

CHAPTER 6

A Revolution, Indeed, 1774–1783

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After you have studied Chapter 6 in your textbook and worked through this study guide chapter, you should be able to:

1. Explain the debate at the First Continental Congress concerning the constitutional relationship between the colonies and England, and indicate the outcome of that debate.
2. Examine the process and methods by which the resistance movement was transformed into a coalition in favor of independence.
3. Discuss the reaction of backcountry settlers, Native Americans, Nova Scotia and Britain's Caribbean possessions, loyalists, and African Americans to the Revolutionary War, and explain the factors that limited the potential threat of these groups to the revolution.
4. Discuss the impact of the Revolutionary War on Native Americans, loyalists, and African Americans.
5. Examine the strengths and weaknesses of the combatants in the Revolutionary War, and explain why the Americans were victorious.
6. Examine British strategy during the course of the Revolutionary War, and, through an examination of the northern and southern campaigns, explain how well it worked.
7. Examine American strategy during the course of the Revolutionary War, and, through an examination of the northern and southern campaigns, explain how well it worked.
8. Explain the process by which Americans gained international recognition, and assess the significance of that accomplishment.
9. Discuss the characteristics of soldiers fighting for the patriot cause, and explain the impact of the Revolutionary War on soldiers and on the American civilian population.
10. Discuss the negotiations that led to the Treaty of Paris (1783), and explain the significance of the treaty's provisions.

THEMATIC GUIDE

In Chapter 6, we consider the tasks the American patriots had to accomplish in order to achieve victory in the Revolutionary War. The first section, "Government by Congress and Committee," concerns the ideological and political task of transforming the resistance movement into a coalition supporting independence. Several factors made achievement of this task possible:

1. The process by which delegates were elected to the First Continental Congress
2. The presence of respected political figures at the Congress
3. The ability of the Congress to allow debate among divergent interest groups in the formulation of a compromise policy

4. The election of committees of observation and inspection at the local level as a means to enforce the Continental Association
5. The emergence of popularly elected provincial congresses to take over the reins of colonial government

The interaction of these factors leads to the conclusion that “independence was being won at the local level.” Such an occurrence made American victory not only possible but likely.

However, as noted in “Contest in the Backcountry,” settlers pouring into the region of Kentucky came into conflict with Indians in that area just as the Revolutionary War began.

Transforming the resistance movement into a coalition supporting independence also involved defeating potential internal enemies. Congress, recognizing that settlers pouring into the region of Kentucky would likely support the side that best served their interests, acted to protect those settlers from Native Americans. Although Congress recognized the potential threat of Native Americans to the patriot cause and, as a result, sought Indian neutrality, in the end a lack of unity prevented the Native American threat from materializing. Patriot policies, built on a broad popular base, were also effective in isolating the loyalist minority and in defusing them as a potential threat. Moreover, although slaves were drawn to the British side, as the side that could offer them freedom, African Americans never became a real threat because (1) blacks did not rally to the British side as much as expected, and (2) southern patriots were successful in manipulating white fears concerning a slave conspiracy.

In the section “War and Independence,” we see how the political and ideological tasks confronting the patriots converged. The British frame of reference toward the war becomes clear through the context of the early skirmishes at Lexington and Concord. At this time, the Second Continental Congress assumed responsibility for organizing the American war effort and selected George Washington as commander of the Continental Army. The discussion of Washington’s background, beliefs, and military strategy suggests that his selection was an additional reason for eventual American victory.

As both sides prepared to deal with the military tasks of the war, the ideological war continued to rage. Decisive American victory in this realm was largely due to the efforts of Thomas Paine and Thomas Jefferson. These men so eloquently defined the American cause that they established principles that aided the war effort and served as a solid base on which the new republic was founded.

In the last three sections of the chapter, the military task of defeating the British takes center stage. The discussion of the northern and southern campaigns shows the importance of the following factors in the patriot victory:

1. The false assumptions on which the British based their strategy
2. The battlefield errors of the British
3. Washington’s strategy of avoiding decisive losses
4. The almost unlimited reservoir of personnel available to the American side
5. The commitment to the patriot cause that developed among the officers in the Continental Army
6. American perseverance and resourcefulness
7. American policies that effectively swayed the populace to the patriots’ side
8. the Franco-American alliance of 1778

The chapter ends with a discussion of the Battle of Yorktown, the final skirmishes of the war, the impact of the war on the Indians, and the Treaty of Paris.

IDENTIFICATION AND SIGNIFICANCE

After studying Chapter 6 of *A People and a Nation*, you should be able to identify *and* fully explain the historical significance of each item listed below.

- Identify each item in the space provided. Give an explanation or description of the item. Answer the questions *who*, *what*, *where*, and *when*.
- Explain the historical significance of each item in the space provided. Establish the historical context in which the item exists. Establish the item as the result of or as the cause of other factors existing in the society under study. Answer this question: *What were the political, social, economic, and/or cultural consequences of this item?*

1. the First Continental Congress
2. loyalists
3. the battles of Lexington and Concord
4. the Battle of Breed's (Bunker) Hill
5. the Second Continental Congress
6. George Washington

7. *Common Sense*
8. Thomas Jefferson
9. the Declaration of Independence
10. the New York and New Jersey campaigns
11. the battles of Trenton and Princeton
12. the Battle of Saratoga
13. Benjamin Franklin
14. the Franco-American alliance
15. *esprit de corps* among officers of the Continental Army

16. endemic diseases in the Continental Army

17. the Battle of Yorktown

18. the Newburgh Conspiracy

19. the Treaty of Paris

IDEAS AND DETAILS

Objective 7

1. As commander-in-chief of the Continental Army, George Washington’s primary goal was to
 - a. avoid decisive military losses.
 - b. win a quick and decisive military victory against British forces.
 - c. gain control of the urban areas.
 - d. secure financial aid from foreign sources.

Objectives 1 and 2

2. Measures adopted by the First Continental Congress met with widespread support because
 - a. the congressional delegates took no action without first polling the populace.
 - b. many colonists, through widespread open meetings, had already shown support for defying British authority.
 - c. most colonists favored military action in the face of British tyranny.
 - d. the measures were ambiguous and indecisive.

Objective 3

3. In an attempt to deal with those who were against the resistance movement, the Second Continental Congress did which of the following?
 - a. It passed legislation calling for the banishment of all loyalists and neutrals.
 - b. It recommended that the states disarm and arrest all “disaffected” persons.
 - c. It required the states to administer an oath of allegiance to all voters.
 - d. It required the confiscation of all property belonging to suspected loyalists.

Objectives 3 and 5

4. Virginia was more likely to support the revolution than was Georgia because
 - a. Virginia had a much higher percentage of tenant farmers than did Georgia.
 - b. Anglican clergymen had far more influence in Virginia than in Georgia.
 - c. whites constituted a majority of the Virginia population while in Georgia slaves were in the majority.
 - d. there were many more Scots-Irish in Virginia than in Georgia.

Objectives 3 and 4

5. The question most slaves faced during the Revolutionary War was?
 - a. How can we best serve our masters?
 - b. How can we best serve the patriot cause?
 - c. Which side is morally right?
 - d. Which side offers us the best chance of becoming free?

Objectives 5 and 6

6. With regard to the Revolutionary War, the British assumed that they could
 - a. win the conflict by concentrating their forces in the rural areas.
 - b. use the same strategy that they used in European wars.
 - c. win with a small expeditionary force.
 - d. wear the American forces down through a long, protracted struggle.

Objective 2

7. The pamphlet *Common Sense*
 - a. argued that America would be stronger if freed from British control.
 - b. argued that the colonists owed allegiance to George III.
 - c. restated traditional ideas about government.
 - d. was a reasoned argument in favor of reconciliation with Great Britain.

Objective 2

8. The long-term significance of the *Declaration of Independence* lies in its
 - a. charge that the king was responsible for slavery in the colonies.
 - b. charge that Parliament used excessive force in the colonies.
 - c. statements of principle.
 - d. commitment to strong central government.

Objectives 6 and 7

9. Which of the following is true concerning the battle for New York City?
 - a. The British forces were defeated because of inadequate supplies.
 - b. Washington had time to move his troops from Boston to New York because Sir William Howe delayed his attack of the city.
 - c. Washington's defense was in accordance with the basic rules of military strategy.
 - d. Washington's defense of the city was masterful.

Objective 8

10. France decided to actively enter the American Revolution on the American side for which of the following reasons?
 - a. The establishment of a strong and independent United States was in France's best interests.
 - b. France wanted to defend its Canadian colonies.
 - c. The French government fully supported the republican ideals on which the American Revolution was based.
 - d. The French wanted to avenge their defeat in the Seven Years War.

Objectives 5 and 9

11. Which of the following was true of the officers of the Continental Army?
 - a. Most refused to serve for more than six months.
 - b. Their primary sense of devotion was to their respective states.
 - c. There was little sense of camaraderie among them.
 - d. They developed an intense commitment to the patriot cause.

Objective 10

3. In the negotiations that led to the Treaty of Paris, American negotiators
 - a. demonstrated that they were naive and unskilled in the art of diplomacy.
 - b. relied on the French in formulating their diplomatic strategy.
 - c. were so weary of the conflict that they settled for much less than they could have gotten.
 - d. wisely chose to bargain separately with the British.

ESSAY QUESTIONS

Objectives 1 and 2

1. Discuss the decisions made by the First Continental Congress concerning the Galloway Plan, the Declaration of Rights and Grievances, and the Continental Association. In what way were these decisions important? What did these decisions imply about the relationship between the colonies and England?

Objective 3

2. Assess the nature and seriousness of the threat posed by loyalists, African Americans, and Indians to the patriot war effort.

Objective 2

3. What ideas were expressed by Thomas Paine in *Common Sense* and by Thomas Jefferson in the *Declaration of Independence*? Assess the importance of these ideas to the patriot resistance movement.

Objectives 5 and 7

4. Explain the importance of the strategies employed by General Nathanael Green.

Objectives 5 and 8

5. Evaluate the role of the French in the Revolutionary War.

Objectives 5, 6, 7, and 8

6. Discuss the factors that led to American victory in the Revolutionary War.

ANSWERS**Multiple-Choice Questions**

1.
 - a. Correct. Washington realized that a prolonged conflict would be to the advantage of the American forces because, in such a conflict, the British could be worn down. Therefore, the American army's survival to fight another battle was more important than decisively winning individual battles.
 - b. No. In light of the fact that the British had a well-trained, well-equipped, and well-disciplined army, Washington realized that a quick and decisive military victory against the British was practically impossible to achieve.
 - c. No. Washington realized that since the vast majority of the American people lived in the countryside, not in urban areas, the loss of urban areas would not seriously damage the American cause.
 - d. No. Although Washington realized that shortage of funds was a serious American weakness, the task of financing the war was largely left to the Second Continental Congress.
2.
 - b. Correct. During the summer of 1774, people throughout the colonies had participated in open meetings in which they pledged to support decisions made at the First Continental Congress.
 - a. No. Although members of the First Continental Congress tried to represent their constituents, this was not an age in which polls were taken to judge the mood and desires of the electorate.
 - c. No. Although many colonists labeled parliamentary actions as tyrannical, most colonists wanted reconciliation with the mother country. These sentiments were reflected among the delegates to the First Continental Congress.
 - d. No. The measures adopted by the First Continental Congress were decisive. Therefore, widespread support for these measures was not due to their ambiguity.
3.
 - b. Correct. Delegates to the Second Continental Congress were very concerned about the potential threat posed by loyalists and neutrals. In an effort to deal with that threat, the Congress recommended that the states disarm and arrest all "disaffected" persons.
 - a. No. Although the Second Continental Congress saw loyalists and neutrals as a threat to the revolutionary cause, the delegates did not pass legislation calling for their banishment.
 - c. No. Although many states required an oath of allegiance of all voters, this was not a requirement imposed on the states by the Second Continental Congress.
 - d. No. Many states confiscated the property of banished loyalists after 1777, but this was not a requirement imposed on the states by the Second Continental Congress.

4. c. Correct. In colonies such as Georgia and South Carolina, where slaves constituted over 50 percent of the population, whites were afraid that involvement in the resistance movement would increase the likelihood of (1) a slave revolt, and (2) the British use of slaves against patriot masters. By contrast, those concerns were not as great among white Virginians because whites constituted a majority of the Virginia population.
- a. No. There is no evidence provided that suggests that Virginia had a higher percentage of tenant farmers than did Georgia. In addition, tenant farmers, especially those whose landlords were patriots, tended to be loyalists.
- b. No. Although Anglican clergymen probably did have more influence in Virginia than in Georgia, this does not explain why Virginia was more likely to support the revolution than was Georgia because Anglican clergymen in all colonies tended to be loyalists.
- d. No. Although people of Scots-Irish descent constituted a larger percentage of the Virginia population, especially in the backcountry, this does not explain why Virginia was more likely to support the revolution than was Georgia because Scots-Irish settlers often remained neutral in the conflict. See also page 95.
5. d. Correct. Since slaves wanted freedom, deciding which side offered the best chance of achieving that goal was the dilemma faced by most slaves during the Revolution. This question transcends the moral question concerning the combatants, just as it transcends how best slaves could serve their masters or the patriot cause.
- a. No. In normal times, how they could best serve their masters was not the primary question on the minds of slaves. These were not normal times, and this particular question was even less important.
- b. No. In the eyes of many slaves, the patriot cause was associated with white Americans. Although some slaves decided to join that cause, they, along with other slaves, had to deal with another question before choosing sides.
- c. No. Deciding the moral rightness of the combatants was not the question faced by most slaves during the Revolutionary War.
6. b. Correct. This was one of the three major assumptions about the war made by the British. The other two were that, (1) patriot forces could not withstand the assaults of British troops, and (2) the allegiance of the colonies could be retained by a military victory. All three assumptions proved to be false.
- a. No. Rather than concentrating their forces in the countryside, the British concentrated on capturing major American cities.
- c. No. In the belief that overwhelming military force would guarantee a swift victory, Great Britain sent to the colonies the largest single force it had ever assembled anywhere.
- d. No. The British assumed that they could win a quick, decisive military victory.
7. a. Correct. One of the beliefs challenged by Paine in his pamphlet was the belief that an independent America would be weak.
- b. No. The fact that Paine called for the establishment of a republic indicates that he rejected the idea that Americans owed allegiance to the English king.
- c. No. Paine questioned traditional ideas about government and even called for the establishment of a republic.

- d. No. Notice that the words “strident” and “stirring” are used to describe Paine’s pamphlet. These are not descriptive of a “reasoned” presentation. In addition, Paine was not attempting to bring about a reconciliation between England and the colonies.
8. c. Correct. At the time it was adopted, the document was important because it identified George III as the villain. However, its list of grievances against the king was, in the long run, less important than its statements of principle.
- a. No. Thomas Jefferson originally included this charge in his list of grievances against the king. However, the charge was deleted from the document before its acceptance by Congress because of objections from southern delegates. In addition, the grievances against the king would not prove to be that significant in the long run.
- b. No. Since Americans no longer saw themselves as subjects of Parliament, the document did not mention their specific grievances against Parliament’s actions.
- d. No. The Declaration of Independence did not provide an outline for a central government and did not support the idea of strong central government. Instead, it contended that government exists for the limited purpose of protecting the rights of the people.
9. b. Correct. Sir William Howe’s troops landed on Long Island on July 2, 1776, but Howe waited until August to begin his attack against New York City. This delay gave Washington time to move his troops from Boston to New York.
- a. No. Sir William Howe did not suffer defeat at the hands of Washington’s forces, and the British forces were not inadequately supplied.
- c. No. In his defense of New York City, Washington divided his force in the face of a superior enemy. In so doing, he broke a basic rule of military strategy.
- d. No. Since Washington divided his force in the face of a superior enemy and exposed his army to the danger of entrapment, his defense cannot be described as masterful.
10. d. Correct. France wanted revenge against the British because of the French defeat in 1763. Convinced by the Battle of Saratoga that American victory was possible, France hoped that a formal alliance with the United States would hasten Britain’s defeat and make that defeat more embarrassing.
- a. No. France did not foresee or desire the creation of a “strong and independent” United States.
- b. No. In the Treaty of Alliance in 1778, France abandoned all its claims to Canada.
- c. No. France was, in many respects, the center of the intellectual movement known as the Enlightenment. As a result, many people in France found the American Revolution attractive because of the principles expressed in the *Declaration of Independence*. But this was not true of the French government.
11. d. Correct. Those officers in the Continental Army who fought together for a long period of time developed a sense of pride and commitment to the revolutionary cause.
- a. No. Enlistments in the Continental Army were for periods ranging from one year to the duration of the war. By way of contrast, most enlistments in state militias were usually for three-, six-, or nine-month periods.
- b. No. The officers in the Continental Army developed a tremendous sense of devotion to the revolutionary cause.

- c. No. Due to their shared experiences and hardships, a sense of comradeship did develop among the officers of the Continental Army.
12. d. Correct. American negotiators chose to disobey their instructions to be guided by the French. They seemed to instinctively recognize that what was in the best interests of the U.S. was not necessarily in the best interests of France. As a result they bargained separately with the British.
- a. No. American negotiators demonstrated their intelligence and skill.
 - b. No. American negotiators were wary of French advice.
 - c. No. It was British negotiators, not the Americans, who were weary of the war. American negotiators proved adept at playing the game of power politics and gained their main goal, which was independence as a united nation.