirring political document, the Declaration of Independence declared the colonies to be “free and independent states absolved from all allegiance to the British Crown.” The American Revolution had formally begun.

The war against Great Britain was a great gamble. Britain was a strong military power with enormous financial resources. The Continental Army of the Americans was made up of undisciplined amateurs who agreed to serve for only a short time.

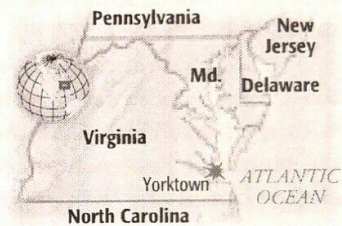
**Foreign Support and British Defeat** Of great importance to the colonies' cause was support from foreign countries. These nations were eager to gain revenge for earlier defeats at the hands of the British.

The French supplied arms and money to the rebels from the beginning of the war. French officers and soldiers also served in Washington's army. In February

1778, following a British defeat, the French granted diplomatic recognition to the American state.

Spain and the Dutch Republic also entered the war against Great Britain. Now, the British were faced with war against much of Europe, as well as against the Americans.

When the army of General Cornwallis was forced to surrender to combined American and French forces under Washington at **Yorktown** in 1781, the British decided to end the war. The Treaty of Paris, signed in 1783, recognized the independence of the American colonies and granted the Americans control of the western territory from the Appalachians to the Mississippi River.



**Reading Check** Explaining Why did foreign countries support the American cause?

## The Birth of a New Nation

**TURNING POINT** Americans created a new social contract in 1788. The creation of the Constitution made Enlightenment concepts of liberty and representative government a reality for the first time.

The 13 American colonies had gained their independence. The former colonies were now states. The states feared concentrated power, however, and each one was primarily concerned for its own interests. For these reasons, they had little enthusiasm for creating a united nation with a strong central government.



The Articles of Confederation, the American nation's first constitution, thus did little to provide for a strong central government. It soon became clear that the government under the Articles lacked the power to deal with the new nation's problems. A movement for a different form of national government arose.

The Articles of Confederation had been approved in 1781. In the summer of 1787, 55 delegates met in Philadelphia to revise the Articles. That meeting became known as the Constitutional Convention. The convention's delegates decided to write a plan for an entirely new national government.

**The Constitution** The proposed Constitution created a federal system in which power would be shared between the national government and the state governments. The national, or federal, government was given the power to levy taxes, raise an army, regulate trade, and create a national currency.

The federal government was divided into three branches, each with some power to check the workings of the others. The first branch was the executive branch. A president served as the chief executive. The president had the power to execute laws, veto the legislature's acts, supervise foreign affairs, and direct military forces.

The second branch of government was the legislative branch. It consisted of two houses—the Senate, with members elected by the state legislatures, and the House of Representatives. Representatives were elected directly by the people.

The Supreme Court and other courts “as deemed necessary” by Congress provided the third branch of government, the judicial branch. The courts would enforce the Constitution as the “supreme law of the land.”

According to the Constitutional Convention, the Constitution would have to be ratified, or approved, by nine states before it could take effect. The Constitution was eventually approved, but in several states the margin was slim.

**The Bill of Rights** Important to the eventual adoption of the Constitution was a promise to add a bill of rights. In 1789 the new Congress proposed 12 amendments, and the 10 that were approved by the states became known as the Bill of Rights.

These 10 amendments guaranteed freedom of religion, speech, press, petition, and assembly. They gave Americans the right to bear arms and to be protected against unreasonable searches and arrests. They guaranteed trial by jury, due process of law, and the protection of property rights.

Many of the rights in the Bill of Rights were derived from the natural rights proposed by the eighteenth-century philosophes. Many European intellectuals saw the American Revolution as the embodiment of the Enlightenment's political dreams. The premises of the Enlightenment seemed confirmed. A new age and a better world could be achieved.

**✓ Reading Check Contrasting** What was the main difference between the Articles of Confederation and the Constitution?

## SECTION 4 ASSESSMENT

### Checking for Understanding

- 1. Define** mestizo, mulatto, federal system.
- 2. Identify** Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, Hanoverians, Robert Walpole.
- 3. Locate** Brazil, Yorktown.
- 4. Explain** the role of the Catholic Church and its missionaries in colonial Latin America.
- 5. List** the freedoms guaranteed under the American Bill of Rights.

### Critical Thinking

- 6. Summarize** Why did the American colonies declare their independence from the British Empire?
- 7. Summarizing Information** Use a chart like the one below to identify the significant events and conflicts between the British and the colonists leading to the American Revolution.

Conflicts Between British and Colonists

### Analyzing Visuals

- 8. Examine** the depiction of the signing of the Declaration of Independence on page 370. What principles of government and citizenship are illustrated in the painting?

### Writing About History

- 9. Expository Writing** Do further research on how the French supported the colonies during the American Revolution. Based on your research, write an essay analyzing the importance of the French assistance to the American colonists.

## American Revolution Guided Reading

1. Why do the American colonies declare their independence from the British Empire?
2. Why did foreign countries support the American cause?
3. List the freedoms guaranteed under the American Bill of Rights?
4. What was the main difference between the Articles of Confederation and the U.S. Constitution?
5. Explain how enlightened ideas encouraged the American colonists to revolt against the British Empire?