

CHAPTER
4

Summary

TELESCOPING THE TIMES

The War for Independence

CHAPTER OVERVIEW *The colonists' clashes with the British government lead them to declare independence. With French aid, they overcome early setbacks to win their freedom from Great Britain.*

❶ The Stirrings of Rebellion

MAIN IDEA *Conflict between Great Britain and the American colonies grew over issues of taxation, representation, and liberty.*

Tensions grew again in 1765 when Parliament passed the Stamp Act. The new law required colonists to buy government stamps when buying anything from wills to playing cards. It was the first British tax to directly affect the average colonist.

The colonists were outraged. Merchants vowed to boycott British goods until the act was repealed. Leaders from throughout the colonies met and declared that only colonial assemblies—not Parliament—could pass tax laws. Parliament repealed the Stamp Act but also insisted that it had the power to govern the colonies in all matters. It backed up the claim by passing the Townshend Acts, which imposed indirect taxes.

Riots in Boston prompted the British to station troops there. In a tussle with local workers in 1770, the soldiers opened fire, killing five Bostonians. Fanning anger against the British, Samuel Adams called it the “Boston Massacre.”

To calm feelings, the British government withdrew the taxes—except the one on tea. In 1773, the British tried to help a near-bankrupt British company by giving it a monopoly on the tea trade to the colonies, freezing out colonial merchants. In response, a group of Bostonians dressed as Native Americans boarded three ships and dumped crates of tea into Boston Harbor.

Parliament passed a set of punishing laws that colonists called the Intolerable Acts. The port of Boston was closed and troops maintained law. In 1774 delegates from the colonies met in Philadelphia in the First Continental Congress. They issued a declaration of colonial rights.

Many colonists formed military companies. The British decided to seize their weapons. British troops briefly fought colonial minutemen in the town of Lexington. When the British marched back to Boston, minutemen ambushed them and killed many soldiers.

❷ Ideas Help Start a Revolution

MAIN IDEA *Tensions increased throughout the colonies until the Continental Congress declared independence on July 4, 1776.*

In 1775, the colonies again sent delegates to Philadelphia, to meet in the Second Continental Congress. John Adams of Massachusetts urged that the colonies declare themselves independent of Great Britain, but the Congress could not agree on this action. It did create an army, however, placing George Washington in command.

In June 1775, British troops clashed again with colonials near Boston in the Battle of Bunker Hill. The British took heavy losses. Hoping for peace, Congress sent a plea—the Olive Branch Petition—to King George III. The king rejected it. More colonists began to favor independence.

Many were persuaded by a pamphlet titled *Common Sense*. In it, Thomas Paine blamed the colonists' troubles on the king, not his government. In June 1776, a Virginia delegate urged that Congress declare independence. Thomas Jefferson of Virginia was asked to write a document stating the colonies' reasons. On July 2, 1776, the delegates voted to free the colonies of British rule. Two days later, they approved Jefferson's Declaration of Independence.

The many colonists who opposed independence called themselves Loyalists. Supporters of independence were called Patriots. Native Americans—who thought colonists threatened their land—supported the British. Many African Americans—given promises of freedom from slavery—joined the British cause as well. Others fought with the Patriots.

❸ Struggling Toward Saratoga

MAIN IDEA *After a series of setbacks, American forces won at Saratoga and survived.*

In March 1776, the British transferred their troops from Boston. They planned to split New England from the rest of the colonies by

seizing New York City. Washington assembled an army to oppose them, but his soldiers were poorly prepared and equipped. The British beat them badly in August.

Washington retreated south. On Christmas Day of 1776, he staged a surprise attack across the Delaware River. His troops captured almost 1,000 enemy soldiers. After another Patriot victory, the two sides settled down for winter camp. The next spring, British troops won two battles near Philadelphia. Congress fled the city, which the British occupied.

Patriots got some needed good news late in 1777. An army of British troops and Native Americans marched south from Canada. A Patriot army beat them at Bennington, Vermont, and won a clear victory at Saratoga, New York.

Saratoga cheered the Patriots—and convinced the French that the colonists had a chance to win the war. Hoping to hurt their long-time enemy, the British, the French recognized American independence. They also agreed to send troops and supplies. Before French aid could arrive, however, Washington and his soldiers spent a miserable winter at Valley Forge, Pennsylvania. Short on food, blankets, and clothing, the American soldiers suffered hunger and frostbite. More than 2,000 soldiers died.

Congress could not provide the needed supplies because it had difficulty raising the money needed to conduct the war. It managed to do so by borrowing money and by printing paper money. Printing money had a bad effect, though, as prices for food and supplies began to rise.

Women contributed to the war effort. With husbands and fathers away fighting, they ran family farms and businesses. They did what they could to raise supplies. Many women traveled with the army, washing and cooking for their husbands and other troops. Many felt a new sense of freedom and self-confidence.

4 Winning the War

MAIN IDEA *Strategic victories in the South and at Yorktown enabled the Americans to defeat the British.*

During the winter of Valley Forge, a German officer began to train the Patriot army. These efforts turned the ragtag bunch into a fighting

army. Washington was also aided by a French officer, the Marquis de Lafayette.

The first years after Saratoga proved hard on the Patriots, though. The British hoped to rally Loyalist support in the South and moved operations there. At the end of 1778, they took Savannah, Georgia, and in May 1780 they captured Charles Town, South Carolina, taking 5,500 Patriot soldiers as prisoners of war. With yet another victory, they soon had a secure hold on Georgia and South Carolina.

Washington sent General Nathanael Greene south to stop the British. One part of Greene's army defeated redcoats at Cowpens, South Carolina, in January 1781. Then the British moved north to Virginia. The commander, Charles Cornwallis, foolishly occupied a narrow peninsula near Yorktown. Patriot and French forces moved in and trapped Cornwallis's troops. Meanwhile, a French fleet blocked British ships from delivering supplies or rescuing their soldiers. On October 19, 1781, Cornwallis surrendered to Washington.

The next year, the Patriots and British began to discuss terms for peace. The American delegates were John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, and John Jay. They insisted that the British recognize American independence. In the Treaty of Paris, the British also gave the new nation land all the way west to the Mississippi River.

The American Revolution had profound effects on American society. As rich and poor fought together, people began to have a sense of egalitarianism—the equality of all people. Many urged that the new nation extend freedom by ending slavery, but Southern states were unwilling to lose their laborers. Women, too, did not gain political or social rights.

Review

1. Outline the different steps that Great Britain and the colonists took toward conflict.
2. What factors helped convince many people to support independence?
3. Why was Saratoga an important battle?
4. Describe the events of the last years of the American Revolution.