

### SESSION PREPARATION

Read the following material before attending the workshop. As you read the excerpts and primary sources, take note of the “Questions to Consider” as well as any questions you have. The activities in the workshop will draw on information from the readings and the video shown during the workshop.

### UNIT INTRODUCTION

In the eighteenth century, Enlightenment-based ideas of freedom and equality swept through the British colonies. This unit traces the effects of those ideas and the impact on diverse groups such as British Loyalists, Revolutionary leaders, Native Americans, yeoman farmers, and enslaved blacks.

### UNIT LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading the text materials, participating in the workshop activities, and watching the video, teachers will

- have a better understanding of how Enlightenment ideas influenced people in this era;
- learn how to examine written sources and visual sources to learn about the Revolutionary era;
- explore how Americans from different backgrounds participated in or responded to the events of the Revolutionary period.

### THIS UNIT FEATURES

- Textbooks excerpts (sections of U.S. history surveys, written for introductory college courses by history professors)
- Primary sources (documents and other materials created by the people who lived in the period), including the Declaration of Independence, state constitutions, letters, a poem, a petition, and drawings
- An article by a historian (Steve Mintz, “Using Primary Source Documents”) that uses both primary sources and secondary sources (other articles and books written by historians)
- A timeline at the end of the unit, which places important events in the Revolutionary era

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# CONTENT OVERVIEW

Many developments in the colonies during the decades prior to 1776 contributed to the colonists' increasing desire to alter relations with Great Britain. The colonies' population had increased tenfold since 1700; and their economies, particularly in the North, had become more oriented around trade, cities, and even manufacturing.

New ways of thinking accompanied these economic changes. Young men more commonly left home to seek their fortunes away from their fathers' authority, and young men and women alike more often married whom and when they pleased. More and more churchgoers asserted that people could choose salvation, that God alone did not decide who would be saved and who would be damned. Their liberal counterparts spoke more and more optimistically about people's capacity to invent a better stove or a better society without God's direct intervention, and that humans were making all aspects of life better and better. This optimism in people's capacity to shape the world fuelled a growing belief that citizens—not just kings and queens—could exercise political sovereignty.

The American Revolution constituted a sort of marriage between these material and ideological changes. Economic and social developments fitted the colonies for independence. But declaring and seizing that independence required both a series of provocative political events and an underlying sense of political rights that borrowed from the European Enlightenment. This broad intellectual and cultural movement stressed humans' capacity to manage their own affairs reasonably and effectively.

The American Revolution, in fact, generated radical political ideas and changes, often in ways that alarmed conservative patriots. Most Native Americans and many slaves sided with the British for practical reasons. But many African Americans, women, and poor whites in the countryside and cities alike seized upon and expanded the rhetoric of freedom, liberty, and rights. The hotly contested debates around state constitutions—and the final drafts of those constitutions—illustrated the wide differences of opinion on just how far the revolution in political authority should go.

Historians still disagree on how radical the Revolution was—to what extent it established political and social equality. But there is no doubt that it both broke decisively with Great Britain's political practices, and prompted hopes and ideals that Americans and others still strive to achieve.

## Theme 1:

The Enlightenment inspired many colonists to challenge England's governance, providing an importance impetus for the Revolution.

## Theme 2:

Some African Americans, white women, and white yeoman farmers used political rhetoric to argue for their own rights; Loyalists and most Native Americans found little in these ideals to support their own interests.

## Theme 3:

During this period, the writing of state constitutions provided crucial, but contested, opportunities to put democratic concepts into practice.

# VIDEO RELATED MATERIALS

## Historical Perspectives

Most colonists thought of themselves as British citizens until the American Revolution, and they believed that they enjoyed certain rights based on English political traditions and Enlightenment-thinking. Thomas Paine’s *Common Sense* persuaded many that natural rights and popular sovereignty trumped monarchy. Such ideas attracted slaves and other marginal groups, but white planters associated freedom with the right to hold property—including slaves.

## Faces of America

Loyalties that grew during the Revolution were based on individual perspectives. For disparate persons such as Phillis Wheatley, a slave poetess; William Franklin, a royal governor; and Dragging Canoe, a Cherokee warrior, these perspectives represented a broad cross-section of people inhabiting America at that time.

Phillis Wheatley was kidnapped from West Africa and sold as a slave in Boston. She began writing at an early age, and was soon drawing parallels between the evils of slavery and Great Britain’s colonial policies.

William Franklin served Great Britain as a soldier and governor before the Revolution, and remained loyal during the war.

Tsiyugunsini (Dragging Canoe) emerged before the American Revolution as a young Cherokee leader who opposed accommodating white settlement. Like most indigenous nations, the Cherokee sided with the British during the conflict, and Dragging Canoe led a large coalition of groups in battle.

## Hands on History

Carol Berkin studies the history of colonial women through immersing herself in the documents they produced, and the artifacts they fashioned and used. She argues that this immersion helps students of history to avoid “presentism,” the imposition of modern points of view on cultures of the past. Careful study of textiles, for example, can help us understand the women who made and wore them.



# THEME ONE

**Theme One:** The Enlightenment inspired many colonists to challenge England's governance, providing an importance impetus for the Revolution.

## Overview

For the thirteen colonies to declare their independence from Great Britain in the late 1700s seems, in retrospect, predictable. They had developed economic and political structures contrary to their colonial status. But Great Britain had never accepted these developments. After the Seven Years' War (known in North America as the French and Indian War) ended in 1763, imperial discipline was imposed on its unruly North American colonies.

In 1764, Parliament started to pass bills aimed at establishing increased authority over the colonies and extracting taxes from them. It imposed the Revenue (or Sugar) Act and, a year later, the Stamp Act. Colonial reaction to the Stamp Act varied. Some unhappily submitted, while others stood together in mass opposition. The British government was surprised by the defiance, as were many Americans.

The ensuing struggle between Great Britain and the thirteen colonies would be over ideas as well as power. Growing numbers of colonists of diverse socio-economic backgrounds were advocating a new, radical understanding of government, sharply at odds with European practice. This new, subversive way of thinking was drawn from the European Enlightenment, a diffuse but profound intellectual movement that stressed human rationality and implied (or even asserted) that people could govern themselves rather than submitting to monarchs. This emphasis on humanity's capacities and rights explains why so many patriots insisted on defending their political rights—even to the point of risking their own lives and the lives of many others in a long, bloody conflict.

## Questions to Consider

1. What key event or events prompted the Revolution?
2. What ideas did patriots use to justify their revolution?

## 1. Stamp Act Riots

In late 1764, Virginia's House of Burgesses had strenuously objected to the proposed stamp tax, citing the economic hardship it would cause and arguing that it was their "inherent" right to be taxed only by their own consent. [Bostonians destroyed buildings belonging to British officials, acts that alarmed many well-to-do residents who opposed the tax but feared the destruction of property.] . . .

Violent protests against the Stamp Act also wracked New York and Newport, Rhode Island. Leading the resistance were groups calling themselves the Sons of Liberty, composed mostly of artisans, shopkeepers, and ordinary citizens. By late 1765, effigy-burning crowds all over America were convincing stamp distributors to resign . . .

In March 1766, Parliament debated the furious American reaction to the Stamp Act. Lobbied by many merchant friends of the Americans, Parliament voted to repeal it. Some members warned that to retreat before colonial defiance of the law would ultimately be fatal. But the legislators bowed to expediency, though they also passed the Declaratory Act, which asserted Parliament's power to enact laws for the colonies in "all cases whatsoever."

The crisis had passed, yet nothing was solved. Americans had begun to recognize a grasping government trampling its subjects' rights. The Stamp Act, one New England clergyman foresaw, "diffused a disgust through the colonies and laid the basis of an alienation which will never be healed."

Gary B. Nash and others, eds. *The American People: Creating a Nation and a Society*, 6th ed. (New York: Pearson Education, 2004), 173–75.

Parliament soon tried again to establish its right to tax the colonies, but the colonists boycotted the taxed goods, which prompted a British occupation of Boston and New York City. In the Boston Massacre of 1770, British troops killed several colonists. Three years later, in the Boston Tea Party, patriots heaved tea that was to be taxed into the harbor. This destruction of private property led Great Britain to close the port of Boston and to restrict people's liberties; steps that in turn provoked hard feelings in the American colonies and, in 1774, the First Continental Congress. In 1775—a full year before the Declaration of Independence was written—armed conflict began outside of Boston when General Gage sent 700 troops to seize a patriot arsenal. Congress again met to authorize a continental army (headed by George Washington) and to petition King George. But Great Britain's leaders concluded that members and followers of the Congress had committed treason. The king declared that the colonies were in "open and avowed rebellion" and sent more troops to end it.

# THEME ONE PRIMARY SOURCE

## TWO DRAWINGS: BOSTONIANS PAYING THE EXCISE MAN & THE ABLE DOCTOR

### Questions to Consider

1. How do these two drawings depict the British and the Americans? What do the drawings have in common?
2. How do the drawings use symbols considered masculine and feminine to make their arguments?



Item 1895  
Philip Dawe, (c.1750–c.1785) "The Bostonians Paying the Excise-Man or Tarring & Feathering." London (1774). Colored engraving. Location: Private Collection  
Photo Credit: Art Resource, NY.

See Appendix for larger image – pg. 45

<b>Creator:</b>	British political cartoonists
<b>Context:</b>	For several years, from the 1760s into the 1770s, Great Britain tried to establish that it had the right to tax the colonies.
<b>Audience:</b>	Great Britain's public
<b>Purpose:</b>	To illustrate political debates

### Historical Significance:

In the days before radio or television, political leaders and opinion-makers used drawings to shape public perception of events.

Each of these drawings was first published in England in 1774 and addressed the question of British taxes in North America. The first depicted how Boston patriots treated British officials who tried to enforce these taxes. The second, a more sympathetic view, illustrated the British forcing America or Liberty (shown as a woman) to swallow tea, "the Bitter Draught." The female figure in the background is Britannia, who often symbolized Great Britain. The American patriot and engraver Paul Revere liked this image and reproduced it in Massachusetts.

# THEME ONE PRIMARY SOURCE



*The able Doctor, or America Swallowing the Bitter Draught.*

Item 2125  
Unknown, THE ABLE DOCTOR, OR AMERICA SWALLOWING THE BITTER  
DRAUGHT (1774). Courtesy of the Library of Congress.

See Appendix for larger image – pg. 46

## 2. Thomas Paine's *Common Sense*

As the crisis deepened, a pamphlet appeared that would speed the move toward independence. Published in Philadelphia on January 9, 1776, Thomas Paine's *Common Sense* soon appeared in bookstalls all over the colonies. In scathing language, Paine denied the very legitimacy of monarchy. "Of more worth is one honest man to society," he scoffed, "than all the crowned ruffians that ever lived." It was Paine's unsparing rejection of monarchy that made his pamphlet seem so radical. From that it was a logical step to call openly for Americans to act in defense of their liberties. "O ye that love mankind," he declared. "Ye that dare oppose not only the tyranny, but also the tyrant, stand forth!" . . .

Paine's ringing challenge had the desired effect. "The public sentiment which a few weeks before shuddered at the tremendous obstacles, with which independence was envisioned," declared Edmund Randolph of Virginia in amazement, now "overleaped every barrier."

The pamphlet's astounding popularity—it went through 25 editions in 1776 and sold more copies than any printed piece in colonial history—stemmed not only from its argument but also from its style. Shunning the elaborate, legalistic language of most pamphlets written by lawyers and clergymen, Paine wrote for the common people who read little more than the Bible . . . It was language that could be understood on the docks, in the taverns, on the streets, and in the farmyards. [Even those who could not read might hear the pamphlet read aloud.]

Nash et al., 195.

## 3. Declaring Independence

[The two sides had begun fighting in 1775, and the conflict continued in 1776.] It was almost anticlimactic when Richard Henry Lee introduced a congressional resolution on June 7 calling for independence. After two days of debate, the Congress ordered a committee chaired by Jefferson to begin drafting such a document.

Though it would become revered as the new nation's birth certificate, the Declaration of Independence was not a highly original statement. It drew heavily on the Congress's earlier justifications of American resistance, and its theory of government had already been set forth in scores of pamphlets over the previous decade. The ringing phrases 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" were familiar in the writing of many American pamphleteers.

Nash et al., 195–96.

# THEME ONE PRIMARY SOURCE

## THE DESTRUCTION OF A ROYAL STATUE IN NEW YORK

### Questions to Consider

1. Does the artist appear to be sympathetic toward the people trying to pull down the statue? Why?
2. The artist who made this drawing probably did not witness the event he is describing. Does that mean that this drawing is of no value to historians of the American Revolution?



Item 1012  
Chez Basset, LE DESTRUCTION DE LAS STATUE ROYALE A NOUVELLE YORCK/DIE  
ZERSTORUNG DER KONIGLICHEN BILD SAULE ZU NEU YORCK  
(ca. late-1770s). Courtesy of the Library of Congress.

*See Appendix for larger image – pg. 47*

<b>Creator:</b>	French artist Chez Basset
<b>Context:</b>	The American Revolution interested many Europeans, in part because it might affect the balance of power in Europe.
<b>Audience:</b>	French readers
<b>Purpose:</b>	To show colonial unrest toward Great Britain

### Historical Significance:

The outbreak of the American Revolution was accompanied by the destruction of British symbols of authority. This French print depicts patriots pulling down a statue of King George the III in New York City in 1776. Because the British had just defeated the French in a bitter war (fought in Europe and North America), Great Britain's troubles with its colonies cheered France, which decided to aid the young United States.

## EXCERPTED FROM PREAMBLE TO THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE, 1776

### Questions to Consider

1. Which lines in the preamble explain why Jefferson believed that the colonies were compelled to declare independence?
2. Is this a radical document, advocating the destruction of authority; or a moderate one, calling for the restoration of order?

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.

Thomas Jefferson, PREAMBLE TO THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE (1776).  
Courtesy <http://press-pubs.uchicago.edu/founders/documents/v1ch1s5.html>.

<b>Creator:</b>	Thomas Jefferson
<b>Context:</b>	Jefferson had been asked by the Continental Congress to head a committee charged with writing a declaration of independence.
<b>Audience:</b>	The nation and the world
<b>Purpose:</b>	To state clearly and persuasively the American case for revolution and independence

### Historical Significance:

One of the issues facing the writers of the Declaration of Independence was the question of slavery—the economic and social complexities were vast. Thomas Jefferson—himself a slaveholder—penned language asserting that the king had forced slavery on the colonists; Congress later removed that section. Slavery was a volatile issue for the patriots, so many leaders felt it best to ignore rather than criticize it.

But there was plenty in Jefferson's declaration that all patriots could agree on, including a meticulous accounting of King George's abuses of the colonies and a proclamation that they were now "free and independent states."

It is the first section of Jefferson's seminal work that we best remember. Here, in the preamble, Jefferson laid out the philosophical justification for revolution ("We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created "equal . . ." ) in words that would inspire slaves, women, and victims of colonization around the world for many years to come.

# THEME ONE

## Conclusion

The American Revolution was a bold experiment in the history of Western civilization. Never before had such a large group so directly asserted their moral right to pursue political independence. Yet this was just the first a long series of incremental steps, in which the outcome was not at first anticipated. Once unleashed, however, the intoxicating ideas of liberty and freedom would prove difficult to restrict.

## Questions to Consider

1. The Declaration of Independence appeared more than a decade after major clashes and disagreements between Great Britain the thirteen colonies. Why did the Revolution take so long to begin?
2. What role did ideology play in the coming of the Revolution? To what extent did the ideology of inalienable rights simply mask economic and political self-interest?

# THEME TWO

**Theme Two:** Some African Americans, white women, and white yeoman farmers used political rhetoric to argue for their own rights; Loyalists and most Native Americans found little in these ideals to support their own interests.

## Overview

We should not imagine that the residents of the thirteen colonies unanimously and enthusiastically took the side of the patriots—or, from the British point of view, insurrectionists—during the American Revolution. Political conservatives, merchants with strong ties to Great Britain, indigenous peoples, and slaves and poor farmers who distrusted any cause embraced by wealthy landowners commonly opposed the Revolution. A majority of colonists probably tried to stay neutral.

But, diverse types of people soon found reason to embrace the Revolution and its rhetoric. Self-preservation had something to do with this, as the patriots were adept at persecuting residents who showed insufficient enthusiasm for the cause or supported the British. Moreover, the ideas of the Revolution—Enlightenment principles of inalienable rights, and hints of political and social equality—appealed to poor farmers and laborers, white women, and African Americans.

## Questions to Consider

1. Why did support for the Revolution increase during the war?
2. Why did Native Americans, African Americans, poor whites, and women respond in such diverse ways to the Revolution?

### 1. Civilians and the War and The Loyalists

While the experience of war varied from place to place depending on people's proximity to battle, vulnerability to economic disruption, and racial and ethnic makeup, it touched the lives of virtually every American. Noncombatants experienced the realities of war most intensely in densely settled areas along the coast. The British concentrated their military efforts there, taking advantage of their naval power and striking at the political and economic centers of American life. At one time or another, British troops occupied every major port city: Boston for a year at the war's start, New York from 1777 to 1783, Philadelphia over the winter and spring of 1777–1778, Charleston in 1780–1781, and Savannah two years earlier . . .

During the first years of the war, the port cities lost nearly half their population, while inland communities struggled to cope with the thousands of refugees who streamed into them. Settlers from the interior fled eastward for safety as Loyalist rangers and their Indian allies fought Patriot militias in a violent, often chaotic struggle. By 1783, the white population along the Mohawk River west of Albany, New York, had declined from 10,000 to 3,500. According to one observer, after nearly five years of warfare in Tryon County, 12,000 farms had been abandoned, 700 buildings burned, thousands of bushels of grain destroyed, nearly 400 women widowed, and perhaps 2,000 children orphaned. Similar disasters unfolded up and down the backcountry from Maine to Georgia.

Wherever the armies went, they generated a swirl of refugees, who spread vivid tales of the war's devastation. This refugee traffic, together with the constant movement of soldiers between army and civilian life, brought the war home to countless people who did not experience it first hand. Moreover, disease followed the armies like an avenging angel, ravaging soldiers and civilians alike . . .

Additional thousands who wished the Revolution had never occurred stayed on in the new nation, struggling to rebuild their lives. The incidence of loyalism differed from region to region. Loyalists were fewest in New England and most numerous around New York City, where British authority was most stable.

Nash et al., 209–14 (selections).

## THEME TWO SECONDARY SOURCE

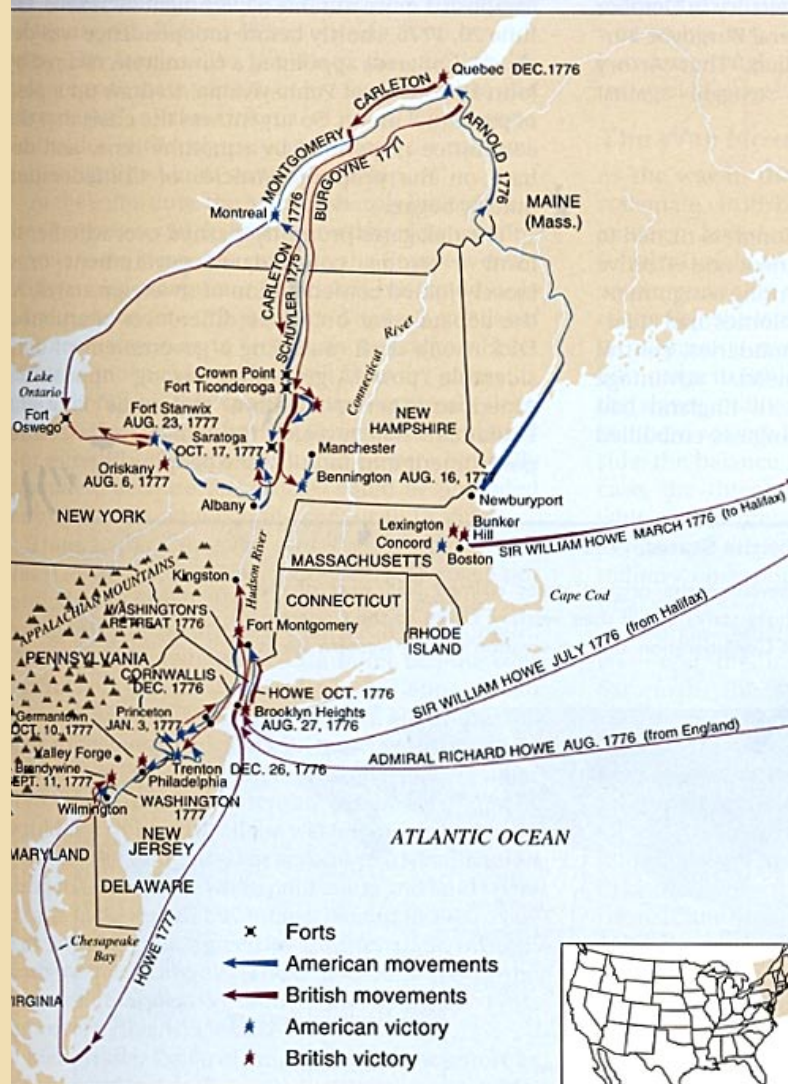
### MILITARY OPERATIONS IN THE NORTH, 1776–1780 AND MILITARY OPERATIONS IN THE SOUTH, 1778–1781

At first the British tried to isolate New England, which they deemed to be the radical center of the patriot movement, from the other colonies. By 1778, more British soldiers were in the southern colonies. These troops often created a great deal of friction and conflict in the areas they resided, marched through, and fought in.

What most surprises you about these maps?

#### Military Operations in the North, 1776–1780

During the early years of the war, fighting was most intense in upper New York and the mid-Atlantic states. Note the importance of water routes to military strategies.

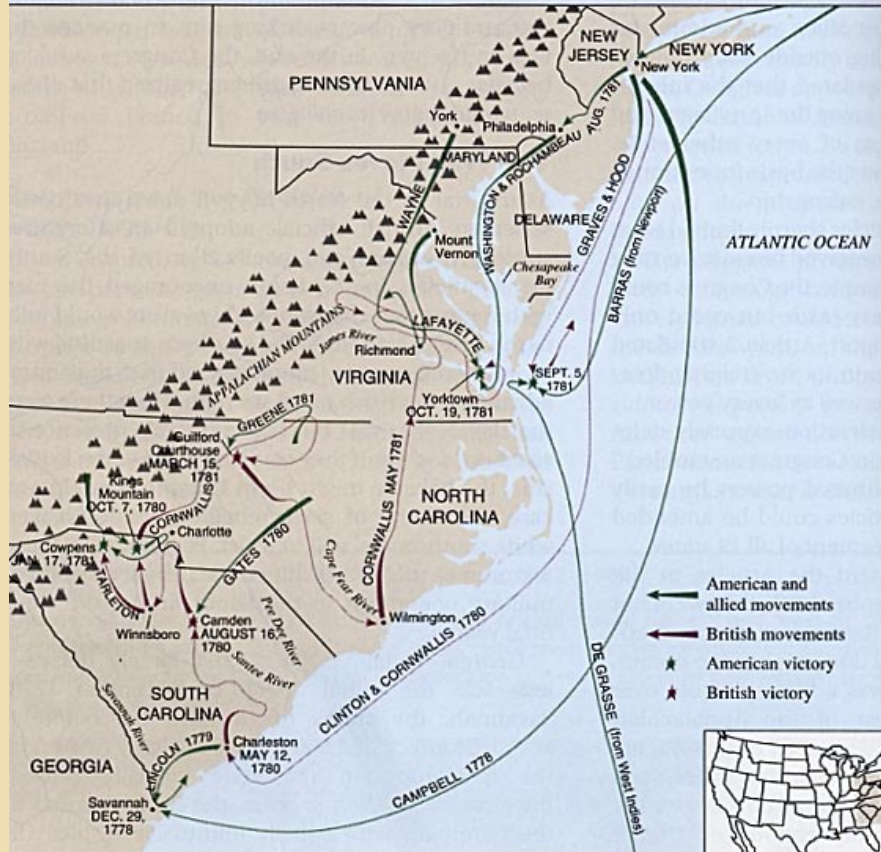


Nash et al., 197.

# THEME TWO SECONDARY SOURCE

## Military Operations in the South, 1778-1781

The war in the South was fought both along the coast and in the interior.



Nash et al., 200.

### 2. African Americans and the War

The revolution caught up thousands of American blacks in its toils. In the northern states, both free and enslaved blacks enlisted in support of the revolutionary cause. In the South, nearly 400,000 slaves constituted a vast and uncertain force, viewed by the British as a resource to be exploited and by southern whites as a source of vulnerability and danger. Sizing up the opportunities provided by the war's confusion, many southern blacks struck out for their own freedom by seeking liberty behind English lines, journeying to the north, or fleeing to mixed-race settlements in the interior. Before the war was over, it generated the largest slave rebellion in American history prior to the Civil War.

[African Americans, slave and free, seized upon the patriots' rhetoric of liberty to advance their cause.] In the North, slaves petitioned state legislatures for their freedom, while in the South, pockets of insurrection appeared. In 1765, more than 100 South Carolina slaves, most of them young men in their 20s and 30s, fled their plantations. The next year, slaves paraded through the streets of Charleston chanting, "Liberty, liberty!"

In November 1775, Lord Dunmore, Virginia's royal governor, issued a proclamation offering freedom to all slaves and servants, "able and willing to bear arms," who would leave their masters and join the British forces at Norfolk. Within weeks, 500 to 600 slaves responded.

How many African Americans sought liberty behind British lines is unknown, but as many as 20 percent may have done so. Unlike their white masters, blacks saw in England the promise of freedom, not tyranny. As the war dragged on, English commanders pressed blacks into service. A regiment of black soldiers, formed from Virginia slaves who responded to Dunmore's proclamation, marched into battle, their chests covered by sashes emblazoned with the slogan "Liberty to Slaves."

Fewer blacks fought on the American side than on England's, in part because neither the Congress nor the states were eager to see them armed. Faced with the increasing need for troops, however, the Congress and each of the states except Georgia and South Carolina eventually relented and pressed blacks into service. Of those who served the Patriot cause, many received the freedom they were promised. The patriotism of countless others, however, went unrewarded.

Nash et al., 215–16.

## THEME TWO PRIMARY SOURCE

EXCERPTED FROM TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE  
WILLIAM, EARL OF DARTMOUTH, HIS  
MAJESTY'S PRINCIPAL SECRETARY OF STATE  
FOR NORTH-AMERICA, &C.

### Questions to Consider

1. What does Wheatley want from the Earl of Dartmouth?
2. How does slavery inform her poem? Which lines allude to slavery?

While in thine hand with pleasure we behold  
The silken reins, and Freedom's charms unfold.  
Long lost to realms beneath the northern skies  
She shines supreme, while hated faction dies:  
Soon as appear'd the Goddess long desir'd,  
Sick at the view, she languish'd and expir'd;  
Thus from the splendors of the morning light  
The owl in sadness seeks the caves of night.

No more, America, in mournful strain  
Of wrongs, and grievance unredress'd complain,  
No longer shalt thou dread the iron chain,  
Which wanton Tyranny with lawless hand  
Had made, and with it meant t' enslave the land.

Should you, my lord, while you peruse my song,  
Wonder from whence my love of Freedom sprung,  
Whence flow these wishes for the common good,  
By feeling hearts alone best understood,  
I, young in life, by seeming cruel fate  
Was snatch'd from Afric's fancy'd happy seat:  
What pangs excruciating must molest,  
What sorrows labour in my parent's breast?  
Steel'd was that soul and by no misery mov'd  
That from a father seiz'd his babe belov'd:  
Such, such my case. And can I then but pray  
Others may never feel tyrannic sway?

For favours past, great Sir, our thanks are due,  
And thee we ask thy favours to renew,  
Since in thy pow'r, as in thy will before,  
To sooth the griefs, which thou did'st once deplore.

Phillis Wheatley, "To the Right Honourable William, Earl of Dartmouth, His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for North-America, &c.," *Poems on Various Subjects Religious and Moral* (1773). Courtesy the University of Oregon, <http://darkwing.uoregon.edu/~rbear/wheatley.html>.

<b>Creator:</b>	Phillis Wheatley
<b>Context:</b>	Wheatley had just been freed and she hoped to influence the Earl of Dartmouth, an influential British policy maker.
<b>Audience:</b>	The Earl of Dartmouth
<b>Purpose:</b>	To persuade the Earl of Dartmouth to respect the colonies' rights

### Historical Significance:

Born in the Senegal area of West Africa and enslaved at age seven, Phillis Wheatley was purchased by a Boston tailor in 1761. She took advantage of opportunities to read and write, and proved to be extraordinarily gifted and determined. In 1771, though still in her teens, she became the first published African American, and her poetry became well known in North America and England.

Wheatley corresponded with several prominent people on both sides of the Atlantic, including George Washington. She wrote the poem in 1773, around the time her owners freed her. It is addressed to the new secretary of state for the colonies, the Earl of Dartmouth, a man who would have a great deal to say about political relations between Great Britain and the colonies. Wheatley's poem was politically motivated.

Steeped in the classics, Wheatley's emotionally restrained style was characteristic of the period's high literature.

## THEME TWO PRIMARY SOURCE

Wheatley was not unusual in being an African American who paid close attention to politics around the time of the American Revolution. What sets her apart, however, is that she set her thoughts to paper. Historians must rely on scarce and biased pieces of historical evidence in trying to piece together how slaves and other African Americans reacted to the Revolution.

### Teaching American History With Documents From The Gilder Lehrman Collection

#### *Using Primary Source Documents: African Americans in the Revolutionary War* —By Steven Mintz

Nothing brings the past to life quite like primary sources. Letters, diaries, trial transcripts, and other original documents allow us to hear the living voices of the past. By encouraging students to see history through opposing viewpoints – from the vantage point of loyalists as well as patriots and slaves as well as masters – primary sources can encourage a much more sophisticated understanding of the forces that have shaped our society.

Primary source documents are particularly useful in helping students understand the central role of slavery and of African Americans in the outcome of the American Revolution. Several thousand slaves won their freedom by serving both sides in the War of Independence, and thousands of others freed themselves by running away. In Georgia alone, five thousand slaves, a third of the colony's prewar total, escaped. South Carolina lost a quarter of its slaves. Both the British and American revolutionaries recognized slavery's significance. In April 1775, Lord Dunmore (1732–1809), the royal governor of Virginia, issued a proclamation promising freedom to all slaves belonging to rebels who would join his army:

**By His Excellency the Right Honourable JOHN Earl of DUNMORE, His Majesty's Lieutenant and Governor General of the Colony and Dominion of VIRGINIA, and Vice Admiral of the same.**

#### **A PROCLAMATION**

**As I have ever entertained Hopes, that an Accommodation might have taken Place between GREAT-BRITAIN and this Colony, without being compelled by my Duty to this most disagreeable but now absolutely necessary Step, rendered so by a Body of armed Men unlawfully assembled, firing on His MAJESTY'S Tenders, and the formation of an Army, and that Army now on their March to attack his MAJESTY'S Troops and destroy the well disposed subjects of the Colony. To defeat such treasonable Purposes, and that all such Traitors, and their Abettors, may be brought to Justice, and that the Peace and good Order of**

this Colony may be again restored, which the ordinary Course of the Civil Law is unable to effect; I have thought fit to issue this my Proclamation, hereby declaring, that until aforesaid good purpose can be obtained, I do in Virtue of the Power and Authority to ME given, by His MAJESTY, determine to execute Martial Law, and cause the same to be executed throughout this Colony: and to \*\*\*\*\* the Peace and good Order may be sooner be restored, I do require every Person capable of bearing Arms, to resort to His MAJESTY'S STANDARD, or be looked upon as Traitors to His MAJESTY'S Crown and Government, and thereby become liable to the Penalty of Law inflicts upon such Offenses; such as forfeiture of Life, confiscation of Lands, &. &. And I do hereby further declare all indented Servants, Negroes, or others, (appertaining to Rebels,) free that are able and willing to bear Arms, they joining His MAJESTY'S Troops as soon as may be, for the more speedily reducing this Colony to a proper Sense of their Duty, to His MAJESTY'S Crown and Dignity. I do further order, and require, all His AMJESTY'S Liege Subjects, to retain their Quitrents, or any other Taxes due or that may become due, in their own Custody, till such a Time as Peace may be again restored to this at present most unhappy Country, or demanded of them for their former salutary Purposes, by Officers properly \*\*\*\*\* to receive the same.

Some eight hundred slaves joined Dunmore's forces, some wearing the emblem "Liberty to Slaves." Dunmore's appeal outraged Virginia's slaveholders. The Virginia Assembly responded by denouncing Dunmore's proclamation and threatening to execute fugitive slaves.

Virginia, Dec. 14, 1775

By the Representatives of the People of the Colony and Dominion  
of VIRGINIA, assembled in GENERAL CONVENTION

### A DECLARATION

WHEREAS lord Dunmore by his proclamation, dated on board the ship William, off Norfolk, the 7th day of November 1775, hath offered freedom to such able-bodied slaves as are willing to join him, and take up arms, against the good people of this colony, giving thereby encouragement to a general insurrection, which

may induce a necessity of inflicting the severest punishments upon those unhappy people, already deluded by his base and insidious arts; and whereas, by an act of the General Assembly now in force in this colony, it is enacted, that all negro or slaves, conspiring to rebel or make insurrection, shall suffer death, and be excluded all benefit of clergy: We think it proper to declare, that all slaves who have been, or shall be seduced, by his lordship's proclamation, or other arts, to desert their masters' service, and take up arms against the inhabitants of this colony, shall be liable to such punishment as shall hereafter be directed by the General Convention. And to that end all such, who have taken this unlawful and wicked step, may return in safety to their duty, and escape the punishment due to their crimes, we hereby promise pardon to them, they surrendering themselves to Col. William Woodford, or any other commander of our troops, and not appearing in arms after the publication thereof. And we do farther earnestly recommend it to all humane and benevolent persons in this colony to explain and make known this our offer of mercy to those unfortunate people.

The British appeal to slave unrest outraged slaveholders not only in the South but in the north, especially after Sir Henry Clinton (1738–1795), the commander-in-chief of the British army in America from 1778 to 1782, promised protection to all slaves who deserted from the rebels. By suggesting that the Revolution was a war over slavery, he alienated many neutrals and even some loyalists . . .

A former slave, who fought in the Revolution, Peter Kiteridge recounts his background to the town officials of Newfield, Massachusetts. Now fifty-eight years old, with no compensation available for injuries, he seeks assistance supporting his wife and four children. Kiteridge was one of approximately five thousand free blacks and slaves who served in the American army during the Revolution.

Gentlemen I beg leave to state to you my necessitous circumstances, that through your intervention I may obtain that succour, which suffering humanity ever requires. Borne of African parents . . . and apprenticed in Boston, from whence I was removed to Roseley and from thence again to Andover into the family of Locerage, with whom as was then the lot of my unfortunate race, I passed the best part of my life as a slave. In the year of our Lord 1775 or 6 and in the twenty fifth of my age I

entered into the service of the U.S. as a private soldier wherein I continued five years and contracted a complaint from which I have suffered in a greater or less degree ever since and with which I am now afflicted. After leaving the army to become a sailor for two years I was for some time in Newtown, from whence I went to Natick where I remained for a short time and then removed to Dover whence I was a day labourer during the period of seven years. Eight years past I removed to the place where I now live and have until this time by my labor assisted by the kindness of the neighbouring inhabitants been enabled to support myself and family. At present having arrived at the fifty eighth year of my life and afflicted with an unuseable arm as I apprehend with incurable diseases where by the labor of my hands is wholly cut off, am with it is the only means of my support. My family at this time consists of a wife and four children three of whom are so young as to be unable to support themselves and the time of their mother is wholly occupied in taking care of myself & my little ones – thus gentlemen in this my extremity I am induced to call on you for assistance; not in the character of an inhabitant of the town of Westfield for I have no such claim but as a stranger accidentally falling within your borders, one who has not the means of subsistence, and in failure one who must fail through want and disease unless sustained by your care.

Source: Peter Kiteridge, 6 April 1806, "To the Selectmen of the Town of Newfield, Massachusetts." The Gilder Lehrman Collection on deposit at the Pierpont Morgan Library, GLC 1450-702. An extensive collection of annotated primary source documents from the Gilder Lehrman Collection, on deposit at the Pierpont Morgan Library, is available online at: <http://www.gilderlehrman.org/collection/archive.html>.

### 3. Native Americans in the Revolution

[Like African Americans, Native Americans more often sided with the British than the colonial patriots, as they drew from a long history of carefully choosing which Europeans to ally with or to fight.]

The Revolutionary War drew in countless Native Americans as well as colonists and Englishmen. It could hardly have been otherwise, for the lives of all three peoples had been intertwined since the first English settlements more than a century earlier.

Though small tribes still struggled to maintain their identities along the eastern seaboard and though Indians still roamed the streets of America's port cities, the coastal tribes were mostly gone by the time of the Revolution, their villages displaced by white settlement, their numbers thinned by warfare and disease. Powerful tribes, however, still controlled the interior between the Appalachians and the Mississippi River. The Iroquois Six Nations, a confederation numbering 15,000 people, controlled a huge area stretching westward from Albany, New York, and dominated the "western tribes" of the Ohio valley—the Shawnee, Delaware, Wyandotte, and Miami. In the Southeast, five tribes—the Choctaw, Chickasaw, Seminole, Creek, and Cherokee, 60,000 people in all—dominated the interior.

Far outnumbering the few white settlers that had pushed across the Appalachians, the interior tribes were more than a match, militarily and diplomatically, for the Anglo-Americans. As the imperial crisis between England and its colonies deepened, Native and European Americans eyed each other warily across this vast "middle ground."

When the Revolutionary War began, British and American officials urged neutrality on the Indians. The British, expecting the conflict to be short, wished to disrupt the interior as little as possible, while the Americans worried about Indian attacks from the west when confronting British power along the coast. The Native Americans, however, were too important militarily for either side to ignore. By the spring of 1776, both were actively seeking Indian alliances. Recognizing their stake in the white man's conflict, Native Americans up and down the interior debated their options.

Nash et al., 201.

## THEME TWO SECONDARY SOURCE

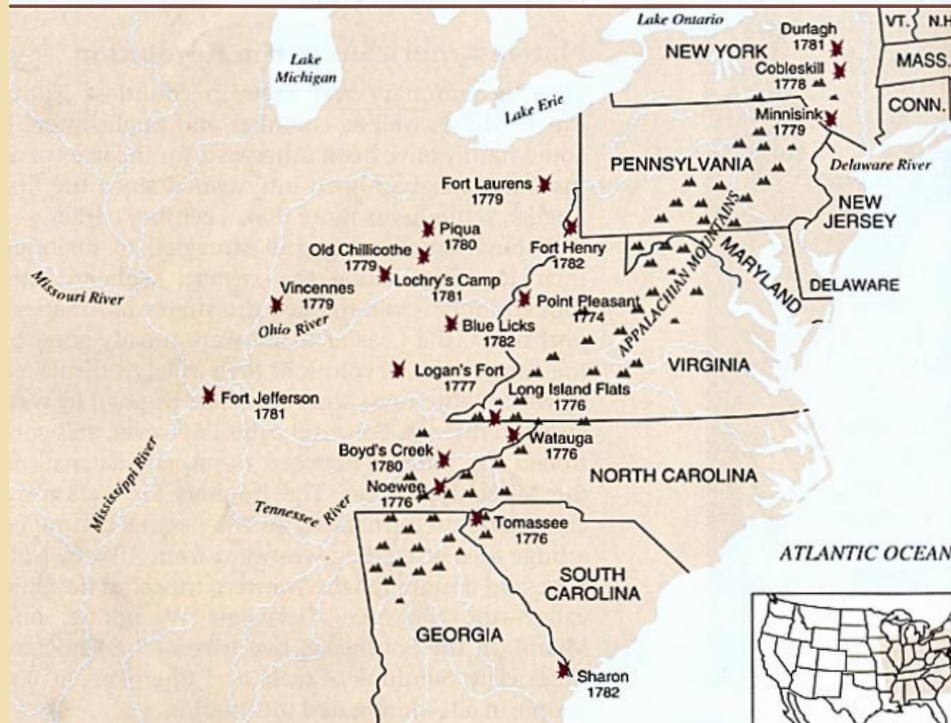
### INDIAN BATTLES AND THE WAR IN THE WEST, 1775–1783

Native Americans nations fought with their British allies in battles in the war's western theater.

Which areas saw the most battles between Indians and colonists during the Revolution?

#### Indian Battles and the War in the West, 1775–1783

Though most battles were fought along the coastal plain, the British and their Indian allies opened a second front far to the west.



Nash et al., 202.

### 4. The Devastation of the Iroquois

At a council in Albany, New York, in August 1775, representatives of the Iroquois Six Nations listened while American commissioners urged them to remain at home and keep the hatchet buried deep. “The determination of the Six Nations,” replied Little Abraham, a Mohawk leader, “[is] not to take any part; but as it is a family affair, to sit still and see you fight it out.” Iroquois neutrality, however, did not last long.

After U.S. troops raided deep into Mohawk territory west of Albany, the British argued with words, rum, and trade goods that the Iroquois should join them against the rebels. Most did so in the summer of 1777, at the urging of Joseph Brant, a Mohawk warrior who had visited England several years earlier and proclaimed England’s value as an ally against American expansion.

It was a fateful decision for Indians and whites alike. Over the next several years, the Iroquois and their British allies devastated large areas in central New York and Pennsylvania, destroying property and terrorizing the inhabitants. An officer of the Pennsylvania militia reported somberly, “Our country is on the eve of breaking up. There is nothing to be seen but disolation, fire & smoak.”

The Americans’ revenge came swiftly. During the summer of 1779, General John Sullivan led a series of punishing raids into the Iroquois country, burning villages; killing men, women, and children; and destroying fields of corn. His motto was blunt: “Civilization or death to all American savages.” By war’s end, the Iroquois had lost as many as one-third of their people as well as countless towns. Their domination of the northeastern interior was permanently shattered.

Not all the Eastern Woodland tribes sided with England in the Revolutionary War. The Oneida and the Tuscarora, members of the Iroquois confederation, fought with the Americans, their decision driven by intertribal politics and effective diplomacy by emissaries of the Continental Congress. In New England, the Stockbridge, a small tribe surrounded by a sea of white settlement, contributed warriors and scouts, while farther to the south the Catawba, similarly dependent on the Americans for trade and diplomacy, also signed on. The Indians who fought for American independence, however, reaped little reward. Though General Sullivan spared the Oneida and Tuscarora villages, the British and their Iroquois allies destroyed them in turn. And although a number of Indian warriors were compensated by grateful state governments once the war was over, tribes allied with the victorious American cause enjoyed no protection from the accelerating spread of white settlement.

## THEME TWO EXCERPTS

Most Indians had sound reason for opposing American independence, because England provided them with trade goods, arms, and markets for their furs. England, moreover, had promised protection against colonial expansion, as the Proclamation Line of 1763 had demonstrated. At the peace talks that ended the Revolutionary War, however, the British ignored their Indian allies. They received neither compensation for their losses nor guarantees of their land, for the boundary of the United States was set far to the west, at the Mississippi River.

Though the Indians' struggle against white expansion would continue, their own anticolonial war of liberation had failed. The American Revolution, declared a gathering of Indian chiefs to the Spanish governor at Saint Louis in 1784, had been "the greatest blow that could have been dealt us."

Nash et al., 202–3.

### 5. Women and the Limits of Republican Citizenship

[Unlike Native Americans and African Americans, white women seldom took up arms during the Revolution. But they, too, were very much affected by the conflict's ideas and events.] While men of the revolutionary generation battled over sharing political power, they were virtually unanimous in the belief that women should be excluded from public affairs. Though women participated in revolutionary crowds and other political activities, they continued to be denied the franchise. Except on scattered occasions, women had neither voted nor held public office during the colonial period. Nor, with rare exceptions, did they do so in revolutionary America.

In New Jersey, the constitution of 1776 opened the franchise to “all free inhabitants” meeting property and residency requirements. During the 1780s, numerous women took advantage of that opening and cast their votes, leading one disgruntled male to protest, “It is evident that women, generally, are neither by nature, nor habit, nor education . . . fitted to perform this duty with credit to themselves, or advantage to the public.” Reflecting that widely held, male belief, the New Jersey Assembly in 1807 again disenfranchised women. The author of that law, John Condict, had narrowly escaped defeat several years earlier when women voted in conspicuous numbers for his opponent. In no other state did women even temporarily secure the vote.

Prior to independence, most women had accepted the principle that political involvement fell outside the feminine sphere. The Revolution altered that attitude, for women felt the urgency of the revolutionary crisis as intensely as men. “How shall I impose a silence upon myself,” wondered Anne Emlen in 1777, “when the subject is so very interesting, so much engrossing conversation & what every member of the community is more or less concerned in?” With increasing frequency, women wrote and spoke to each other about public events, especially as they affected their own lives. Declared Eliza Wilkerson of South Carolina during the British invasion of 1780, “None were greater politicians than the several knots of ladies, who met together. All trifling discourses of fashions, and such low chat were thrown by, and we commenced perfect statesmen.”

As the war progressed, increasing numbers of women spoke out publicly. A few, such as Mercy Otis Warren and Esther DeBerdt Reed of Philadelphia, published essays explaining women's urgent desire to contribute to the Patriot cause. In her 1780 broadside “The Sentiments of an American Woman,” Reed declared that women wanted to serve like “those heroines of antiquity, who have rendered their sex illustrious,” and called on women to renounce “vain

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ornament” as they had earlier renounced English tea. The money not spent on clothing and hair styles would be the “offering of the Ladies” to Washington’s army. In Philadelphia, women responded by collecting \$300,000 in continental currency from over 1,600 individuals. Refusing Washington’s proposal that the money be mixed with general funds in the national treasury, they insisted on using it to purchase materials for shirts so that each soldier might know he had received a contribution directly from the women.

Even women’s traditional roles assumed new political meaning. With English imports cut off and the army badly in need of clothing, spinning and weaving took on patriotic significance. Coming together as Daughters of Liberty, women made shirts and other items of clothing. Charity Clarke, a New York teenager, acknowledged that she “felt Nationaly” as she knitted stockings for the soldiers. Though “heroines may not distinguish themselves at the head of an army,” she informed an English cousin, a “fighting army of amazons . . . armed with spinning wheels” would emerge in America.

Nash et al., 221–22.

# THEME TWO PRIMARY SOURCE

## REMEMBER THE LADIES

ADAMS CORRESPONDENCE, 1776

### Questions to Consider

1. Which parts of these letters are in earnest, and which parts are in jest?
2. How do Abigail and John differ in their goals for the Revolution?

*Excerpted from Abigail Adams to John Adams, 31 March 1776*

I long to hear that you have declared an independency — and by the way in the new Code of Laws which I suppose it will be necessary for you to make I desire you would Remember the Ladies, and be more generous and favourable to them than your ancestors. Do not put such unlimited power into the hands of the Husbands. Remember all Men would be tyrants if they could. If perticular care and attention is not paid to the Laidies we are determined to foment a Rebellion, and will not hold ourselves bound by any Laws in which we have no voice, or Representation.

That your Sex are Naturally Tyrannical is a Truth so thoroughly established as to admit of no dispute, but such of you as wish to be happy willingly give up the harsh title of Master for the more tender and endearing one of Friend. Why then, not put it out of the power of the vicious and the Lawless to use us with cruelty and indignity with impunity. Men of Sense in all Ages abhor those customs which treat us only as the vassals of your Sex. Regard us then as Beings placed by providence under your protection and in imitation of the Supream Being make use of that power only for our happiness.

Letter from Abigail Adams to husband John Adams, 31 March 1776,  
[http://www.masshist.org/adams/manuscripts\\_1.cfm#%23](http://www.masshist.org/adams/manuscripts_1.cfm#%23).

*John Adams to Abigail Adams, 14 April 1776*

As to Declarations of Independency, be patient. Read our Privateering Laws, and our Commercial Laws. What signifies a Word.

As to your extraordinary Code of Laws, I cannot but laugh. We have been told that our Struggle has loosened the bands of Government every where. That Children and Apprentices were disobedient

<b>Creator:</b>	Abigail Adams and John Adams
<b>Context:</b>	The couple was separated while John was serving in the Continental Congress, and Abigail had strong ideas about what the Congress should do.
<b>Audience:</b>	Each other
<b>Purpose:</b>	To stay in touch—and to influence each other

### Historical Significance:

Abigail Adams was an eloquent, opinionated, and accomplished woman by the time of the American Revolution. Her husband, John, would become one of the nation's most prominent—and conservative—founders. During his presidency, from 1797 to 1800, Abigail handled part of his correspondence.

The couple shared a deep affection for each other and wrote frequent and far-ranging letters back and forth while separated. For much of 1776, Abigail ran their home outside Boston while John represented Massachusetts in Congress at Philadelphia. In this widely quoted excerpt, the couple traded opinions on women's place in the emerging republic.

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— that schools and Colledges were grown turbulent — that Indians slighted their Guardians and Negroes grew insolent to their Masters.

But your Letter was the first Intimation that another Tribe more numerous and powerfull than all the rest were grown discontented. — This is rather too coarse a Compliment but you are so saucy, I wont blot it out

Depend upon it, We know better than to repeal our Masculine systems. Altho they are in full Force, you know they are little more than Theory. We dare not exert our Power in its full Latitude. We are obliged to go fair, and softly, and in Practice you know We are the subjects. We have only the Name of Masters, and rather than give up this, which would compleatly subject Us to the Despotism of the Peticoat, I hope General Washington, and all our brave Heroes would fight. I am sure every good Politician would plot, as long as he would against Despotism, Empire, Monarchy, Aristocracy, Oligarchy, or Ochlocracy. -- A fine Story indeed. I begin to think the Ministry as deep as they are wicked. After stirring up Tories, Landjobbers, Trimmers, Bigots, Canadians, Indians, Negroes, Hanoverians, Hessians, Russians, Irish Roman Catholicks, Scotch Renegadoes, at last they have stimulated the to demand new Priviledges and threaten to rebell.

Letter from John Adams to wife Abigail Adams, 14 April 1776,  
<http://www.masshist.org/digitaladams/aea/cfm/doc.cfm?id=L17760414ja>.

## THEME TWO

### Conclusion

Abigail Adams was one of many Americans who wanted the American Revolution to go further than conservative patriots like her husband wanted it to. To be sure, many slaves, and certainly Indians, believed that the British were more likely to advance their interests than the patriots were. But thousands of white women, working people, and African Americans hoped and asserted that the Revolution should be concerned about their rights. State governments were charged with creating constitutions that would negotiate these conflicting ideas about who should wield political power in the young nation, and how.

### Questions to Consider

1. To what extent did simple self-interest determine how African Americans, Native Americans, and white women responded to the Revolution?
2. Why did many white patriots oppose extending political rights to people of color and white women, while the British often allied themselves with slaves and Native Americans?

# THEME THREE

**Theme 3:** During this period, the writing of state constitutions provided crucial, but contested, opportunities to put democratic concepts into practice.

## Overview

The states had more power than the young federal government until the Federal Constitution of 1789, and the constitutions negotiated and created by these states during the Revolutionary War often differed a great deal from each other. Patriots disagreed over how state government should work.

Citizens of the young nation agreed that power should reside ultimately in the people, not a monarch. But they disagreed strongly on the particulars of who should wield power and how, and on how directly ordinary people should be able to participate in politics.

## Questions to Consider

1. Why were these state constitutions so varied?
2. What accounts for the bitter debates over the details of these constitutions?

## 1. Forming New Governments

Fashioning new governments would not be easy, for the American people had no experience with government making on such a scale and had to undertake it in the midst of a disruptive war. In addition, there were sharp divisions over the kinds of governments they wished to create . . .

Rather than create new systems of government, Connecticut and Rhode Island continued under their colonial charters, simply deleting all reference to the British Crown. The other 11 states, however, set their charters aside and wrote new constitutions. Within two years following 1776, all but Massachusetts had completed the task. By 1780, it had done so as well.

Given their recent experience with England and the prompting of republican theory, constitution makers began with two overriding concerns: to limit the powers of government and to make public officials closely accountable. The only certain way of accomplishing these goals was by establishing a fundamental law, in the form of a written constitution, that could serve as a standard for controlling governmental behavior . . .

Through trial and argumentation, the revolutionary generation gradually worked out a clear understanding of what a constitution was and how it should be created. In the process, it established some of the most basic doctrines of American constitutionalism: that sovereignty resides in the people; that written constitutions, produced by specially elected conventions and ratified by the people, embody their sovereign will; and that governments must function within clear constitutional limits. No principles have been more important to the preservation of American liberty.

The governments described by these new constitutions were considerably more democratic than the colonial regimes had been. Most state officials were now elected, many of them annually rather than every two or three years as before. [More and more citizens were eligible to vote.] The assemblies, moreover, were now larger and more representative than they had been prior to 1776, and many of the powers formerly exercised by colonial governors—control over the budget, veto power over legislation, and the right to appoint various state officials—were either abolished or reallocated to the assemblies.

Nash et al., 219–20.

### 2. Different Paths to the Republican Goal

In Pennsylvania, a coalition of western farmers, Philadelphia artisans, and radical leaders such as Thomas Paine, Timothy Matlack, and Thomas Young pushed through the most democratic state constitution of all. Drafted less than three months after independence, during the most intense period of political reform, it rejected the familiar English model of two legislative houses and an independent executive. Republican governments, the radicals insisted, should be simple and easily understood. The constitution thus provided for a single, all-powerful legislative house—its members annually elected and its debates open to the public. There was to be no governor; legislative committees would handle executive duties. A truly radical assumption underlay this unitary design: that only the “common interest of society” and not “separate and jarring private interests” should be represented in public affairs. Property-holding requirements for public office were abolished, and the franchise was opened to every taxpaying, white male over 21. A bill of rights guaranteed every citizen religious freedom, trial by jury, and freedom of speech.

The most radical proposal of all called for the redistribution of property. “An enormous proportion of property vested in a few individuals,” declared the proposed constitution, “is dangerous to the rights, and destructive of the common happiness of mankind.” Alarmed conservatives just managed to have the offending language removed.

Nash et al., 219–20.

Pennsylvania’s constitution attempted to make legislators directly accountable to voters. Massachusetts’s constitution instead insulated much of its government from such pressure.

# THEME THREE PRIMARY SOURCE

## ORIGINAL STATE CONSTITUTIONS FOR VIRGINIA AND PENNSYLVANIA

### Questions to Consider

1. How do the mechanisms of representative government differ in these constitutions? Is one more democratic than the other?
2. Are the tones of the documents different? How? Can you tell which state had more slaves and large plantations?

### Excerpted from Original State Constitution for Virginia (June 29, 1776)

The legislative, executive, and judiciary department, shall be separate and distinct, so that neither exercise the powers properly belonging to the other: nor shall any person exercise the powers of more than one of them, at the same time; except that the Justices of the County (courts shall be eligible to either House of Assembly

The legislative shall be formed of two distinct branches, who, together, shall be a complete Legislature. They shall meet once, or oftener, every year, and shall be called, The General Assembly of Virginia. One of these shall be called, The House of Delegates, and consist of two Representatives, to be chosen for each county, . . .

The other shall be called The Senate, and consist of twenty-four members, of whom thirteen shall constitute a House to proceed on business; for whose election, the different counties shall be divided into twenty-four districts; and each county of the respective district, at the time of the election of its Delegates, shall vote for one Senator, who is actually a resident and freeholder within the district, or duly qualified according to law, and is upwards of twenty-five years of age; and the Sheriffs of each county, within five days at farthest, after the last county election in the district, shall meet at some convenient place, and from the poll, so taken in their respective counties, return, as a Senator, the man who shall have the greatest number of votes in the whole district. To keep up this Assembly by rotation, the districts shall be equally divided into four classes and numbered by lot. At the end of one year after the general election, the six

<b>Creator:</b>	The legislatures of Pennsylvania and Virginia
<b>Context:</b>	After the colonies declared their independence from Great Britain, they had to create new constitutions to establish how they would be governed.
<b>Audience:</b>	The citizens of each state
<b>Purpose:</b>	To establish rules of governance

### Historical Significance:

Each state had to create its own constitution, its own rules for governance. The struggle over the nature of state constitutions was particularly important because the national government was so weak.

Some of the states echoed the Declaration of Independence in laying out the case for separating from Great Britain. Some included a bill of rights to protect specific civil liberties. All established and detailed how the states would be governed.

Pennsylvania's constitution was written by radical Philadelphians, devoted to the egalitarian ideas of Thomas Paine. Virginia's was the product of powerful plantation owners.

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members, elected by the first division, shall be displaced, and the vacancies thereby occasioned supplied from such class or division, by new election, in the manner aforesaid. This rotation shall be applied to each division, according to its number, and continued in due order annually.

The right of suffrage in the election of members for both Houses shall remain as exercised at present [meaning that most men would not be able to vote]; and each House shall choose its own Speaker, appoint its own officers, settle its own rules of proceeding, and direct writs of election, for the supplying intermediate vacancies . . .

A Governor, or chief magistrate, shall be chosen annually by joint ballot of both Houses (to be taken in each House respectively) deposited in the conference room; the boxes examined jointly by a committee of each House, and the numbers severally reported to them, that the appointments may be entered (which shall be the mode of taking the joint ballot of both Houses, in all cases) who shall not continue in that office longer than three years successively. nor be eligible, until the expiration of four years after he shall have been out of that office. An adequate, but moderate salary shall be settled on him, during his continuance in office; and he shall, with the advice of a Council of State, exercise the executive powers of government, according to the laws of this Commonwealth; and shall not, under any presence, exercise any power or prerogative, by virtue of any law, statute or custom of England. But he shall, with the advice of the Council of State, have the power of granting reprieves or pardons, except where the prosecution shall have been carried on by the House of Delegates, or the law shall otherwise particularly direct: in which cases, no reprieve or pardon shall be granted, but by resolve of the House of Delegates . . .

A Privy Council, or Council of State, consisting of eight members, shall be chosen, by joint ballot of both Houses of Assembly, either from their own members or the people at large, to assist in the administration of government. They shall annually choose, out of their own members, a President, who, in case of death, inability, or absence of the Governor from the government, shall act as Lieutenant-Governor. Four members shall be sufficient to act, and their advice and proceedings shall be entered on record,

and signed by the members present, (to any part whereof, any member may enter his dissent) to be laid before the General Assembly, when called for by them. This Council may appoint their own Clerk, who shall have a salary settled by law, and take an oath of secrecy, in such matters as he shall be directed by the board to conceal. A sum of money, appropriated to that purpose, shall be divided annually among the members' in proportion to their attendance; and they shall be incapable, during their continuance in office, of sitting in either House of Assembly. Two members shall be removed, by Joint ballot of both Houses of Assembly, at the end of every three years, and be ineligible for the three next years. These vacancies, as well as those occasioned by death or incapacity, shall be supplied by new elections, in the same manner.

Original state constitution for Virginia (June 29, 1776),  
<http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/states/va05.htm>.

### **Excerpted from Original State Constitution for Pennsylvania, September 28, 1776**

SECTION 1. The commonwealth or state of Pennsylvania shall be governed hereafter by an assembly of the representatives of the freemen of the same, and a president and council, in manner and form following-

SECT. 2. The supreme legislative power shall be vested in a house of representatives of the freemen of the commonwealth or state of Pennsylvania.

SECT. 3. The supreme executive power shall be vested in a president and council.

SECT. 4. Courts of justice shall be established in the city of Philadelphia, and in every county of this state.

SECT. 5. The freemen of this commonwealth and their sons shall be trained and armed for its defence under such regulations, restrictions, and exceptions as the general assembly shall by law direct, preserving always to the people the right of choosing their colonels and all commissioned officers under that rank, in such manner and as often as by the said laws shall be directed.

SECT. 6. Every freemen of the full age of twenty-one Years,

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having resided in this state for the space of one whole Year next before the day of election for representatives, and paid public taxes during that time, shall enjoy the right of an elector: Provided always, that sons of freeholders of the age of twenty-one years shall be intitled to vote although they have not paid taxes . . .

SECT. 8. No person shall be capable of being elected a member to serve in the house of representatives of the freemen of this commonwealth more than four years in seven.

SECT. 9. The members of the house of representatives shall be chosen annually by ballot, by the freemen of the commonwealth, on the second Tuesday in October forever, (except this present year,) and shall meet on the fourth Monday of the same month, and shall be stiled, The general assembly of the representatives of the freemen of Pennsylvania, and shall have power to choose their speaker, the treasurer of the state, and their other officers; sit on their own adjournments; prepare bills and enact them into laws; judge of the elections and qualifications of their own members; they may expel a member . . . . But they shall have no power to add to, alter, abolish, or infringe any part of this constitution.

PLAN OR FRAME OF GOVERNMENT FOR THE COMMONWEALTH OR  
STATE OF PENNSYLVANIA (September 28, 1776),  
<http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/states/pa08>.

# THEME THREE PRIMARY SOURCE

## PRINCE HALL PETITION

### Questions to Consider

1. What exactly did Hall want?
2. How did he justify it? Would it be accurate to characterize Hall as an Enlightenment-thinker?

To the Honorable Counsel & House of Representatives for the State of Massachusetts Bay in General Court assembled, January 13, 1777:

The petition of A Great Number of Blackes detained in a State of slavery in the bowels of a free & Christian County Humbly sheweth that your Petitioners apprehend that they have in Common with all other men a Natural and Unalienable Right to that freedom which the Grat Parent of the Universe that Bestowed equally on all menkind and which they have Never forfeited by any Compact or agreement whatever but that wher Unjustly Dragged by the hand of cruel Power and their Derest friends and sum of them Even torn from the Embraces of their tender Parents from A populous Pleasant and Plentiful country and in violation of Laws of Nature and of Nations and in Defiance of all the tender feelings of humanity Brough here Either to Be sold like Beast of burthen & Like them Condemned to Slavery for Life Among A People Professing the mild Religion of Jesus A people Not Insensible of the Secrets of Rational Being Nor without spirit to Resent the unjust endeavors of others to Reduce them to a state of Bondage and Subjugation your hononuer Need not to be informed that A Live of Slavery Like that of your petitioners Deprived of Every social privilege of Every thing Requisite and render Life Tolable is far worse that Nonexistence.

[In imitat]ion of the Lawdable Example of the Good People of these States your petitioners have Long and Patiently waited the Event of petition after petition. By them presented tot the Legislative Body of this state and cannot but with Grief Reflect that their Success hath been but too similar they Cannot but express their Astonishment that It have Never Bin Considered that Every Principle from which America has Acted in the Course of their unhappy Difficulties with Great Briton Pleads Stronger than A thousand arguments in favors of your petitioners they therfor humble Beseech your honours to give this petition its due weight and consideration & cause an act of the legislature to be past Wherby they may be Restored to the Enjoyments of that which is the Natural right of all men and their Children who wher Born in this Land of Liberty may not be held as Slaves after they arrive at the age of twenty one years so may the Inhabitance of this States No longer chargeable with the inconstancy of acting themselves that part which they condemn and oppose in others Be prospered in their present Glorious struggle for Liberty and have those Blessings to them, &c.

To the Honorable Council & House of Representatives  
for the State of Massachusetts... (January 13, 1777),  
<http://www2.volstate.edu/socialscience/FinalDocs/Revolution/petition.htm>.

<b>Creator:</b>	Prince Hall
<b>Context:</b>	Northern states allowed slavery at the time of the American Revolution, a condition that many African American patriots and early abolitionists in the North found hypocritical.
<b>Audience:</b>	The Massachusetts Legislature
<b>Purpose:</b>	To persuade them to end slavery at a time when the state constitution was being revised and debated

### Historical Significance:

The Enlightenment impulses that shaped many of the state constitutions spread far beyond arguments over how government should function and who should be allowed to vote.

Prince Hall, an African American leather worker and community leader in Boston, petitioned the state of Massachusetts early in 1777 to expand the sphere of liberty much more radically. Hall had been a slave but was free by the time of the Revolution.

## THEME THREE

### Conclusion

The Massachusetts Legislature, like its counterparts in the other twelve colonies, had to create laws of governance—constitutions—quickly to replace the longstanding laws of a nation from which they had declared their independence. The results were highly variable and often contentious. Many citizens, like Hall, were disappointed at the conservative nature of the constitutions, most of which seemed to replace one set of political elites with another.

### Questions to Consider

1. In what ways were even the more liberal state constitutions conservative?
2. What areas of government did the state constitutions leave contested or unresolved?

### Unit Conclusion

The American Revolution would prove to be a process as well as an event. Conservatives such as John Adams would not have the last word on issues like political rights for white women, African Americans, and other poor people. The ideology of equal rights that had done so much to inspire and to sustain the Revolution survived and would lead to further experiments in liberty.

## TIMELINE

- 1760** Phillis Wheatley purchased by John and Susannah Wheatley in Boston
- 1762** William Franklin becomes royal governor of New Jersey
- 1764–65** Series of restrictive acts by Great Britain culminate with Stamp Act, requiring stamp fee on printed documents
- 1764–83** Women take political role, as increasing numbers boycott British household goods and return to “homespun” over manufactured cloth
- 1765** William and Benjamin Franklin experience falling-out over Stamp Act
- 1768–70** British Troops occupy Boston, kill eight and wound four American civilians in Boston Massacre
- 1773** Boston Tea Party dumps £10,000 of tea into Boston harbor in response to Tea Act; Wheatley publishes Poems on Various Subjects Religious and Moral, becoming first published African American writer
- 1774** First Continental Congress meets in response to Coercive or Intolerable Acts imposed upon the colonies, helping make unified resistance possible
- 1775** Dragging Canoe opposes signing of Treaty of Sycamore Shoals by Cherokee elders; military action taken by British General Thomas Gage at Battles of Lexington and Concord begin Revolutionary War; Virginia governor, Lord Dunmore, offers freedom to slaves and servants willing to join British ranks
- 1775–89** Second Continental Congress, convened after start of war, acts as provisional congress until ratification of federal Constitution
- 1776** Thomas Paine’s Common Sense, published in January, sells 100,000 copies. The radical pamphlet urges Americans to declare independence. Declaration of Independence proclaimed independence of the thirteen colonies from Great Britain on July 4th; eight states draft constitutions, including New Jersey, whose state constitution opens suffrage franchise to women
- 1777** Vermont’s constitution provides unrestricted manhood suffrage and declares all adult slaves free
- 1778** United States forges an alliance with France (French Treaty of Alliance and Commerce)
- 1779** With war in North bogged down by costly stalemate, British shift theater of operations to South; as many as one of every seven Americans in Washington’s army is black; more Americans are fighting on side of the British than in George Washington’s army



## TIMELINE *cont'd*

- 1780** Massachusetts becomes last of original thirteen states to ratify its constitution
- 1781** Articles of Confederation are ratified by states under Second Continental Congress; French Naval fleets turn tide of war at Yorktown, where British General Cornwallis surrenders
- 1783** Treaty of Paris, signed in September, officially ends war; British recognize American independence and set boundary of United States at Mississippi River
- 1783–85** Loyalists, including blacks, evacuate from colonies to sites that include Nova Scotia, Great Britain, and the Caribbean
- 1786–87** In response to conservative resurgence, veteran Daniel Shays leads rebellion of farmers, echoing sentiment of Revolutionary rhetoric
- 1792** Dragging Canoe dies, reportedly from too vigorous celebration of military success, near Nashville

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## FURTHER READING

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- 2 - Fischer, David Hackett. *Liberty and Freedom: A Visual History of America's Founding Ideas*.
- 3 - Gates, Jr., Henry Louis. *The Trials of Phillis Wheatley*.
- 4 - Martin, Joseph Plum. *The Diary of Joseph Plumb Martin* (excerpts available on the Web).
- 5 - Nash, Gary B., ed. *Encyclopedia of American History*, Vol. III.
- 6 - Randall, Willard. *A Little Revenge: Benjamin Franklin & His Son*.
- 7 - Skemp, Sheila. *William Franklin*.



8 - Wiencek, Henry. *An Imperfect God: George Washington, His Slaves, and the Creation of America*.

9 - Young, Alfred F. *Masquerade: The Life and Times of Deborah Sampson, Continental Soldier*.

10 - Zinn, Howard. *A People's History of the United States*.

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## APPENDIX 1-1



THEME ONE PRIMARY SOURCE

Item 1895

Unknown, THE BOSTONIANS PAYING THE EXCISE-MAN, OR TARRING AND FEATHERING (1774).

Courtesy of the Library of Congress.

APPENDIX 1-2



THEME ONE PRIMARY SOURCE  
Item 2125  
Unknown, THE ABLE DOCTOR, OR AMERICA SWALLOWING THE BITTER DRAUGHT (1774).  
Courtesy of the Library of Congress.

## APPENDIX 1-3



THEME ONE PRIMARY SOURCE  
Item 1012  
Chez Basset, LE DESTRUCTION DE LAS STATUE ROYALE A NOUVELLE YORK/DIE ZERSTORUNG DER KONIGLICHEN BILD SAULE ZU NEU YORK  
(ca. late-1770s). Courtesy of the Library of Congress.