

>> England had a vast trading network that included its thirteen North American colonies. This image shows the busy port of Charleston, South Carolina.

 **Interactive Flipped Video**

3.5

By the 1770s, Britain was a major power in Europe with territories around the globe. Although upheavals in the 1600s had created a limited monarchy, a new king was eager to recover powers the crown had lost.

>> Objectives

Describe how Britain became a global power.

Understand the events and ideas leading up to the American Revolution, including the impact of the Enlightenment.

Summarize key events of the American Revolution.

Identify the political and legal ideas in the Declaration of Independence and the United States Constitution.

>> Key Terms

George III
Stamp Act
George Washington
Benjamin Franklin
Thomas Jefferson
popular sovereignty
Yorktown, Virginia
Treaty of Paris
James Madison
federal republic
checks and balances

The American Revolution

Britain Becomes a Global Power

Trade and Commerce Britain's rise to global prominence had multiple causes. England's location and long seagoing tradition placed it in a position to build a vast trading network. By the 1600s, England had trading outposts and colonies in the West Indies, North America, and India. A new merchant class expanded trade and competed vigorously with Spanish, Portuguese, and Dutch traders.

During the 1700s, thousands of settlers sailed to North America to build colonies. At the same time, British merchants expanded into the profitable slave trade, carrying enslaved people from West Africa to the Americas.

Britain's economic policies added to its prosperity. England offered a climate favorable to business and commerce. It put fewer restrictions on trade than some of its neighbors, such as France.

Territorial Expansion In the 1700s, Britain was generally on the winning side in European conflicts. In the Treaty of Utrecht, which ended the War of the Spanish Succession, France gave Nova Scotia and Newfoundland to Britain. As a result of the French and Indian

War, Britain gained all of French Canada, as well as rich islands in the Caribbean in 1763.

At home, England grew by merging with neighboring Scotland. In 1701, the Act of Union united the two countries in the United Kingdom of Great Britain. The union brought economic advantages.

Free trade between both lands created a larger market for farmers and manufacturers. The United Kingdom also included Wales, and in 1801 Ireland would be added to Great Britain.

George III Takes Power In 1760, **George III** began a 60-year reign. Unlike his German father and grandfather, the new king was born in England. He spoke English and loved Britain. But George was eager to recover the powers the crown had lost since the Glorious Revolution. Following his mother's advice, "George, be a king!" he set out to reassert royal power. He wanted to end Whig domination, choose his own ministers, dissolve the cabinet system, and make Parliament follow his will.

Gradually, George found seats in Parliament for "the king's friends." With their help, he began to assert his leadership. Many of his policies, however, would prove disastrous. He angered colonists in North America, leading 13 English colonies to declare independence.

Britain's loss of its American colonies discredited the king. Increasingly, too, he suffered from bouts of

mental illness. By 1788, cabinet rule was restored in Britain.

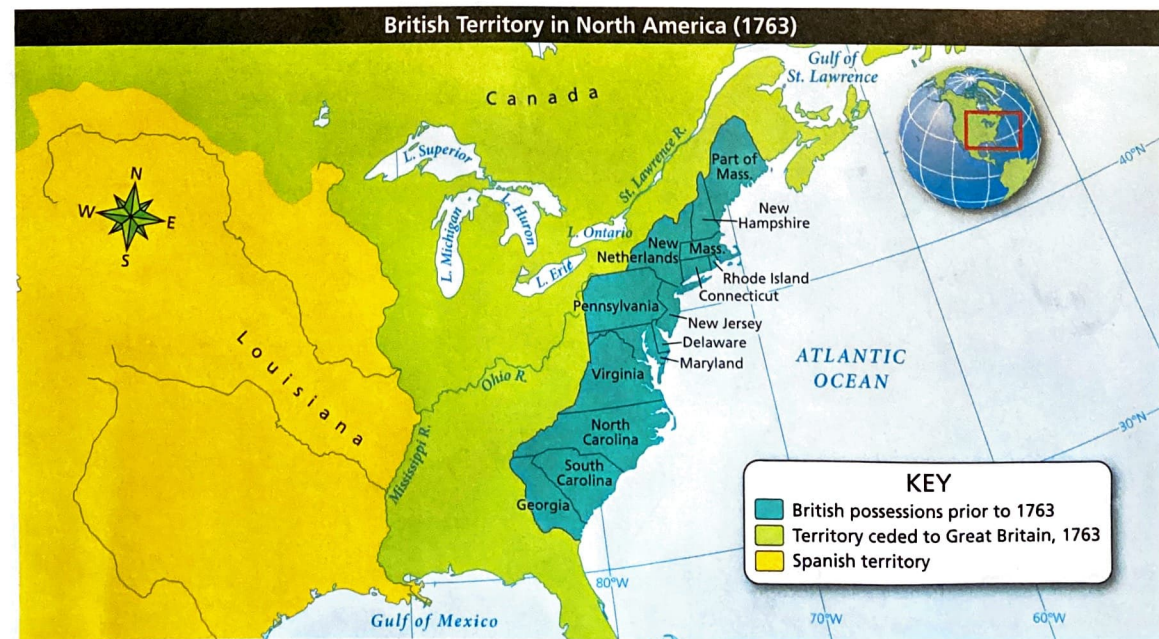
? ANALYZE INFORMATION What were some of the elements that led to Britain's rise to global prominence in the 1700s?

The British Colonies in America

By 1750, a string of prosperous colonies stretched along the eastern coast of North America. They were part of Britain's growing empire. Colonial cities such as Boston, New York, and Philadelphia were busy commercial centers that linked North America to the West Indies, Africa, and Europe. Colonial shipyards produced many vessels for this trade.

Britain applied mercantilist policies to its colonies in an attempt to strengthen its own economy by exporting more than it imported. To this end, in the 1600s, Parliament had passed the Navigation Acts to regulate colonial trade and manufacturing. For the most part, however, these acts were not rigorously enforced. Therefore, activities like smuggling were common and not considered crimes by the colonists.

By the mid-1700s, the colonies were home to diverse religious and ethnic groups. Social distinctions were more blurred than in Europe, although wealthy



>> **Analyze Maps** What do all of the colonies on this map have in common?

landowners and merchants dominated government and society. In politics, as in much else, there was a good deal of free discussion.

Colonists felt entitled to the rights of English citizens, and their colonial assemblies exercised much control over local affairs. Many also had an increasing sense of their own destiny separate from Britain.

? **DESCRIBE** Why did Americans believe they had the same rights as English citizens?

Discontent in the Colonies

The French and Indian War had drained the British treasury. George III and his advisors insisted that colonists pay the costs of their own defense, including troops still stationed in frontier posts.

Growing Tensions Parliament passed new taxes on the colonies. The Sugar Act of 1764 taxed imports, while the **Stamp Act** of 1765 taxed items such as newspapers and pamphlets. Although the new taxes were not burdensome, colonists bitterly resented them as an attack on their rights. “No taxation without representation,” they protested. Since they had no representatives in Parliament, they believed

that Parliament had no right to tax them. Parliament repealed the Stamp Act, but asserted its right to tax the colonists.

A series of violent clashes intensified the colonists’ anger. In March 1770, British soldiers in Boston opened fire on a crowd that was pelting them with stones and snowballs. Colonists called the death of five protesters the Boston Massacre.

Then, in December 1773, a handful of colonists hurled a cargo of recently arrived British tea into the harbor to protest a tax on tea. The incident became known as the Boston Tea Party. When Parliament passed harsh laws to punish Massachusetts, other colonies rallied to help Massachusetts.

As tensions rose, representatives from 12 colonies gathered in Philadelphia in 1774. At the First Continental Congress, representatives discussed how to respond to Britain’s harsh moves against Massachusetts.

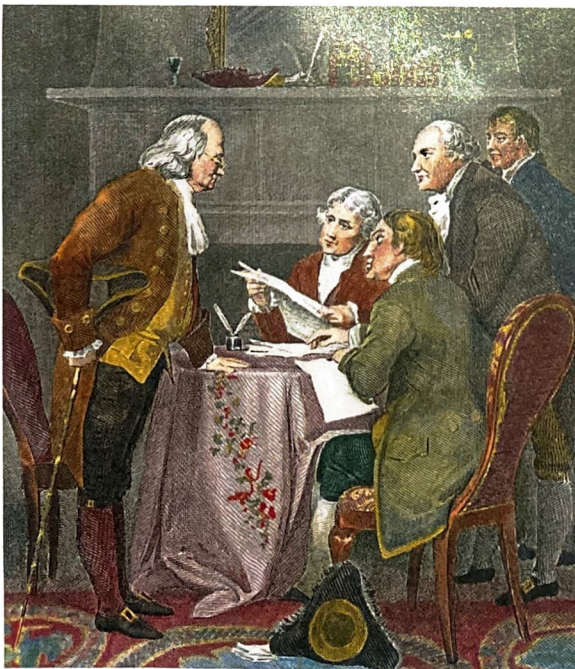
Among the participants were the radical but fair-minded John Adams, the Virginia planter and soldier **George Washington**, and **Benjamin Franklin**, a leading figure of the American Enlightenment.

Declaring Independence In April 1775, the crisis between the colonists and the British exploded into war. At the battles of Lexington and Concord in Massachusetts, colonists clashed with British troops—the opening shots of the American Revolution. Soon after, the Second Continental Congress met and set up a Continental Army with George Washington in command.

In 1776, Congress took a momentous step, voting to declare independence from Britain. Young **Thomas Jefferson** of Virginia was the principal author of the Declaration of Independence. Jefferson’s political philosophy was heavily influenced by Enlightenment thinkers, especially John Locke. The document clearly reflects Locke’s political and legal ideas, including the idea of natural law. It announced that people have “certain inalienable rights, that among them are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.”

In the Declaration, Jefferson further stated that people had the right “to alter or to abolish” unjust governments, echoing Locke’s ideas about the right to revolt. He then carefully detailed the colonists’ grievances against Britain, such as imposing taxes without consent, dissolving colonial legislatures at will, and depriving many colonists of their legal right to trial by jury. Because Parliament had trampled colonists’ natural rights, he argued, the colonists had the right to rebel and set up a new government to protect them.

The document spelled out the political principle of **popular sovereignty**, the idea that all government power comes from the people. Aware of the risks



>> Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, Robert R. Livingston, and Roger Sherman served as the committee to draft the Declaration of Independence.

 **Interactive Illustration**

involved, on July 4, 1776, American leaders signed the Declaration, pledging “our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor” to the cause of the United States of America.

? DRAW CONCLUSIONS Why did the colonists object so strongly to the idea of taxation without representation?

The American Revolution

At first, the American cause looked bleak. The colonists themselves were divided. About one third of the American colonists were Loyalists, or those who supported Britain. Many others refused to fight for either side.

Military Strengths and Weaknesses The colonists faced severe military disadvantages as well. The British had a large number of trained soldiers, a huge fleet, and plentiful money. They occupied most major American cities. The Americans lacked military resources, had little money to pay soldiers, and did not have a strategic plan.

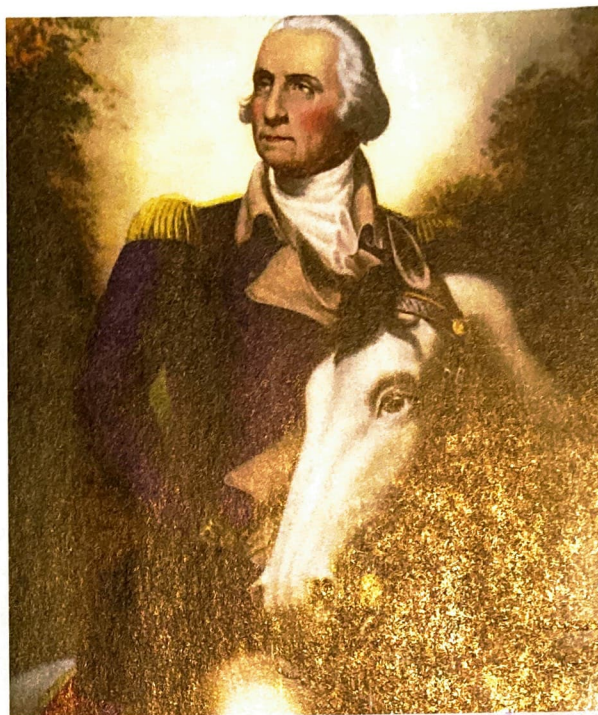
Still, the colonists had some advantages. They were battling for their own independence on their own familiar home ground. Although the British held New York and Philadelphia, colonists controlled the countryside. And they had a strong, inspiring military leader in George Washington.

As the war unfolded, the British relied on Loyalists as well as Native American groups, some of whom sided with them. The British also sought support among African Americans held in slavery. They offered freedom to any who would join their side.

Alliance with France The first turning point in the war came in 1777, when the Americans triumphed over the British at the Battle of Saratoga. This victory persuaded France to join the Americans against its old rival, Britain. The alliance brought the Americans desperately needed supplies, trained soldiers, and French warships. Spurred by the French example, the Netherlands and Spain added their support.

Hard times continued, however. In the brutal winter of 1777–1778, Continental troops at Valley Forge suffered from cold, hunger, and disease. Throughout this crisis and others, Washington was patient, courageous, and determined. He held the ragged army together.

Victory for the Americans Finally, in 1781, with the help of a French fleet, Washington forced the surrender



>> George Washington encouraged his men to fight on despite heavy odds.

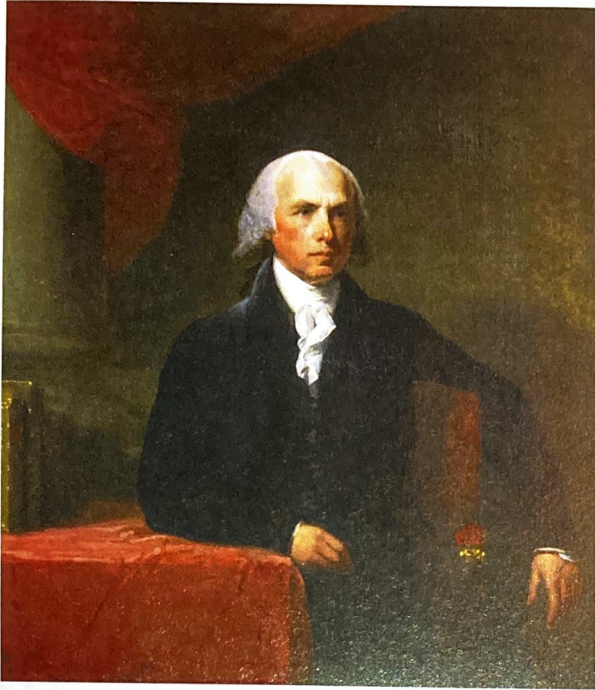
of a British army at **Yorktown, Virginia**. With that defeat, the British war effort crumbled.

Two years later, American, British, and French diplomats signed the **Treaty of Paris**, ending the war. Britain formally recognized the independence of the United States of America. Britain also accepted the new nation's western frontier as the Mississippi River.

? GENERATE EXPLANATIONS Why was the selection of George Washington as head of the American army essential to the ultimate success of the American Revolution?

The United States Constitution

The Articles of Confederation was the new nation's first constitution. It proved to be too weak to rule effectively. To address this problem, the nation's leaders gathered once more. Among them were George Washington, **James Madison**, and Benjamin Franklin. During the hot summer of 1787, they hammered out the Constitution of the United States. This framework for a strong, flexible government has remained in place for more than 200 years.



>> James Madison is known as the father of the U.S. Constitution because he was instrumental in drafting the document.

The Impact of the Enlightenment The Framers of the Constitution had absorbed the ideas of Locke, Montesquieu, and Rousseau. Like Rousseau, the framers saw government in terms of a social contract among members of the community. A central feature of the new federal government—the separation of powers among the legislative, executive, and judicial branches—was borrowed directly from Montesquieu.

The framers were also influenced by the ideas of an English legal scholar of the 1700s, William Blackstone, who shared many of Locke's ideas. Blackstone's writings greatly informed the legal ideas contained in the Constitution and a good portion of American law to the present day. For example, his famous statement that “the law holds it better that ten guilty persons escape, than that one innocent party suffer” is reflected in the Constitutional rights given to people accused of crimes.

A Framework of Government The Constitution created a **federal republic**, with power divided between the federal, or national, government and the states. It provided for both an elected legislature and an elected president.

To prevent any branch of government from becoming too powerful, the Constitution set up a series of **checks and balances**. Under this system, each branch of the government has the right to monitor and limit each of the other branches.

The Bill of Rights, or the first ten amendments to the Constitution, recognized the idea that citizens have basic rights that the government must protect. These included freedom of religion, speech, and the press.

It also affirmed legal ideas, such as the right to trial by jury and the principle that no one may be forced to testify against him- or herself. The Bill of Rights, like the Constitution, put Enlightenment ideas into practice.

Symbol of Freedom From the start, the new republic was a symbol of freedom for many. The Declaration of Independence, along with the Bill of Rights, put forth the idea that there are certain rights that belong to everyone.

In 1789, most countries in Europe were ruled by hereditary absolute monarchs. The United States stood out as a beacon to Europeans who took up the cry for liberty and freedom.

Demands for written constitutions and a limit to royal power would bring great changes to Europe by the decades ahead. Revolutionaries in Latin America were also inspired by the example of the United States.

Under the Constitution, citizens enjoy many rights, but they also have many responsibilities. They are expected to vote, sit on juries, and keep informed on



>> The U.S. Constitution, shown here, set up a series of checks and balances in which each branch of government can limit the powers of the other branches.

Interactive Chart

topics of local and national interest. Noncitizens who reside in the United States also enjoy its constitutional rights and protections and have responsibilities such as paying taxes and abiding by local, state, and federal laws.

? ANALYZE CONTEXT How did the ideas of the Enlightenment influence the United States Constitution and the Bill of Rights?

ASSESSMENT

- 1. Identify Main Ideas** How did trade play a role in Britain's becoming a global power?

- 2. Identify Cause and Effect** Why did North America's geography make it difficult for the British to win the war?
- 3. Check Understanding** Why did colonists wait to declare independence from Britain?
- 4. Hypothesize** Why do you think many countries over time have emulated the principles outlined in the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution?
- 5. Describe** In what way does the Bill of Rights put the ideas of the Enlightenment into practice?