

LEVELED BOOK • Z<sup>1</sup>

# Battling for Independence



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Part Two of The American Revolution  
Written by Terry Miller Shannon

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## Focus Question

How did the battles of the Revolutionary War lead to the creation of the United States of America?

# Words to Know

allies  
amends  
casualty  
commission  
delegates  
independence  
Loyalists  
momentum

morale  
Patriots  
petition  
rebellion  
retaliated  
self-governing  
siege

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## Part Two of The American Revolution

*Battling for Independence* tells about the major battles of the Revolutionary War. Read *Seeds of Revolution* to find out what events lead to the war. Then read *Building a Nation* to find out what happens after the war is over.

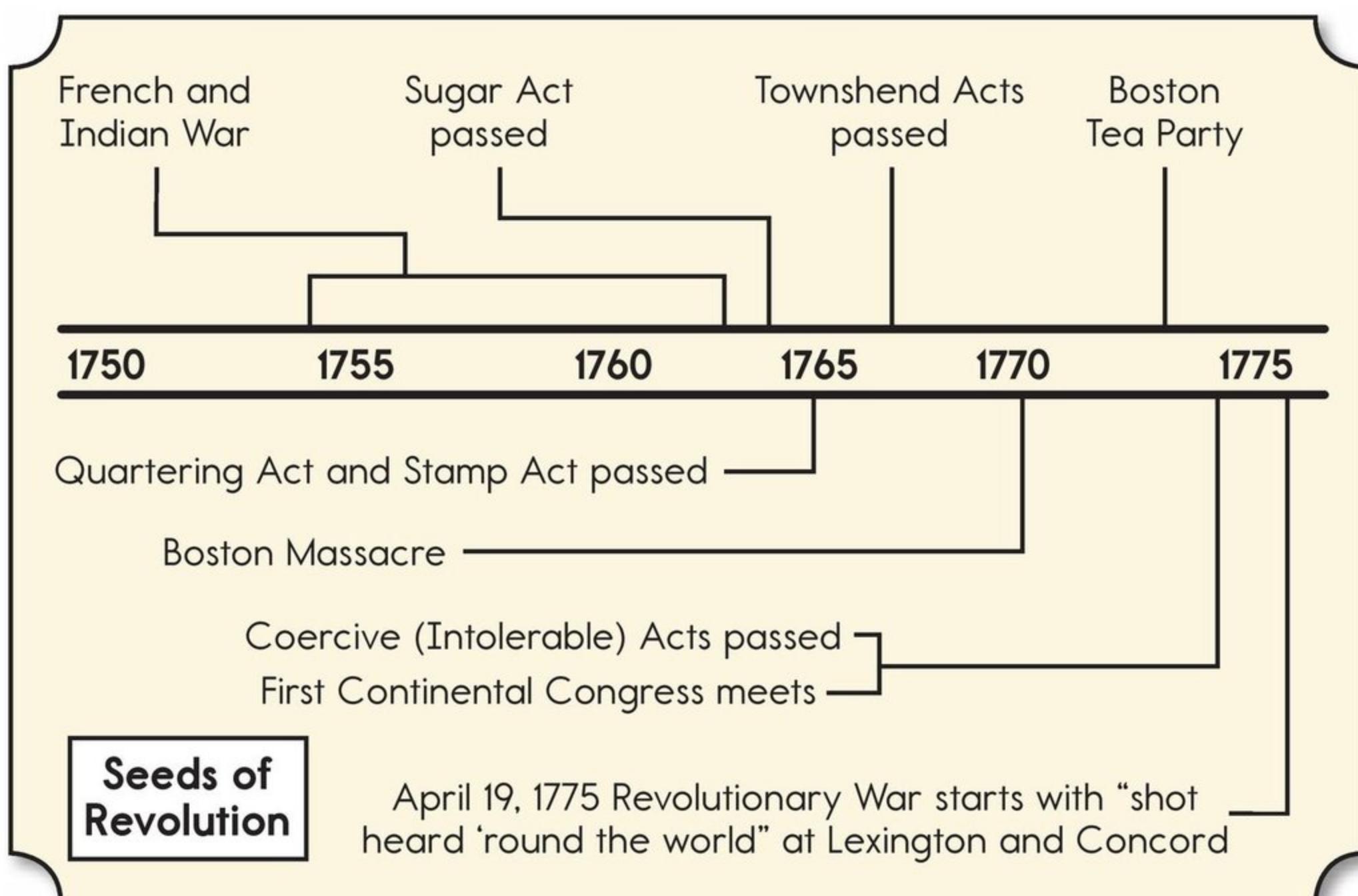
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## Correlation

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## Table of Contents

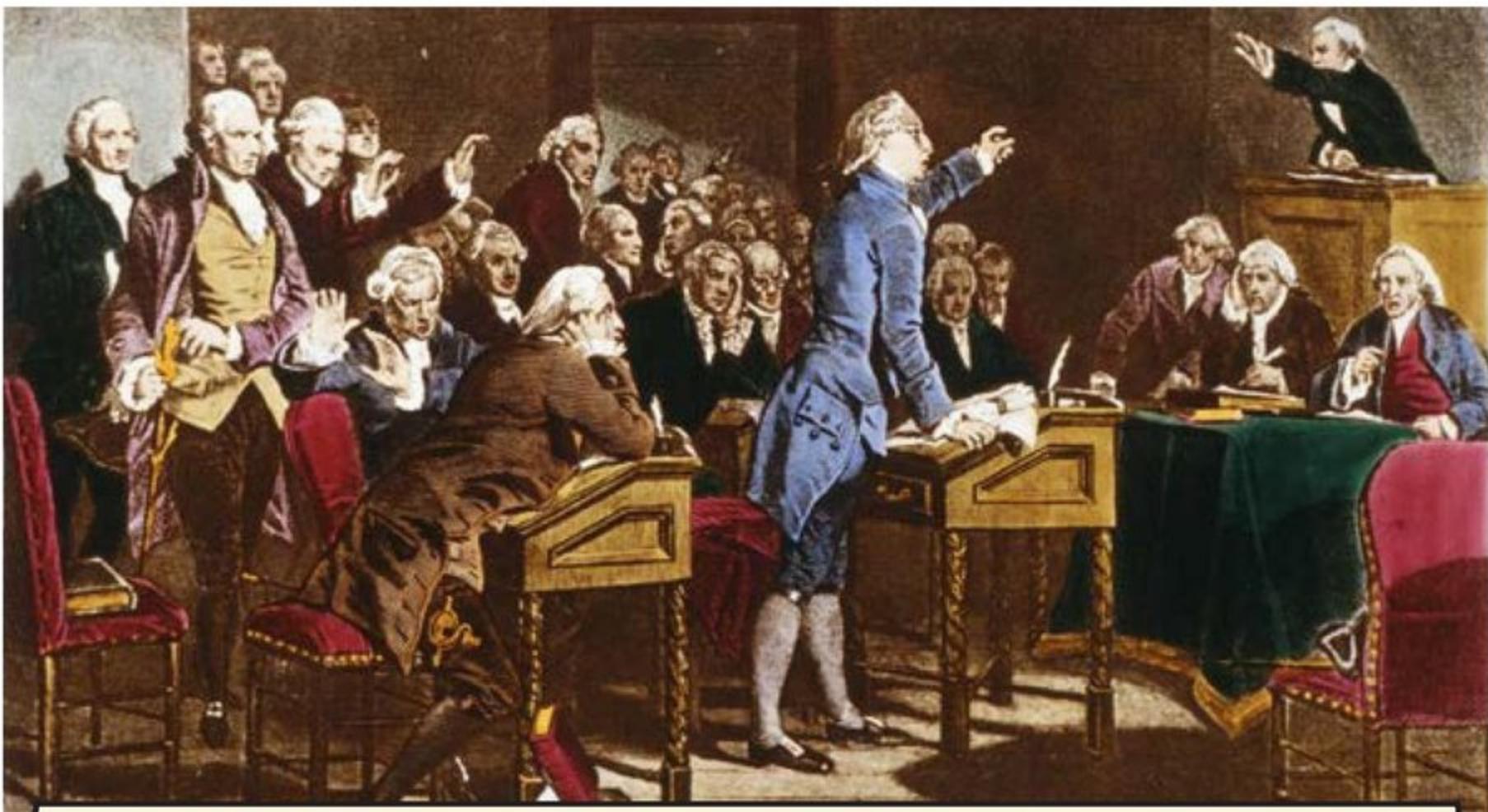
Introduction .....	4
The Second Continental Congress .....	5
The Patriots Take Ticonderoga .....	8
Bunker Hill (and Breed’s Hill) .....	9
Declaring Independence .....	13
Battling for Freedom .....	14
Southern Battles .....	18
Major Players in the Revolutionary War .....	21
Glossary .....	23
Index .....	24

## Introduction

America was not always a country. More than 200 years ago, it was a collection of thirteen colonies ruled by Great Britain and its English king, George III. Britain began taxing the colonists and enforcing unpopular new laws. The colonists objected, saying they wanted “no taxation without representation” in British Parliament.

Over time, the disagreements between the two groups only increased the negative feelings and violence. King George III tried to gain control over the colonists by using harsher taxation and threats of military force. A series of events led to a confrontation on April 19, 1775, between British soldiers and colonists at the towns of Lexington and Concord in Massachusetts. Shots were exchanged on the village green in Lexington—no one knows who fired first. That first shot became known as “the shot heard ‘round the world,” which signaled the beginning of war between Britain and the thirteen colonies.





## Give Me Liberty!

When King George refused to repeal the taxes, it became obvious that the colonies would have to fight for their independence. After the First Continental Congress, Patrick Henry returned to Virginia and made a speech in which he cried, "Give me liberty or give me death!" During the war, "Liberty or Death!" was a Patriot battle cry.

## The Second Continental Congress

On May 10, 1775, the Second Continental Congress met at **Independence Hall** in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The fifty-six **delegates** unanimously chose George Washington, one of the delegates from Virginia and a former officer in the British army, to command the colony's troops, which until then had been called the New England militia. The Congress voted to call the troops the Continental Army and declared it would be made up of volunteer soldiers from each of the thirteen colonies.

## Thinking Critically

WHAT does a unanimous vote reveal about the delegates' perception of George Washington?

IN YOUR MIND, how might a unanimous vote benefit the delegates?

Washington's job as commander of the Continental Army wasn't going to be easy. Washington had a ragtag group of farmers, carpenters, and blacksmiths with few weapons and little or no training. These soldiers would be fighting against the powerful, well-trained, and well-supplied military might of Britain. He expected to fail, telling Patrick Henry—a lawyer from Virginia—"From the day I enter upon the command of the American armies, I date my fall,



George Washington accepts the surrender of troops in Trenton, New Jersey, 1776.

and the ruin of my reputation." Although he thought his reputation would be ruined, Washington believed so strongly in the cause of American independence, he took the challenge as its commander and insisted that he not be paid for his services.

# The Olive Branch Petition

The petition that the Second Continental Congress sent to King George III was called the Olive Branch Petition. An olive branch is a symbolic offering of peace.

To the Kings most excellent Majestie

*Most gracious sovereign*

The year Majesty's  
lithful subjects of the colonies of New Hampshire, Massa-  
chusetts bay, Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, Con-  
necticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, the  
counties of New Castle, Kent and Sussex in Delaware, Ma-  
ryland, Virginia, North Carolina and South Carolina, on  
half of ourselves and the inhabitants of these colonies, who  
are entitled us to represent them in general Congress, en-  
treat your Majesty's gracious attention to this our humble  
petition.

The union between our Mother-country and these colonies, and the energy of mild and just government produce benefits so remarkably important, and afford such an assurance of their permanency and increase, that the voices & fury of other nations were excited, while they behold your colonies rising to a power the most extraordinary the world has ever known.

The evils observing, that there was no probability of this happy connection being broken by civil dissensions, are apprehending its future effects, if left any longer undisturbed, will be to prevent her deriving such continual and formidable accessions of wealth and strength, by checking the growths of those settlements from whence they were to be derived.

In the prosecution of this attempt events so unfavourable to the design took place that every friend to the

Not every colonist wanted to be independent from Britain. So while George Washington headed to Concord and Lexington near Boston to lead his new troops, the Continental Congress continued to try to make **amends** with Britain's Parliament. The delegates sent a **petition** to King George III asking him again to grant the colonists rights and to proclaim the colonists loyal English subjects. King George refused to receive the petition and declared that the colonists "had proceeded to open and avowed **rebellion**."

## The Patriots Take Ticonderoga

While the Second Continental Congress met in Philadelphia, the Colonist soldiers scored a victory over the British at Fort Ticonderoga in New York. A rough, tough farmer from Connecticut named Ethan Allen and his backwoods friends had formed a group called the Green Mountain Boys. Congress asked the Green Mountain Boys to capture the British fort on Lake Champlain in New York. Another soldier named Benedict Arnold also was ordered to attack Fort Ticonderoga. Arnold had an official **commission** from Connecticut to take the fort from the British. Both Arnold and Allen wanted to lead the attack, so they argued all the way to Ticonderoga, but they managed to conquer the fort together on May 10, 1775.

The next day, another British fort, at Crown Point, was captured by Allen and Arnold. The victories gave the **Patriots** a **morale** boost. They also served as an announcement that war had indeed begun. Colonists were now forced to take sides either as **Loyalists**, those who wanted to remain part of Britain, or as **Patriots**, those who wanted independence from Britain. There was no middle ground.

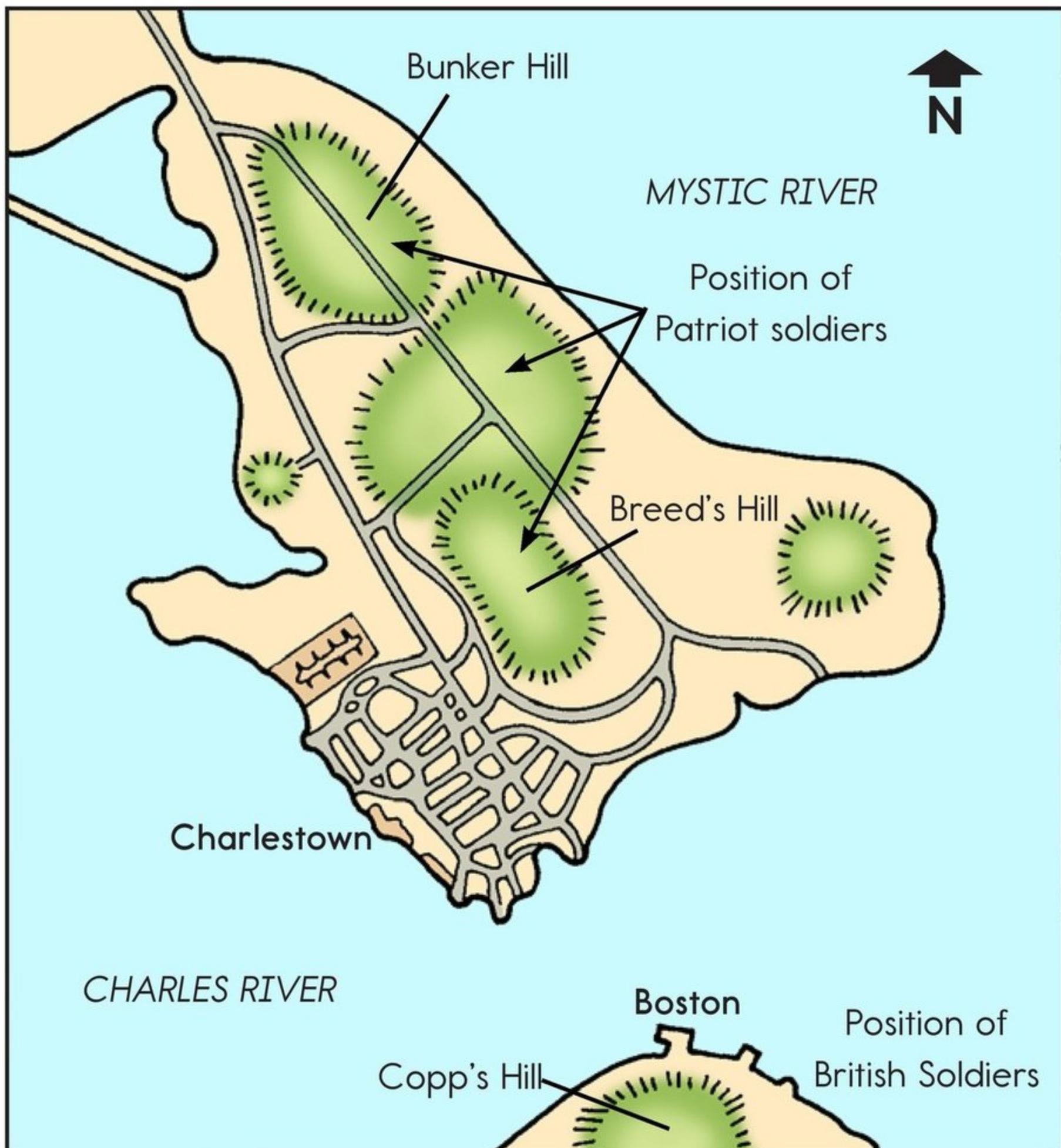
## Bunker Hill (and Breed's Hill)

After the Battle of Lexington, in which “the shot heard ‘round the world” started the first battle of the American Revolution, the British soldiers, led by Major John Pitcairn, had retreated to Boston. The colonist soldiers camped outside Boston, gathering forces. Around 16,000 Patriot troops eventually surrounded Boston, cutting off the British supply line into Boston. With Patriot troops surrounding Boston, British General Thomas Gage worried enemy troops might fortify the hills across the Charles River from Boston—Bunker Hill and Breed’s Hill in Charlestown.



On the night of June 16, 1775, General Artemis Ward ordered his Patriot soldiers to dig trenches into Bunker Hill. The soldiers misunderstood their orders and instead went to Breed's Hill, which was closer to the British position. By morning, soldiers and trenches covered the hill. The British soldiers moved by ship across the Charles River with cannons blasting. The minutemen were at a disadvantage: they weren't trained well and were fighting Britain's professional soldiers. The Patriots also had very little gunpowder. In order to conserve their ammunition, Patriot officers told their soldiers to make every shot count by waiting until the British were very close before firing: "Wait until you see the whites of their eyes."

The strategy worked, and as the British soldiers rushed the hill, the Americans held their fire until the last safe moment. Many British soldiers died. More British troops landed and attacked, with the Americans continuing to wait and then shoot. Finally, after the third wave of attacks, when the Americans ran out of gunpowder and had to retreat, the British captured Breed's Hill and Bunker Hill.



The British won control of the two hills at the cost of many British lives. More than 1,000 British soldiers were wounded or killed, while the Patriots lost 441 men. The Patriots gained a big boost in morale even though they lost a battle because they could fight and win a war against a larger number of professional soldiers. Although most of the action was seen on Breed's Hill, the battle has come to be known as "The Battle of Bunker Hill."

General George Washington arrived in July 1775, and his troops besieged the British in Boston for nearly a year. He also sent forces to invade Canada to prevent the British from landing there and sending forces south into New York. The Patriots captured Montreal in November 1775. Benedict Arnold led an attack on the city of Quebec, but because of the severe December weather, it failed.

During the winter, Patriots used cannons they captured from the British to attack British soldiers in Boston. On March 17, 1776, the British soldiers and thousands of Loyalists left Boston, leaving

## Thinking Critically

HOW would seeing the Patriots using British cannons cause the British troops to react?

IN YOUR MIND, how could their reaction have been an advantage or disadvantage for the Patriots?

Washington's troops to march triumphantly into the city.





## "Put your John Hancock right here."

The above saying dates back to 1776 when John Hancock boldly signed the Declaration of Independence. His large signature encouraged the other 53 signers to sign.

### Declaring Independence

Patriot Thomas Paine wrote a pamphlet, *Common Sense*, in which he declared independence to be the only correct choice for the colonists. Paine challenged the authority of the British government using plain language that most people could easily understand. His booklet sold 150,000 copies in a few months and swayed many Loyalists to the side of independence.

In June 1776, the Continental Congress selected a committee to write a statement about the colonists' right to be **self-governing**. Thomas Jefferson was chosen as the actual writer because he was known for his writing skills. The Continental Congress approved the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776. Once passed by each of the thirteen colonies, the Declaration of Independence created the United States of America.

## Battling for Freedom

There were dark days ahead for the Patriots, as they lost battle after battle. A month after the Declaration of Independence was signed, the British, under General William Howe, shipped 30,000 soldiers into New York Harbor. The Battle of Long Island lasted for three days until the outnumbered Patriots finally retreated south across New Jersey to Philadelphia. The British occupied New York City and won a battle in which Patriots surrendered Fort Washington.

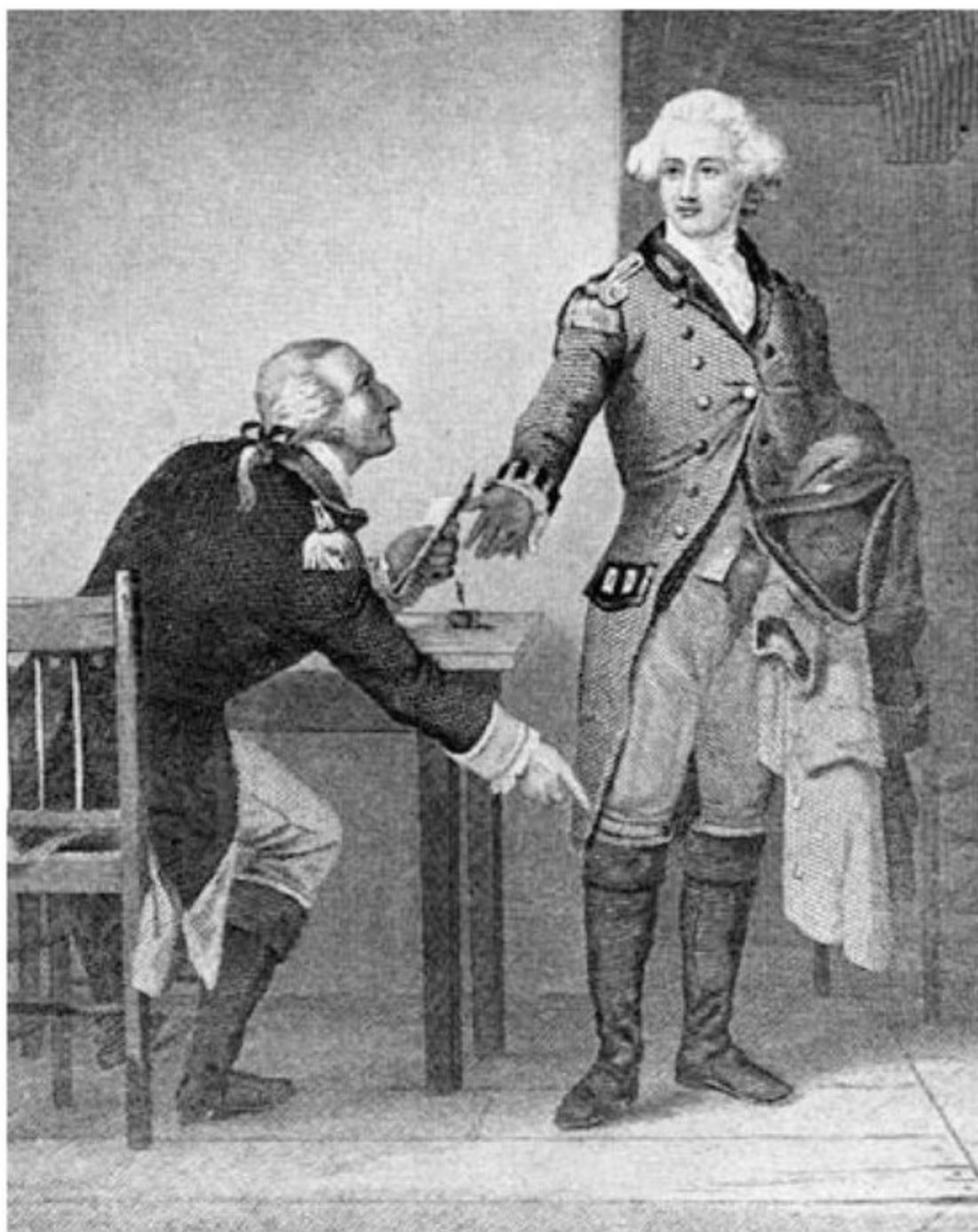


A statue honors Nathan Hale's sacrifice.

### A Spy's End

Nathan Hale, a 21-year-old teacher, volunteered to spy on British troops in New York City. Hale was caught and hanged. His last words were: "I regret that I have but one life to give for my country."

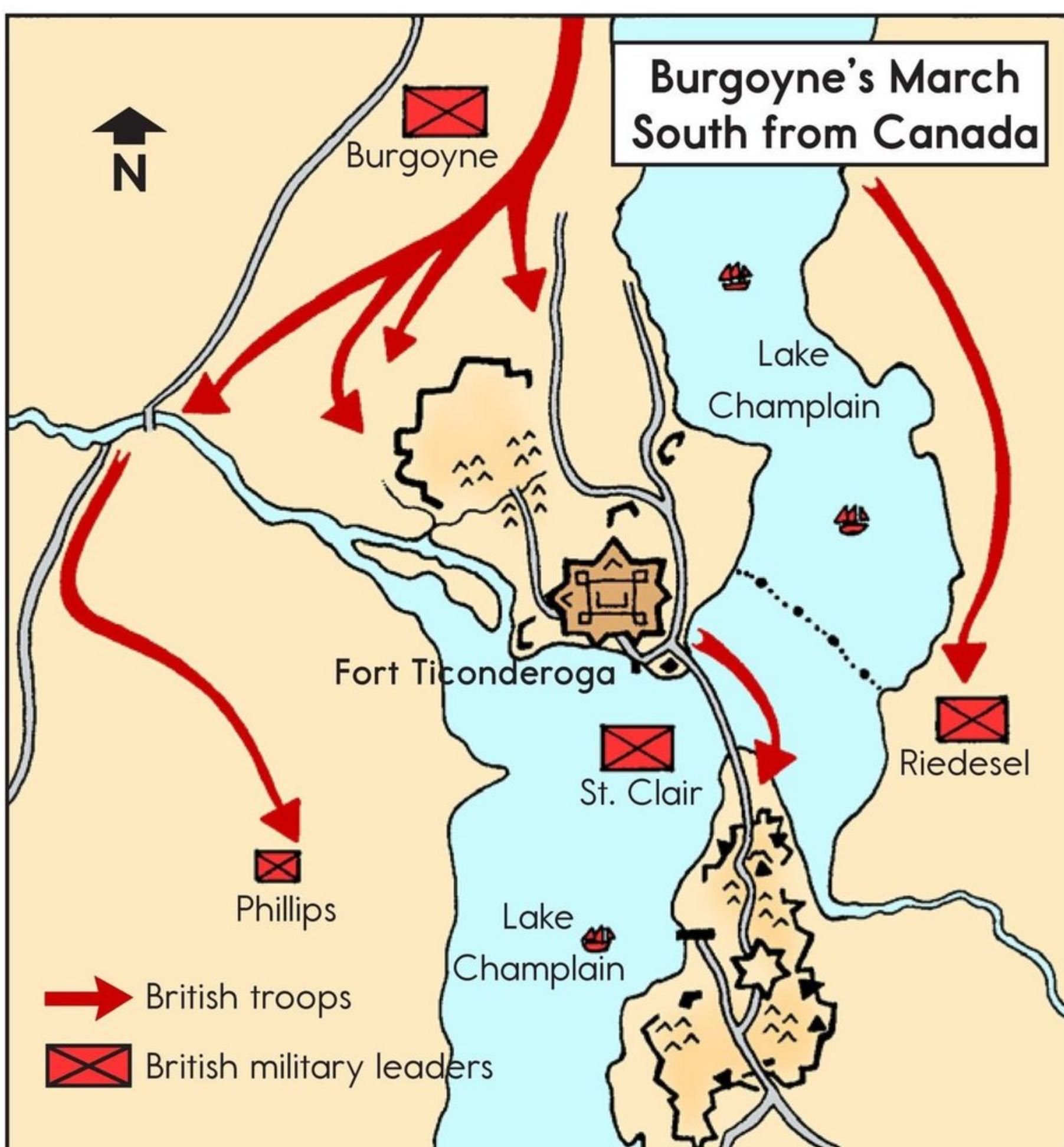
In October 1776, Patriot Benedict Arnold's gunboats were defeated at Lake Champlain in Canada. However, the Patriots fought so fiercely that the British were concerned. Conquering the rebels might not be as easy as they'd thought. On December 24, 1776, George Washington and his men ferried across the Delaware River to Trenton, New Jersey. In one night, the Patriots moved 2,400 men across the icy river in sleet and snow. The Patriots won a battle there in less than an hour! It was the first major victory of the war. A few days later, Washington defeated the British at Princeton, New Jersey. These victories rejuvenated the Patriots' morale.



### Benedict Arnold's Plot

Benedict Arnold was a brave general, but he felt Congress and the Continental Army had mistreated him. In 1779, Washington put Arnold in charge of a fort on the lower Hudson River called West Point. Arnold planned to sell the fort to the British. When his plan was revealed, he became a traitor and joined the British army.

Britain retaliated in June 1777 by moving a large army led by General John Burgoyne south from Canada. Burgoyne planned to conquer the Hudson River area at Albany, New York, cutting off New England and New York from the other colonies. On the way, Burgoyne recaptured Fort Ticonderoga. However, Patriot soldiers stopped Burgoyne's momentum at the Battle of Saratoga in October, with Burgoyne surrendering around 6,000 men.



The Battle of Saratoga was a turning point in the war because it proved to France and other European countries that the Patriots might win the war. In 1778, France joined the fight against its long-standing enemy Great Britain by sending supplies to the Continental Army. Soon after, Spain would declare war on Britain.

Supplies grew scarcer for the Continental Army. Soldiers often lacked food, clothing, and shelter. The Continental Congress needed **allies** such as France to help supply the troops. George Washington's troops suffered through a cold and hungry winter at Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, before supplies reached them. The soldiers spent the winter training and preparing for the coming spring.

In June 1778, after that horrible winter, Washington attacked the British army, now under the command of General Henry Clinton, at the Battle of Monmouth. Neither side won the fight, which was the last major battle in the northern colonies, but it demonstrated that the Patriots could fight just as well as the British.



## Southern Battles

British forces captured Savannah, Georgia, in December 1778. Then they attacked and captured Charleston, South Carolina, in May 1780. They won yet again at Camden, South Carolina, in August 1780. These three battles had the highest **casualty** rates of the war. Many colonists in the southern colonies were Loyalists. Although Britain was winning the South, the Patriots would not give up.

The tide of the war started to turn in favor of the Patriots in October when they won a battle at

King's Mountain, South Carolina, in a speedy sixty-five minutes. This battle was one of the few in the war that did not involve British soldiers—it was fought by Patriots against Loyalists. The Patriots again won battles at Camden and Cowpens. Next, they forced British General Charles Cornwallis north into Virginia. Cornwallis had aided the British victory at Long Island and had taken command of British troops in the South. The Patriots' alliance with the French began to pay off. French soldiers helped hold back the British and fought alongside colonists as part of the troops Washington led into Virginia.



### **It's a Grand Old Flag**

Congress decided on a flag for the new republic on June 14, 1777. It was to have thirteen stars on a blue field and thirteen red and white stripes.



Cornwallis surrenders to Washington at Yorktown.

The most important battle of the war was about to begin. French ships drove off the British ships sent to rescue Cornwallis and his troops at Yorktown, on the coast of Virginia. The French fleet also brought extra soldiers to help the fight on land. The French and Patriot troops moved into Yorktown, laying **siege** to the British army for three weeks before they surrendered on October 19, 1781, thus ending the Revolutionary War.

The Patriots had won their war and were now independent from Britain. The United States of America officially became independent from Great Britain with the Peace of Paris in 1783. Now

## Thinking Critically

WHAT do you consider to be the greatest challenge faced by people of any new nation?

IN YOUR MIND, why might one challenge be greater than others?

a group of colonies that was used to being supported by another country had to come together and build a brand new nation.

## Major Players in the Revolutionary War

### George Washington:

Commander of the Continental Army; later became the country's first president



George Washington

**Thomas Gage:** Commander of British troops in the colonies; army was trapped in Boston after battles at Lexington and Concord

**John Burgoyne:** British commander of the northern army; captured Fort Ticonderoga but was defeated at Saratoga

**King George III:** Twenty-two years old when he became Great Britain's king; was determined to keep the colonies at all costs

**Thomas Jefferson:** Wrote the Declaration of Independence

**Thomas Paine:** Wrote a booklet called *Common Sense*, which inspired many colonists to choose independence



King George III

**William Howe:** Commander of the British army in North America, 1775–1778

**Henry Clinton:** Replaced Howe as British commander in 1778

**Charles Cornwallis:** British general under Henry Clinton; was in charge of the South; surrendered at Yorktown on October 19, 1781



**Marquis de Lafayette:** A young Frenchman who served as a commander under Washington; instrumental in attaining the French military assistance that helped win the war

Charles Cornwallis



## Glossary

<b>allies</b> (n.)	people or groups that join with others for a common cause (p. 17)
<b>amends</b> (n.)	acts that are intended to make up for causing a bad situation or loss (p. 7)
<b>casualty</b> (n.)	a person injured, killed, or missing during a war, accident, or disaster (p. 18)
<b>commission</b> (n.)	an official command authorizing someone to perform a duty (p. 8)
<b>delegates</b> (n.)	chosen or elected people who represent and act on behalf of others (p. 5)
<b>independence</b> (n.)	freedom from the control, influence, support or help of others (p. 5)
<b>Loyalists</b> (n.)	citizens of the thirteen colonies who remained loyal to Great Britain during the American Revolution (p. 8)
<b>momentum</b> (n.)	the strength or force that keeps something moving or increasing over time (p. 16)
<b>morale</b> (n.)	the level of confidence or enthusiasm of an individual or a group when working on a project or toward a goal (p. 8)
<b>Patriots</b> (n.)	people who supported the independence of the thirteen colonies during the American Revolution (p. 8)
<b>petition</b> (n.)	a formal written request, usually accompanied by the signatures of a large number of citizens (p. 7)
<b>rebellion</b> (n.)	a fight against authority or power (p. 7)
<b>retaliated</b> (v.)	attacked in response to having been attacked (p. 16)
<b>self-governing</b> (adj.)	having the right to create and enforce laws without outside interference (p. 13)

**siege** (*n.*)      the act of surrounding and often attacking an enemy for a long time while preventing them from getting food and other supplies (p. 20)

## Index

- Allen, Ethan, 8
- Arnold, Benedict, 8, 12, 15
- Boston, 7, 9, 11, 12, 21, 22
- Breed's Hill (Bunker Hill), 9–11
- Burgoyne, John, 16, 21
- Camden, Battle of, 18, 19, 22
- Canada, 12, 15, 16
- Charleston, S.C., 18, 22
- Clinton, Henry, 17, 21, 22
- Common Sense*, 13, 21
- Concord, 4, 7, 9, 21, 22
- Continental Congress, 5, 7, 8, 13, 17
- Cornwallis, Charles, 18–20, 22
- Declaration of Independence, 13, 14, 21
- de Lafayette, Marquis, 22
- Fort Ticonderoga, 8, 16, 21, 22
- Fort Washington, 14
- France (French), 17, 19, 20, 22
- Gage, Thomas, 9, 21
- George III (King), 4, 5, 7, 21
- Georgia, 18
- Green Mountain Boys, 8
- Hale, Nathan, 14
- Hancock, John, 13
- Jefferson, Thomas, 13, 21
- King's Mountain, Battle of, 18, 19, 22
- Lexington, Mass., 4, 7, 9, 21
- Long Island, Battle of, 14, 19, 22
- Loyalists, 8, 12, 13, 18, 19
- Monmouth, Battle of, 17
- New Jersey, 6, 14, 15
- New York, 8, 12, 14, 16
- Paine, Thomas, 13, 21
- Pennsylvania, 5, 17
- Philadelphia, 5, 8, 14
- Saratoga, Battle of, 16, 17, 21
- Savannah, Ga., 18, 22
- South Carolina, 18, 19
- Trenton, Battle of, 6, 15
- Valley Forge, 17, 22
- Washington, George, 5–7, 12, 15, 17, 19–22
- Yorktown, 20, 22

# Battling for Independence

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## Connections

### Writing

Imagine you are Thomas Jefferson and you have been asked to write the Declaration of Independence. Write a modern-day version and read it to your class.

### Social Studies

Choose one major battle of the Revolutionary War. Write a research report summarizing the battle and how a different outcome of the battle could have impacted the war.



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