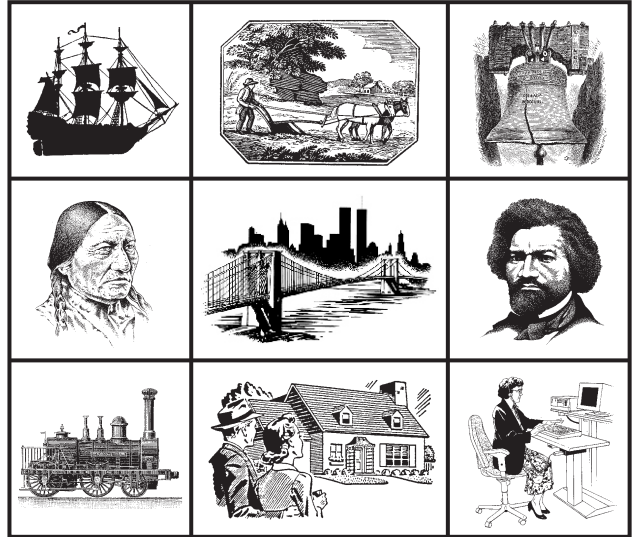

Fasttrack to America's Past

Age of Discovery to Present 7th Edition



An interactive learning guide for students of U.S. History

by David Burns

Section 3: Revolutionary Years 1775 - 1800

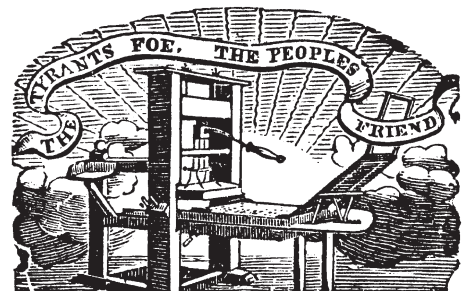


The Teacher Key and additional resources to use with these pages are at:

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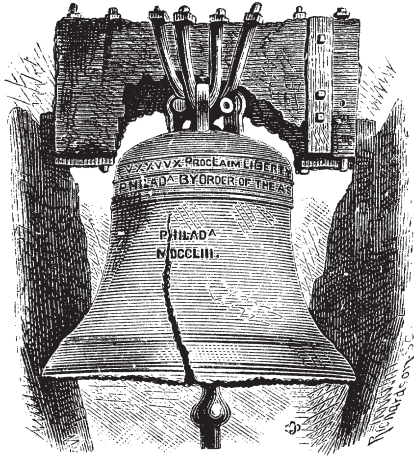
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3

Revolutionary Years: 1775 - 1800



"I know not what course others may take; but as for me, give me liberty, or give me death!"

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness. – That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. – That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it...."



"We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America."

Study Checklist

When you have completed this section, you should be able to:



Identify and explain the context of the **Famous Quotes** shown on the Section Title Page.



Identify and explain the importance of the **Famous Names and Terms** listed on the topic summary pages in this section.



Identify on a map and explain the importance of the **Famous Places** shown on the maps in this section.



Explain the general sequence of events in this period and tell from memory the **Famous Years**:

- The Declaration of Independence was signed (1776).
- The Americans won at Yorktown (1781).
- The Constitution was written (1787).
- The Bill of Rights was ratified (1791).

Take a Practice Test!



A multiple-choice practice test for this section can be found on the Internet support site.

Textbook Page References:



Discuss or write briefly on such questions and topics as these:

1. Describe how each of these laws and events pushed the colonies closer to breaking with England: the Tea Act; the Boston Tea Party; the Intolerable Acts; the British march to Lexington and Concord; the Second Continental Congress.
2. How did the geographic pattern of fighting during the Revolution reflect the strengths and weaknesses of each side? How was the American victory finally achieved?
3. How revolutionary was the American Revolution? What aspects of life did it change? What aspects of life remained relatively unchanged?
4. What were the main problems in the years after the Revolution that led to the decision to write the Constitution?
5. Describe several of the ways the Constitution tries to deal with the fact that governments often tend to become too powerful or to abuse power.
6. Describe the differences in the political views of Thomas Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton. Explain how these differences led to the formation of the first political parties in the U.S.

Timeline 1775 - 1800

As you study the timeline, fill in the blanks using the word bank at the bottom of the page.

Late Colonial era items: **Boston Tea Party** - December 1773
Intolerable Acts - May 1774
First Continental Congress - September 1774

Lexington/Concord fighting - The British went to seize weapons and rebels from these towns near the city of _____.

Second Continental Congress - It sent the Olive Branch Petition to King George III, in hope that war with Great Britain could be _____.

Common Sense published - It swung public opinion toward _____.

Independence declared - The Declaration was written by Thomas _____.

Valley Forge Camp - About one _____ of the 10,000 man army died that winter.

Victory at Yorktown - The French _____ was a key factor in the victory at this town beside the York River in Virginia.

Treaty of Paris - It put the western border of the U.S. at the _____ River.

Constitutional Convention - It decided to toss out the Articles of _____.

Constitution ratified - The Constitution sets up the rules the government _____ follow.

George Washington inaugurated - He is often called the _____ of our country.

Bill of Rights ratified - This list gives solid _____ from government power.

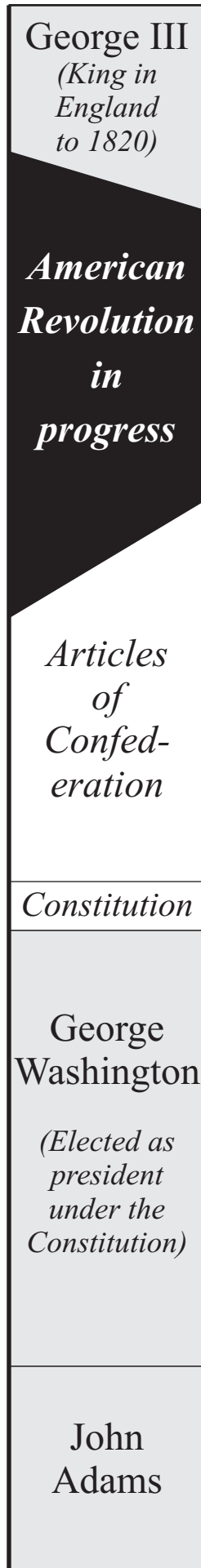
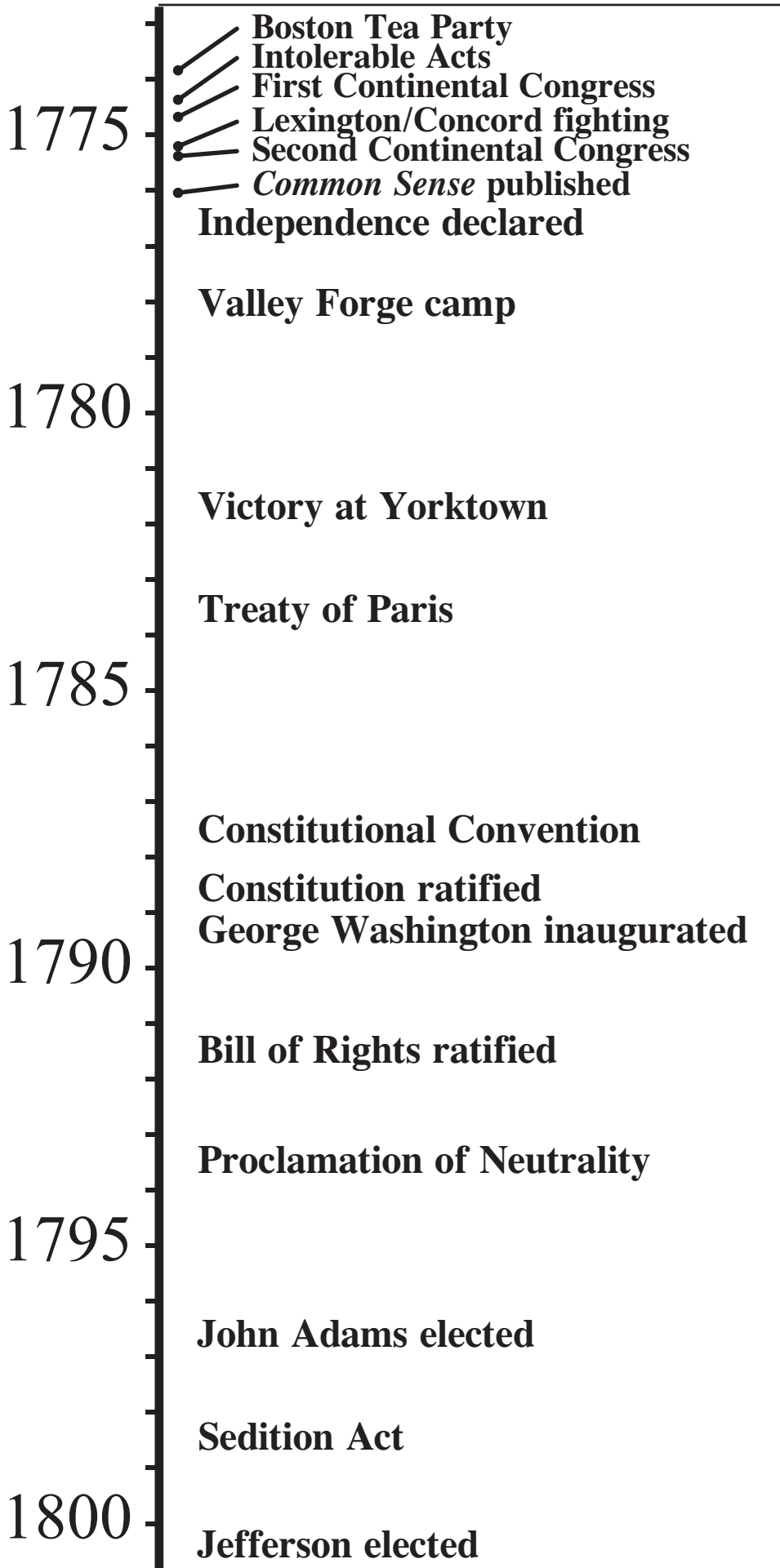
Proclamation of Neutrality - Washington wanted to avoid being dragged into a war that had erupted between Great Britain and _____.

John Adams elected - One of his accomplishments was avoiding _____ with France.

Sedition Act - It was a law that tried to make criticism of government officials a _____.

Jefferson elected - He and his supporters were loud _____ of the Sedition Act.

Word bank to fill in the blanks: *avoided, Boston, Confederation, critics, crime, father, France, independence, Jefferson, Mississippi, must, navy, protection, quarter, war*



TIMELINE: REVOLUTIONARY YEARS

THE REVOLUTION BEGINS

minutemen, Lexington & Concord, Paul Revere, Second Continental Congress,

George Washington, Thomas Paine, Patrick Henry, tyrant/tyranny, Thomas Jefferson

The first fighting of the American Revolution came in 1775, as the dispute over the Tea Act and the Boston Tea Party came to a boil. England had ordered Boston Harbor closed in 1774, and suspended the right of colonists in Massachusetts to elect officials and hold town meetings. A military governor was appointed to run the colony. These measures were called the “Intolerable Acts” by colonists. The colonies began to unite as never before to help Boston and resist England.

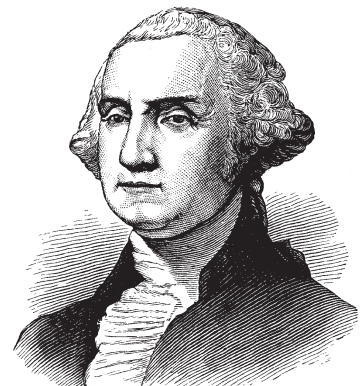


The First Continental Congress of the colonies met in Philadelphia in 1774 to coordinate a response to the Intolerable Acts. It called for the formation of citizen militia units for defense, and set up a new boycott of British goods. Some delegates, but not a majority at this time, wanted a total break with England.



The British, of course, considered all this to be rebellion, especially the armed militia groups in Massachusetts known as minutemen. When spring arrived (1775), the British set out from Boston with about 700 soldiers to flush out “trouble-makers” and seize weapons kept by the rebel colonists in the town of Concord. On the way, the soldiers ran into a group of armed colonial minutemen in the town of Lexington, and the shooting began. (This is where Paul Revere made his famous ride to warn the townspeople.) The British Redcoats didn’t find much to grab in Concord. But on the march back to Boston, they fell by the dozens to the angry fire of colonial muskets.

The very next month, in May 1775, delegates of the colonies met again in Philadelphia. This was the Second Continental Congress. It named George Washington as commander of the militia units camped in the Boston area that were to become the Army of the United Colonies. It also sent a message to King George III stating that the colonies did not really want to break away, but simply wanted the colonists’ basic rights recognized. This was called the Olive Branch Petition. King George refused to consider negotiating with the colonists. The revolt, he felt, had to be stopped cold.





In June there was another much more deadly fight between colonists and the British. This was the famous battle of Bunker Hill, just outside Boston. The British actually won, but lost so many men it almost seemed a victory by the colonists.

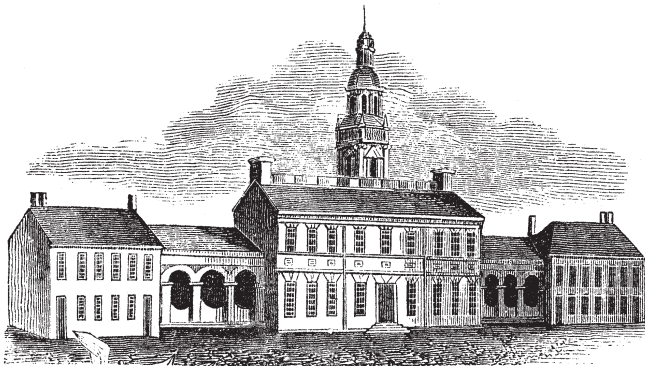
By the time 1775 ended, Virginians had chased their royal governor and many of the British troops with him out of their colony.

Talk of outright revolution was in the air as 1776 began. It got a big boost when Thomas Paine published a pamphlet or slim book that winter titled *Common Sense*. In powerful language, he urged independence for the colonies. It was absurd, he wrote, for a vast continent like America to be ruled forever by a small nation on an island across the Atlantic ocean.

Paine also argued that independence would create a chance to build a new and better kind of government, without kings or nobility. Ordinary citizens, he argued, could run their own government. The spread of this idea is what made the fight truly revolutionary, and more than just a tax revolt. *Common Sense* became enormously popular, and helped push public opinion toward the idea of a break with England. Other colonists, like Patrick Henry in Virginia, were adding their own voices for independence. More and more people dared to openly call the English king a tyrant.



It was now spring of 1776. The British pulled out of Boston, but only because colonists set up cannons in the hills overlooking the city and its harbor. In June a Virginia delegate at the Second Continental Congress in Philadelphia made a motion (a call for a vote) on the question of independence. Some delegates resisted, however, and debate continued. A committee was then set up to prepare a document for the delegates to consider. A young delegate from Virginia named Thomas Jefferson was asked to pull the committee's ideas together in writing.



Finally, on July 4th, 1776, the final break with the mother country was made. The Declaration of Independence was adopted by a unanimous vote. The fighting had already begun, and now there could be no turning back.

THE BATTLE OF BUNKER HILL

The Battle of Bunker Hill (June 17, 1775) is among the most famous in American history. Bunker Hill sits on the Charlestown Peninsula, just across the Charles River from the city of Boston. Study the map below to answer the questions on the next page.



ACTION ON BREED'S HILL,
JUNE 17th, 1775.

The Background: The American militia forces were camped outside Boston in June of 1775 because British forces occupied the city of Boston itself. A group of about 1,500 Americans marched at night onto the Charlestown Peninsula, intending to fortify Bunker Hill. Instead, they built their main “redoubt” or dugout fort on Breed’s Hill. The British attacked with a force of 2,400 the next day.

4. *The Americans stopped two British attacks and inflicted heavy casualties before being forced to retreat during a third attack up the hill. According to the map, the only road off the Charlestown Peninsula was the road that went to what two towns?*

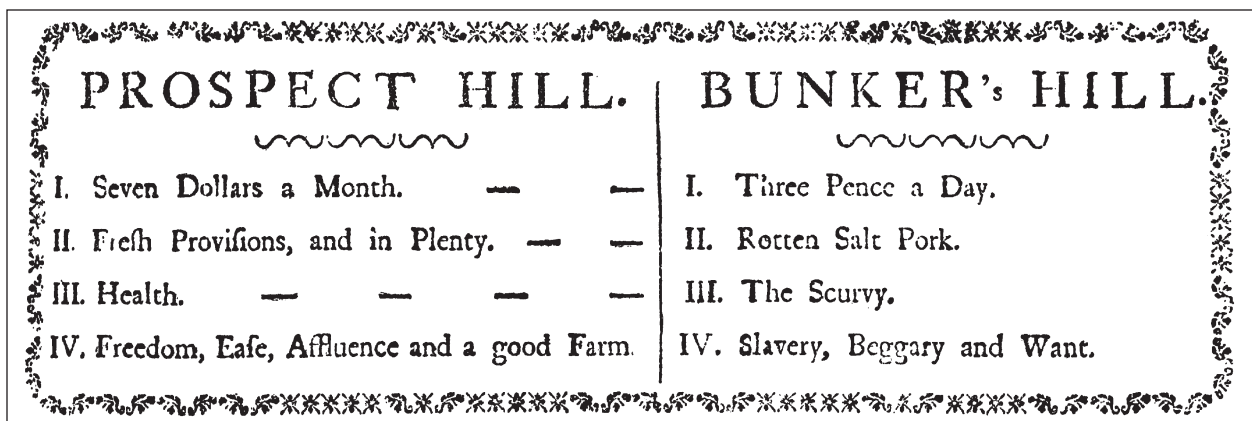
1. *According to the map, did the decision to fortify Breed’s Hill put the Americans closer to, or farther away from, the British cannon position on Cops Hill in Boston?*

The Outcome: The American forces did retreat successfully, and rejoined the other militia units outside Boston. Almost half the British troops involved were killed or wounded. The battle proved to both sides that Americans could fight effectively. The Americans also realized that they would need to improve their tactics and training. Although most of the fighting took place on Breed’s Hill, the event is almost always called the Battle of Bunker Hill.

2. *According to the map, where did the British put their soldiers ashore as they prepared to attack the American position?*

3. *The British made several attacks up Breed’s Hill. The Americans had limited gunpowder, and were ordered not to fire on the British troops until they saw “the whites of their eyes.” What does the map give as the height of Breed’s Hill?*

Group Discussion: *Later in 1775 the Americans printed handbills like the one shown below to encourage British soldiers who held the Charlestown Peninsula and Bunker Hill to desert and come over to the American side (“Prospect Hill.”) What does it indicate about the life of a British soldier at the time?*



PATRICK HENRY CALLS FOR A FIGHT

Boston harbor was closed by the Intolerable Acts, but no fighting had yet occurred when Patrick Henry delivered his famous speech in March of 1775. The presence of British troops in the colonies, however, convinced him that war was coming. He made the speech (condensed here) at a meeting of Virginia's leaders called to consider the situation.

The question before the House is one of awful moment [importance] to this country. For my own part I consider it as nothing less than a question of freedom or slavery.

I ask gentlemen, sir, what means this martial array [the British military force], if its purpose be not to force us into submission? Has Great Britain any enemy in this quarter of the world, to call for all this accumulation of navies and armies?

No, sir, she has none. They are sent over to bind and rivet upon us those chains which the British have been so long forging.

And what have we to oppose them? Shall we try argument? Sir, we have been trying that for the last ten years.

Sir, we have done everything that could be done, to avert the storm which is now coming on.

There is no longer any room for hope. If we wish to be free, we must fight! I repeat it sir, we must fight! An appeal to arms and to God is all that is left to us!

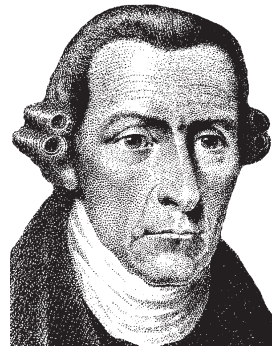
They tell us, sir, that we are weak; unable to cope with so formidable an adversary. But when will we be stronger? Will it be the next week, or the next year? Will it be when we are totally disarmed, and when a British guard shall be stationed in every house?

Sir, we are not weak, if we make a proper use of the means which the God of nature has placed in our power. Three millions of people, armed in the holy cause of liberty,

and in such a country as that which we possess, are invincible by any force which our enemy can send against us.

Besides, sir, we shall not fight our battles alone. There is a just God who presides over the destinies of nations, and who will raise up friends to fight our battles for us.

The battle, sir, is not to the strong alone. It is to the vigilant, the active, the brave.



Besides, sir, we have no election [no choice]. If we were base [coward] enough to desire it, it is now too late to retire from the contest. There is no retreat, but in submission and slavery!

Our chains are forged! Their clanking may be heard on the plains of Boston! The war is inevitable – and let it come! I repeat it, sir, let it come!

It is in vain, sir, to extenuate [delay] the matter. Gentlemen may cry peace, peace – but there is no peace. The next gale that sweeps from the north will bring to our ears the clash of resounding arms!

Our brethren are already in the field! Why stand we here idle? What is it that gentlemen wish? What would they have? Is life so dear, or peace so sweet, as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God! I know not what course others may take; but as for me, give me liberty, or give me death!

Group Discussion: *What does Patrick Henry claim is the choice that confronts the colonies in 1775? What arguments does he make to persuade his listeners that the colonies could win against the far superior forces of Great Britain?*

THOMAS PAINE'S COMMON SENSE

Thomas Paine immigrated to America from England. In January, 1776, Paine published Common Sense, which instantly became a "best seller" in the colonies. The booklet helped convince many Americans to embrace the idea of independence. These are condensed excerpts.

In the following pages I offer nothing more than simple facts, plain arguments, and common sense.

I challenge the warmest advocate for reconciliation to show a single advantage that this continent can reap by being connected with Great Britain.

But the injuries and disadvantages we sustain by that connection are without number. Any submission to, or dependence on, Great Britain tends directly to involve this continent in European wars and quarrels, and sets us at variance [at odds] with nations who would otherwise seek our friendship.

Everything that is right or natural pleads for a separation. Even the distance at which the Almighty has placed England and America, is a strong and natural proof that the authority of the one over the other was never the design of Heaven.

As to government matters, it is not in the power of Britain to do this continent justice. The business of it will soon be too weighty and intricate to be managed with any tolerable degree of convenience by a power so distant from us and so very ignorant of us. To be always running three or four thousand miles with a tale or petition, waiting four or five months for an answer, will in a few years be looked upon as folly and childishness.

Small islands not capable of protecting themselves are the proper objects for king-

doms to take under their care; but there is something very absurd in supposing a continent to be perpetually governed by an island.

O ye that love mankind! Ye that dare oppose, not only the tyranny, but the tyrant, stand forth!

Every spot of the old world is overrun with oppression. Freedom has been hunted around the globe. Asia and Africa have long expelled her. Europe regards her like a

stranger, and England has given her warning to depart. O! receive the fugitive, and prepare in time an asylum [a safe place] for mankind.



We ought to reflect, that there are three different ways by which independence may be established; and that one of those three will, one day or another, be the fate of America: by the legal voice of the people in Congress; by a military power; or by a mob.

Should independence be brought about by the first of those means, we have every opportunity before us, to form the noblest, purest constitution on the face of the earth.

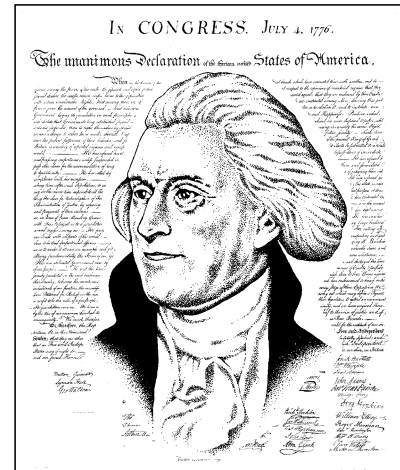
We have it in our power to begin the world over again. The birthday of a new world is at hand.

Group Discussion: *What do you think is Paine's best argument for breaking the colonies away from Great Britain? What does he think is happening around the world to the idea of freedom? What possibilities does he see for America if it becomes an independent country?*

THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

The Enlightenment, social contract theory, unalienable, Benjamin Franklin, John Hancock

In the spring of 1776, the Second Continental Congress was still debating whether to break completely with England when Thomas Jefferson was put on a committee to draw up a Declaration of Independence. The document included the ideas of many people, but Jefferson pulled it all together in brilliant language and form. The final version was approved on July 4, 1776, at the Pennsylvania State House in the city of Philadelphia. (The building is now called Independence Hall.) The Declaration can be divided into three main parts:



Part I. The first section says that the colonists want to explain why they are making the break with England. It also spells out a political theory that justifies such a break. This section draws on ideas about government that developed in an intellectual movement of the 18th century called The Enlightenment. The movement drew heavily on the ideas of the English philosopher John Locke, who had written about the social contract theory of government. Locke argued that governments are formed by an agreement or “social contract” among the people. He even suggested that people have a right to overthrow their government when their rights are abused. Jefferson and many other leading colonists had read and studied John Locke’s ideas.

Find a copy of the Declaration of Independence online or in print, and locate the famous lines in the document which declare:

A. All people have unalienable rights that cannot be taken away:

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.”

B. The only legitimate source of a government’s power to rule and make laws is the consent or approval of the people themselves:

“That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.”

C. If a government becomes abusive of the people’s rights, the people have a right to change that government or even abolish it and form a new one:

“That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it...”

Part II. The next section is a long list of specific complaints about King George III and the British Parliament. The delegates meeting in Philadelphia wanted to convince leaders in England and in other nations that the Americans had legitimate and serious complaints.

Find these lines that criticize King George III and Parliament:

“For cutting off our Trade with all parts of the world.”

“For imposing Taxes upon us without our Consent.”

“For depriving us in many cases, of the benefits of Trial by Jury.”

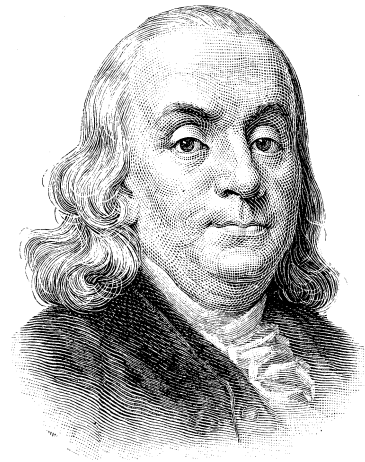
Thomas Jefferson also wrote a passage critical of slavery in this section. But some colonies objected, and the passage was dropped to keep as much support for the document as possible. The delegates knew the vote for independence, when it came, had to be unanimous.

Part III. The final section states that the colonists have tried to resolve or settle their differences with England, but without success.

Find the lines that boldly announce to the world that:

“these United Colonies are, and of Right ought to be, Free and Independent States...”

The men who signed the Declaration were not wild-eyed radicals aiming for a complete overhaul of society. Many were successful businessmen, like John Hancock, a Boston merchant, and Benjamin Franklin, who got his start as a printer in Philadelphia. Most simply objected to the idea that a far-away King or Parliament could make the laws for the colonies. To protect what they considered their traditional English liberties, they were ready to endorse some very untraditional political language and action. The American Revolution, however, never slipped into the kind of extreme radicalism that plagued so many later revolutions around the world.



In the last line of the Declaration, the delegates pledged to each other “our Lives, our Fortunes, and our sacred Honor.” The document they signed remains famous as one of the world’s most powerful and most important political statements.

MAP - THE REVOLUTION'S FAMOUS PLACES

Draw three lightly shaded ovals on the map to show the three main stages of fighting in the Revolution. The list is divided into three groups to help you. Also, show the route of British General Charles Cornwallis from Charleston to Yorktown.

Lexington and Concord, the small towns outside Boston where the first shots of the Revolution were fired in April of 1775.

Fort Ticonderoga, a British outpost that the colonists captured in 1775.

Boston, where the Battle of Bunker Hill was fought in 1775. The British pulled out of Boston early in 1776 and sailed to their base in eastern Canada.

Montreal and Quebec, British cities the Americans attacked late in 1775. While victorious at Montreal, they could not take the more important city of Quebec.



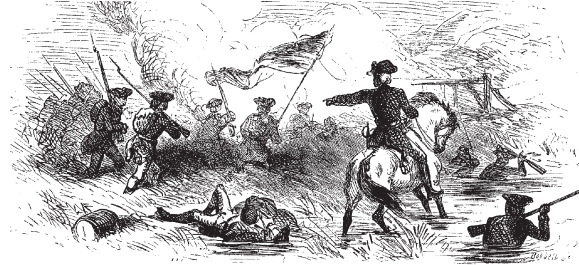
New York City, where a British attack in July 1776 forced the Continental Army to retreat to Pennsylvania.

Trenton, where General Washington led a daring Christmas night raid across the Delaware River in 1776. The victory at Trenton boosted morale and helped to keep the Revolution alive.

Philadelphia, which the British seized and held in 1777.

Saratoga, where American forces defeated one part of the British army in 1777. This victory became a turning point in the war, as France declared itself an ally of U.S.

Valley Forge, where the Continental Army went into winter camp late in 1777. The army suffered with inadequate food and supplies.



Savannah, taken by the British in 1778 as they shifted their war effort to the South.

Charleston, where the American forces had their worst defeat of the war in 1780.

Cowpens and Guilford Courthouse, where the strength of the American forces early in 1781 sent British General Charles Cornwallis retreating to Wilmington, then into Virginia.

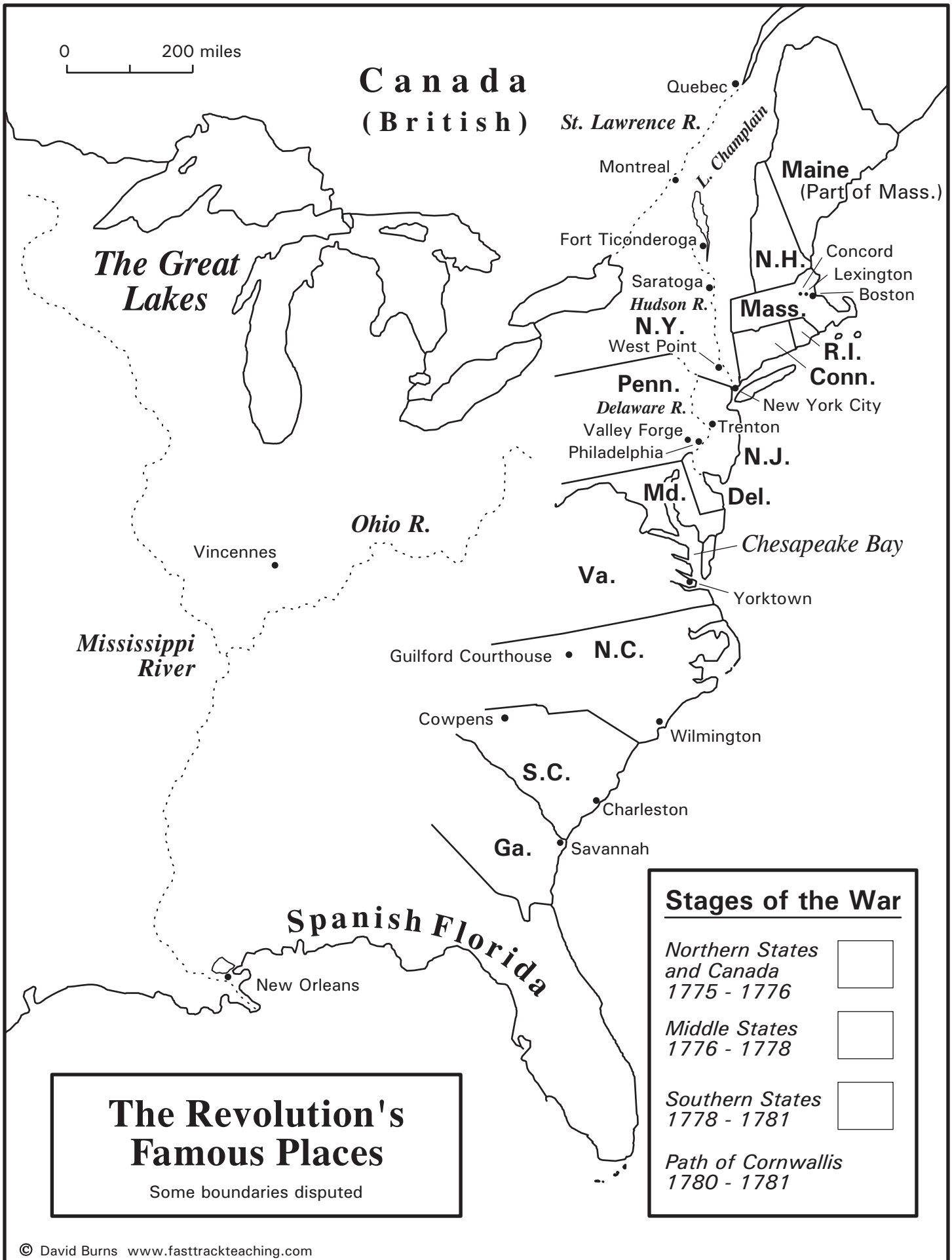
Yorktown, where the British under Gen. Cornwallis were trapped on a peninsula and defeated in October 1781 by the combined American and French forces.

Some other important places:

Vincennes, where Americans seized an important British outpost in 1779.

New Orleans, in Spanish territory. When Spain joined the war on the American side, American ships could use New Orleans as a base.

West Point, a key American fort on the Hudson River. Benedict Arnold, a hero early in the Revolution, tried to betray the fort to the British in 1780.



0 200 miles

**Canada
(British)**

**The Great
Lakes**

Ohio R.

**Mississippi
River**

Spanish Florida

Quebec

St. Lawrence R.

Montreal

**Maine
(Part of Mass.)**

Fort Ticonderoga

N.H.

Concord
Lexington
Boston

Saratoga
Hudson R.

N.Y.

Mass.

R.I.

Conn.

West Point

Penn.

Delaware R.

New York City

Valley Forge

Trenton

Philadelphia

N.J.

Md.

Del.

Chesapeake Bay

Va.

Yorktown

Guilford Courthouse • **N.C.**

Cowpens

Wilmington

S.C.

Charleston

Ga.

Savannah

Vincennes

New Orleans

LIFE AND THOUGHT IN THE REVOLUTION

Loyalist/Tory, Patriots, Continental Army, Hessians, inflation, idealism,

Virginia Declaration of Rights, rule of law, legislature, constitutional government, republic

As the Revolution began, Americans faced a tough question: *Which side am I on?*

Perhaps one-third of the people were Loyalists (also called Tories) who did not want to break with England. Perhaps one-third were Patriots who were committed to the fight. Some of the rest might swing back and forth, depending on whose troops were in the neighborhood. In some areas, Loyalists were harassed into fleeing. In a few places, Loyalists organized and took up arms to fight against the Patriots.



A revolutionary soldier's life was often very rough. At first, enthusiasm was high, and men of all social classes volunteered. But as the war dragged on, enlistment quotas in the Continental Army were often filled by poorer men who were paid bonuses to sign on for three years. Pay and bonuses, however, often were long overdue. Supplies ran short almost constantly. At the winter encampment at Valley Forge, many soldiers lacked the most basic items, like shoes and blankets. The British armies were far better equipped, and used hired German soldiers called Hessians as well. The remarkable thing is that George Washington was able to hold together an army at all under the circumstances.



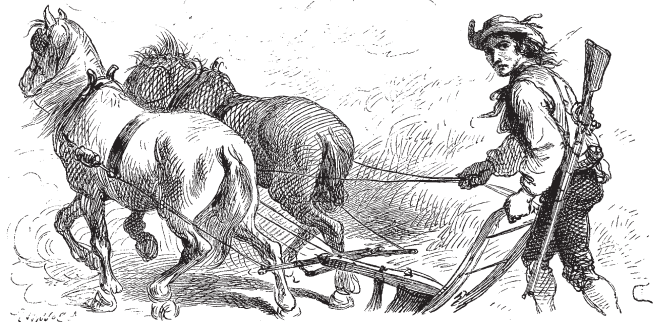
One way or another, the Revolution affected everyone. Women often had to run the family farm or business while their husbands were away. Some followed their husbands, and sometimes even joined the fighting itself, like the famous Molly Pitcher.

Blacks often saw England in a different light than most whites as the fighting began. The English commanders promised freedom to all slaves who escaped and came to fight on the British side. Many did. Later, however, many blacks also served in the Continental Army. Indians generally sided with the British.

Whatever their position, everyone was affected by the economic crisis. The volume of both imports and exports fell to almost nothing. People involved in trade often lost their businesses. Farmers who grew crops like tobacco or wheat for export were hurt. Some of the unemployed people went into the army.

Money itself, however, quickly became unstable. The government borrowed money, but also met the expenses of war by simply printing more paper money. The result was a rapid inflation of prices that ruined many people financially.

Yet alongside these problems, a powerful change was taking place in the average citizen's way of thinking about government. Before, people accepted the idea that political authority started at the top with a king. A colonist might vote, but he felt the “better” classes had the right to sit in the colonial assemblies and make decisions. The events of the Revolution, however, often brought ordinary people directly into the action. A spirit of idealism grew, and the old lines of social class and traditional authority seemed less important. Groups of citizens formed committees, discussed issues and took action, often without waiting for any official backing.



As the Revolution spread, citizens and leaders were thrilled by the job of creating the new state governments. Virginians meeting in 1776 to write their state constitution even added a breathtaking Declaration of Rights. This document, which later became the model for the U.S. Bill of Rights, describes virtually all of the principles of government that Americans live by even today. Political equality, free elections, freedom of the press, the free exercise of religion, the rule of law – all are listed as the basic foundation of the new state government formed by “the good people of Virginia.”

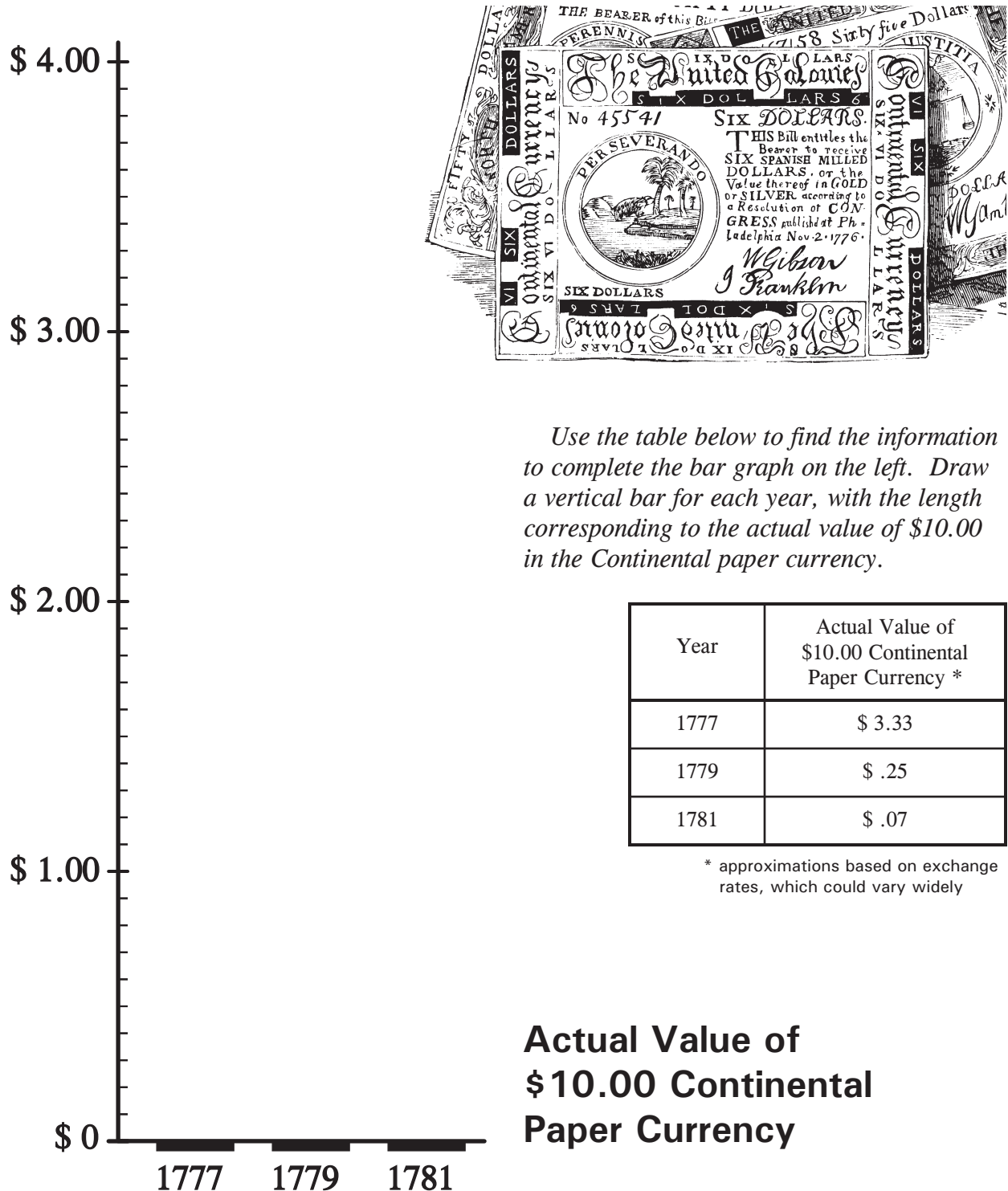


The various state constitutions reveal a practical side, as well as idealism. Most set forth a system with a governor and a legislature, the pattern familiar since early colonial days. The legislature (the law-making branch) itself was typically divided into two separate parts or “houses.” One house (often called the Assembly) would represent the average citizen. The other part (usually called the Senate) would represent the wealthy, who were better educated and more experienced in governmental affairs. Each center of power would serve to balance the others.

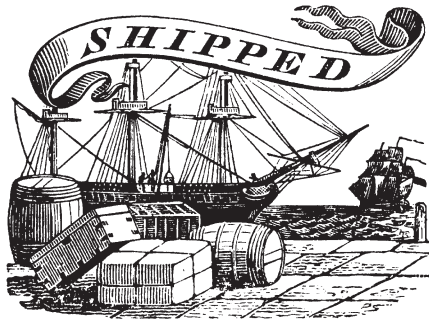
But the idea that political authority ultimately resides in “the people” got a powerful push forward as the Revolution unfolded. It became accepted that the new state constitutions should be written, not by existing government bodies, but by special conventions of citizens. The resulting documents had to be approved by a vote. Only then did a legitimate government truly spring to life, with its rules and especially its limits clearly listed. This concept of constitutional government was one of the most important results of the Revolution, and survives to this day as the cornerstone of liberty in our republic.

CHARTING MONEY AND TRADE

The Revolution created a large and sudden need for money to pay soldiers and buy supplies. The Continental Congress met that need in part by printing paper money called Continentals. Complete the bar graph below to show how the value of the new money fell as more and more of the paper dollars were issued.



The war with Great Britain ended most American trade with British merchants for the duration of the conflict. In fact, the war made trade of any kind very difficult to conduct. Complete the bar graph below to show the impact on America's exports. What groups would have been hurt most by the trends shown on these pages?

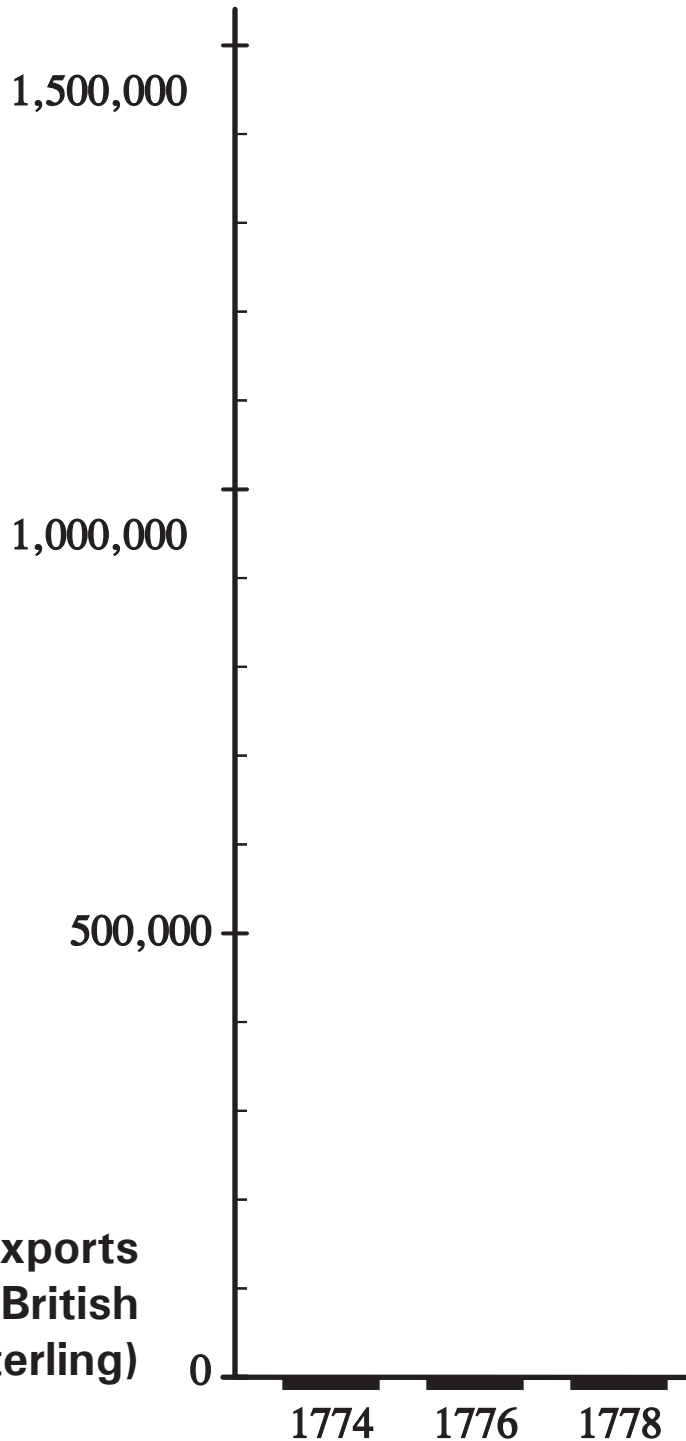


Use the table below to find the information to complete the bar graph on the right. Draw a vertical bar for each year, with the length corresponding to the value of exports.

| Year | Exports (Value in British Pounds Sterling) |
|------|---|
| 1774 | £ 1,373,846 |
| 1776 | £ 103,964 |
| 1778 | £ 17,694 |

source: *Historical Statistics of the United States*

**Exports
(Value in British Pounds Sterling)**



ABIGAIL ADAMS CALLS FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS

The start of the rebellion against British rule led colonists to think in fresh ways about liberty. Abigail Adams began thinking about the fact that English laws often put women in a very disadvantaged position. (For example, husbands held legal power over property in a marriage.)

In March of 1776 Abigail wrote a now famous letter to her husband, John Adams, who was in Philadelphia meeting with other leaders at the Continental Congress. These condensed excerpts use the spelling found in the original letters.



I long to hear that you have declared an independancy — and by the way in the new Code of Laws which I suppose it will be necessary for you to make I would desire you would Remember the Ladies, and be more generous and favourable to them than your ancestors.

Do not put such unlimited power into the hands of the Husbands. Remember all Men would be tyrants if they could.

If pertuculiar care and attention is not paid to the Laidies we are determind to forment [begin] a Rebellion, and will not hold ourselves bound by any Laws in which we have no voice, or Representation.

That your Sex are Naturally Tyrannical is a Truth so thoroughly established as to admit of no dispute, but such of you as wish to be happy willingly give up the harsh title of Master for the more tender and endearing one of Friend.

Why then, not put it out of the power of the vicious and the Lawless to use us with cruelty and indignity. Men of Sense in all

Ages abhor [despise] those customs which treat us only as the vassals [servants] of your Sex. — *Abigail Adams*

John wrote back from Philadelphia to his wife in a partly serious and partly joking style. He agrees that the legal system favors males. But he makes the claim that in practice (as opposed to the legal rules) women actually have great power over men. Changing the laws, he argues, would give women (“the Petticoat”) complete power (“Despotism”) over men.

As to your extraordinary Code of Laws, I cannot but laugh.

Depend upon it, We know better than to repeal our Masculine systems. Altho they are in full Force, you know they are little more than Theory. We dare not exert our Power in its full Latitude.

We are obliged to go fair, and softly, and in Practice you know We are the subjects [the ones who are ruled].

We have only the Name of Masters, and rather than give up this, which would compleatly subject Us to the Despotism of the Petticoat, I hope General Washington, and all our brave Heroes would fight.

— *John Adams*

Abigail was not convinced by John's arguments. From their home near Boston, she sent her husband a letter predicting (correctly) that someday the laws that limited women's rights would be changed.

Group Discussion: *What is the main argument Abigail uses to justify women's right to rebel against laws that put them at a disadvantage? What do you think of the points John makes?*

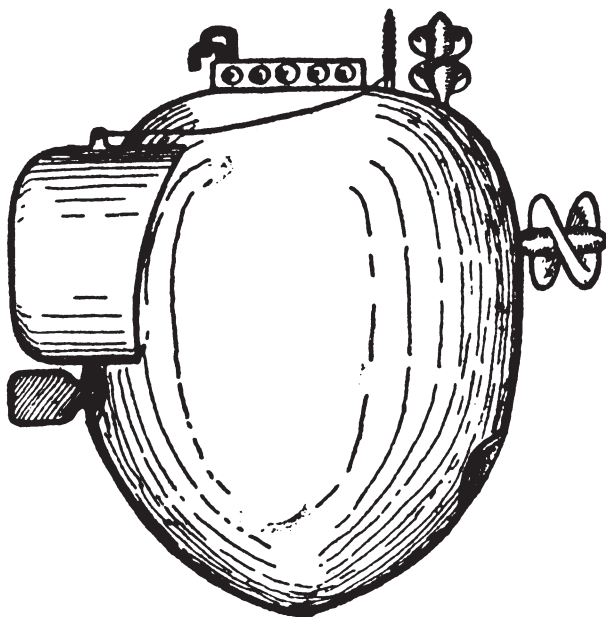
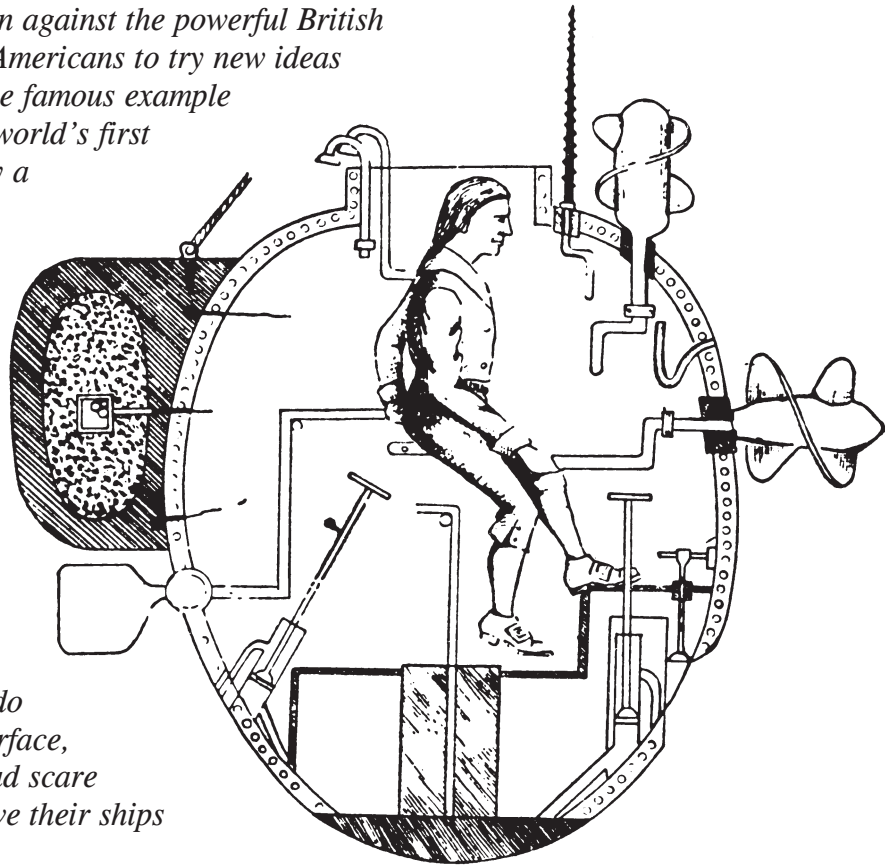
A REVOLUTIONARY DEFENSE

Defending the new nation against the powerful British army and navy forced the Americans to try new ideas and adopt new tactics. One famous example is shown here. It was the world's first combat submarine, built by a Connecticut man in 1776.

It was sent against a British warship in the harbor of New York City. The submarine's drill bit could not penetrate a metal plate on the ship's hull, however, so the torpedo could not be attached. The submarine headed back to the shore, and released the torpedo.

An hour later, the torpedo exploded on the water's surface, giving the British a very bad scare and prompting them to move their ships to a safer location.

Study both drawings, then label the parts of the submarine with the letters shown.



Design of the *Turtle*

- A - Propellers** (hand cranked)
- B - Rudder** (for steering)
- C - Torpedo** (Filled with gunpowder, it is carried on the outside of the submarine. A timer sets it off an hour after it is attached to an enemy ship.)
- D - Drill bit** (It is cranked into a ship's wooden hull, and holds the torpedo in place with a rope. The drill bit and the torpedo detach from the submarine.)

THE CHALLENGES OF VICTORY

Articles of Confederation, James Madison, Federalists, Anti-Federalists



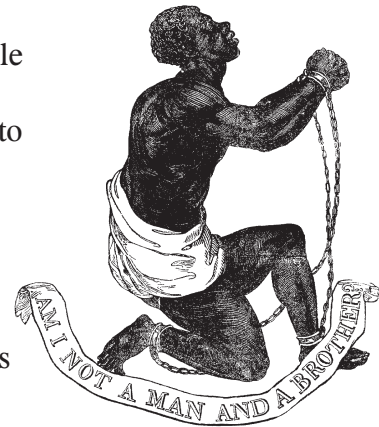
The victory at Yorktown won independence from England. The peace treaty signed in 1783 vastly expanded the new nation's territory all the way out to the Mississippi River. But Americans soon discovered that winning independence didn't automatically settle everything.

Many Americans had died in the cause, perhaps 25 thousand or more. Many farms and towns had been destroyed by raids and fighting. Trade, especially exports, had been badly hurt. The paper currency issued by the Continental Congress to

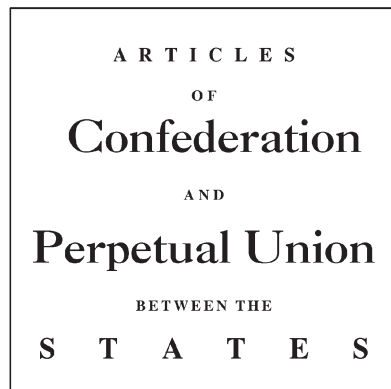
finance the fight was worth only a small fraction of its original value. No one had a clear idea what the future might bring.

Loyalists, who had sided with England, were in an especially awkward situation. Fortunately, there were few violent attacks or reprisals against them. Tens of thousands decided to emigrate to Canada or England when the British troops sailed away.

The Revolution led to laws ending slavery in many of the northern states. Slavery, these states said, was not at all compatible with the ideas of liberty on which the Revolution itself was based. (Of course, it helped that these states never had very many slaves to begin with.) Southern states did not follow their lead, but some, like Virginia, made it much easier for owners to free their slaves. Communities of free blacks began growing more rapidly.



The Revolution also helped spread the spirit of religious tolerance. Visitors often remarked on the diversity of the churches and beliefs that could be found in American cities.



Of all the challenges of the years after the Revolution, the toughest was finding an answer to the question: *Just what is "The United States of America"?*

The nation was only a loose association of independent states under an agreement called the Articles of Confederation when the Revolution ended. This first form of government didn't work so well. The national level of government had too little power. For example, it could not regulate foreign trade, or even trade between states. It had no power to collect money directly with taxes. It could not enforce its own laws.

This early national government had some important accomplishments. One was a decision to give the unsettled territories to the west the right to form into new states, and enter the Union on an equal footing with the original states. Within five years of the Yorktown victory, however, even the original states seemed to be falling apart. Luckily, some of the most capable leaders saw what was happening, and called for a special meeting or convention to be held in Philadelphia in the spring of 1787.



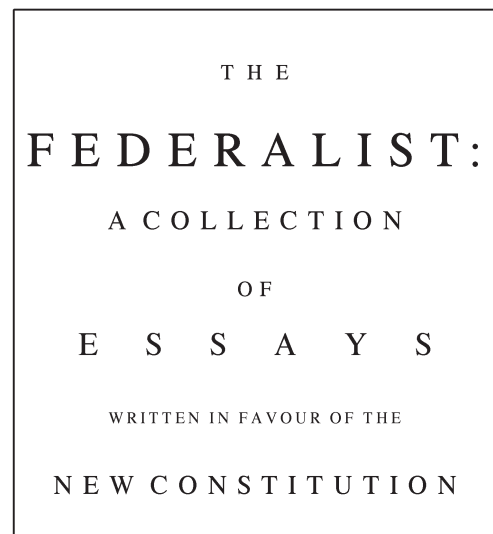
The convention's delegates soon realized that the problems in the Articles of Confederation system couldn't just be given a quick fix-up. James Madison, from Virginia, played a key role as they worked through the summer to develop something completely new. The meetings were closed to everyone but the delegates themselves. It was an idea that people accepted only because George Washington was named as the chairman of the meetings.

branches and levels of government.

The delegates had a tough job designing a system that left the states with most of the power they wanted, but also created a stronger national government. By September, a compromise plan was worked out which divided power among different

The proposed Constitution faced some stiff opposition from people who feared that a stronger national government might become as bad as King George. These opponents were called Anti-Federalists. They basically thought that a good government was a small size government.

But supporters (called Federalists) campaigned hard for the new system. They wrote essays and articles in newspapers. They promoted the fact that many of the big names of the Revolution were supporting the change. (Alexander Hamilton was among the most famous of the Federalists, and his essays on the Constitution are widely read even today.) People who feared the new system might someday lead to a loss of individual liberty were promised that a Bill of Rights would soon be added to the document.

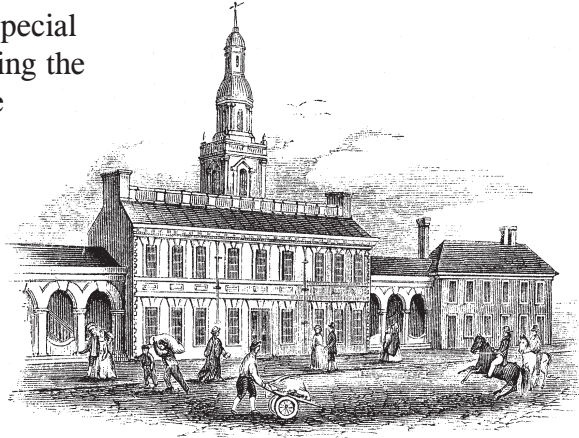


By the next summer, 1788, the Constitution was approved by nine states and went into effect. (The rest gave approval by the end of 1790.) George Washington was picked as the first president by a group of special electors chosen by the states. He took office in New York City in 1789.

THE CONSTITUTION

federalism, separation of powers, checks and balances, branches of the federal government, House of Representatives, Senate, Electoral College, ratify, amendment

The Constitution was written by delegates to a special convention that met in the city of Philadelphia during the summer of 1787. The leaders who met there were concerned that the government formed during the Revolution by the Articles of Confederation was not working well. In fact, the nation was almost falling apart. Unable to propose an easy “fix” for that system, they wrote an entirely new document.



During the Revolution, many people believed that the struggle for independence would inspire citizens and state leaders to work selflessly for the good of the entire nation. But various conflicts that developed by 1787 showed that this expectation was not very realistic. The new government system designed at the Constitutional Convention assumes free people will often disagree about important issues and push for their own interests. It also recognizes the fact that anyone with too much power is likely to abuse it.

The Constitution is based on three important principles: **federalism**, **separation of powers**, and a system of **checks and balances**. For example:

1. The document splits the big jobs of government between the national level and the state level. This split system is called federalism. The national level has control of matters like foreign relations, the military, and coining money. The states kept control of highways, education, marriage and divorce laws, and most laws dealing with crime.

2. The powers of the national (federal) government are further separated into three branches. Each branch is given certain specific powers to “check” or limit unwise actions by the other branches. The branches, and their basic functions, are these:

Legislative Branch – makes the laws for the nation. Congress is in this branch.

Executive Branch – proposes policy; carries out the laws; makes treaties.
The president is the head of this branch and also serves as commander in chief of the armed forces.

Judicial Branch – interprets the laws. It includes the Supreme Court.

3. Another important separation and balancing of power occurs within the legislative branch itself. A “two-house” or bicameral system was devised for the Congress. The House of Representatives was designed to bring in the views of the average American citizen and voter. The Senate was designed to bring in the views of the wealthier, better educated, and more experienced citizens. Proposed laws must pass both houses.



This two-house approach solved a big headache for the delegates. Should all states have the same number of representatives in the Congress, or should the big states have more? The “Great Compromise” gave each state two senators. The number of seats each state gets in the House of Representatives, however, is based on the population of that state. Senators serve six year terms, while members of the House face election much more often, every two years.

We the People of the
*insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, &
and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for*
Article I

The opening paragraph of the Constitution, called the Preamble, begins with the famous phrase “*We the People.*” But many delegates feared that putting too much power directly into the hands of the people could be dangerous, and lead to mob rule. So a

check was placed on the power of the people in the presidential election. The president is elected by an indirect or two-step process. The citizens’ vote – called the popular vote – selects the members of a group called the Electoral College. That group then casts the ballots that actually elect the president. (The details are a bit complicated, but the system has proven to be a good one.)

Remember that the Constitution does not offer a guarantee that everyone will live or act the way we might want them to. It recognizes that citizens must first be individuals who think and act freely within the law. In such a society there will always be disagreements about public policy. On most matters the Constitution does not dictate, but rather forces all sides to talk and reach a compromise as part of the political process.

At the same time, the Constitution sets up an open, free society in which citizens can steadily improve their own lives and the character of the nation. Despite some opposition, the Constitution was ratified (formally approved) by the states in 1788. It was amended to add a Bill of Rights a few years later. That listing provides additional limits or checks on the powers of the government in order to protect citizens’ rights. Other amendments have been made since, as Americans tackled important issues like ending slavery (the 13th Amendment), problems created by alcohol (the 18th), and women’s voting rights (the 19th).

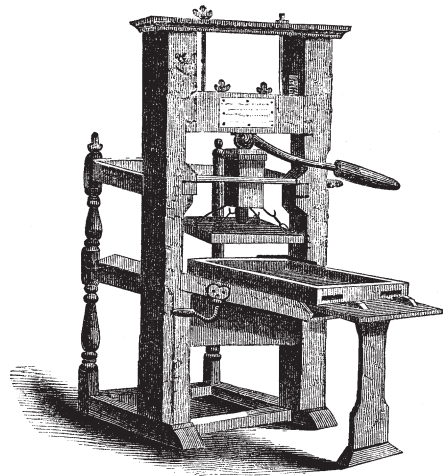
THE BILL OF RIGHTS

search warrant, due process, “take the fifth,” civil lawsuit, bail

The Bill of Rights was added to the U.S. Constitution in 1791 to satisfy people who had questioned the wisdom of creating a much stronger federal government. At the time, many people feared that a strong national government might eventually grow out of control and try to grab too much power. But the idea of a list of limits on government power wasn't entirely new. Many states had listings of basic rights in their own state constitutions. In fact, the Bill of Rights is largely modeled on the Virginia Declaration of Rights, adopted in that state in 1776.

Here are some of the key rights protected by these first ten amendments to the U.S. Constitution:

1. Your first amendment rights include freedom of religion, freedom of speech, and freedom of the press. They also include the right to assemble or meet together with other citizens. You have a right to petition the government for the “redress of grievances.” That means you have a right to have your concerns heard by government officials.
2. This amendment guarantees that you have a right to “keep and bear arms,” so that citizen militia units could be organized if necessary to defend the nation. The debate over gun safety and crime in recent decades has often put this amendment in hot controversy.
3. This amendment states that in peacetime the government cannot house troops in a private home without the owner's permission.
4. This amendment says that the government cannot search you or your home without a search warrant issued by a judge. The judge will first require reasonable evidence, called “probable cause,” to justify the search.
5. If the government takes any action against you, they must follow due process of law. That means they must follow all the legal rules. You cannot be made to testify against yourself – you can “take the fifth” and remain silent. The government cannot try you twice for the same crime. This amendment also says that the government cannot take your property without fair payment.



6. If you are charged with a crime, you have a right to a speedy and public trial before a jury of your fellow citizens. The government has to tell you exactly what law you have broken. If there are witnesses, their testimony must be made in front of you, so you know exactly what is going on. Since the workings of law can be pretty complicated, you have a right to a lawyer to help you make your defense.

7. If a civil lawsuit involving over twenty dollars is brought against you by another citizen or group, you have a right to a trial by a jury. The court must follow the customary legal practices and court rulings that have been made in previous cases, called the common law.

8. If you are charged with a crime, the bail can't be set excessively high. (Bail is the term for money you may be required to put up to guarantee you will show up for the trial.) If you are convicted, the punishment cannot be cruel or unusual. The amendment doesn't specify exactly what this means, so some disputes still exist on issues like the death penalty.

9. Citizens have many rights other than those specifically listed in the Constitution and Bill of Rights. Even though they may not be listed, the government can't violate them.

10. The federal government can only claim powers that are specifically listed in the Constitution. All other powers belong to the state level of government or to the people themselves. In spite of this amendment, the power of the federal government has grown enormously in modern times, prompting considerable political debate.



The Bill of Rights did not automatically end all danger of abuse by government power. Slavery, of course, was a direct affront to the principles it contains. Native Americans were often deprived of their rights as the nation expanded. In a few cases, laws have been passed which trampled even more broadly on basic rights. For example, in 1798 a law called the Sedition Act was passed by Congress after some of its members were criticized severely in newspaper articles. The new law declared criticism of government officials a crime. The Sedition Act was widely protested, and enforcement of it was soon stopped. But the attempt remains a good example of the reason why specific written limits on government power are so important.



Today the Bill of Rights is still constantly cited in courthouses across America whenever disputes involving citizens' rights and government power are decided. For more than 200 years, it has remained a powerful shield for people in America working to protect their basic civil rights.

THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT ORGANIZES

Cabinet, Whiskey Rebellion, Alexander Hamilton, John Adams, Sedition Act

George Washington was cheered nationwide when he took office as the country's first president in New York City in 1789. There the great task of transforming a paper constitution into a working government began under his leadership and that of vice-president John Adams.

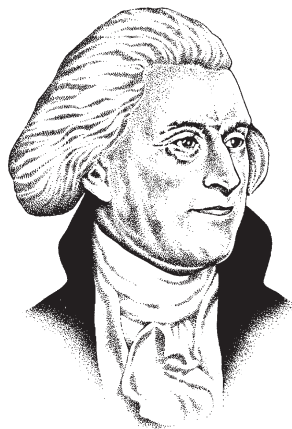


The new Congress was also ready to begin work. One of their first tasks was creating several executive departments. These were the Department of State (to handle foreign affairs), the Department of the Treasury (to handle money matters), and the Department of War (to manage the military). An Attorney General was named to handle legal matters. The men Washington chose to head these departments and offices became his closest advisors, and were called his Cabinet. Their influence on issues and events in these early years was enormous, and remains visible to this day.



Alexander Hamilton, Secretary of the Treasury, had the greatest influence. He argued that the wealthy classes were best able to give America the leadership and stability it needed. He pushed for policies to promote commerce, the growth of industries, and a strong national government. He argued successfully for creation of a National Bank and a new American system of coinage. Most of the money that was needed by the government was raised by a tariff, a tax on imported goods. Hamilton deserves most of the credit for getting America on a solid and respected financial footing.

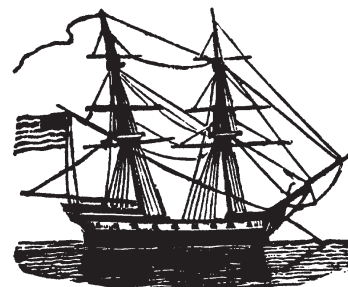
One of Hamilton's tax ideas that was adopted by Congress, a tax on whiskey production, led to a small but famous conflict. Farmers in western Pennsylvania refused to pay the tax, and even threatened federal tax collectors. Washington sent in troops to put down this "Whiskey Rebellion." The fact that order was quickly restored without bloodshed solidified the power and prestige of the federal government at a critical time.



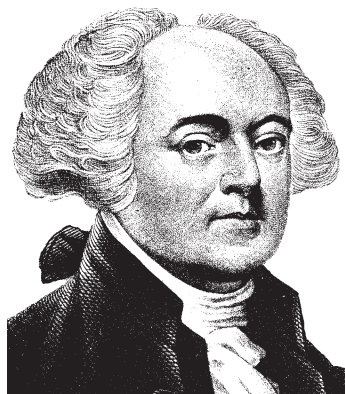
Thomas Jefferson, Secretary of State, often opposed Hamilton's vision of America's future. America should be built on a foundation of small farms and virtuous, freedom-loving farmers, he believed. That would best protect the Revolutionary ideals of liberty and equality. Growing cities, industry, and commerce would lead, he feared, to great inequality of conditions, and eventually kill the spirit of democracy. Jefferson also resented Hamilton's policies that favored the wealthy merchant class. Events in later decades moved America away from Jefferson's vision. But his faith in the wisdom of ordinary citizens, democracy, and open discussion of all issues remains a vital part of American life.

Next to finance, the biggest domestic issue was trouble on the western frontier. Fighting by settlers and Native Americans over land was killing thousands of people. In the area south of the Ohio River, treaties were signed with the Cherokee (1791) and other tribes. This accelerated settlement of lands that soon became the new states of Kentucky and Tennessee. Further north, resistance by Indians caused Washington to send in troops. By 1795 Native Americans were forced to surrender most of present-day Ohio. Settlers poured into the region, which officially became a state in 1803.

Some of the most difficult decisions in these early years concerned foreign relations. When war broke out between Great Britain and France in 1793, at the end of the French Revolution, American leaders faced a real dilemma. The French had helped America win its own Revolution, and now expected help in return. But America was in no shape to oppose the British navy on the seas, and could not afford losing its profitable trade with British merchants. George Washington, urged by Hamilton, issued a Proclamation of Neutrality. This kept America out of the war, in spite of some troublesome incidents provoked by both sides in the European conflict.



Washington was re-elected with no opposition in 1792. But with the approach of the election of 1796, he decided to step down. Now a new development appeared: political parties. Followers of Jefferson organized into a group that called themselves the Jeffersonian Republicans, and later, the Democratic-Republican Party. Followers of Hamilton also organized, and called themselves Federalists. (It was the same name used by those who pushed for approval of the Constitution some years earlier.)



The Federalists chose John Adams as their candidate. The Republicans chose Thomas Jefferson. Because of the way Electoral College votes were counted at that time, the election made Adams president and Jefferson vice-president, even though they were from different political parties. Disputes with France over Washington's Neutrality Proclamation continued. Some fighting did occur at sea with the French. Fortunately, Adams stood firmly against a full declaration of war. He helped bring the crisis to an end through negotiations and a peace agreement.

The Federalists actually planted the seeds of their own political decline in these years. In Congress, they pushed through several laws that were blatant attempts to unfairly undermine their political opponents. The Sedition Act was one. This law made it a crime to speak or publish criticism of the federal government or its officers. Jefferson and the Republicans rallied public anger against the law, and against the snobby attitude that seemed to motivate many of the Federalists. The election of 1800 gave Thomas Jefferson the presidency. He was the first president inaugurated (sworn into office) in the new capital built beside the Potomac River: Washington, D.C.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS OF A NEW NATION

These condensed excerpts are from a book by a German visitor, Johann Schoepf. He was a surgeon with the Hessian troops who fought on the side of the British. With peace established by treaty in 1783, he decided to take a trip through the new nation before returning home.

Who in the fatherland [Germany] has not heard of Philadelphia? William Penn, well known in history, founded the city in 1682, and in the space of 100 years it has grown to a notable size. The city, if not greatly beyond others in America in wealth and number of houses, far surpasses them all in learning, in the arts, and public spirit.



Throughout the city the streets are well paved and well kept. At night the city is lit by lanterns placed on posts.

The streets are kept clean and in good order by the householders themselves. Appointed night-watchmen call out the hours and the state of the weather.

Behind each house is a little court or garden, where usually are the necessaries [out-houses]. The kitchen, stable, etc., are all placed in buildings at the side or behind, kitchens often underground.

In the matter of interior decorations the English style is imitated here as throughout America. The taste generally is for living in a clean and orderly manner, without the continual scrubbing of the Hollanders or the frippery and gilt [fancy style] of the French. The rooms are in general built with open fire-places.

The number of inhabitants at present is

placed at thirty to forty thousand – with what certainty I am not prepared to say. A strict numbering of the inhabitants is difficult in America, where people are continually moving about, leaving a place or coming in.

Pennsylvania, and in consequence Philadelphia, assures freedom to all religious sects. Men of all faiths, and many of none, dwell together in harmony and peace. The spirit of tolerance has gone so far that different religious sects have assisted one another in the building of houses of worship. At the present time there are in Philadelphia more than thirty such buildings.

A college in Philadelphia founded for the instruction of the young was raised to a University in the year 1780. The University consists of two departments, the Academy or lower preparatory schools for younger students, and the University proper, where the higher sciences, Philosophy, Mathematics, and Medicine are taught.

The science of Medicine has the most Professors. None of them has a fixed salary, but they earn considerable sums, according to the number of those attending their lectures. Candidates for the degree of Doctor in Medicine, it is said, are exactly and strictly examined. But with the degree the practitioner has no advantage over other practitioners and bunglers, except as he himself chooses to make much of his diploma.

In America every man who is in the curing trade is known without distinction as Doctor, as elsewhere every person who makes verses is a poet, so there are both bad doctors and quacks [deliberate frauds] in abundance.

Libraries also Philadelphia possesses. A taste for reading is pretty widespread. People of all classes use the library on Carpenter Street. Benjamin Franklin, supported

particularly by Quakers, began this library as early as 1732 by the creation of a Reading Society. The rooms are open to the public twice a week in the afternoon, but the members of the society have access every day. In an adjoining room several mathematical and physical instruments are also kept, as also a collection of American minerals.

There are eight to ten newspapers, weekly sheets in large folio [folded paper]. Of them all the *Independent Chronicle* is the favorite on account of its freedom in regard to public affairs. Liberty of the press was one of the fundamental laws which the states included in the design of their new governments.

It arouses the sympathies to see how often the Congress is mistreated in these sheets. The financier, Bob Morris, recently found himself slandered [falsely criticized] by an article in the *Independent Chronicle* and began a lawsuit. But the public supported the printer and as free citizens asserted their right to communicate to one another their opinions regarding the conduct of public officials. But it must be said that through the misuse of so special a privilege great harm may arise. How many upright and innocent characters are roughly treated under the shield of the freedom of the press!

People think, act, and speak here precisely as it prompts them. The poorest day-laborer on the bank of the Delaware River holds it his right to advance his opinion, in religious as well as political matters, with as much freedom as the gentleman or the scholar. And as yet there is to be found as little distinction of rank among the inhabitants of Philadelphia as in any city in the world.

No one admits that the Governor has any particular superiority over the private citizen except in so far as he is the right hand of the law, and the law equally regards and deals

with all citizens. Riches make no difference, because in this regard every man expects at one time or another to be on a footing with his rich neighbor. Rank of birth is not recognized, and is resisted with a total force.

The Philadelphia market deserves a visit from every foreigner. Astonishment is excited not only by the



extraordinary store of provisions but also by the cleanliness and the good order in which the stock is exposed for sale. On the evenings before the chief market days (Wednesdays and Saturdays) all the bells in the city are rung.

People come into Philadelphia in great covered wagons. Numerous carts and horses bring in from all directions the rich surplus of the countryside. Everything is full of life and action.

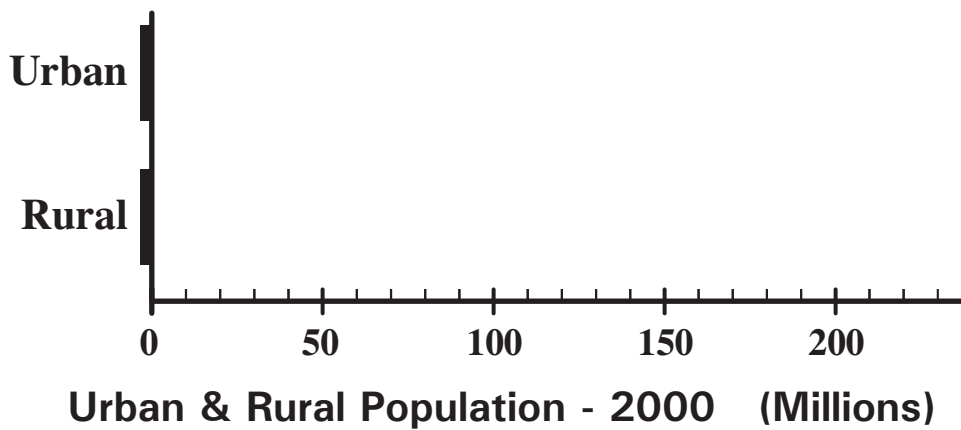
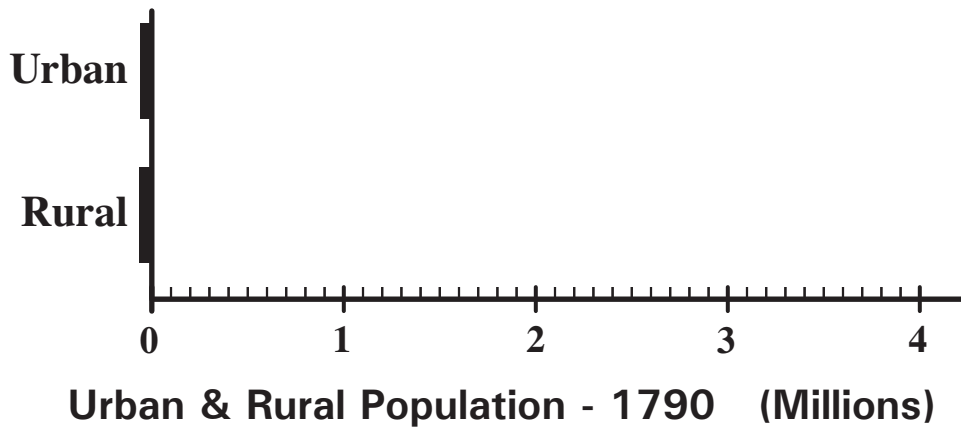
Besides the customary sorts of meat, Europeans find in season several dishes new to them, such as raccoons, opossums, otters, bear-bacon and bear's foot, as well as many local birds and fishes. All sorts of melons and many kinds of pumpkins are seen in great quantity, and fruits also.

The war has left no sign of want [poverty or shortages] here. The inhabitants are not only well clothed but well fed, and comparatively, better than in Europe.

Group Discussion: *What were Americans like, and what did they value, in the 1780s? What aspects of American life described here have changed since this account was written? What aspects of American life have not changed?*

CHARTING THE FIRST CENSUS

The first official U.S. census was made in 1790, and a new census is made every ten years. Many census figures can be found in *Historical Statistics of the United States and Statistical Abstract of the United States*. Both are government publications, and are available in many libraries. Complete the bar graphs below to show some of the basic population changes revealed by statistics from these sources.



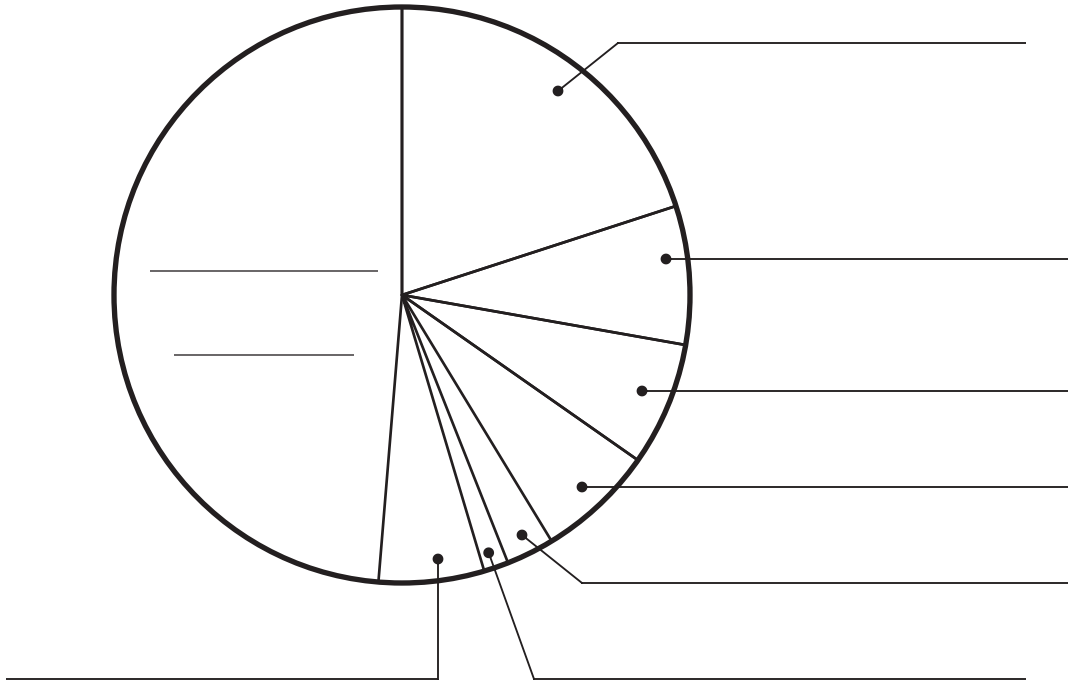
Use the table below to find the information to complete the bar graphs. Draw horizontal bars of the appropriate length to show the urban and rural population for the years shown.

| Year | Total Population (Millions) | Urban Population (Millions) | Rural Population (Millions) |
|------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1790 | 3.9 | .2 | 3.7 |
| 2000 | 281 | 226 | 55 |

sources: *Historical Statistics of the United States* and *Statistical Abstract of the United States*

Complete the pie chart below to show the ethnic and national backgrounds of Americans in the census year 1790. How has the pattern changed in the years since that time?

Ethnic and National Backgrounds of Americans - 1790
Total Population: 3.9 Million



Use the table below to complete the pie chart. Show each group and its percent of the total American population on the lines provided. Be sure to add the “%” sign. The pie chart starts with the English on the left, and moves clockwise in order, ending with “Other” at the bottom.

| Group | Percent of Total | Group | Percent of Total |
|---------|------------------|----------|------------------|
| English | 48.7 | Scottish | 6.6 |
| African | 20 | Dutch | 2.7 |
| Irish | 7.8 | French | 1.4 |
| German | 7 | Other | 5.8 |

source: *Historical Statistics of the United States*