

# Revolutionary War

## 1775–1783



The Revolutionary War was between the American colonies and Great Britain. The colonies wanted freedom from Great Britain. They did not like the way the British government treated them. The first shot was fired on April 19, 1775. A group of delegates from the colonies had an idea for a document in 1776. It became the *Declaration of Independence*.

In the mid 1700s, the colonists talked about being free to choose their own rules. The colonists began to dislike the King of England. They did not like some British laws. The colonies had different needs. They had different social ideas. They had different religions. Soon, there were more and more problems between the two. The British liked mercantilism. This meant that they would control trade. The colonists wanted free trade. They wanted the right to have any business they choose. The British passed laws such as the Navigation Acts to control trade. Many colonists ignored those laws.

The French and Indian War ended in 1763. British Prime Minister George Grenville wanted more control over the colonies. He wanted the colonies to help to pay for the war and for the British troops still in the colonies. The colonists disliked his taxes. This led to a revolt against the British.

The first shots were fired on April 19, 1775. This started the Revolutionary War. People from the thirteen colonies met on May 10, 1775, in Philadelphia. This was the Second Continental Congress. On the same day, Ethan Allen led an army. They took Fort Ticonderoga in New York. Seth Warner took Crown Point. The British still occupied Boston. Congress chose George Washington to be the commander of the new Continental Army. The British won the Battle of Bunker Hill, across the river from Boston.

The war had become very grim. Some colonists stayed loyal to the British. They were called Loyalists. Ben Franklin's son, William, was a Loyalist. There were Loyalists among both the rich and the poor. Many of the colonists did not take sides. They wanted to see who would win.

Thomas Paine wrote a document called *Common Sense* in 1776. It was written to encourage more colonists to support the revolution. It was read everywhere. At first, the Continental Army did not do well. They could not get Canada to join the Revolution. They lost the Battle of Quebec. The British left Boston and went to Halifax to regroup. Washington's army was still not doing well.

Congress declared independence in 1776. The *Declaration of Independence* was adopted on July 4, 1776. It did not help at first. New York harbor was invaded. British General William Howe and his brother, Admiral Richard Howe, were in charge. They really liked the colonists and agreed with them on some things. They wanted to end the war. Unfortunately, it was too late. The British attacked New York. Washington lost a battle at Brooklyn Heights. He retreated north. They lost at Harlem Heights. They lost at White Plains. They moved back to New Jersey. Then he moved his troops to their winter camp in Pennsylvania. Thomas Paine wrote another document called *The Crisis*. It inspired the colonists the war could be won. Washington made a risky trip across the Delaware River. He began winning small battles, such as those at Trenton and Princeton. These wins showed the British the war would not be easy for them to win.

The colonists got help from some French officers and soldiers in 1777. The colonists won another battle. This was the Battle of Saratoga. France and the United States became friends. Benjamin Franklin and the French foreign minister signed a treaty in 1778. This treaty sent French troops to help the Americans. The Americans were able to beat the British in many more battles. They were able to keep the war going for several more years.

The war ended on September 3, 1783. The British, the Americans, and the French signed the Treaty of Paris. The new nation was recognized. The leaders were heroes. Washington became the first president six years later.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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### Discussion Questions:

1. When were the first shots fired?
2. Who wanted to tighten political control over the colonies?
3. What happened on the same day as the meeting of the Second Continental Congress?
4. Who wrote the pamphlet, *Common Sense*?
5. What treaty ended the Revolutionary War?