


CHAPTER 6

War for Independence



MOVEMENT TOWARD INDEPENDENCE

The battles at Lexington and Concord in April 1775 touched off a full-scale *War for Independence*. In the beginning, it looked like a terrible mismatch between 13 colonies, economically dependent on British mercantilism, and Great Britain, arguably the most powerful nation in the world.

 COLONIES VS. GREAT BRITAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES ON EACH SIDE				
	Colonies		Britain	
	Strengths	Weaknesses	Strengths	Weaknesses
Leadership	George Washington, excellent leader and strategist	Short-term enlistments causing continuous turnover	Experienced generals	
Motivation	Fighting for freedom on home ground	United efforts hindered by local rivalries		Fighting in hostile territory
Skills/ Training	Knowledge of Native American guerrilla warfare (hit-and-run raids)	Soldiers unused to military discipline	Well-equipped, disciplined troops	Effectiveness compromised by traditional strategies
Support	Foreign military and financial aid	Chronic shortage of money and supplies	Long supply lines Best navy in the world	

Early Clashes Ethan Allen was leader of a Vermont militia unit called the Green Mountain Boys. In May 1775, they captured the British-held forts of Ticonderoga and Crown Point on Lake Champlain. Seizing cannon and ammunition, they sent them to the Patriots surrounding Boston, who badly needed weapons.

In an attempt to force the British from Boston, the colonists seized Breed's Hill, overlooking the city, and installed the captured cannon. In the *Battle of Bunker Hill* (named for a nearby strategic position), outnumbered Patriots twice turned back British "regulars." In a third clash, however, the Americans had to retreat for lack of gunpowder. It was an inconclusive battle, but the inexperienced Patriots had inflicted on the British twice as many casualties as they suffered themselves.



**Ethan Allen
demanding
surrender of
Fort Ticon-
deroga from
the surprised
British com-
mander**

Canada At first, the Second Continental Congress hoped for Canadian support against the British. Most Canadians, however, were satisfied with British rule. Some sent food and supplies to the Patriots, but most stayed completely neutral.

In the fall of 1775, the Patriots attempted an invasion of Canada from two directions. One army marched from Lake Champlain, took Montreal, and headed for Quebec. The other marched across Maine. They met up at Quebec but were then badly defeated. A **siege** of Quebec (attempt to cut off the city's supplies) also failed, and the Americans fell back to Ticonderoga in the spring of 1776.

The South The American cause got off to a better start in the South. In early 1776, North Carolina militiamen defeated a large Loyalist force at Moore's Creek Bridge. Shortly afterward, a British attack on Charleston, South Carolina, was also repulsed.

Factions For and Against Independence While soldiers fought, civilians argued about independence. In October 1775, the British governor, William Tryon, fled from New York City to a British warship in the harbor. Thus, the Provincial Congress became the official government in New York.

The Patriots, encouraged by Thomas Paine's 1776 pamphlet *Common Sense*, remained defiant. Paine argued that it was illogical for Britain, a small island nation, to rule the American colonies, a vastly larger territory on a distant continent: "To be

always running three or four thousand miles with a tale or a petition, waiting four or five months for an answer . . . will in a few years be looked upon as folly and childishness.”

But many Americans hoped for compromise. Merchants feared losing their trade markets, and frontier farmers valued British protection against hostile Native Americans. Among Native Americans and African Americans, allegiance was also divided. Black Americans, for instance, fought on both sides. In 1781, New York and several other Northern colonies promised freedom to slaves who fought for the Patriot cause. About 5000 served in the American army and navy. A far greater number of blacks—many of them slaves—fought for the British, who also promised them freedom in return for loyalty.

Loyalists The upper class were uneasy about talk of a new, more equal society. The Loyalists among them—and there were many—wanted no break from Britain whatsoever.

When the war officially began in 1776, the British controlled New York City and the surrounding area. Of the 25,000 people who had lived there, only 5000 remained. Soon, however, Loyalists flocked to the city from all colonies. Thus, New York City became a haven for Loyalist **refugees** (people fleeing dangerous conditions elsewhere). By 1783, the population totaled about 29,000.

New Yorkers tipping over the statue of King George III, 1776



Congress In 1775, the Second Continental Congress in Philadelphia considered its choices. Some delegates pushed for independence. They included John Adams of Massachusetts and Patrick Henry of Virginia (“Give me liberty or give me death”).

Others, such as John Jay and James Duane, both of New York, continued to hope for a workable compromise with Britain.



INFO CHECK

1. Compare the British and Patriot armies at the start of the War for Independence.
2. Summarize Thomas Paine’s arguments for independence.
3. Explain why Americans fought on both sides during the war.
4. What role did African Americans play during the Revolution?



DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

The battles of 1775 and early 1776 increased colonists’ anger against the British. On June 11, 1776, the Congress chose a committee to write an argument favoring independence. Committee members included John Adams (Massachusetts), Robert Livingston (New York), Benjamin Franklin (Pennsylvania), Roger Sherman (Connecticut), and Thomas Jefferson (Virginia). Jefferson wrote the draft that was the basis for the final document. It said, in part:

★ 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. . . .

Congress approved the draft after removing a paragraph in which Jefferson had argued against slavery.



INFLUENCE OF ENLIGHTENMENT THINKERS

The ideas expressed in the *Declaration of Independence* (and, later, in the *U.S. Constitution*) came from political philosophers belonging to a European movement called the **Enlightenment**:

 THINKERS AND IDEAS OF THE ENLIGHTENMENT		
Philosopher	Document(s)	Key Ideas
Thomas Hobbes	<i>Leviathan</i> (1651)	The governed enter into a social contract, exchanging freedom for security. The power of absolute monarchs comes from the people.
John Locke	<i>An Essay Concerning Human Understanding</i> (1690) <i>Two Treatises of Government</i> (1690)	Human nature is subject to natural laws—the search for good and avoidance of pain. Natural rights include life, liberty, property. If a government fails to protect such rights, citizens have a natural right to change it.
Voltaire	<i>Philosophical Letters</i> (1734) <i>Universal History</i> (1756–1766)	People cannot govern themselves wisely, so the best government is a <i>good</i> monarchy. Governments must not persecute citizens for religious beliefs.*
Baron de Montesquieu	<i>The Spirit of the Laws</i> (1748)	Government powers should be divided among executive, legislative, and judicial branches.*
Jean-Jacques Rousseau	<i>The Social Contract</i> (1762)	Since government is necessary, citizens must give up some freedom in the interest of all. Political decisions should reflect the <i>general will</i> (those who disagree with it must obey it nevertheless).

*Ideas specifically incorporated into the U.S. Constitution.

While failing to mention slavery, the Declaration affirmed that “all men are created equal.” People everywhere have a natural, God-given right to revolt against unjust governments. Governments rule only by the consent of the governed.

The Declaration also failed to mention the situation of women. Abigail Adams, an early champion of women’s rights, was keenly aware of the omission. In March 1776, she wrote to John Adams, her husband and a member of the Continental Congress: “. . . [I]n the new Code of Laws which I suppose it will be necessary for you to make I desire you would remember the Ladies. . . . If particular care and attention is not paid to the Ladies we . . . will not hold ourselves bound by any Laws in which we had no voice, or Representation.”

Even the “all men” reference was deceptive because, in fact, only men of property took part in the political process by voting. Their numbers, however, were growing. Many colonial farmers, fishers, and merchants (including the fur traders of New York) were prospering. As the middle class of property-owning men grew, so did political democracy.

For its time, the Declaration was a radical statement of human liberty. It was to inspire a desire for freedom in many other parts of the world.



NEW YORK'S ROLE

While Congress, on July 4, voted unanimously to approve the document, New York's delegates waited for instructions from home. Five days after the New York delegation's **abstention** (failure to take part in a vote), a newly elected *Fourth Provincial Congress* of New York met for the first time in the courthouse at White Plains. The members immediately voted in favor of the Declaration of Independence. Thus, New York joined the 12 other colonies and became a new state in a new nation.



INFO CHECK

1. Why do you think the Declaration of Independence omitted any mention of slavery?
2. On what feature of government did Hobbes and Rousseau agree?
3. Which Enlightenment philosopher would have been least likely to approve of government by the people?
4. Why did New York fail to participate in the congressional vote to approve the Declaration of Independence?

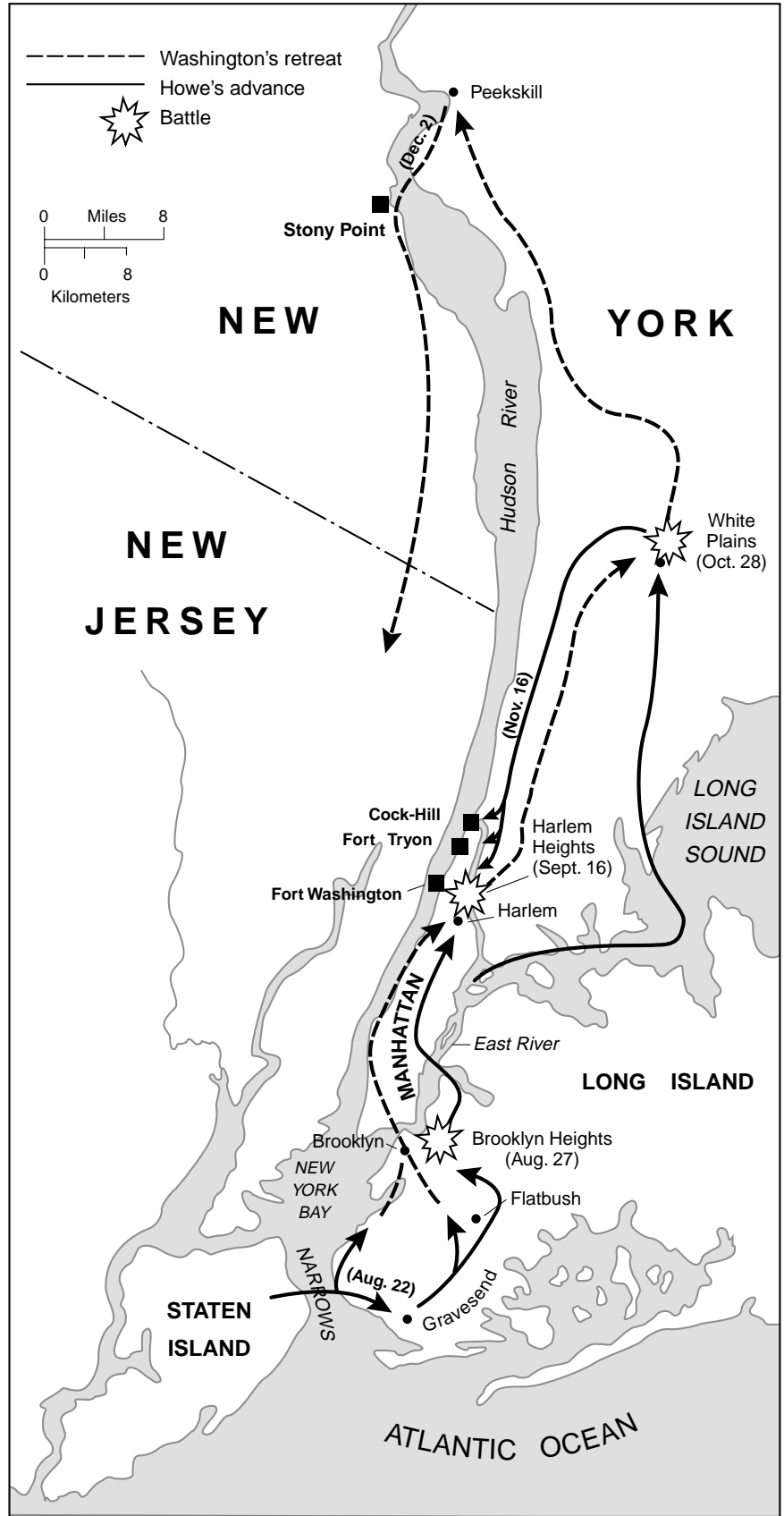
Commander in Chief Washington Born into a Virginia planter family, George Washington became a surveyor at the age of 16. He also pursued an interest in military science. In 1754 (start of the French and Indian War), he was serving as a lieutenant colonel.

In 1758, Washington returned home to Mt. Vernon and remained there until the outbreak of the Revolutionary War. He sat in Virginia's House of Burgesses from 1758 to 1774. Increasingly opposed to British colonial policies, he was a Virginia delegate to the First and Second Continental congresses.

In 1775, the Second Continental Congress chose Washington to be commander in chief of the Continental Army. At first, his poorly trained and equipped troops suffered setbacks, and Washington had to rely on retreat as his best strategy. Later, however, he learned to strike the enemy unexpectedly and began to pile up victories.

Early Battles in New York State One-third of the battles of the Revolutionary War were fought in New York. No other colony suffered as much destruction. Armies marched up and down the region, leveled towns, burned homes, and destroyed farms. Guerrilla warfare became a way of life for New Yorkers.

British soldiers were easy to identify, with their bright red uniform coats. But although Loyalists and Patriots were sworn enemies, they were often hard to tell apart. Many soldiers of the Continental Army—Patriots—did not have uniforms. Moreover, civilians on both sides served as spies, claiming loyalty to one side by day while serving the other side by night. Anna Strong of Setauket, Long Island, for instance, was a Patriot spy who used her clothesline to hang out black petticoats and handkerchiefs as signals to Washington's agents of British ship movements.



Battle of Long Island and Washington's Retreat



Young Patriots mock an unsuspecting Tory.

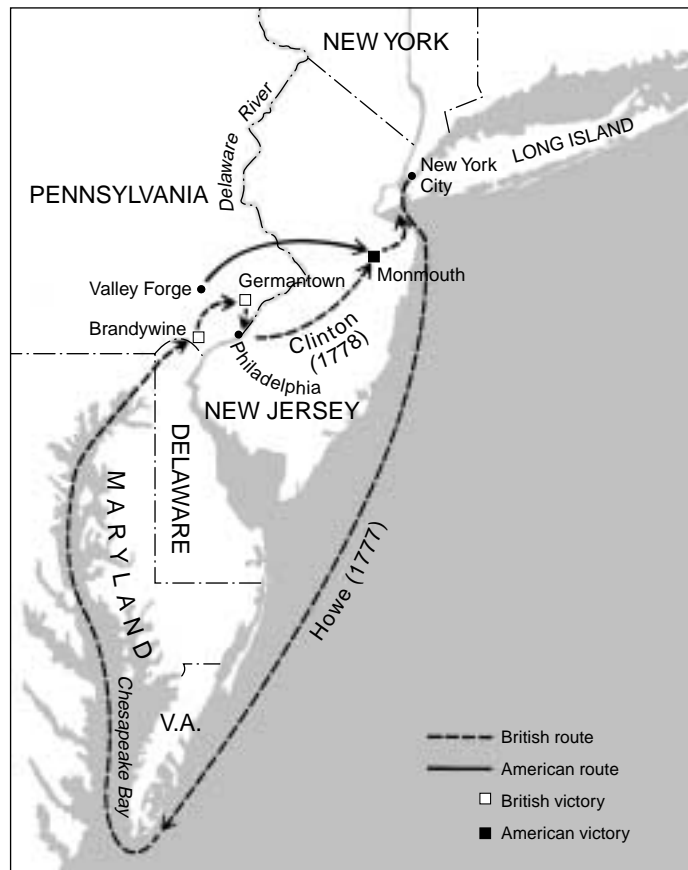
New York City: A British Prize New York City was occupied by the British for seven years of the war. Its location and resources made it a key position in British strategy. Their fleet needed the harbor as an operations base and unloading point for troops and supplies. From there, British ships could launch attacks on Patriot-held ports or set up **blockades** to cut off Patriot supplies and make their communications difficult. Moreover, as long as Britain controlled the harbor, it also controlled the Hudson Valley, which cut New England off from colonies to the south.

The British plan did not escape Washington, who said, “It is the place we must use every endeavor to keep from them.” His inability to do so would require him to explore other strategies.

Patriot Steps Toward Victory

SIGNIFICANT MILITARY ACTIONS OF THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR		
Action/Date	Strategy	Result(s)
Battle of Long Island (July–Sept. 1776)	To capture New York City, British General Howe occupies Staten Island, begins military build-up on Long Island, prepares advance on Brooklyn.	Washington and Continentals hold their own for four months against better-trained British; finally forced to retreat.
Battle of White Plains (Oct. 1776)	British capture this important fortification north of New York City.	Washington retreats before full force of British; 3000 Patriots captured.
Continental retreat through New Jersey (Nov.–Dec. 1776)	Washington continues retreat through New Jersey, across Delaware River, into Pennsylvania.	Fearing British attack on Philadelphia, Congress flees to Baltimore.

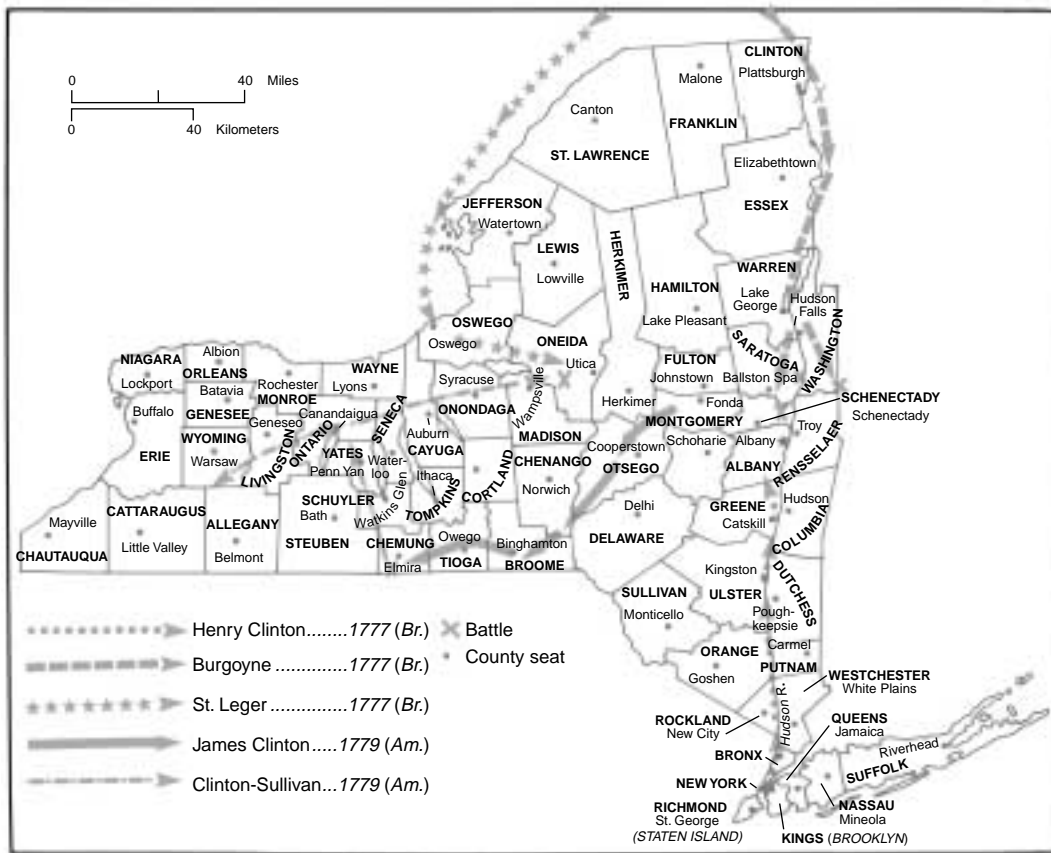
Battle of Trenton (Dec. 1776)	Washington leads surprise attack across Delaware River against Hessian mercenaries (British-hired foreign soldiers) at Trenton.	Hessians surrender; in all, five Patriots are killed.
Battle of Princeton (Jan. 1777)	Howe sends large force to New Jersey in retaliation for loss of Trenton; surprise attack by Washington defeats British.	Most of New Jersey freed from British forces; Washington moves north to rebuild army; American morale boosted.
Pennsylvania campaign (Sept.–Oct. 1777)	British and Patriots clash at Brandywine Creek; Americans retreat, and retreat further after Battle of Germantown.	British are free to attack and capture Philadelphia; Congress again flees; Washington decides to winter at Valley Forge—period of extreme cold and hunger for Patriots.
Battle of Saratoga (Sept.–Oct. 1777)	Battle-worn and short of supplies, British General Burgoyne’s troops are pushed back by Patriot General Gates; Burgoyne retreats to Saratoga, asks for terms of surrender.	Terms require Burgoyne’s army to return to England; his soldiers pledge not to serve again in war; France decides to aid Patriots against Britain.
Franco-American alliance (Jan. 1778)	Alliance negotiated by Benjamin Franklin: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • each partner to consider the other a “most favored nation” for trade and friendship. • France obligated to fight for American independence. • Americans obligated to assist France in any Franco-British war. 	France sends money, supplies, troops, ships to aid Patriots.
Battle of Monmouth (June 1778)	British head for New York with Washington in pursuit; Patriot General Lee gives confusing orders at Monmouth, begins sudden retreat; Washington’s arrival turns battle; British flee to New York.	Battle is last major British-Patriot clash in North.
Western frontier campaign (1778–1779)	Loyalists and Iroquois under Joseph Brant attack American settlers along Pennsylvania frontier.	Loyalists are defeated; Americans destroy many villages of Native Americans allied with British.
Southern campaign—Savannah, Charleston (Dec. 1778–May 1780)	British fleet sails from New York, captures Savannah; British take Charleston, capture 5400 troops and four American ships.	British soon control all of Georgia; worst American defeat of war; Patriot morale low.
Battle of Yorktown (Oct. 1781)	French and American forces join, fight on land and sea, attack British fortifications; Patriots and French gain control of key British positions.	British General Cornwallis and 8000 troops surrender; defeat means British cause in America is lost.



Fighting Around Philadelphia (July 1777–June 1778)

Role of Women Women contributed to the war effort by organizing boycotts of British goods, collecting money for the Patriots, and tending family farms and businesses while the men were away fighting. Some women even joined the men on the battlefield:

- Deborah Samson (Massachusetts): Disguised as a man, she fought the British for three years under the name “Robert Shirliffe.” Wounded twice, she was awarded a pension for military service.
- Sybil Ludington (Connecticut): Hearing that the British had set fire to Danbury, where munitions and supplies were stored, the 16-year-old, on horseback, aided the surrounding Patriots by rallying volunteer militia against the British raiders.
- Margaret Corbin (New York): She took her fatally wounded husband’s place at his cannon during the Battle of Fort Mifflin until she, too, was wounded. In 1779, she was awarded a pension for service and disability.
- Mary Ludwig Hays McCauley (New Jersey): Known as “Molly Pitcher” because she carried water to weary soldiers on the battlefield, she, too, continued firing her husband’s cannon after he was killed in the Battle of Monmouth.



Revolutionary War Routes Shown on a Contemporary Map of New York State

INFO CHECK

1. Why was occupation of New York City a key feature of the British war strategy?
2. Would you describe Washington’s strategy of retreat as fainthearted or wise? Explain.
3. Describe two high points and two low points for the Continental Army during the Revolutionary War.

PEACE

Negotiations in Paris In April 1782, British, French, and American delegates met in Paris to discuss peace. Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, and John Jay represented the Americans.

In September 1783, the *Treaty of Paris* was signed and officially ended the war. Under its terms, Britain recognized American independence and prepared to evacuate all British troops from its former colonies. It also ceded (gave up) to the United States British territory between the Mississippi River and the Allegheny Mountains, which immediately doubled the size of the new nation.

LOYALIST/BRITISH EVACUATION OF NEW YORK CITY

New York City was the last Loyalist refuge in America. By April 1783, word arrived from London that George III had agreed to independence for the former colonies. Knowing that British evacuation would soon leave them defenseless in New York, nearly 30,000 Loyalists packed their belongings and sailed to Nova Scotia and elsewhere in Canada, the British West Indies, or England. In all, the British evacuated more than 100,000 Loyalists from the United States.

On November 25, 1783, as the last British troops sailed out of New York Harbor. General George Washington and Governor George Clinton led the victorious U.S. army through the city as its citizens cheered.



As the British leave New York City, November 25, 1783, the American flag replaces the crown's colors.

**INFO CHECK**

1. List the main provisions of the Treaty of Paris.
2. Why do you think it took so long for New Yorkers to learn about the provisions of the Treaty of Paris?
3. Some Loyalists chose to remain in the United States after the war. What do you think their fate might have been?

**CHAPTER REVIEW****Multiple-Choice Questions**

1. The issue or event that most directly led to the Revolutionary War was
 1. freedom of speech and the press
 2. taxation by Britain
 3. the African slave trade
 4. the French and Indian War.
2. The first confrontation of the Revolutionary War occurred at
 1. Boston
 2. Breed's Hill
 3. Lexington
 4. Ticonderoga.
3. A major advantage of the colonists over the British was
 1. experienced generals
 2. fighting on familiar territory
 3. a united effort to win
 4. ample money and supplies.
4. The last important battle of the Revolutionary War was fought at
 1. Valley Forge
 2. Trenton
 3. Bunker Hill
 4. Yorktown.
5. The major writer of the Declaration of Independence was
 1. Benjamin Franklin
 2. Thomas Paine
 3. James Madison
 4. Thomas Jefferson.
6. Which fundamental principle of government is stated in the Declaration of Independence?
 1. Government must provide free education to all.
 2. Government is based on the consent of the governed.
 3. Public officials are to be elected directly by the people.
 4. Power is to be equally divided between the federal and state governments.
7. The Declaration of Independence states that people have the right to change or eliminate a government that
 1. is a monarchy
 2. is unjust
 3. neglects its colonies
 4. denies women the vote.
8. During the Revolutionary War, African Americans
 1. fought only on the British side
 2. fought only on the colonists' side
 3. fought on both sides
 4. did not participate.
9. At the end of the Revolutionary War, the western boundary of the United States was
 1. the Mississippi River
 2. the Appalachians
 3. the Ohio River
 4. the Pacific Ocean.
10. In the Treaty of Paris, the British agreed to
 1. end taxation of the colonies
 2. recognize U.S. independence
 3. give up all their land claims in the Americas
 4. grant Americans all rights enjoyed by English people.

Constructed-Response Questions

Base your answers to questions 1 and 2 on the illustration on page 75.

1. What is the main idea of this illustration?
2. Give two reasons why colonists would tip over a statue of the king.

Base your answers to questions 3 and 4 on the illustration on page 76.

3. Identify two symbols in the drawing.
4. Explain the significance of each symbol you identified.

Base your answers to questions 5–7 on the map on page 79.

5. How many battles are shown on the map?
6. Why did Washington find it difficult to defend the tip of Manhattan against the British?
7. Explain why these difficulties led to Washington's retreat.

Base your answers to questions 8 and 9 on the illustration on page 80.

8. Define: Loyalist (Tory), Patriot.
9. Since Loyalists outnumbered Patriots in New York City, why would young Patriots have mocked a Tory?

Base your answers to questions 10 and 11 on the map on page 82.

10. What routes did the British take in their battles around Philadelphia?
11. In your opinion, why did they choose these routes?

Base your answers to questions 12–14 on the illustration page 84.

12. Who does the man in the illustration represent?
13. What is he doing?
14. Write a title for this illustration.

Document-Based Question

Part A: Short Answer

Study each document and answer the questions that follow it. Then read the **Task** and write your essay. It should include references to most of the documents, along with additional information based on your knowledge of social studies.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT: Although the colonists differed about separation from Britain, political and economic issues led them to debate independence. By the late 1700s, a number of events, as well as Enlightenment ideas about government, moved the colonists from protesting abuses to declaring independence.

DOCUMENTS 1 AND 2 Refer to the illustration on page 74 and the table on page 73.

1. Describe the action depicted in this illustration.
2. Explain how the illustration and the table show unexpected Patriot strength.

DOCUMENTS 3 AND 4 Refer to the Thomas Paine quote on pages 74–75 and Paul Revere's engraving of the Boston Massacre on page 67.

3. What is the main idea of the quotation from *Common Sense*?
4. Describe the events depicted in the engraving.
5. How might these documents have moved the colonists closer to rebellion?

DOCUMENTS 5 AND 6 Refer to the table on page 77 and the short quotation from the Declaration of Independence directly following it.

6. What ideas in the table might have influenced the colonists to revolt?
7. How are these ideas reflected in the excerpt from the Declaration of Independence?

DOCUMENT 7 Refer to the Abigail Adams quotation on page 77.

8. What request is Adams making?
9. How was her reasoning about women's rights in line with the Declaration of Independence?
10. Explain whether American women gained as much from the Revolutionary War as men did.

DOCUMENT 8 Refer to the map on page 83.

11. Which areas on the map were most affected by Revolutionary War battles?
12. From an economic point of view, why were the Patriots eager to protect these areas?

Part B: Essay

TASK

- Identify one reason *for* and one reason *against* independence from Britain.
- Discuss how the colonists' decisions were affected by economic hardships imposed by Britain and by Enlightenment thinking.
- Explain how these reasons led to the decision to separate from Britain.