

Independence Declared

FIND OUT

- How did *Common Sense* influence the colonists?
- What are the main ideas of the Declaration of Independence?
- How did Americans respond to the Declaration of Independence?

VOCABULARY traitor

Benedict Arnold led the second army north through Maine. He was supposed to join forces with Montgomery in Quebec.

Arnold and his troops had a terrible journey through the Maine woods in winter. Rainstorms followed by freezing nights coated their clothes with ice. Supplies ran so low that soldiers survived only by eating boiled bark and shoe leather. Finally, Arnold reached Quebec. He was disappointed, however. French Canadians did not support the Americans.

In a blinding snowstorm on December 31, 1775, the Americans attacked Quebec. Montgomery was killed, and Arnold was wounded. The Americans failed to take the city. They stayed outside Quebec until May 1776, when the British landed new forces in Canada. At last, weakened by disease and hunger, the Americans withdrew, leaving Canada to the British.

SECTION 1 REVIEW

1. **Locate:** (a) Fort Ticonderoga, (b) Boston, (c) Montreal, (d) Quebec.
2. **Identify:** (a) Ethan Allen, (b) Green Mountain Boys, (c) Olive Branch Petition, (d) Continental Army, (e) Battle of Bunker Hill, (f) Benedict Arnold.
3. **Define:** blockade.
4. Describe three actions taken by the Second Continental Congress.
5. What did the Battle of Bunker Hill reveal about each side?
6. **CRITICAL THINKING Comparing** Compare the strengths and weaknesses of the British and Americans at the start of the war.

ACTIVITY Writing to Learn

Imagine that you have George Washington's job at the beginning of the American Revolution. Write several diary entries describing the task you face as commander of the Continental Army.

George III was furious when he heard about the Olive Branch Petition. The colonies, he raged, are in a "desperate [plot] to establish an independent empire!" He vowed to bring the rebels to justice.

Colonists learned of the king's response in November 1775. At first, most still hoped to patch up the quarrel with Britain. As the months passed, however, attitudes changed. More and more colonists spoke openly of breaking away from Britain.

Common Sense

In January 1776, a pamphlet appeared on the streets of Philadelphia. "I offer nothing more than simple facts, plain arguments, and common sense," said its author, Thomas Paine. The pamphlet, *Common Sense*, created a great stir. Paine's "plain arguments" boldly urged the colonies to declare their independence.

Paine had only recently arrived from England. Still, he shared the colonists' desire for liberty. In *Common Sense*, he showed how colonists had nothing to gain from staying under British rule. He pointed out that there were many disadvantages in their current situation:

“[It is foolish] . . . to be always running three or four thousand miles with a tale or petition, waiting four or five months for an answer, which when obtained requires five or six more to explain it in.”

Since King George had just rejected the Olive Branch Petition, that argument made sense to many colonists.

Paine also attacked the idea of having kings and queens as rulers. One honest man, he insisted, was worth more “in the sight of God than all the crowned ruffians that ever lived.”

In *Common Sense*, Paine’s reasoning was so clear that he won many colonists to the idea of independence. In six months, more than 500,000 copies were printed and sold. “*Common Sense* is working a powerful change in the minds of men,” George Washington observed. It even changed the general’s own habits. Until 1776, Washington followed the custom of toasting the king at

official dinners. After reading Paine’s pamphlet, he ended this practice.

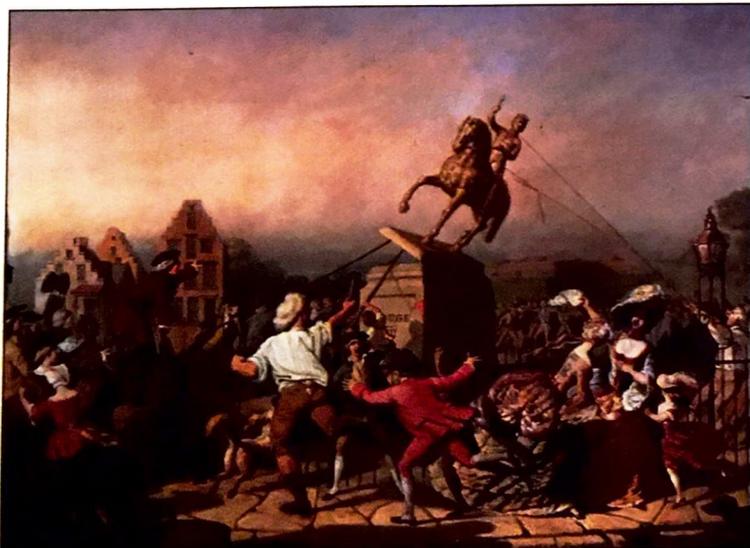
The Fateful Step

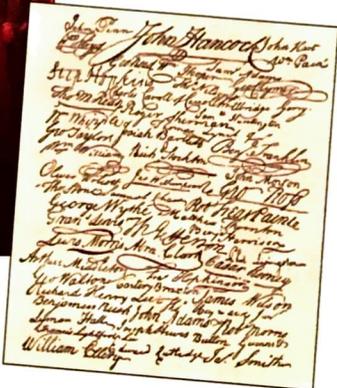
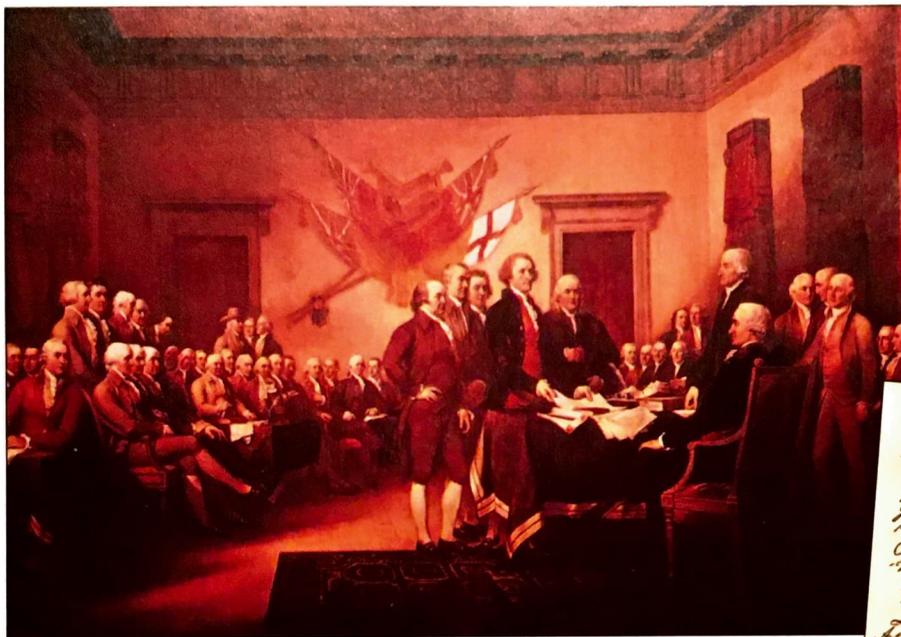
Common Sense affected members of the Continental Congress, too. In June 1776, Richard Henry Lee of Virginia offered a resolution saying that “these United Colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and independent States.”

Delegates faced a difficult decision. There could be no turning back if they declared independence. If they fell into British hands, they would be hanged as traitors. A **traitor** is a person who betrays his or her country.

Writing the Declaration. The delegates took a fateful step. They chose a committee to draw up a declaration of independence. The committee included John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, Robert Livingston, and Roger Sherman. Their job was to tell the world why the colonies were

Down With the King! In July 1776, angry New Yorkers tore down a statue of King George III. Patriots, like Laura Wolcott (at right), used lead from the statue to make cartridges for Washington’s army. **American Traditions** How did Thomas Paine’s writings inflame American opinion against the king?





Declaring Independence Thomas Jefferson labored many hours perfecting the Declaration of Independence. Here, Jefferson and other committee members present the Declaration to the Continental Congress. The delegates' signatures on the document appear at right. **American Traditions** What was the purpose of the Declaration of Independence?

breaking away from Britain. The committee asked Jefferson to write the document.

Jefferson was one of the youngest delegates. A quiet man, he spoke little at formal meetings. But among friends, he liked to sprawl in a chair with his long legs stretched out and talk for hours. In late June, Jefferson completed the declaration, and it was read to the Congress.

The vote. On July 2, the Continental Congress voted that the 13 colonies were “free and independent States.” Two days later, on July 4, 1776, the delegates accepted the **Declaration of Independence**. Since then, Americans have celebrated July 4th as Independence Day.

John Hancock, president of the Continental Congress, signed the Declaration first. He penned his signature boldly, in large,

clear letters. “There,” he said, “I guess King George will be able to read that.”

The Declaration

Across the colonies, people read the Declaration of Independence. The document has three main parts. (The complete Declaration



Linking Past and Present

The Declaration of Independence gained new meaning over time. Americans now accept that the words “all men are created equal” mean “all people are created equal.” This includes women and African Americans, as well as minorities of all kinds.

of Independence is printed in the Reference Section.)

Basic rights. The first part of the Declaration describes the basic rights on which the nation was founded. In bold, ringing words, Jefferson wrote:

“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.”

How do people protect these rights? By forming governments, the Declaration says. Governments can exist only if they have the “consent of the governed.” If a government takes away its citizens’ rights, then it is the people’s “right [and] duty, to throw off such government, and provide new guards for their future security.”

British wrongs. The second part of the Declaration lists the wrongs committed by Britain. Jefferson carefully showed how George III had abused his power. He condemned the king for disbanding colonial legislatures and for sending troops to the colonies in times of peace. He listed other wrongs to show why the colonists had the right to rebel.

An independent nation. The last part of the Declaration announces that the colonies had become “the United States of America.” All ties with Britain were cut. As a free and independent nation, the United States could make alliances and trade with other countries.

Choosing Sides

John Dunlap of Philadelphia printed the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776. Later, Mary Katherine Goddard, a Baltimore printer, produced the first copies that included the names of all the signers. As colonists studied the document, they had to decide what course to take.

Opinion was divided. Some colonists were **Patriots**, people who supported independence. Others were **Loyalists**, people who remained loyal to Britain. Many families were split. Ben Franklin, for example, was a Patriot. His son, the royal governor of New Jersey, supported King George.

During the American Revolution, tens of thousands of people supported the British. Loyalists included wealthy merchants and former officials of the royal government. However, many farmers and craftsmen were Loyalists, too. There were more Loyalists in the Middle States and the South than in New England.

Life was difficult for Loyalists everywhere. Patriots tarred and feathered people known to favor the British. Many Loyalists fled to England or Canada. Others found shelter in cities controlled by the British. Those who fled lost their homes, stores, and farms.

SECTION 2 REVIEW

- 1. Identify:** Ⓐ Thomas Paine, Ⓑ Richard Henry Lee, Ⓒ Thomas Jefferson, Ⓓ Declaration of Independence, Ⓔ Mary Katherine Goddard, Ⓕ Patriot, Ⓖ Loyalist.
- 2. Define:** traitor.
- 3.** What arguments did Thomas Paine offer in favor of independence?
- 4.** Describe the three main parts of the Declaration of Independence.
- 5.** Why was life difficult for Loyalists during the Revolution?
- 6. CRITICAL THINKING Comparing** Compare the viewpoints of Patriots and Loyalists at the outbreak of the Revolution.

ACTIVITY

Writing to Learn

Imagine that you are one of the delegates to the Continental Congress. Write a letter to a friend describing your feelings about signing the Declaration of Independence.