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*The American Revolution guaranteed the freedoms we still have in America today. When we learn about the difficult struggle to gain independence, we value and protect our freedoms.*

## Britain's American Colonies

### ***Why did England found colonies in North America?***

The first permanent English colony in North America was set up by the Virginia Company in the area that is now Virginia. The company owners wanted riches and planned to make money from the colony. People who wanted religious freedom, such as the Puritans, established other colonies in North America.

During the early 1600s, Puritans in England were persecuted (PUR • seh • kyoo • tehd) for their beliefs. When a group is persecuted, its members are punished and made to suffer. People sometimes persecute others because of religious differences.

In 1620, a group of Puritans known as the Pilgrims left Britain for America so they could worship freely. They sailed across the Atlantic Ocean in a ship called the *Mayflower* and landed in what is today the state of Massachusetts. Their settlement was called Plymouth.

### Founding Colonies

The success of Plymouth may have influenced other Puritans to come to America. In 1630, about 1,000 Puritans founded the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Others soon followed. By the mid- 1640s, more than 20,000 Puritans had settled in America.

Other people seeking religious freedom set up colonies elsewhere along the Atlantic coast. For example, English Catholics founded Maryland in 1634. The Quakers, a religious group that had also been persecuted in England, established Pennsylvania in 1680.

When the first English settlers arrived in North America, they came into contact with Native Americans. At first the two groups lived peacefully. The English learned Native American farming skills. Settlers began eating local foods, such as corn and beans. As more English settlers arrived, however, the relationship worsened. Native Americans often died of diseases brought by the English or in battles with the settlers over land.

By the early 1700s, the English had thirteen colonies along the Atlantic coast of North America. Settlers in northern colonies found a cool or moderate climate and rocky soil. The land was more suitable for smaller farms than the warmer, more fertile southern colonies. In the South, large plantations worked by enslaved African people grew crops for export.

### Self-Government in the Colonies

Self-government began early in England's American colonies. To attract more settlers, the Virginia Company gave colonists in Virginia the right to elect burgesses, or representatives. The elected burgesses formed the first House of Burgesses, modeled on England's Parliament. The House of Burgesses first met in 1619.

The House of Burgesses set an example of representative government, or a government in which people elect representatives to make laws. Other colonies soon set up their own legislatures.

The Puritans in Massachusetts also wanted to govern themselves. Before leaving the *Mayflower*, the Pilgrims signed an agreement called the Mayflower Compact. They agreed that they would choose their own leaders and make their own laws:

We, whose names are underwritten . . . Having undertaken for the glory of God, and Advancement of the Christian Faith . . . a Voyage to plant [a] colony . . . do . . . enact, constitute, and frame, such just and equal Laws . . . as shall be thought most meet [acceptable] and convenient for the general good of the Colony . . .

—from the *Mayflower Compact*

Over the years, most of the English colonies developed constitutions, or written plans of government. These documents let the colonists elect assemblies and protected their

rights.

**Explaining** What steps did the colonists take to govern themselves?

## Road to Revolt

### *How did conflict develop between Britain and its American colonies?*

During the 1700s, many changes came to England and its colonies. In 1707, England united with Scotland to form Britain. The term *British* came to mean both the English and the Scots. Meanwhile, the colonies came to depend on Britain for trade and defense.

### Trade and the Colonies

The American colonies shipped their raw materials to Britain. In return, they received British manufactured products as well as tea and spices from Asia. To control this trade, Britain passed the Navigation Acts. Under these laws, the colonists had to sell their products to Britain even if they could get a better price elsewhere. Any goods bought from other countries had to go to Britain first and be taxed before going to the Americas.

The colonists at first accepted the trade laws because Britain was a guaranteed buyer of their raw materials. Later, as the colonies grew, colonists wanted to produce their own manufactured goods. They also wanted to sell their products elsewhere if they could get higher prices. Many colonial merchants began smuggling goods in and out of the colonies. Smuggling is shipping products without paying taxes or getting government permission.

### Britain Tightens Its Controls

Between 1756 and 1763, Britain and France fought a war for control of North America. When Britain won, it gained nearly all of France's North American empire. The conflict, however, left Britain deeply in debt. Desperate for money, the British made plans to tax the American colonists and tighten trade rules.

In 1765, Parliament passed the Stamp Act, which taxed newspapers and other printed material. These items had to bear a stamp showing that the tax was paid. The colonists were outraged. They responded by boycotting British goods. Boycotting is refusing to buy specific products in protest.

Finally, nine colonies sent delegates to a Stamp Act Congress in New York City. The Congress declared that Parliament could not tax the colonies because the colonies did not have representatives in Parliament. The colonists united under the slogan, "No taxation without representation!" They believed that only colonial legislatures had the right to tax them. The British government backed down for a while, but it still needed money. In 1767, Parliament placed taxes on glass, lead, paper, paint, and tea.

### Unrest in Massachusetts

The Americans hated the new taxes. Mobs attacked royal tax collectors, and writers made fun of Britain's king. Worried, the British sent troops to Boston, Massachusetts, where the strongest protests had taken place.

In March 1770, British troops and American colonists clashed. A Boston crowd threw snowballs at British soldiers. The soldiers fired their weapons. Five people were killed. The event became known as the Boston Massacre. In response, Parliament repealed, or canceled, all of the taxes except the one on tea.

In 1773, Parliament passed the Tea Act. It allowed the British East India Company to ship tea to the colonies without paying the tax that American tea merchants had to pay. This allowed the company to sell its tea very cheaply and threatened to drive the American tea merchants out of business.

In Boston, angry colonists decided to take action. A group of protesters disguised themselves as Native Americans. They boarded British ships in Boston Harbor and dumped their tea into the water. This event is known as the Boston Tea Party.

To punish the colonists, Parliament passed laws that shut down Boston Harbor and placed Massachusetts under military control. It also required colonists to house and feed British soldiers. The colonists called these laws the Intolerable Acts, or laws they could not accept. The Acts made the colonies realize that they had to work together to defend their liberties. In September 1774, delegates from twelve colonies met in Philadelphia at the First Continental Congress. They demanded that the Intolerable Acts be repealed. Colonial leaders, however, could not agree about what to do. Some, such as George Washington of Virginia, hoped to settle the dispute with Britain. Others, like Samuel Adams of Massachusetts and Patrick Henry of Virginia, wanted the colonies to declare independence.

**Identifying Cause and Effect** What were the Intolerable Acts? How did the colonists respond to them?

## A War for Independence

**How did war between Britain and the American colonies lead to the rise of a new nation—the United States of America?**

While colonial leaders debated, fighting began in Massachusetts. British soldiers set out to destroy colonial weapons being stored in the town of Concord. On April 19, 1775, they met armed colonists at Lexington and fought the first battle of the American Revolution.

News of the conflict spread throughout the colonies. In May 1775, the Second Continental Congress met in Philadelphia. It created an army with George Washington as commander. The Congress, however, tried one last time to settle differences with the British. Members sent an appeal to King George III, but he refused to listen.

More and more Americans began to think that independence was the only answer. In January 1776, in a pamphlet called *Common Sense*, writer Thomas Paine called on the colonists to break away from Britain.

## The Declaration of Independence

On July 4, 1776, the Congress issued the Declaration of Independence. Written by Thomas Jefferson of Virginia, the Declaration stated that the colonies were separating from Britain and forming a new nation—the United States of America.

In the Declaration, Jefferson explained why the Americans were creating a new nation. He referred to John Locke's idea that people can overthrow a government that ignores their rights. The Declaration stated that "all men are created equal" and have certain God-given rights. King George III had violated colonists' rights, and so the colonists had the right to rebel.

## An American Victory

The Declaration turned the conflict into a war for independence. The struggle was long and bitter. The American Continental Army had fewer and less-disciplined soldiers than the British. However, they had a skilled general in Washington. The British had the disadvantage of trying to fight a war a long way from home. Also, they had to conquer the whole country to win. The Americans only had to hold out until the British accepted defeat.

The turning point came in October 1777 when the Americans won the Battle of Saratoga in New York. France, Britain's old enemy, realized that the colonists might win and agreed to help the Americans.

The final victory came in 1781 at the Battle of Yorktown in Virginia. American and French forces surrounded and trapped the British. The British surrendered. Peace talks began, and two years later, the Treaty of Paris ended the war. Britain finally accepted American independence.

## The United States Constitution

The United States at first was a confederation, or a loose union of independent states. Its plan of government was called the Articles of Confederation. The Articles created a national government, but the states held most powers. It soon became clear that the Articles were too weak to deal with the new nation's problems.

To change the Articles, 55 delegates met in Philadelphia in 1787. They decided instead to write a constitution for an entirely new national government. The new United States Constitution set up a federal system, which divided powers between the national government and the states. The delegates divided power in the national government between executive, legislative, and judicial branches. A system called checks and balances enabled each branch to limit the powers of the other branches.

The Constitution made the United States a republic with an elected president. In 1789, George Washington was elected the first president of the United States. That same year, a Bill of Rights was added to the Constitution. The Bill of Rights guaranteed certain rights to citizens that the government could not violate. These rights included freedom of religion, speech, and press, and the right to trial by jury.

The U.S. Constitution was shaped by Enlightenment principles. One of these is popular sovereignty, or the idea that government receives its powers from the people. Another principle is limited government, or the idea that a government may use only those powers given to it by the people.

**Explaining** What kind of government did the Americans set up after the American Revolution?

## LESSON 1 REVIEW

### Review Vocabulary

1. Use the words *persecute* and *boycott* in a sentence about the American colonies.

2. What is meant by *popular sovereignty* and why was it important?

### Answer the Guiding Questions

3. **Evaluating** Why did the success of the Pilgrims influence others to settle in the Americas?

4. **Making Connections** What types of British laws did American colonists protest the most?

5. **Drawing Conclusions** Why do you think it was important for the authors of the Constitution to create a Bill of Rights?

6. **ARGUMENT** Write a short essay from the viewpoint of Thomas Paine in which you try to persuade American colonists to declare independence from Britain.