CHAPTER 4

The American Revolution

ANTICIPATION/REACTION

Directions: Before you begin reading this chapter, place a check mark beside any of the following seven statements with which you now agree. Use the column entitled “Anticipation.” When you have completed your study of this chapter, come back to this section and place a check mark beside any of the statements with which you then agree. Use the column entitled “Reaction.” Note any variation in the placement of check marks from anticipation to reaction and explain why you changed your mind.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anticipation</th>
<th>Reaction</th>
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<tr>
<td>_____ 1. The first major battle of the Revolutionary War occurred before independence was declared.</td>
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<td>_____ 3. Once independence was officially declared, Americans unified in support of the Patriot cause.</td>
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<td>_____ 4. The individual states drafted constitutions before a national constitution was ratified.</td>
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<td>_____ 5. Ironically, Americans, incensed by British taxation, financed the Revolutionary War by imposing heavy taxes on themselves.</td>
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<td>_____ 6. The winning of independence was accompanied by significant social reforms and basic changes in the structure of American society.</td>
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<td>_____ 7. A sense of national loyalty was more a product of the Revolutionary War than a cause of it.</td>
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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading Chapter 4 you should be able to:

1. Analyze the intent and the content of the Declaration of Independence.
2. Compare and contrast the advantages and disadvantages of the British and Americans as the Revolutionary War began.
3. Identify the key battles of the Revolutionary War and explain how the Americans were able to win their independence.
4. Describe the main characteristics of the national and state governments that were created during the Revolutionary War.
5. Summarize the major short-term consequences of the Revolutionary War for the United States.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

“The Shot Heard Round the World”

The American Revolutionary War began in 1775 when Parliament declared Massachusetts in a state of rebellion and Massachusetts Patriots took up arms. Massachusetts “Minute Men” confronted British regulars at Lexington and Concord and sniped at British troops as they returned to Boston. Massachusetts received reinforcements as other colonies rallied to the cause.

The Second Continental Congress

Compared to their predecessors, it was a more radical group of delegates that met at the Second Continental Congress in Philadelphia in May 1775. Although it had no legal authority, the Congress set about dealing with the military crisis. It created the Continental Army and appointed George Washington as its commander.

The Battle of Bunker Hill

Meanwhile, American forces took a heavy toll of British regulars before withdrawing from the Battle of Bunker Hill, a battle that virtually eliminated the possibility of reconciliation between the colonies and Great Britain. General William Howe took command of British troops in America, and King George III formally proclaimed the colonies to be “in open rebellion.” The Continental Congress condemned recent British policies and refused to submit to British “tyranny.” Congress then ordered an attack on Canada, commissioned a navy, and began seeking foreign aid.

The Great Declaration

Still, many hesitated at declaring independence. They disliked being labeled traitors, feared the possibility of social revolution upheaval in the new states, and were apprehensive about the likely success of self-government. But two events moved the colonies toward independence: Britain’s callous employment of Hessian soldiers, and Thomas Paine’s publication of Common Sense. Paine’s call for independence and republican government profoundly affected public
opinion. Congress commissioned privateers to attack British commerce, opened all ports to foreign shipping, and called upon the states to draft constitutions and establish independent governments.

Finally, Congress appointed a committee to draft a Declaration of Independence. Thomas Jefferson’s Declaration justified the right of revolution and defined republican government. It also contained a bill of indictment against George III. The Declaration was a self-conscious attempt to convince the world that the Americas had good reasons to create a government of their own.

1776: The Balance of Forces

The British had the formidable task of bringing men and supplies all the way from England. Britain was also hampered by the mismanagement of its army, a reluctance to expend blood and money in another American war, and the need to protect its European flank. Nevertheless, Britain had superior resources in population, war materials, and industrial capacity, and it had control of the seas and a well-trained and experienced army. Americans, on the other hand, were chronically short of money and the tools of war. George Washington commanded an inexperienced and poorly-supplied army.

Loyalists

Perhaps a fifth of the colonists were Loyalists (Tories), who rejected independence for the colonies. Colonists who were most likely to be Loyalists were royal appointees, Anglican clergymen, merchants with close connections in Britain, or minority groups who counted on London for protection. Loyalists were not well organized and were often physically abused by Patriots, forced into exile, or had their property confiscated.

Early British Victories

British general William Howe failed to pursue his advantage promptly, or he may have ended the war with the Battle of Long Island in 1776. Washington learned rapidly, however, and he was seldom thereafter caught so vulnerable. Howe went into winter quarters in New York while the Americans boosted their morale with victories at Trenton and Princeton.

Saratoga and the French Alliance

The complicated British campaign to isolate New England from the other colonies in 1777 ended in a fiasco. Instead of following prearranged plans, Howe left New York to capture Philadelphia, and General Burgoyne’s army was forced to surrender at the key Battle of Saratoga. With the
victory at Saratoga, France allied itself with the colonies. This changed the course and character of the war in the Americans’ favor, but they did not yet have it won.

The War Moves South

In 1778, the British replaced Howe with General Clinton, moved back to New York, and changed strategy. They now focused on the southern colonies, hoping to utilize their sea power, Loyalist supporters, and southern slaves. They dealt the Americans their worst defeat of the war at Charleston. Nathanael Greene then conducted a guerrilla campaign against British general Cornwallis’ army as it moved north toward Virginia.

Victory at Yorktown

Cornwallis encamped at Yorktown, Virginia, where he hoped to be resupplied by sea. But the French navy took control of Chesapeake Bay, and Washington’s Continental Army, the Virginia militia, and French troops trapped Cornwallis’ army. Cornwallis surrendered in October 1781.

The Peace of Paris

Facing defeats elsewhere in the world and a doubled national debt, the British government gave up trying to suppress the rebellion after Yorktown and opened peace negotiations. American peace commissioners maneuvered the British into a generous peace. In the 1783 Treaty of Paris the British acknowledged American independence and transferred control of trans-Appalachia to the new nation. Further, the United States won fishing rights off Canada, and the British agreed to evacuate United States territory. The United States promised to recommend the restitution of Loyalist properties and not to impede the British collection of prewar debts. America’s diplomats shrewdly played the European powers against each other to achieve these favorable terms.

Forming a National Government

In 1777, the Continental Congress submitted a national constitution—the Articles of Confederation—for ratification by the states. But the Articles were not ratified until disputes over state representation and western land claims were resolved in 1781. Under the Articles, each state retained its essential sovereignty and was equally represented in the national congress. The central government had no power to tax or to enforce its authority.
Financing the War

The Continental Congress and the states cooperated in conducting the Revolutionary War. Congress supported the Continental Army and each state raised a militia. States spent money in support of the war and met Congress’ request for military supplies. Congress borrowed money by selling war bonds and accepting foreign loans. It also issued millions in depreciating paper currency that resulted in inflation. But, superintendent of finance Robert Morris got the country back on a hard money basis after Yorktown and was able to inspire confidence in the new government’s financial stability.

State Republican Governments

States began writing their constitutions even before the Declaration of Independence was drafted. Generally, the new state governments were responsive to public opinion, had a powerful elected legislature, and limited the power of governors and judges. Americans saw their legislators as actual representatives carrying out the wishes of the voters in their home districts. Each state constitution had a bill of rights to protect individual liberties. These state constitutions, written frames of government based on the compact principle of government, were one of the most important innovations of the era: a peaceful method for altering the political system.

Social Reform

Many states introduced important new social and political reforms. Steps were taken to reapportion state legislatures, reform inheritance laws, and separate church and state. Many states also acted against slavery. Enlightenment thought, Revolutionary rhetoric, and blacks’ service in the Patriot army and navy posed questions about the morality of slavery. During the Revolution, all the states abolished the slave trade. Beginning in 1780, northern states enacted legislation to gradually abolish slavery, and most southern states removed restrictions on voluntary emancipation of slaves. Still, slavery died only in the North where it was economically unimportant.

Overall, the Revolution produced little of the economic and political upheaval usually associated with revolution. People paid lip service to equality and less willingly deferred to elite leadership, but property confiscated from Loyalists was not redistributed to the poor, and high property ownership requirements for office holding remained the rule. Two other consequences of the Revolution were that the states initiated the convention system of drafting and rewriting constitutions, and state governments became more responsive to public opinion.
**Effects of the Revolution on Women**

Revolutionary rhetoric and the Declaration of Independence, with their stress on liberty and equality, helped strengthened the legal rights of women. It became easier for women to obtain divorces. Male attitudes toward women were not much changed, but the war effort increased the influence of women in several ways. During the war women demonstrated their competence by managing farms and shops. The education of women was vitalized by recognition of their role in training the next generation to be well-educated citizens of the new republic.

**Growth of a National Spirit**

The common goal of independence united the colonies, and American nationalism developed during the conflict with Great Britain. Although local ties remained strong, American nationalism sprang from the experience of shared sacrifices, the wartime mobility of leaders, and the need to find common solutions to wartime problems. Wartime disruption of the economy encouraged manufacturing and interstate trade that in turn encouraged pride in America’s greater self-sufficiency.

**The Great Land Ordinances**

When ceded to the national government, western lands also became a nationalizing force. The Land Ordinance of 1785 stipulated that the national government survey and sell the public lands at auction. While the ordinance ensured orderly development of the West, its provisions favored land-development companies over typical family farmers. The Northwest Ordinance of 1787 established governments for the West, set guidelines for transforming territories into republican states, and banned slavery from the Northwest Territory. While they were territories, western governments would have appointed governors and judges, elected legislatures, and nonvoting delegates to Congress. Under these provisions, territories were nurtured toward guaranteed statehood.

**National Heroes**

The Revolution further fostered nationalism by providing national heroes. Above all others was George Washington, who was revered for his personal sacrifice while leading his forces in adversity. Washington was admired as a man of deeds, a bold Patriot, and a respected leader of unquestionable integrity.
A National Culture

Post-Revolutionary nationalism strengthened the desire for a distinctly American culture. American churches broke their ties to Europe, Noah Webster promoted nationalizing influences in language and education, and painters and writers chose patriotic American themes. Though still intensely loyal to their own states, Americans were becoming increasingly aware of their common interests and increasingly proud of their common heritage.

PEOPLE, PLACES, AND THINGS

Define the following:

right of revolution

actual representation

constitutional convention

nationalism

Describe the following:

Battle of Bunker Hill

Declaration of Causes and Necessity for Taking up Arms

Common Sense
Declaration of Independence

Battle of Long Island

Battle of Saratoga

Battle of Yorktown

Peace of Paris, 1783

Articles of Confederation

Land Ordinance of 1785

Northwest Ordinance of 1787

Identify the following:

Second Continental Congress

George Washington
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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<tr>
<td>William Howe</td>
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<td>Hessians</td>
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<td>Thomas Paine</td>
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<td>Thomas Jefferson</td>
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<tr>
<td>George III</td>
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<tr>
<td>Loyalists/Tories</td>
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<td>John Burgoyne</td>
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<td>Horatio Gates</td>
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<td>Nathanael Greene</td>
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<td>Charles Cornwallis</td>
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<td>Benedict Arnold</td>
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Locate the following places. Write in both the place name and its map location number.

1. Where the first skirmishes of the Revolutionary War occurred.

2. Site of the first pitched battle of the Revolutionary War.

3. Site of two psychologically important Patriot victories over British forces in 1776.

4. Where Washington’s army suffered a difficult winter encampment in 1777.

5. Where Americans suffered their worst defeat of the Revolutionary War.

6. Where the surrender of a British army helped forge a formal alliance between the colonies and France.

7. Where the surrender of a British army effectively ended the British effort to try to suppress the rebellion in the colonies.

8. The new territory the United States acquired from Britain in the Peace of Paris of 1783.

9. The area banned to slavery by the Northwest Ordinance of 1787.
SELF-TEST

Multiple-Choice Questions

1. What is the correct time order of (A) Battle of Bunker Hill, (B) George III proclaims the colonies in open rebellion, (C) Congress adopts the “Declaration of the Causes and Necessity of Taking Up Arms”?

   A. C, B, A
   B. B, A, C
   C. A, B, C
   D. A, C, B
2. The British view following the Boston Tea Party that other colonies would not rally to the aid of New Englanders was based on
   A. the behavior of colonial militia units during the French and Indian War.
   B. information provided by colonial agents who represented the colonies in Parliament.
   C. the hesitancy of other colonies, southern colonies in particular, to resist the Sugar and Stamp acts and the Townshend duties.
   D. intelligence reports from British spies in the colonies.

3. The Declaration of Independence did NOT
   A. call upon the states to draft constitutions.
   B. justify the right of revolution.
   C. describe a theory of republican government.
   D. blame George III for the colonies’ discontent.

4. As the Revolutionary War began, Britain’s disadvantages included all of the following EXCEPT
   A. a poorly-disciplined army.
   B. a long supply line.
   C. inefficient and poor military leadership.
   D. European enemies anxious to take advantage of the situation.

5. In the winter of 1776, Washington’s army boosted the Patriots’ morale by winning victories at
   A. Philadelphia and Brandywine.
   C. Trenton and Princeton.
   D. Ticonderoga and Crown Point.

6. The British military strategy for 1777 was to
   A. occupy Boston.
   B. invade the southern colonies.
   C. isolate New England from the other colonies.
   D. hold colonial cities and let the Americans have the countryside.

7. The key significance of the Battle of Saratoga was that it
   A. forced Britain to sue for peace.
   B. began a successful colonial invasion of Canada.
   C. encouraged the French to ally with the colonies.
   D. proved the Continental Army was superior to colonial militia.
8. The worst American defeat of the Revolutionary War was at
   A. Bunker Hill.
   B. Trenton.
   C. Saratoga.
   D. Charleston.

9. The major fighting of the Revolutionary War began in _______, then moved to _______, and ended in _______.
   A. New England; the South; the Middle Colonies
   B. the South; New England; the Middle Colonies
   C. New England; the Middle Colonies; the South
   D. the Middle Colonies; New England; the South

10. In the 1783 Peace of Paris, the new boundaries of the United States did NOT include the
    A. Gulf of Mexico.
    B. Great Lakes.
    C. Mississippi River.
    D. St. Lawrence River.

11. In the 1783 Peace of Paris, Americans did NOT agree to
    A. recommend the return of Loyalists’ property.
    B. allow the British to collect prewar debts.
    C. end the alliance with France.
    D. accept British terms on Canadian fishing rights.

12. Ratification of the Articles of Confederation was delayed by a dispute over
    A. the financial obligation of each state to the national government.
    B. the cession of state-claimed western lands to the national government.
    C. the expansion of slavery into western lands.
    D. using actual or virtual representation in the national government.

13. Congress did NOT use _____ to finance the Revolutionary War.
    A. bond sales
    B. foreign loans
    C. currency issues
    D. heavy taxes

14. The most powerful institution in the new state governments was the
    A. governor.
    B. courts.
    C. legislature.
    D. bureaucracy.
15. During or just after the Revolutionary War, all of the following were true EXCEPT
   A. northern states abolished slavery.
   B. blacks served in the Patriot army and navy.
   C. southern states outlawed voluntary emancipation.
   D. slavery was banned from the Northwest Territory.

16. A political innovation of the new states as they established their independence was
   A. constitutional conventions.
   B. political parties.
   C. representative assemblies.
   D. bicameral legislatures.

17. An important consequence of the American Revolution was that
   A. each colony separated church and state.
   B. it produced major social and economic upheaval.
   C. governments became more responsive to public opinion.
   D. confiscated properties were redistributed to the poor.

18. The American Revolution did NOT significantly improve
   A. women’s ability to obtain divorce.
   B. women’s legal rights.
   C. men’s attitude toward women’s equality.
   D. the appreciation of women’s role in the education of the young.

19. The Northwest Ordinance of 1787 did NOT provide for
   A. the survey and sale of public lands.
   B. a territorial form of government.
   C. a procedure for transforming territories into states.
   D. the banning of slavery from the Northwest Territory.

20. All of the following contributed to the development of American nationalism EXCEPT
   A. George Washington.
   B. George Clinton.
   C. Benjamin Franklin.
   D. Noah Webster.

**Essay Questions**

1. Compare and contrast the relative strengths and weaknesses of the British and Americans as they went to war in 1775.

2. Explain why, in 1776, Americans were prepared to declare their independence from Britain.

3. Explain how the Americans were able to win their independence in the Revolutionary War.
4. Describe the key features of the Articles of Confederation national government, the several state governments, and the land ordinances of the 1780s. Suggest how they each reflect the democratic republicanism of the Revolutionary generation.

5. List the significant consequences of the American Revolution for blacks and women, and for the national spirit.

CRITICAL THINKING EXERCISE

Facts, Inferences, and Judgments

Being able to distinguish between a statement of fact, an inference, or a judgment is an important skill to critical thinking. It involves knowing what can be proven directly, what is a legitimate implication derived from the facts, and what is fair to conclude from the historical record.

Historians typically interweave facts, inferences they derive from the facts, and their own judgments into a seamless historical narrative. Active and analytical readers—critical thinkers—must be able to distinguish between these three types of communication:

- A **fact** reports information that can be directly observed, or can be verified or checked for accuracy.
  
  *Example:* The statement, “Until the adult male population of the entire area reached 5,000, it was to be ruled by a governor and three judges . . .” can be checked for factual accuracy by consulting the Northwest Ordinance.

- An **inference** is a logical conclusion based on factual information, yet goes beyond factual information to make a more general statement about something.
  
  *Example:* The statement, “The western lands . . . became a force for unity once they had been ceded to the national government” implies that by their act of giving up their individual claims to western territories, each state placed the union of all the states above their individual interests; thus, the western lands became a force for unity.

- A **judgment** expresses an evaluation based on certain criteria which may or may not be expressed but assesses the rightness or wrongness of an act, whether it was good or bad.
  
  *Example:* The statement, “Seldom has a legislative body acted more wisely,” expresses the author’s judgment that the enactment of the Northwest Ordinance was a good thing, that it was the right thing to do to advance the interests of the nation.
Generally, facts are constants in historical study. But a compendium of facts is inevitably incomplete and dull reading. Historians narrow the gaps in their knowledge about the past, increase our understanding, and enliven historical narrative by drawing logical inferences from facts they have assembled and classified. Often, they then use their expertise to arrive at a considered judgment about the wisdom or significance of past decisions and events.

Distinguishing statements of fact, inference, and judgment may at first seem difficult to do. That is because often they are woven closely together. It takes a special and conscious effort to distinguish between these three types of communication. But the effort will be rewarded because it will make reading history (or any subject) more interesting to you. And it will help develop your critical thinking abilities by enabling you to distinguish information from opinions.

Practice this skill on the following excerpt from the textbook. For each of the numbered statements in the excerpt, circle F for fact, I for inference, or J for judgment on the answer grid that follows the excerpt.
(1) Seeing no future in the Carolinas and unwilling to vegetate at Wilmington, 
(2) Cornwallis marched north into Virginia, where he joined forces with troops under 
Benedict Arnold. . . .

(3) General Clinton ordered Cornwallis to establish a base at Yorktown, where he 
could be supplied by sea. . . (4) It was a terrible mistake. (5) The British navy in 
American waters far outnumbered American and French vessels, but . . . (6) the French had 
a fleet in the West Indies under Admiral François de Grasse and another squadron at 
Newport, Rhode Island, where a French army was stationed. (7) In the summer of 1781, 
Washington, de Grasse, and the Comte de Rochambeau, commander of French land forces, 
designed and carried out with an efficiency unparalleled in eighteenth-century warfare a 
complex plan to bottle up Cornwallis.

(8) The British navy in the West Indies and at New York might have forestalled this 
scheme had it moved promptly and in force. (9) But Admiral Sir George Rodney sent only 
part of his Indies fleet. (10) As a result, (11) De Grasse, after a battle with a British fleet 
. . . won control of the Chesapeake and cut Cornwallis off from the sea.

(12) The next move was up to Washington, and this was his finest hour as a 
commander. (13) He desperately wanted to attack the British base at New York, but at the 
urging of Rochambeau he agreed instead to strike at Yorktown. . . . (14) He soon had 
early 17,000 French and American veterans in position.

(15) Cornwallis was helpless. (16) He held out until October 17 and then asked for 
terms [of surrender]. . . .