

Nevertheless, American colonists dutifully fought alongside British soldiers, while the French allied themselves with several Native American tribes (hence the name “French and Indian War”). This war ended after the British captured most of France’s major cities and forts in Canada and the Ohio Valley.

### Pontiac’s Rebellion

The powerful Ottawa chief **Pontiac**, who had no intention of allowing land-hungry whites to steal more tribal lands, united many of the tribes in the volatile Ohio Valley and led a series of raids on British forts and American settlements. British forces eventually squashed **Pontiac’s Rebellion**. As a conciliatory gesture toward the Native Americans, Parliament issued the **Proclamation of 1763**, forbidding American colonists to settle on Native American territory unless native rights to the land had first been obtained by purchase or treaty.

### The End of Salutary Neglect

The French and Indian War also motivated Parliament to end the age of **salutary neglect**. Prime Minister **George Grenville** began enforcing the ancient **Navigation Acts** in 1764, passed the **Sugar Act** to tax sugar, and passed the **Currency Act** to remove paper currencies (many from the French and Indian War period) from circulation. A year later, he passed the **Stamp Act**, which placed a tax on printed materials, and the **Quartering Act**, which required Americans to house and feed British troops.

### Taxation Without Representation

The Sugar Act was the first fully enforced tax levied in America solely for the purpose of raising revenue. Americans throughout the thirteen colonies cried out against “**taxation without representation**” and made informal nonimportation agreements of certain British goods in protest. Several colonial leaders convened the **Stamp Act Congress** in New York to petition Parliament and King George III to repeal the tax. In 1766, Parliament bowed to public pressure and repealed the Stamp Act. But it also quietly passed the **Declaratory Act**, which stipulated that Parliament reserved the right to tax the colonies anytime it chose.

### The Townshend Acts and Boston Massacre

In 1767, Parliament passed the **Townshend Acts**, which levied another series of taxes on lead, paints, and tea known as the **Townshend Duties**. In the same series of acts, Britain passed the **Suspension Act**, which suspended the New York assembly for not enforcing the Quartering Act. To prevent violent protests, Massachusetts Governor Thomas Hutchinson requested assistance from the British army, and in 1768, four thousand redcoats landed in the city to help maintain order. Nevertheless, on March 5, 1770, an angry mob clashed with several British

## Key People

**George Washington** - Commander of the Continental Army

**Nathanael Greene** - Aide to Washington; one of the highest-ranking and most respected American generals in the war

**Baron von Steuben** - German commander who helped George Washington and Nathanael Greene train the Continental army

**Thomas Paine** - Radical philosopher who strongly supported republicanism; wrote 1776 pamphlet *Common Sense*, which was a best-seller in the American colonies

**Joseph Brant** - Mohawk chief who advocated alliance with Britain against American forces in the Revolutionary War

## *Training the Continental Army*

As the colonies prepared themselves for war, new militias were formed throughout America, primarily to defend local communities from British aggression. Other units, however, rushed to join their comrades in Boston as soon as every man had a musket. Under the strict command of **George Washington**, **Nathanael Greene**, and the German **Baron von Steuben**, this ragtag collection of undisciplined militiamen eventually became the well-trained **Continental Army**.

## *Popular Support for the War*

When the Revolutionary War began, Britain made a costly and ultimately fatal error in assuming that opposition to British policies came only from a core group of rabble-rousing ringleaders such as Washington, Jefferson, and the Adams cousins. The British believed, incorrectly, that if they arrested these men, the revolt would collapse and the minutemen would return to their homes. They failed to understand that a significant majority of Americans disliked British rule and desired something better. Historians estimate that the majority of eligible American men served at some point in the Continental Army, the militias, or both.

## *Patriotic Women*

Many American women supported the war effort as well. Some particularly daring women chose to serve as nurses, attendants, cooks, and even spies on the battlefields. Others, such as the famous “**Molly Pitcher**” (a woman named Mary Hays McCauly, who fought in her husband’s place) and **Deborah Sampson** (who disguised herself as a man) saw action in battle. Most women, however, fought the war at home. As more and more husbands and fathers left home to fight, more and more wives and mothers took to managing the farms and businesses. A majority

The Native American decision to ally themselves with the British and raid American outposts and towns proved in the end to be a fatal one. Most believed that the British were a sure bet and that the rebellious colonies stood almost no chance of winning. The ultimate British surrender was a huge loss for Native Americans: white settlers were already pushing westward, and after the war, they felt justified in their taking of native lands.

### ***African Americans***

Blacks, too, generally supported the British because an American victory would only keep them in bondage. Although roughly 5,000 blacks did serve in militias for the United States, most who had the opportunity chose to flee to British and Loyalist areas that promised freedom from slavery. Consequently, colonies both north and south lost tens of thousands of slaves.

To some degree, blacks fared better after the war than before. Faced with the somewhat embarrassing predicament of supporting the premise that "all men are created equal," as stated in the Declaration of Independence, while at the same time practicing human bondage, many states, such as Vermont, eventually abolished slavery. Other states legislated more gradual forms of emancipation. As a result, the number of free blacks in the United States skyrocketed into the tens of thousands by the end of the century. Slavery was by no means a dead institution (as the early 1800s proved), but these liberal decisions made during the war were significant steps forward on the road to equality.

### ***Undecided Colonists***

Finally, some men and women were neither patriots nor Loyalists and opted to take a wait-and-see approach. Civilian casualties remained low throughout the war, so such fence-sitting was an attractive alternative for some colonists. Some of the colonies, however, tried to curb the number of free riders by passing laws that essentially ordered citizens to choose sides. Able-bodied men who failed to join militias were prosecuted in some colonies for failing to show support for the patriotic cause.

## **The Declaration of Independence: 1776**

### **Events**

June 7 Second Continental Congress begins to debate independence

July 2 Second Continental Congress votes to declare independence

July 4 Delegates sign Declaration of Independence

## ***Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness***

The Declaration's second paragraph begins the body of the text with the famous line, "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." With these protections, any American, regardless of class, religion, gender, and eventually race, could always strive—and even sometimes succeed—at improving himself via wealth, education, or labor. With those seven final words, Jefferson succinctly codified the American Dream.

## ***The Social Contract***

Jefferson argued that governments derived their power from the people—a line of reasoning that sprang from the writings of contemporary philosophers including **Jean-Jacques Rousseau** and **Thomas Paine**. Both had argued that people enter into a **social contract** with the body that governs them and that when the government violates that contract, the people have the right to establish a new government. These notions of a contract and accountability were radical for their time, because most Europeans believed that their monarchs' power was granted by God. The Declaration of Independence thus established a new precedent for holding monarchies accountable for their actions.

## ***Abuses by George III***

In the Declaration, Jefferson also detailed the tyrannical "abuses and usurpations" that George III committed against the American colonies. Jefferson claimed that the king had wrongly shut down representative colonial legislatures, refused to allow the colonies to legislate themselves, and convened legislatures at inconvenient locations. He also accused the king of illegally assuming judicial powers and manipulating judges and the court system. Finally, Jefferson claimed that George III had conspired with others (other nations and Native Americans) against the colonists, restricted trade, imposed unjust taxes, forced American sailors to work on British ships, and taken military actions against Americans. Jefferson noted that the colonists had repeatedly petitioned the king to try to restore friendly relations but that he had consistently ignored them. Americans had also appealed to the British people for help on several occasions, again to no avail.

Jefferson concluded that, in light of these facts, the colonists had no choice but to declare independence from Britain and establish a new government to protect their rights. He stated that in order to achieve this goal, the independent states would come together to become the **United States of America**.