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FAQs and the Georgia Standards of Excellence

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FAQs and the Georgia Standards of Excellence

How did the Enlightenment shape the fight for independence?

- The Enlightenment (1685-1815) had a significant impact on the Revolutionary era's leading figures. This movement emphasized reason, individual rights, and liberty. It helped provide the foundation for the American Revolution by challenging royal authority and inspiring concepts like natural rights, the social contract, and self-governance.
- Natural rights, a concept explored by philosopher John Locke, held that people are born with certain rights that come from God, and that governments have no authority to revoke them. Locke's 1689 *Two Treatises of Government* directly inspired Thomas Jefferson's language in the Declaration of Independence regarding "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."
- Improvements in printing allowed depictions of the revolution and opposition to British policies to circulate throughout the colonies. American colonists learned about the fight for independence from newspapers and broadsides
- Learn more at: <https://www.history.com/articles/enlightenment>

How did the French and Indian War contribute to the American Revolution?

- The French and Indian War (1754–1763) left Britain with massive debt and newly acquired territory. The Treaty of Paris (1763) that ended the war gave Britain a massive amount of land, doubling its holdings. It now controlled the Atlantic Seaboard from Newfoundland to the Mississippi Delta. Key acquisitions included all French territory in Canada (New France) and all territory east of the Mississippi River, including the Ohio River Valley.
- To pay for the war and secure the frontier, Britain imposed direct taxes (Stamp Act, Tea Act) and restrictions (Proclamation of 1763) that enraged colonists who complained about "no taxation without representation."
- The end of the French and Indian War set the stage for the rise of colonists who supported the Patriot cause.
- Learn more at: <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1750-1775/french-indian-war>

What were some of the causes of the American Revolution?

The American Revolution resulted from economic, political, and social factors that escalated in mid-18th century.

- Post-French and Indian War taxation: To pay for its costly victory in the French and Indian War (1754–1763), Britain imposed a series of taxes on the American colonies. This included the Sugar Act (1764) and the Stamp Act (1765).
- “Taxation without representation”: Colonists lacked representation in the British Parliament and argued that they should not be taxed by a government in which they had no voice. This slogan became a rallying cry for the independence movement.
- Oppressive British measures: Other British actions inflamed tensions, including the Townshend Acts (1767), which taxed goods imported to the colonies, and the Intolerable Acts (1774), which were punitive measures enacted in response to the Boston Tea Party.
- Developing American identity: Over time, a distinct American identity emerged, with colonists increasingly feeling a disconnection from British customs and governance. The ideas “life, liberty, private property, and the pursuit of happiness” were concepts that saw popularity among the colonists who favored challenging British aggression.
- Among these patriots, Samuel Adams, Patrick Henry, John Adams, Thomas Paine, and George Mason sought to enact these principles in ways that would define how the colonists viewed themselves.
- Learn more at: <https://visit.archives.gov/whats-on/explore-exhibits/road-revolution>

What was the Boston Massacre?

- The Boston Massacre was a deadly confrontation on March 5, 1770, when British soldiers fired on Boston colonists, killing five people, including Crispus Attucks, and wounding several others.
- The event fueled anti-British sentiment that helped lead to the American Revolution. Patriots like Paul Revere and Samuel Adams portrayed the event as a deliberate slaughter of patriots.
- Future president John Adams, then a lawyer in Boston, defended the British soldiers, most of whom were acquitted or convicted of manslaughter.
- Learn more at: <https://guides.bpl.org/c.php?g=800717&p=10389852>

Why was Thomas Paine's *Common Sense* so important?

- Thomas Paine's influential 47-page pamphlet was published on January 10, 1776. It helped shift colonial sentiment toward independence, using simple, plain language to make complex political arguments accessible to the average colonist.
- By advocating for a republic over a monarchy, it united public opinion and pressured leaders to declare independence, acting as a catalyst for the American Revolution.
- First published in Philadelphia anonymously, it became an immediate sensation, selling 120,000 copies in three months. The publication coincided with King George III's speech to Parliament, which declared the American colonies to be in a state of rebellion.
- Learn more at: <https://constitutioncenter.org/the-constitution/historic-document-library/detail/thomas-paine-common-sense-1776>

What was the Declaration of Independence?

- Thomas Jefferson was the primary author of the Declaration of Independence. He was appointed to a "Committee of Five" that included John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Roger Sherman, and Robert R. Livingston.
- Adopted by the Second Continental Congress on July 4, 1776, the Declaration of Independence was the formal document by which thirteen American colonies announced their separation from Great Britain and explained their reasons for doing so.
- The Declaration of Independence is formally divided into three main parts:
 - **The Preamble** – This opening section outlines the philosophical foundation of the new nation, emphasizing natural rights such as life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, and the idea that government derives its power from the consent of the governed.
 - **The List of Grievances** – The second section outlined complaints against King George III and the British government, including taxing the colonists without consent, suspending trial by jury, limiting trade, and maintaining a standing army among them without their consent
 - **The Formal Declaration of Independence** – The final section officially declares the thirteen colonies as free and independent from all allegiance to the British Crown. It concludes by stating that as free states, they have the power to declare war, conclude peace, contract alliances, and establish commerce.
- Learn more at: <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/declaration>

Who from Georgia signed the Declaration of Independence?

- Three Georgians signed the Declaration of Independence: Button Gwinnett, Lyman Hall, and George Walton, who were merchants, farmers, and leaders that represented the colony at the Second Continental Congress.
- Learn more at: https://www.georgiahistory.com/ghmi_marker_updated/the-signers-monument/

What did the Loyalists and Patriots believe?

- Loyalists (Tories) believed in maintaining ties with the British Crown, viewing separation as illegal treason. The Patriots (Whigs) believed in colonial self-rule and independence, and that British taxes violated their rights. Loyalists feared chaos, while Patriots believed independence was necessary for liberty.
- Nearly 20% of colonists were Loyalists, while a large, vocal portion were Patriots, with many others remaining neutral or changing sides based on the local situation. The divisions were intensely personal, often splitting neighbors and families, making it a civil war as well as a war for independence.
- Learn more at: <https://americanexperience.si.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Loyalists-and-Patriots.pdf>

Who were the Sons and Daughters of Liberty?

- The Sons and Daughters of Liberty were secret patriot societies formed in the American colonies in 1765 to resist British taxation.
- The Sons of Liberty, including leaders like Samuel Adams, John Hancock, and Paul Revere, used protests and intimidation. They helped organize the Boston Tea Party to protest the Stamp and Tea Acts (1773).
- The Daughters of Liberty organized boycotts and produced homemade goods, playing a key role in the Revolutionary movement. Georgia member Nancy Hart was a spy who disguised herself as a man to enter British camps and helped gather intelligence for the Battle of Kettle Creek. She lived near the Broad River and famously held Tory soldiers captive. Lake Hartwell and Hart County in Georgia are named for her.
- Learn more at: <https://www.battlefields.org/learn/articles/who-were-sons-and-daughters-liberty>

Why was the Boston Tea Party so important?

- The Boston Tea Party (December 16, 1773) was a protest led by the Sons of Liberty in Boston against the British government's Tea Act.
- The Tea Act, passed in May of 1773, was intended to bail out the struggling East India Company by granting it a monopoly on tea sales in the American colonies.
- Protesters disguised as Native Americans dumped 342 chests of tea into Boston Harbor to oppose “taxation without representation” and the British East India Company's monopoly.
- The British responded with the Intolerable Acts (1774), four acts that closed Boston Harbor, suspended Massachusetts’ self-government, allowed royal officials accused of capital offenses to be tried outside of the colony, and forced colonists to house British soldiers.
- In response, the Patriots called for a convention to determine a collective response, leading to the First Continental Congress in 1774.
- Learn more at: <https://www.masshist.org/revolution/teaparty.php>

What was the result of the American Revolution?

- The war led to the first successful colonial overthrow of a European monarchy, resulting in the United States Constitution and the Bill of Rights, which established a government with checks and balances.
- The American Revolution promoted the idea that merit, rather than birthright or hereditary privilege, should determine one’s status in society.
- The American victory served as a catalyst for other global uprisings, most notably the French Revolution (1789) and later independence movements in Latin America, Africa, and Asia.
- Learn more at: <https://www.gilderlehrman.org/history-resources/essays/american-revolution-1763-1783>

How was Georgia impacted by the American Revolution?

- The Proclamation of 1763, issued by King George III, expanded Georgia's territory southward to the St. Marys River and set its western boundary at the Mississippi River, fostering a land boom. This new territory created loyalty to the British crown due to increased land availability. Georgia was predominantly Loyalist at the start of the American Revolution because it had prospered under British rule. As the youngest colony, Georgia was hesitant to join the Revolution, did not send representatives to the First Continental Congress, and had a strong Loyalist support.
- The 1765 Stamp Act had a unique impact on Georgia, which was the only colony to actually sell the mandatory tax stamps, largely due to the influence of James Wright, who served as royal governor from 1760-1782.
- By 1775, revolutionary fervor had grown, leading to the creation of a Council of Safety, which briefly replaced Governor James Wright in 1776.
- The British captured Savannah in 1778, reinstalled Royal Governor James Wright. In the fall of 1779, the Americans were determined to take the city back. In the Siege of Savannah, Polish nobleman Count Casimir Pulaski led the Patriots and was mortally wounded. With the failure of the joint attack, the siege was abandoned, and the British remained in control of Savannah until July 1782, near the end of the war.
- The state saw significant fighting, especially the Battle of Kettle Creek, where Patriots, including Elijah Clarke and Austin Dabney, defeated a large Loyalist force. Fought on February 14, 1779, the small but pivotal clash happened in Wilkes County. It was one of the few significant Patriot victories in Georgia, effectively halting British efforts to recruit Loyalists in the region for over a year.
- Learn more at: <https://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/history-archaeology/revolutionary-war-in-georgia/>

What are the Articles of Confederation and how did they lead to the Constitution?

- The Articles of Confederation were the first constitution of the United States, ratified in 1781 to create a loose confederation of the 13 sovereign states. It established a weak central government, lacking power to tax, regulate commerce, or raise an army, which led to economic instability, inability to pay war debts, and the eventual call for a new Constitution.
- These issues, particularly the inability to handle national debt and uprisings, convinced the founders that a stronger federal framework was necessary, resulting in the Constitutional Convention of 1787.

- Learn more at: <https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/articles-of-confederation>

When was the Constitution ratified?

- The U.S. Constitution was signed on September 17, 1787, by 39 delegates at the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia.
- It required the approval of two-thirds of states (9) before it was ratified.
- It was ratified on June 21, 1788, when New Hampshire became the ninth state to approve it, making it the official framework for the U.S. government.
- Learn more at: <https://constitution.congress.gov/>