

American Government

Unit Two

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Lesson Four: The Steps Toward Independence, Part 1

Please read these sections of the following article:

<https://web.archive.org/web/20210810152007/https://www.historyisfun.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/RoadtoRevolution.pdf>

- Introduction
- How did the accession of King George III to the throne of Great Britain affect British policies towards the American colonies?
- What was the Seven Years War and how did it contribute to the problems between Great Britain and her colonies?
- How did Indians living in the areas formerly controlled by France react to British rule?
- What was the Proclamation of 1763, and how did it impact colonial attitudes towards Great Britain?
- What steps did the British government take to gain control over its finances as the Seven Years War ended?
- How did the colonists in America react to the Currency Act and Sugar Act enacted by Parliament after the Seven Years War?
- What was the colonial reaction to the Stamp Act?
- How did the British Parliament respond to the colonial protest against the Stamp Act?

Lesson Four Review:

True or False:

_____ 1. One of the things that upset the colonists was the aggressive and strict enforcement of the colonial trade laws.

_____ 2. The colonists wanted British soldiers to remain in the colonies to protect them against threats from Indians.

_____ 3. The Proclamation of 1763 prohibited the colonists from settling west of the Appalachian Mountains, which enraged the colonists.

_____ 4. The Stamp Act of 1765 required a government tax stamp on paper goods and all legal documents.

Identify the British and colonists' actions of the following events:

- French and Indian War
- Proclamation of 1763
- The Stamp Act

Define the following terms:

- Quartering
- Sons of Liberty

SAMPLE

Lesson Five: The Steps toward Independence, Part II

Please finish reading the article you started yesterday:

<https://web.archive.org/web/20210810152007/https://www.historyisfun.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/RoadtoRevolution.pdf>

Lesson Five Review:

1. What were the Townshend Acts, and how did the colonists react to them?
2. How did the Tea Act of 1773 and the Boston Tea Party contribute to the final breakdown of relations between Great Britain and the colonies?
3. What were the Intolerable Acts?
4. How did the Intolerable Acts contribute to the final break between the colonies and Great Britain?
5. What event triggered general war between Great Britain and its American colonies?

Lesson 6: Declaration of Independence

We will read and discuss the Declaration of Independence for this lesson. Before reading, please look up the definitions for the following words:

- usurpations
- evinces
- despotism
- tyranny
- candid
- formidable
- annihilation
- convulsions
- arbitrary
- render
- perfidy
- insurrections
- magnanimity
- conjured
- acquiesce
- rectitude

The Declaration of Independence

IN CONGRESS, July 4, 1776.

The unanimous Declaration of the thirteen united States of America,

When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

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, --That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shewn, that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same

Object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security.--Such has been the patient sufferance of these Colonies; and such is now the necessity which constrains them to alter their former Systems of Government. The history of the present King of Great Britain is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States. To prove this, let Facts be submitted to a candid world.

He has refused his Assent to Laws, the most wholesome and necessary for the public good. He has forbidden his Governors to pass Laws of immediate and pressing importance, unless suspended in their operation till his Assent should be obtained; and when so suspended, he has utterly neglected to attend to them.

He has refused to pass other Laws for the accommodation of large districts of people, unless those people would relinquish the right of Representation in the Legislature, a right inestimable to them and formidable to tyrants only.

He has called together legislative bodies at places unusual, uncomfortable, and distant from the depository of their public Records, for the sole purpose of fatiguing them into compliance with his measures.

He has dissolved Representative Houses repeatedly, for opposing with manly firmness his invasions on the rights of the people.

He has refused for a long time, after such dissolutions, to cause others to be elected; whereby the Legislative powers, incapable of Annihilation, have returned to the People at large for their exercise; the State remaining in the mean time exposed to all the dangers of invasion from without, and convulsions within.

He has endeavoured to prevent the population of these States; for that purpose obstructing the Laws for Naturalization of Foreigners; refusing to pass others to encourage their migrations hither, and raising the conditions of new Appropriations of Lands.

He has obstructed the Administration of Justice, by refusing his Assent to Laws for establishing Judiciary powers.

He has made Judges dependent on his Will alone, for the tenure of their offices, and the amount and payment of their salaries.

He has erected a multitude of New Offices, and sent hither swarms of Officers to harrass our people, and eat out their substance.

He has kept among us, in times of peace, Standing Armies without the Consent of our legislatures.

He has affected to render the Military independent of and superior to the Civil power.

He has combined with others to subject us to a jurisdiction foreign to our constitution, and unacknowledged by our laws; giving his Assent to their Acts of pretended Legislation:

For Quartering large bodies of armed troops among us:

For protecting them, by a mock Trial, from punishment for any Murders which they should commit on the Inhabitants of these States:

For cutting off our Trade with all parts of the world:

For imposing Taxes on us without our Consent:

For depriving us in many cases, of the benefits of Trial by Jury:

For transporting us beyond Seas to be tried for pretended offences

For abolishing the free System of English Laws in a neighbouring Province, establishing therein an Arbitrary government, and enlarging its Boundaries so as to render it at once an example and

fit instrument for introducing the same absolute rule into these Colonies:

For taking away our Charters, abolishing our most valuable Laws, and altering fundamentally the Forms of our Governments:

For suspending our own Legislatures, and declaring themselves invested with power to legislate for us in all cases whatsoever.

He has abdicated Government here, by declaring us out of his Protection and waging War against us.

He has plundered our seas, ravaged our Coasts, burnt our towns, and destroyed the lives of our people.

He is at this time transporting large Armies of foreign Mercenaries to compleat the works of death, desolation and tyranny, already begun with circumstances of Cruelty & perfidy scarcely paralleled in the most barbarous ages, and totally unworthy the Head of a civilized nation.

He has constrained our fellow Citizens taken Captive on the high Seas to bear Arms against their Country, to become the executioners of their friends and Brethren, or to fall themselves by their Hands.

He has excited domestic insurrections amongst us, and has endeavoured to bring on the inhabitants of our frontiers, the merciless Indian Savages, whose known rule of warfare, is an undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes and conditions.

In every stage of these Oppressions We have Petitioned for Redress in the most humble terms: Our repeated Petitions have been answered only by repeated injury. A Prince whose character is thus marked by every act which may define a Tyrant, is unfit to be the ruler of a free people.

Nor have We been wanting in attentions to our British brethren. We have warned them from time to time of attempts by their legislature to extend an unwarrantable jurisdiction over us. We have reminded them of the circumstances of our emigration and settlement here. We have appealed to their native justice and magnanimity, and we have conjured them by the ties of our common kindred to disavow these usurpations, which, would inevitably interrupt our connections and correspondence. They too have been deaf to the voice of justice and of consanguinity. We must, therefore, acquiesce in the necessity, which denounces our Separation, and hold them, as we hold the rest of mankind, Enemies in War, in Peace Friends.

We, therefore, the Representatives of the united States of America, in General Congress, Assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions, do, in the Name, and by Authority of the good People of these Colonies, solemnly publish and declare, That these United Colonies are, and of Right ought to be Free and Independent States; that they are Absolved from all Allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain, is and ought to be totally dissolved; and that as Free and Independent States, they have full Power to levy War, conclude Peace, contract Alliances, establish Commerce, and to do all other Acts and Things which Independent States may of right do. And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor.

The 56 signatures on the Declaration appear in the positions indicated:

Column 1

Georgia:

Button Gwinnett
Lyman Hall
George Walton

Column 2

North Carolina:

William Hooper
Joseph Hewes
John Penn

South Carolina:

Edward Rutledge
Thomas Heyward, Jr.
Thomas Lynch, Jr.
Arthur Middleton

Column 3

Massachusetts:

John Hancock

Maryland:

Samuel Chase
William Paca
Thomas Stone
Charles Carroll of Carrollton

Virginia:

George Wythe
Richard Henry Lee
Thomas Jefferson
Benjamin Harrison
Thomas Nelson, Jr.
Francis Lightfoot Lee
Carter Braxton

Column 4

Pennsylvania:

Robert Morris
Benjamin Rush
Benjamin Franklin
John Morton
George Clymer
James Smith
George Taylor
James Wilson
George Ross

Delaware:

Caesar Rodney

George Read
Thomas McKean

Column 5

New York:

William Floyd
Philip Livingston
Francis Lewis
Lewis Morris

New Jersey:

Richard Stockton
John Witherspoon
Francis Hopkinson
John Hart
Abraham Clark

Column 6

New Hampshire:

Josiah Bartlett
William Whipple

Massachusetts:

Samuel Adams
John Adams
Robert Treat Paine
Elbridge Gerry

Rhode Island:

Stephen Hopkins
William Ellery

Connecticut:

Roger Sherman
Samuel Huntington
William Williams
Oliver Wolcott

New Hampshire:

Matthew Thornton

Lesson Six Review:

1. After reading the document, list some of the charges that the colonists make against King George III:

2. The colonists list the repeated attempts at reconciliation with Great Britain. Why do you think they included this information when they announced their separation from Great Britain?

3. Whose authority does Congress use to declare independence from Great Britain?

SAMPLE

Lesson Seven: We've Declared Independence! Now What?

Even before victory was declared, the Second Continental Congress put motions in place to establish a new national government. Why did they need to establish a new government before victory was even declared? The colonies were dependent upon Great Britain for most of their supplies. Obviously, since they were now at war, the colonists could not depend on Great Britain for guns, ammunition, food, and other supplies that it would need to win the war. European nations would not give loans or supplies to thirteen separate colonies, but they would do it if they were united. Also, not one single colony had the capital in which to pay for the war. The only solution was to draft a document that would bind them all together. It took six drafts and several months of debate, but Congress finally adopted the nation's first constitution—the Articles of Confederation.

Please read this very interesting article by the Office of the Historian.

<https://history.state.gov/milestones/1776-1783/articles>

Please also read through the Articles of Confederation:

<http://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?doc=3&page=transcript>

Lesson Seven Review:

There is not a written assignment for today. Take your time reading through the Articles of Confederation.

Lesson Eight: Articles of Confederation

Before the revolution, the colonists associated themselves with the colonies in which they lived. Once the war ended, many believed they would return to their home colony, and life would continue on. The leaders of the Revolution, however, realized that as thirteen separate colonies they were weak to fight against another attack from Great Britain or worse, from another European nation. Their best defense was to stay united as one nation. In order to do that, they would need a document accepted by all and one that bound them together. The Articles of Confederation were finally compiled after months of debate and adopted on June 12, 1777.

Because the colonists feared power that had been wielded by the king, the delegates drew up a document that protected state power by giving the national government none. There were no stipulations for an executive office nor was a federal court system designed. Each state was allowed one vote in a one-house Congress. Delegates to the Congress were selected for and paid by their state. To pass any major legislation, nine states had to agree, which rarely happened. Furthermore, any changes to the Articles of Confederation required approval from all thirteen states, and because only one vote was needed to block any change to the Articles, nothing was ever changed. These restrictions hindered Congress's capacity to act promptly and decisively.

The Articles did give Congress some powers. Congress could admit new states and divide up the western lands. Congress could also declare war, make peace, and conduct foreign policy. Congress also had the power to coin and borrow money, establish a post office, raise an army, and resolve conflicts between the states. Unfortunately, because Congress lacked the power to raise taxes, a national army could not be created, and the soldiers who fought in the Revolution could not be paid. More importantly, without the ability to raise funds, the new nation could not repay the money that was borrowed during the war. It did have the power to coin money, but it did not have the sole power to do so; resulting in several state currencies also in circulation. This barrier inhibited trade and, therefore, created a major problem with the economic growth to the young nation. Without an executive branch, the national government lacked the ability to carry out Congress's laws.

Congress was successful in passing the Northwest Ordinance of 1787 which settled the Northwest Territory (land that now includes Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, Minnesota, and Wisconsin). It created a system to admit new states into the Union. It also barred slavery in the territory and comprised a bill of rights that guaranteed religious freedom, trial by jury, and representation.

The biggest challenges to Congress, such as war debts, uncooperative states, and the sluggish economy, were crippled by the limitations of the Articles of Confederation. Congress had borrowed heavily from foreign creditors and wealthy Americans to pay for the war. It also owed back wages to many of the soldiers who fought in the Revolution. The new nation was broke, and to pay for its obligations, Congress called on the states to approve a tax on imports in 1783. However, with war debts of their own, the states balked and refused to pass the tax. To make matters worse, the economy floundered because farmers were hit hard from the post-war depression. Many lost their farms, and creditors feared many could not make the payments on their loans.

Meanwhile, the states did as they pleased without oversight from an executive branch. They raised their own armies and negotiated their own foreign treaties. After almost ten years of the Articles of Confederation in place, it was clear that something needed to be done in order to preserve the new nation.

Lesson 8: Articles of Confederation

1. List some of the powers that were granted to Congress by the Articles of Confederation.

- a.
- b.
- c.
- d.
- e.

2. List some of the limits that were placed on Congress by the Articles of Confederation.

- a.
- b.
- c.
- d.
- e.

3. How did the Articles of Confederation echo the colonists' fear of a monarchy?

4. What do you think were the most significant weaknesses of the Articles of Confederation?