CHANGING FRONTIERS

A History of THE UNITED STATES

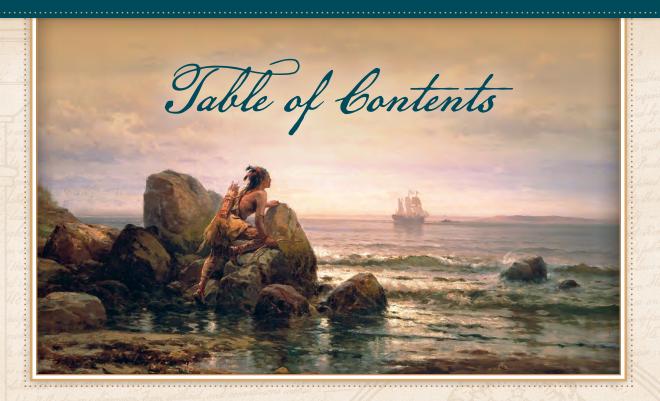
by

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Foreword Is History Always History?

X

Mnit 1

AMERICAN AND EUROPEAN BACKGROUNDS

Chapter 1	The First Americans Were Indians & before 1492	2
	Who Were the Earliest Americans?	
	Who Lived in North America When Columbus Arrived?	
Chapter 2	The Discoverers of America 🎨 985-1516	16
	Who Really Discovered America?	
	What Changes Led to Columbus's Discovery and Made It Important?	
	What Was the Columbian Exchange?	
Chapter 3	Europeans Explore and Colonize America 🍨 1492-1682	28
	Who Were the European Explorers of America?	
	How Did Spanish Influence in North America Rise and Fall?	
Chapter 4	England Establishes Colonies in North America 💠 1585-1752	42
	How Did the First English Colonies Begin?	
	How Did the New England Colonies Begin?	
	How Did the Southern and Middle Colonies Begin?	
	How Did Colonists Seek to Evangelize the Indians?	

Muit 2

WAR, REBELLION, AND INDEPENDENCE

Chapter 5	Life in the English Colonies & 1607-1776	70
	What Was Life in the Colonies Like?	
	How Did Life Differ Throughout the Colonies?	
	What Religious Revival Movement Brought Changes to the Colonies?	
	What Were Four Scenes That Affected Colonial Times?	
Chapter 6	Britain and France Fight in the New World № 1689-1763	96
	Why Did the French and English Take Up Arms in America?	
	Why Was the French and Indian War Fought, and What Did it Change?	
Chapter 7	The Colonies Rebel Against England © 1763-1775	104
	Why Did Britain Issue the Proclamation of 1763?	
	How Did Britain Plan to Raise Money From the Colonies?	
	What Events Caused the Revolutionary War to Start?	
Chapter 8	Independence ≈ 1775-1783	116
	What Were Some of the Early Events of the War?	
	How Did the Colonists Finally Decide to Break With Britain?	
	How Did the Colonists Defeat Britain?	

Muit 3

BEGINNINGS, GROWTH, AND CHANGE

ation ♦ 1776-1791 132
148
ration?
erms?
1816-1844 170
ations?
ti Te

Chapter 12 Americans' Lives Change in the Early 1800s № 1800-1860 188 What Changes Did the Industrial Revolution Bring to America? How Did Changes in Transportation and Communication Affect America? How Did Religious Movements, Immigration, and Reform Affect Americans in the Early 1800s? Mnit 4 THE NATION EXPANDS Chapter 13 Slavery in America № 1490s-1860 214 Where Did Slaves Come From, and How Did They Get to America? What Was Slavery Like in North America? How Did Slaves and Some Whites Attack Slavery? Chapter 14 Europeans and Native Americans Clash & 1620-1890 234 How Were Indians Treated Before Indian Removal Became Official Policy? How Did the United States Remove Indians in the Jacksonian Era? How Did Indian Conflicts End in the West? Chapter 15 Westward—Ho! № 1821-1851 252 How Did Americans Help Texas Gain Independence? How Did Oregon Become Part of the United States? How Did the Mexican War and the Gold Rush Change the United States? Muit 5 THE NORTH AND SOUTH IN CONFLICT Chapter 16 The North and South Disagree **North** 21846-1860 274 How Did the United States Deal With Disunion in the Early 1800s? What Fanned the Flames of Conflict in the 1850s? How Did Events of 1856 to 1860 Lead to Disunion? Chapter 17 The Civil War **№** 1861-1865 292 How Did Lincoln's Election Remove All Hopes of Peace? How Did Events Unfold in the Early Part of the War? How Did the Tide Turn in Favor of the North? What Were the Results of the War?

314

Chapter 18

The South Rebuilds **№** 1865-1877

How Did Presidents Lincoln and Johnson Try to Rebuild the South?

How Did Radical Republicans Try to Rebuild the South? What Were the Closing Events of Reconstruction?

Mnit 6

GROWTH, PROGRESS, AND CHANGE

Chapter 19	The Gap in the West Closes ♦ 1860-1900	332
	How Did Miners and Prospectors Start to Settle the West?	
	How Did Transportation Grow in the West?	
	What Part Did Cattlemen Fill in Settling the West?	
	How Did Homesteaders Help to Fill the Midwest?	
Chapter 20	Inventions, Business, and Industry © 1865-1900	354
	What Developments Helped Business to Grow?	
	How Were Businesses Changing?	
	How Did Big Business and Unions Operate?	
Chapter 21	America Changes in the Late 1800s № 1870-1900	372
	What Changes Came to Farming in the Late 1800s?	
	How Did Cities Change in the Late 1800s?	
	How Did the Presidents of the Late 1800s Deal With Political Issues?	
	What Reform and Social Movements Affected the United States in the Late 1800s?	

Minit—7 STRUGGLES WITHIN AND WITHOUT

Chapter 22	The Progressive Movement 2 1885-1915	400
	What Reforms Did the Progressive Movement Promote?	
	What Reforms Did Theodore Roosevelt Introduce?	
	How Did Democrats Regain the White House in 1912?	
Chapter 23	Progressives Gain and Lose № 1890-1920	414
Mark Control	How Were Americans' Lives Changing?	
	What Progress Did Reform Movements Make Under President Wilson?	
	What Groups Did Not Experience Progress?	
Chapter 24	From Isolation to Imperialism © 1850-1920	DOT 428
	Where Did the United States Seek Territory for an Empire?	
	How Did the United States Wield Its Influence Throughout the World?	
	How Did the United States Wield Its Influence in Latin America?	
Chapter 25	The Great War 🗞 1914-1919	444
	What Events Led to the War in Europe?	
	How Did the United States Become Involved in the War?	
	Did the Great War Bring Lasting Peace?	

Mnit 8

BOOM, BUST, AND BATTLE

Chapter 26	The Twenties Bring Trouble and Prosperity © 1919-1935	462
	What Problems and Tensions Did the Country Face?	
	How Was Society Changing in the Twenties?	
	How Did Politics Change in the Twenties?	
Chapter 27	The Great Depression 1929-1939 Automated to the allege and the second to	476
	How Did the Great Depression Defeat Hoover's Promise of Prosperity?	
	What Initial Steps Did President Roosevelt Take to Fight the Depression?	
	What Further Steps Did Roosevelt Take During His Presidency?	
Chapter 28	World War II ≈ 1939-1945	496
	Why and How Did the War Begin?	
	How Did the United States Respond to World Events?	
	How Did the Allies Defeat Italy and Germany?	
	How Did the Allies Defeat Japan?	

Mnit 9 FEARS WITHIN, FIGHTINGS WITHOUT

Chapter 29	Harry Truman and the Aftermath of the War 1945-1952 What Challenges Faced the World in the Aftermath of World War II? What Challenges Did President Truman Face at Home in the Postwar Years?	522
Chapter 30	Communism Threatens at Home and Abroad № 1945-1954 What Steps Did the United States Take to Contain Communism in Europe? What Steps Did the United States Take to Stop Communism in Asia? How Did Fears of Communism Affect Americans at Home?	532
Chapter 31	The Eisenhower Years Shape American Life № 1952-1960 How Did America Prosper During the Eisenhower Years? How Did the Civil Rights Movement Make Progress? How Did World Communism Shape Eisenhower's Foreign Policy?	544
Chapter 32	The Kennedy and Johnson Years Change America № 1960-1969 How Did President Kennedy Deal With the Threat of Communism? What Progress Did the Civil Rights Movement Make in the Early 1960s? What Social Changes Were Occurring in the 1960s?	560

Menit 10 War, Peace, and Prosperity

The United States Fights Communism in Vietnam • 1954-1973 How Did Presidents Kennedy and Johnson Deal With the War in Vietnam? How Did President Nixon Get the United States Out of Vietnam?	582
The Seventies Bring Domestic and Foreign Crises № 1969-1980 What Did President Nixon Accomplish and What Problems Did He Face? What Were the Main Events of the Ford and Carter Presidencies?	592
The Twentieth Century Ends № 1980-2000 What Changes Did the Reagan Administration Bring to the United States? What Issues in Foreign Affairs Did President Reagan Deal With? What Foreign and Domestic Affairs Did the Bush Administration Face? What Were the High Points of the Clinton Presidency?	606
The Turn of the Century Brings Changes 2000— How Did Presidents Bush, Clinton, and Obama Respond to Twenty-First Century Issues? How Did the American Lifestyle Change at the Turn of the Century?	622
ndex	640
	641
and Territories of the United States	648
ents of the United States	650
eclaration of Independence	652
onstitution ONE T	655
Il of Rights	664
onstitutional Amendments 11-27	666
	674
wledgments & Credits	690
	How Did Presidents Kennedy and Johnson Deal With the War in Vietnam? How Did President Nixon Get the United States Out of Vietnam? The Seventies Bring Domestic and Foreign Crises 1969-1980 What Did President Nixon Accomplish and What Problems Did He Face? What Were the Main Events of the Ford and Carter Presidencies? The Twentieth Century Ends 1980-2000 What Changes Did the Reagan Administration Bring to the United States? What Issues in Foreign Affairs Did President Reagan Deal With? What Foreign and Domestic Affairs Did the Bush Administration Face? What Were the High Points of the Clinton Presidency? The Turn of the Century Brings Changes 2000— How Did Presidents Bush, Clinton, and Obama Respond to Twenty-First Century Issues? How Did the American Lifestyle Change at the Turn of the Century? Index and Territories of the United States eclaration of Independence Constitution Il of Rights Constitutional Amendments 11-27

CHAPTER



> Terms

- SecondContinentalCongress
- mercenaries
- **№** Common Sense
- Declaration of Independence
- Loyalists
- **₹** Tories



People

- Thomas Jefferson

- Marquis de Lafayette
- George Rogers
 Clark

- **₹** Francis Marion

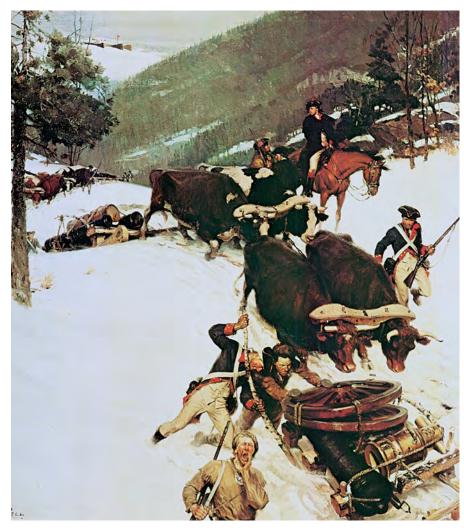


- ₹ Fort Ticonderoga
- Bunker Hill
- **₹** Trenton
- Saratoga
- Valley Forge

Independence

1775-1783

Sixty years after the fighting at Lexington and Concord, Americans raised a monument to the minutemen and dedicated it with "Concord Hymn," Ralph Waldo Emerson's famous poem. "The embattled farmers," said the poem, "fired the shot heard round the world." Yet in 1775 no one envisioned the years of fighting that would follow that skirmish. Most colonists wanted only a voice in the taxations that seemed to shackle them; only a few radicals dreamed of independence. But the next seven years of fighting drew the major powers of Europe into a struggle that challenged the world's views of absolute monarchies.



The colonial troops dragged the heavy cannon captured at Fort Ticonderoga 300 miles (480 km) through mountains and snow to the siege at Boston.

Section 1: What Were Some of the Early Events of the War?

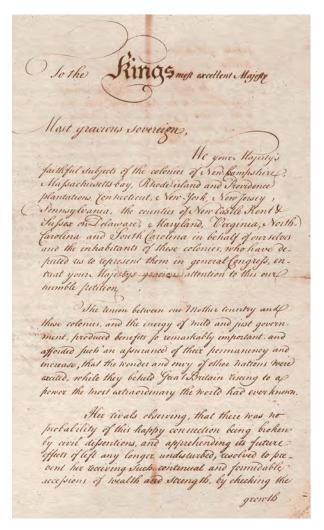
For some time after the fighting at Lexington and Concord, neither the British nor the colonists attacked the other. The British lacked sufficient troops to face the Massachusetts militia. The colonists lacked the cannons and guns to attack Boston while British troops occupied the city and British ships defended the harbor.

The Second Continental Congress meets. The First Continental Congress had agreed to meet again in May 1775 if Britain did not change its policies. When no change seemed forthcoming, the Second Continental Congress met in Philadelphia on May 10, 1775. This group organized the Continental Army and called for twenty thousand troops. Volunteers would agree to serve for one year. By unanimous vote, the Second Continental Congress also appointed George Washington of Virginia as commander-in-chief of the army. Like the Continental Congress, the Continental Army was named for its position on the North American continent in contrast to the islands of Britain.

Some delegates wanted to break ties with Britain, but many others still desired reconciliation. As a final effort to preserve peace, Congress drafted a letter to King George known as the Olive Branch Petition. In it Congress asked for a peaceful resolution and promised loyalty if the king would hear their appeal. Aware that the colonies were already fighting, King George rejected the petition and declared the colonies to be in rebellion. He hired thousands of German **mercenaries**, soldiers paid to fight in a foreign army, and sent them to the colonies.

While Congress discussed measures for peace, Washington headed north to Boston. However, several military actions had already occurred before General Washington took command of the militia that answered the call to arms.

Americans seize Fort Ticonderoga. On May 10, 1775, the same day the Second Continental Congress began, Colonels Ethan Allen and Benedict Arnold led a group of Vermont soldiers known as the Green Mountain Boys against Fort Ticonderoga in New York. Taking the British by



This is the first page of the Olive Branch Petition. King George reportedly never read it.

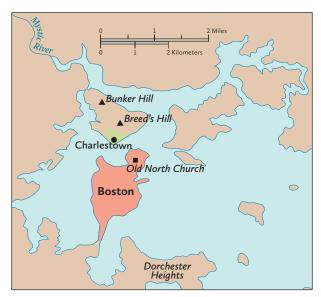
Battle on Breed's Hill

The Battle of Bunker Hill was actually fought on nearby Breed's Hill, but it was named for the hill on which Colonel Prescott had been ordered to build fortifications.

surprise, they seized the fort without either side firing a shot. Soon afterward, the Green Mountain Boys took the British fort at Crown Point, opening the way to Canada. The American colonists hoped to draw the colonists of Canada to their side. Also, the colonists now possessed the artillery they had earlier lacked, but they had to find a way to transport the large guns from the captured forts.

Americans "lose" at Bunker Hill. In June 1775, while Congress was still in session, fighting erupted at Boston. Both colonial and British military forces wanted control of the hills around Boston and Charlestown. These hills overlooked the harbor and the narrow strips of land connecting both towns to the mainland. If either side could fortify these hills, it would greatly handicap the opposing force. British General Gage, short on troops, permitted the colonists to

BOSTON AREA



occupy the hills around Charlestown, knowing the heights were of no particular advantage to a force without artillery. However, as more British troops arrived, General Gage prepared to seize the hills before the colonists could transport cannons from the captured forts in New York.

Hearing of General Gage's intentions, colonial militiamen spent the night of June 16, 1775, digging trenches and piling up earthen forts on Breed's Hill, which overlooked Charlestown.

The next afternoon British General William Howe ordered an attack, and British troops charged up the hill toward the colonists. According to tradition, colonial military officers, concerned about limited ammunition, ordered their soldiers to withhold fire until they could see the whites of their enemies' eyes. Twice the colonists drove the British back. Then the colonists' ammunition ran out, and they were forced to retreat. Though technically a British victory, the Battle of **Bunker Hill** cost the British more lives than it cost the colonial forces.

George Washington takes command. In July 1775, shortly after the Battle of Bunker Hill, Washington arrived at Boston and took command of the military forces, which until that time had lacked a leader. Most of the troops knew nothing of military training, drill, or discipline. Washington's first job was to transform this disorganized militia into a unified body that could combat highly trained British regulars.

Continentals invade Canada. In the fall and winter of 1775, while awaiting more action at Boston, Washington ordered an invasion of Canada. Marching north on the route opened by the capture of Forts Ticonderoga and Crown Point, General Richard Montgomery conquered Montreal in November. Colonel Benedict Arnold led his troops to Quebec, where Montgomery joined him. Together they attacked Quebec during a snowstorm, but Montgomery was killed and Arnold wounded. Outnumbered and ravaged by smallpox, the dwindling American forces released their hold on Montreal and withdrew from Canada.

The British leave Boston. During the winter of 1775 Colonel Henry Knox dragged the heavy cannons from Fort Ticonderoga over frozen hills and rivers to Boston. Equipped with artillery at last, Washington fortified Dorchester Heights south of Boston in March 1776. The British and Continental forces exchanged several rounds of cannon fire, but British artillery could not reach Dorchester Heights. Washington waited, hoping the British would attempt a charge like the one in the Battle of Bunker Hill. Meanwhile, a severe rainstorm struck, and under the threat of American artillery, the British had little choice but to evacuate Boston. Later in March the British retreated to Nova Scotia with more than

a thousand Boston Loyalists; this ended British occupation of New England.

STUDY EXERCISES

8.1

- **1.** What was the Olive Branch Petition?
- 2. How was the Battle of Bunker Hill a loss and a victory for the British?
- 3. Why did the invasion of Canada fail?

Q CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Why did Washington order the invasion of Canada rather than an attack on Boston?

Section 2: How Did the Colonists Finally Decide to Break With Britain?

After America had been at war for a year, many colonists still hoped for a peaceable agreement with Britain. But neither the colonists nor Britain were willing to compromise; and as relationships with Britain worsened, growing numbers of colonists favored independence. Although these colonists represented only about one-fourth of Americans, they promoted their views energetically.

Common Sense unites American Colonists.

In January 1776 Thomas Paine published a small pamphlet titled *Common Sense*. With fiery and eloquent language, Paine attacked King George and Great Britain, and he called for independence. *Common Sense* helped to cement ideas about independence in people's minds and brought a greater unity to the cause.

Americans declare independence. Meeting again in 1776, the Second Continental Congress discussed the question of independence. In June Richard Henry Lee of Virginia proposed a resolution that "these United States are, and of right ought to be, free and independent States; that they are absolved [freed] from all allegiance to the British Crown; and that all political connection between them and the State of Great

Britain is, and ought to be, totally dissolved."

Although delegates from the Middle Colonies withheld their support for independence, Congress appointed a committee to draw up a statement of independence. **Thomas Jefferson**, a member of the committee, wrote most of the declaration.

My Mind Is My Church

Thomas Paine, advocate of the American Revolution, wrote in his book *The Age of Reason*, "I do not believe in the creed professed . . . by any church that I know of. My own mind is my own church."

Later, while imprisoned in France for his support of the French Revolution, Paine wrote attacks on Christianity. He advocated *deism*, the belief that the Creator is uninvolved in the creation and that man has no responsibility to the Creator.

Because of his religious beliefs, Paine died a social outcast. Only six people attended his funeral, and Christian churches of America refused to admit his body to their cemeteries.

Why is it important for us to consider the beliefs of the men whose advice we follow?

Neither Loyalists nor Patriots

The nonresistant Christians (Mennonites, Amish, Moravians, Quakers, and Brethren) of southeast Pennsylvania were confronted with many difficulties as the Revolution developed. Following are some of the issues they faced.

- Because they refused to drill in the local militia, these people were asked to pay money to the newly forming Continental government. But they felt Britain was their rightful government, so they did not consider this money a legal tax, and many were not sure if they could conscientiously pay it.
- During the war, the colonial troops spent a hard winter at Valley Forge while the British troops lived in relative comfort in Philadelphia. In fact, part of the British soldiers' supplies came from local Mennonites, who continued to sell their farm produce in Philadelphia markets. As some of the Mennonites viewed it, the colonial soldiers could have gone home to warm houses instead of suffering as rebels at Valley Forge.
- Nonresistant Christians needed to decide at what point they could recognize the new nation as their rightful government instead of Britain.
- ≈ Sometimes the local militia confiscated a horse from a Mennonite farmer to haul goods on wagons for the army. The farmer needed to decide if he could conscientiously send his son along to drive the wagon so that he would be more likely to get his horse back.
- Nonresistant Christians tried to remain neutral, although independence-minded Americans sometimes accused them of being Loyalists. Some Christians suffered arrest and loss of property for refusing to bear arms in the fight for independence.

a Declaration by the Representatives of the UNITED STATES
OF AMERICA, in General Congress assembled.
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dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to
When in the course of human words it becomes necessary for to propole to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to dissolve the powers of the earth the population to separate and equal
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This early draft of the Declaration of Independence shows the numerous revisions Jefferson made as he wrote.

the Declaration of Independence

The declaration can be divided into the following four parts.

1. The preamble:

an introductory paragraph explaining the purpose of the document.

PREAMBLE

"When in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume, among the Powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinion of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation."

2. An explanation of the principles of democracy:

several paragraphs explaining how the colonists viewed human rights and human governments.

EXCERPT FROM SECTION II:

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed [gifted] by their Creator with certain unalienable [basic] Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving [taking] their just powers from the consent of the governed."

The section goes on to say that people may change their form of government if it does not bring them "Safety and Happiness" or if it becomes abusive of its people, but that people should not change their governments for trivial reasons.

3. The grievances (complaints) against the king of Great Britain:

the colonists' reasons for feeling the king had wronged them

EXCERPT FROM SECTION III:

"The history of the present King of Great Britain is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States. To prove this, let facts be submitted to a candid [impartial] world."

In the paragraphs that follow, the colonists listed twenty-seven specific grievances against King George III.

4. The actual declaration:

a statement that all political ties between Britain and the colonies were dissolved. This section begins by saying that the colonists had sought in every way they could to work with the king—and not only with the king, but also with "our British brethren"; however,

"They too have been deaf to the voice of justice. . . . We must, therefore, . . . hold them, as we hold the rest of mankind, Enemies in War, in Peace Friends.

"We, therefore, the Representatives of the United States of America, in General Congress Assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude [rightness] of our intentions, do, in the Name, and by Authority of the good People of these Colonies, solemnly publish and declare, That these United Colonies are, and of Right ought to be Free and Independent States. . . . And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes, and our sacred Honor."

On July I Congress debated Lee's resolution, and nine of the thirteen colonies approved it immediately. Caesar Rodney, a Delaware delegate, rode home that night through pouring rain to get approval from the Delaware assembly. He arrived in Philadelphia the next morning in time for the vote. On July 2, 1776, with the approval of twelve colonies, Congress irreversibly voted for independence. New York gave its approval two weeks later.

On July 3 Congress read, debated, and edited Jefferson's declaration. John Hancock, president of Congress, signed the draft copy of the **Declaration of Independence** on July 4, and later all fifty-six delegates signed it. According to tradition, while the delegates signed the declaration, John Hancock said, "We must be unanimous; there must be no pulling different ways; we must all hang together." Ben Franklin added, "Yes, we must indeed all hang together, or assuredly we shall all hang separately."

Loyalists support Britain. Congress may have been unified for independence, but the people of the new United States were not. One-third still supported Britain, and another third remained neutral. The Americans were taking on the most

powerful country in the world with the support of only one-third of their population.

British supporters called *Loyalists* or *Tories* were often looked on as traitors. Some Loyalists, including Benjamin Franklin's son William, moved to Canada where they could remain under British rule. Others remained quiet but joined the British army when British troops entered their locality.

STUDY EXERCISES

8.2

- **1.** How did *Common Sense* prepare Americans for war?
- **2.** When was the Declaration of Independence signed?
- **3.** What were the main parts of the Declaration of Independence?

Q CLASS DISCUSSION

- 1. What risk did the colonial leaders take in declaring their independence?
- **2.** If only one-third of the people openly supported independence, why did the colonies go to war with Britain?

Section 3: How Did the Colonists Defeat Britain?

For both sides, the course of the war alternated between periods of dark defeat and times of bloody victory. The difference between victory and defeat pivoted both on small turns of events and on momentous decisions.

Strengths and Weaknesses

Both the British and the Americans possessed major strengths as well as crippling weaknesses. An advantage to one side proved a disadvantage to the other.

The British have advantages and disadvantages. Britain had more people, which meant more soldiers for their army and more sailors for their navy. In addition, the British army was experienced and well trained. The British navy, with

large fleets of warships and transport ships, was the strongest in the world. Britain's army and navy were controlled by an established government that had power to raise both money and troops.

However, many of Britain's soldiers were hired. They cared more about their pay than about the success of the war. Besides, the war was unpopular in England, and in spite of Britain's large population, soldiers were hard to recruit.

The Continentals have advantages and disadvantages. In contrast, the Continental Army was small, inexperienced, and poorly trained. Volunteers often enlisted for a year or less and left the army when planting or harvest time arrived. Unaccustomed to army discipline, soldiers sometimes fled in fright before enemy fire.