

Overall main idea: *In 1776, Americans turned to ideas of independence and republicanism, which led to divisions between “patriots” and “loyalists.”*

Thomas Paine Preaches Common Sense

Main idea: *Americans continued to pledge allegiance to the King until the burning of American towns, the hiring of the Hessians, and the publication of the popular pamphlet “Common Sense.”*

As late as early 1776, American soldiers continued to pledge allegiance to the King of England

Events pushing Americans away from the King and toward independence:

The burning of American towns in Falmouth and Norfolk

The rejection of the Olive Branch Petition by the King

The declaration that the colonies were in a treasonous “state of rebellion” by the King

The hiring of Hessian mercenary soldiers

The publication of Thomas Paine’s “Common Sense”

Paine said that independence for America was “common sense,” that it was ridiculous for a tiny island (England) to rule an entire continent (America), and that the King was a “royal brute”

Paine and the Idea of “Republicanism”

Main idea: *Thomas Paine’s call for republicanism was well received by Americans, whose previous experience made them more receptive of it.*

Paine called for independence and a new republic in America

Republic – a form of government where power flows from the common people, usually to elected representatives, instead of a monarch

Republican ideas had been around since ancient Greece and Rome and were promoted by the English in the 1600s, leading to their “mixed government” of monarch and Parliament

American experiences prepared them for republican ideas – they had years of self-government experience, no hereditary aristocracy, relatively few social classes

Republicans believed that citizens must be virtuous and sacrifice their private self-interests for the public good

Some Republicans believed that the “natural aristocracy,” but not hereditary, should still have the most power in the Republic, to prevent the wild and ignorant lower classes from ruining it

Jefferson’s “Explanation” of Independence

Main idea: *Thomas Jefferson wrote the Declaration of Independence to explain the rationale and reasons for America’s breaking away from Great Britain.*

June 7, 1776 – In the 2nd Continental Congress, Richard Henry Lee of VA proposed the resolution to break free from Great Britain; it was approved and adopted after much debate, on July 2, 1776; John Adams predicted July 2 would be a major holiday later

July 4, 1776 – the Declaration of Independence was adopted by the Congress; it would later be signed, mostly on August 2, 1776

Jefferson, John Adams, and Franklin were assigned with two others to a committee to write the Declaration, to explain the reasons and ideas behind American independence, to inspire other Americans and to inform other countries; Jefferson was known as a great writer and was given the task

Thomas Jefferson – Virginia planter, lawyer, slaveholder, only 33 at the time, writer and “renaissance man”; wrote the Declaration of Independence

Jefferson used John Locke’s ideas of “**natural rights**” and contract theory of government (see notes on Declaration of Independence)

The Declaration would become a source of inspiration for many other people, countries, and years later

Patriots and Loyalists

Main idea: *The Revolutionary War was also a civil war as many people sided with the patriots and many with the loyalists.*

Patriots – those who supported the revolution; a.k.a. “Whigs,” in reference to the opposition party in British government

Loyalists – those who supported the King and were against the revolution; a.k.a. “Tories,” in reference to the dominant party in British government

Patriots were a minority of Americans, just as loyalists were; many Americans were neutral or indifferent

Patriot militiamen were excellent at propaganda and convincing their countrymen to support the revolution

Likely to be loyalists: the educated, the wealthy, those with lots to lose, the older generations, royal officials and beneficiaries of the crown, Anglican clergy and congregations, New York, Charleston

Likely to be patriots: young, New Englanders, Virginians, Congregationalists, Presbyterians, non-English Americans

Makers of America: The Loyalists

Main idea: *Loyalists came from many parts of society, were subject to harassment and confiscation of property, escaped to other British colonies and stayed at home to become future U.S. citizens.*

The Loyalist Exodus

Main idea: *While some loyalists were violently harassed and had their property confiscated by patriots, many escaped to British lines or joined the British military.*

Harassment of loyalists grew after the Declaration of Independence; they were imprisoned, tarred and feathered, beaten, and some hanged; yet they were not nearly as brutalized or killed like would later occur in French or Russian revolutions

Many loyalists were driven out or fled to the British, but more stayed home; their property was often confiscated and sold to pay for the war effort

Other loyalists aided the British war effort as spies, by inciting Indians, and joining the British military

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