



THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

The Birth of a Nation | 1765 – 1783

OVERVIEW

Setting the Stage

By the mid-1700s, thirteen British colonies stretched along the eastern coast of North America. Colonists had built thriving communities, yet had little voice in the Parliament that governed them.



13

Colonies along
the Atlantic coast

2.5M

Colonial population
by 1775

3,000

Miles from
London to Boston

CAUSES

"No Taxation Without Representation"

After the French and Indian War, Britain imposed a series of taxes on the colonies to pay off war debts — without giving colonists any representation in Parliament.

1765

Stamp Act

Tax on printed materials — newspapers, legal documents, playing cards

1767

Townshend Acts

Duties on imported glass, lead, paper, paint, and tea

1773

Tea Act

Monopoly for East India Company, sparking the Boston Tea Party

1774

Intolerable Acts

Punitive laws closing Boston Harbor and restricting self-governance

Rising Tensions



March 5, 1770

The Boston Massacre

British soldiers fired into a crowd of colonists, killing five. The incident became a powerful symbol of British tyranny and was used extensively in revolutionary propaganda.



December 16, 1773

The Boston Tea Party

Colonists disguised as Mohawk Indians boarded three ships and dumped 342 chests of tea into Boston Harbor, protesting the Tea Act and taxation without representation.



THE SHOT HEARD ROUND THE WORLD

April 19, 1775 — Lexington & Concord

British troops marched toward Concord to seize colonial weapons stores. Militiamen met them at Lexington Green, and shots were fired — the opening battle of the Revolution.

The colonial militia proved they could stand against the world's most powerful army, retreating British forces all the way back to Boston. News spread rapidly across the colonies.

The Declaration of Independence



July 4, 1776

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Second Continental Congress

*Drafted primarily by
Thomas Jefferson*

Core Principles

Natural Rights

All people possess unalienable rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

Popular Sovereignty

Government derives its power from the consent of the governed.

Right of Revolution

When government becomes destructive of these ends, the people may alter or abolish it.

Founding Fathers



George Washington

Commander-in-Chief of the
Continental Army; first
President



Thomas Jefferson

Principal author of the
Declaration of Independence



Benjamin Franklin

Diplomat who secured the
critical French alliance



John Adams

Advocate for independence;
key voice in the Continental
Congress

BATTLES

Decisive Engagements

June 1775

Boston, MA

Bunker Hill

Costly British victory that proved colonial fighters could hold their own against regulars.

December 1776

Trenton, NJ

Trenton

Washington's daring Christmas crossing of the Delaware boosted morale after a series of defeats.

October 1777

New York

Saratoga

The turning point — American victory convinced France to enter the war as an ally.

October 1781

Virginia

Yorktown

Final major battle. Combined American and French forces trapped Cornwallis, ending the war.

VALLEY FORGE

Winter 1777 – 1778

12,000

Soldiers entered
camp

2,000+

Died from disease
and cold

6 Months

Of harsh winter
training

The brutal winter at Valley Forge tested the Continental Army to its limits. Yet under Baron von Steuben's rigorous training, the ragged force emerged as a disciplined fighting army — transforming the war's trajectory.

Foreign Support

The American victory would not have been possible without crucial foreign assistance, both military and financial.

France

Treaty of Alliance, 1778

The most vital ally. After Saratoga, France formally allied with America, providing troops, a powerful navy, and crucial financing. French forces were decisive at Yorktown.

Spain

Joined 1779

Entered the war against Britain in 1779, attacking British positions in the Gulf Coast and Mississippi Valley, diverting resources from the American theater.

Netherlands

Recognized 1782

Provided critical loans and financial support, and recognized American independence. Dutch merchants also supplied arms and goods to the Revolution.

The Treaty of Paris, 1783



September 3, 1783

Britain formally recognized the independence of the United States, ending eight years of conflict and establishing the new nation's borders from the Atlantic to the Mississippi.

Key Terms

Independence

Full recognition of U.S. sovereignty

Boundaries

Territory from Atlantic coast to the Mississippi River

Fishing Rights

Access to fishing off the coast of Newfoundland

Debts & Property

Provisions for repayment of debts and treatment of Loyalists

LEGACY

A Revolution That Changed the World



Constitutional Democracy

Established the first large-scale republic with a written constitution, separation of powers, and a Bill of Rights.



Global Inspiration

Directly inspired the French Revolution and independence movements across Latin America and beyond.



Ideals of Liberty

Enshrined principles of individual rights and self-governance that continue to shape democracies worldwide.



Thank You

"The Revolution was effected before the War commenced. The Revolution was in the minds and hearts of the people."

— John Adams