

## The American Revolution (1775–1783)

The American Revolution was a political and military conflict between Great Britain and its thirteen North American colonies. It resulted in the colonies' independence and the creation of the United States of America.

### 1. Causes of the American Revolution

#### a. British Policies and Colonial Resistance

After the costly French and Indian War (1754–1763), Britain imposed taxes on the colonies to recover war expenses. The colonists, who had no representation in the British Parliament, strongly opposed these taxes.

Britain's victory in the French and Indian War brought significant changes in its imperial policy toward the colonies. In the 1760s and 1770s, England sought to tighten its control, which ultimately led to revolution.

#### Key Causes:

- **The Sugar Act (1764):** Tax on sugar and molasses.
- **The Stamp Act (1765):** Required colonists to buy special stamps for legal documents.
- **The Townshend Acts (1767):** Tax on imported goods like glass, paper, and tea.
- **The Tea Act (1773):** Gave the British East India Company a monopoly on tea sales in the colonies (allowing it to sell tea directly to the colonies and undercutting local merchants).
- **The Intolerable Acts (1774):** Punished Massachusetts after **the Boston Tea Party** by closing Boston Harbor and placing Massachusetts under strict British control.

Colonists responded with **boycotts, protests, and violence**, arguing “**No taxation without representation!**”

#### b. Enlightenment Ideas

Philosophers like **John Locke** inspired revolutionaries with ideas of **natural rights** (life, liberty, property) and **the right to overthrow oppressive governments**.

### 2. Key Events of the Revolution

#### a. Early Conflicts (1770–1776)

- **Boston Massacre (1770):** A deadly confrontation between British soldiers and American colonists on March 5, 1770, in Boston, Massachusetts. British soldiers killed five protesting colonists. It was a pivotal event that fueled anti-British sentiment and moved the colonies closer to revolution.
- **Boston Tea Party (1773):** A political protest that took place on December 16, 1773, in Boston, Massachusetts. It was carried out by the Sons of Liberty, a group of patriots who boarded three British ships—the Dartmouth, the Eleanor, and the Beaver—and dumped 342 chests of British tea (worth about \$1.7 million today) into the Boston Harbor.

- **First Continental Congress (1774):** Aimed to unite the colonies in opposition to British policies, particularly the Intolerable Acts, which were seen as a direct threat to colonial liberties. The delegates sought to petition King George III to repeal these harsh measures, hoping for a peaceful resolution. At the same time, they organized a **boycott** of British goods, using economic pressure to push for change. However, recognizing the possibility of British resistance, they also began preparing for potential military action, ensuring that the colonies would be ready to defend their rights if necessary. This combination of diplomatic and defensive strategies marked a crucial step toward the American Revolution.
- **Lexington and Concord (April 19, 1775):** The first military engagements of the American Revolution. These battles marked the beginning of open conflict between the American colonies and Britain. The first shot of the war was later known as “**the shot heard 'round the world**”.

## **b. The Declaration of Independence (July 4, 1776)**

Written by **Thomas Jefferson**, this document stated that:

- People have unalienable rights: “**Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.**”
- Britain had violated those rights.
- The colonies were now **free and independent states** (formally declared the colonies' separation from Britain).

## **c. Major Battles (1776–1781)**

Several key battles shaped the course of the war and ultimately led to American victory.

- **Battle of Saratoga (1777):** This was the turning point of the war. The American victory convinced France to officially ally with the colonies, providing crucial military and financial support against Britain..
- **Winter at Valley Forge (1777–1778):** Though not a battle, this winter encampment tested the strength and endurance of George Washington’s army. Despite harsh conditions, starvation, and disease, the army emerged stronger and better trained, thanks to drills led by Baron von Steuben.
- **Battle of Yorktown (1781):** The final major battle of the war. General George Washington, with help from the French army and navy, trapped British General Cornwallis at Yorktown, Virginia. Cornwallis surrendered, effectively ending the war and leading to the Treaty of Paris (1783).

## **d. Treaty of Paris (1783)**

It was the peace agreement that officially ended the American Revolution and recognized **the United States as an independent nation**. It was signed on September 3, 1783, between Britain and the United States, along with France and Spain, who were also involved in the war.

### 3. Consequences of the Revolution

1. **Political Impact:** The United States became an independent nation and initially adopted the Articles of Confederation in 1781. However, due to its weaknesses, it was later replaced by the U.S. Constitution in 1787, establishing a democratic republic.
2. **Social Change:** Ideas of liberty and democracy inspired movements for **women's rights** and **abolition of slavery** (though slavery persisted in the South).
3. **Global Influence:** The revolution inspired the **French Revolution (1789)** and independence movements in Latin America.

The revolution transformed political thought by proving that a colony could successfully overthrow a powerful empire. It laid the foundation for American democracy, inspiring other nations to fight for self-governance, liberty, and human rights.