

1 Key words

Vocabulary

Skim the text below to find words or phrases that fit these definitions.

1. ancestors, grandfathers, etc. _____
2. laws that control how businesses can trade _____
3. bringing things into a country illegally _____
4. take money from people (colloquial) _____
5. a small battle _____
6. the act of stepping in to help _____
7. rough land _____
8. searching for food _____
9. usual, normal _____
10. areas where a war is fought _____

The American Revolution (1775 – 1783)



Many Americans speak with great pride about the achievement of their forefathers in establishing their nation. The tales of courage, heroism and cunning have been told so many times that it can be difficult on occasion to separate truth from fiction. What cannot be disputed is that a relatively small group of colonies defeated one of the great superpowers of the 18th century, and in doing so prepared the way for revolutions that followed.

Many of the citizens of the Thirteen British Colonies along the east coast of North America were either the descendants of religious objectors or were there to make a new beginning. They were believers in their own ability to establish the communities they wanted. After the Seven Years' War,

(called in America the French and Indian War) the British Government tried to impose trade restrictions and failed to recognize in any practical way the contribution made by the colonists in the battles fought in America against the French.

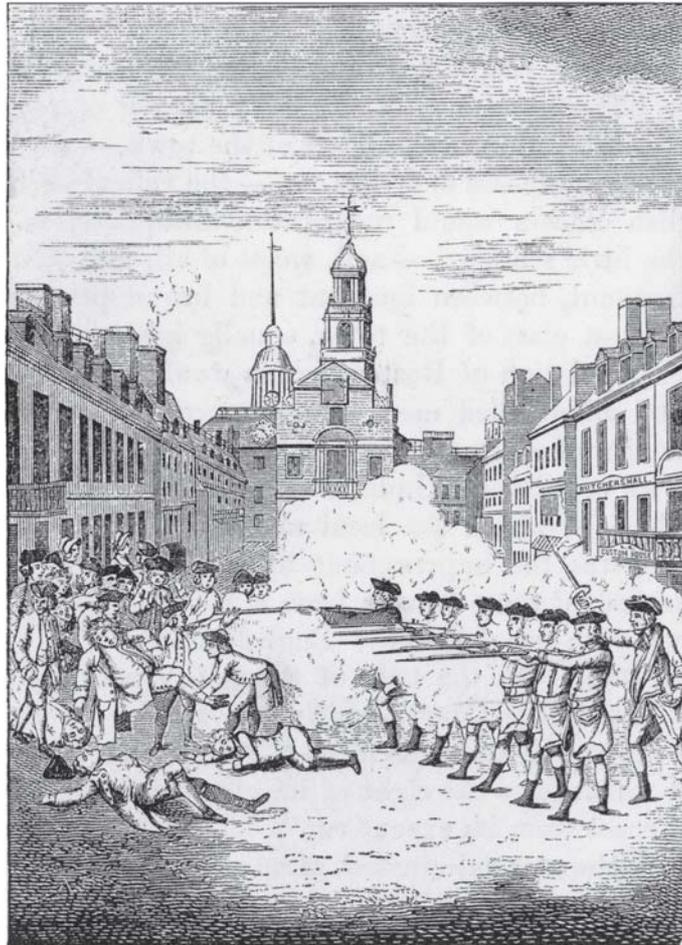
The colonists' response was not restricted to complaining: they resorted to smuggling. Only British ships were allowed to carry goods to America, so smuggling became an early form of tax and government rule avoidance.

In 1765, in an attempt, it was said, to get the colonists to contribute to the cost of keeping an army in America, the British Parliament passed the Stamp Act. This was a tax on all newspapers and legal documents and was seen by the colonists

as further evidence that the government in London was looking for ways to 'pick their pockets'.

In 1770, further taxes were imposed on goods imported into America. In Boston,

the complaints and sense of a lack of power developed into a riot. British soldiers responding to it were blamed for the deaths of five citizens. It became known as the Boston Massacre.



Boston Massacre. From an Engraving by Paul Revere.

Boston was again the setting for anti-British activities in 1773. A British ship loaded with tea was boarded and the tea was thrown into the sea when the colonists refused to pay the tax on it. The British response was to send a force of soldiers who closed the port.

The War begins

As the situation had worsened, all that was required to generate an all-out conflict was a confrontation between armed British soldiers and angry colonists. In

April 1775, General Gage ordered 700 of his soldiers to seize weapons that were stored by the colonists in Concord. A warning was sent to the colonists, and when the British reached Lexington there was a short skirmish in which shots were exchanged. An armed conflict between the colonies and Britain had begun.

Although of no great strategic importance in itself, the conflict at Lexington and Concord is often referred to as 'the shot heard around the world'. Its importance is that it was the first example in 'modern'

times of one of the mighty European nations facing armed revolt within its own borders.

Within a few months, following a gathering of representatives of the Thirteen Colonies (the Continental Congress), George Washington had been given command of the colonial forces and had set about raising a regular army. At this point it seemed unlikely that the British could be defeated. Until France's intervention they had almost complete command of the sea, and therefore access to any east coast port, while the colonists, with only the beginnings of an army, faced land forces accustomed to winning wars in both Europe and Asia. However, as many generals have since discovered, having

superiority in numbers, equipment and experience is not always sufficient advantage. The colonists were fighting in terrain they knew well, they were used to hunting and foraging to survive, and in addition, they were fighting not simply because they were paid but because they wanted their own government to control their nation's destiny.

During the course of the late 1770s, battles were won and lost by both sides but there was no occasion on which colonial forces 'gambled' with their whole army. As long as an army fighting on home territory stays in the field and avoids a total defeat, it is very difficult for a conventional force to beat it.



SURRENDER AT YORKTOWN.

The British surrender

In 1781, a French fleet under Admiral de Grasse sailed to Chesapeake Bay in an attempt to take control of the sea in that area. As soon as Washington heard of this, he took his army and French allies to trap the British force, led by General Cornwallis, in Yorktown. As colonial and French forces pounded the British force, Cornwallis decided he had no choice but to surrender.

The British Prime Minister, Lord North, realizing that the war was proving too costly and too difficult to win, and was taking forces better used in other 'theatres', acknowledged that the war, in effect, was over. It was formally ended in 1783 by the Treaty of Paris, under which Britain recognized the new nation.

2 Presenting the American Revolution

Reading, Writing Speaking

Work in a group. Read the text again and write notes in the frame below to prepare a PowerPoint presentation. Then in groups give your presentation to the class.

Text structure

Introduction



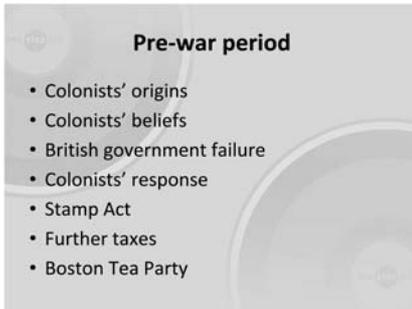
Notes

Americans have pride in _____

Truth and fiction confused because _____

Significant because _____

Pre-war period



Colonists were _____ and
believed in _____

After years of war, British Govt. failed to _____

Colonists' response was _____

Stamp Act _____

Further taxes _____

and Boston Tea Party _____

continued on page 6

The War begins

War period

- Beginnings of the war
- Washington took control
- Unlikely British defeat
- Colonialists' advantage
- Key strategy

The beginning of the war _____

Washington took control _____

Unlikely British defeat because _____

Colonists' advantage was _____

Key strategy was _____

The British surrender

British surrender

- French fleet
- Washington
- Cornwallis
- Lord North

French fleet _____

Washington _____

Cornwallis _____

Lord North _____
