

The Americans (Reconstruction to the 21st Century)

Chapter 2:

TELESCOPING THE TIMES Revolution and the Early Republic

CHAPTER OVERVIEW Colonists declare their independence and win a war to gain the right to govern themselves. Leaders meet to write the Constitution. George Washington guides the new nation, but conflict between the two major political parties increases. The country also faces conflict with European nations.

Section 1: Colonial Resistance and Rebellion

MAIN IDEA Conflicts between Great Britain and the American colonists escalated, until the colonists finally declared their independence.

By the 1760s, King George was faced with paying off the debt Britain had accumulated during the French and Indian War. In 1763, King George appointed George Grenville, a financial expert, as his prime minister. Grenville believed that the colonies were smuggling goods rather than paying taxes on them.

In 1764, Grenville urged Parliament to pass the Sugar Act and in 1765, the Stamp Act. The Stamp Act required colonists to place stamps on certain items. Some colonists opposed British taxation, because they were not represented in Parliament. The colonists were furious and boycotted (refused to buy) British goods in protest. The British repealed the Stamp Act but enacted other laws that raised taxes.

Tension increased in Boston. In 1770, some British soldiers fired on a mob and killed several colonists, prompting angry colonial leaders to call the event the Boston Massacre. Passions cooled, and the British removed all the taxes but one.

In 1773, the British granted a British company the sole right to handle the tea trade. American merchants resented their loss of business. A group of colonists dumped tea into

Boston Harbor in protest. To punish Massachusetts, Parliament passed the Intolerable Acts in 1774.

In 1775, colonists and British soldiers fought at Lexington and Concord, near Boston. Colonial leaders convened in Philadelphia for the Second Continental Congress. Though some leaders urged independence, the majority were not ready for that step. They did form the Continental Army, with George Washington in command. The British king rejected a peace offer and declared the colonists in rebellion.

Attitudes in the colonies shifted, with more people opposing British rule. Thomas Paine's pamphlet *Common Sense* powerfully argued in favor of independence. In July 1776, the Continental Congress adopted the Declaration of Independence, declaring the colonies independent.

Section 2: The War for Independence

MAIN IDEA American victories reversed British advances during the American Revolutionary War.

Colonists were divided almost evenly between those who favored independence—Patriots—and those who supported the British—Loyalists. Many African Americans joined the Patriot cause. Others fought on the British side because they were offered freedom from slavery. Most Native Americans supported the British.

In March 1776, the British army retreated from Boston and seized New York City. Washington's troops defeated the British in a surprise attack late in 1776 and in another battle shortly after. These victories revived American hopes. In the fall of 1777, the Americans won an important victory at Saratoga, New York. This win convinced the French to support the Americans. Before any aid could arrive, however, Washington's army suffered from bitter cold and hunger during a terrible winter at Valley Forge, Pennsylvania.

In 1778, the Continental Army began to receive supplies and more intense training from France, and transformed itself into an effective force. The British moved their war effort to the South. In the battles that followed, both sides enjoyed several victories. In 1781 the British decided to move the war effort to Yorktown, Virginia. American and French forces surrounded the British army there, while a French fleet defeated British ships. Surrounded and unable to receive help, the British surrendered.

The following year, the two sides engaged in peace talks. In the Treaty of Paris, signed in 1783, the British recognized the United States as a nation with borders from the Atlantic Ocean to the Mississippi River.

Section 3: Confederation and the Constitution

MAIN IDEA American leaders created the Constitution as a blueprint of government for the United States.

The first government of the United States, which was established by the Articles of Confederation, was called a confederation. Voters elected delegates to the Congress, which was the national government. Congress organized the new lands west of the Appalachian mountains. The Northwest Ordinance declared that the areas would be treated as territories, and it set requirements for the admission of new states formed from these territories.

Although the Articles gave the Congress certain powers, they did not create a department to enforce the laws or a court system to decide the meaning of laws. Also, because the states acted independently of one another, the country lacked national unity. As a result, the Confederation encountered many problems.

Many leaders believed that the country needed a stronger national government. In 1787, delegates from 12 states met in Philadelphia to discuss changes to the Articles. Instead, though, they decided to write a new constitution to form a new government.

The delegates agreed to a government with three branches: legislative, executive, and judicial. Congress would make laws. A president would carry out laws. Courts would hear cases. They agreed that the Congress should have two houses. In the House of Representatives, states' representation would be based on population. In the Senate, each state would have two members. The delegates agreed to give some powers to the national government and some to the states.

Federalists favored this new Constitution. Antifederalists feared that the federal government would be too strong. Some demanded that the new Constitution guarantee people's rights. The framers of the Constitution promised to add a Bill of Rights. In 1789, the required number of states ratified the Constitution. By 1791, the required number of states approved the first ten amendments, known as the Bill of Rights. The Constitution is still in effect today.

Section 4: Launching the New Nation

MAIN IDEA With George Washington as its first president, the United States began creating a working government for its new nation.

George Washington, the first president, and Congress worked to establish the new government. Congress created a national court system, and it also set up three departments to serve under the president. Washington named able leaders to head the departments. These leaders made up the first cabinet.

Secretary of the Treasury Alexander Hamilton preferred a strong central government. He wanted to support trade and industry. But Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson favored strong state governments. He wanted an economy based on farming.

Hamilton wanted to create a national bank. He also wanted to repay the money borrowed during the Revolutionary War. Jefferson opposed the plan. However, he agreed to it in return for the promise that a new capital of the nation would be established near Virginia.

The differences between Hamilton and Jefferson led to the formation of the nation's first two political parties.

Settlers streamed into the Northwest Territory, upsetting Native Americans there. After the defeat in the Battle of Fallen Timbers, several Native American groups signed a treaty giving up a large area of land in what is today Ohio.

Washington retired after serving two terms, and John Adams was elected president. He lost the support of his own party when he refused to engage in a war with France. He also angered Jefferson's backers when he signed laws creating harsh punishments for people who criticized the government. Kentucky and Virginia passed resolutions against these laws. They claimed that states could void laws that they considered unconstitutional.