

Section 4

The American Revolution

Enlightenment ideas help spur the American colonies to shed British rule and create a new nation.

Britain and Its American Colonies

The American Colonies Grow

- American colonies grow large and populous during 1600s, 1700s
- Colonies thrive economically through trade with Europe
 - Britain's Navigation Act restricts that trade (1651)
 - other trade laws add restrictions, taxes
- Colonists identify less and less as British subjects

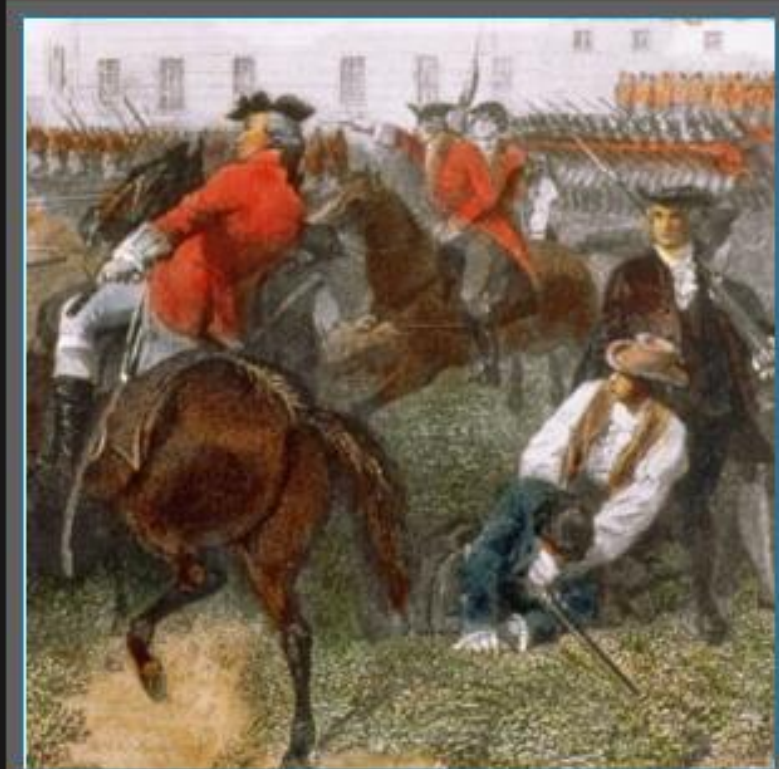
Americans Win Independence


British-Colonial Tensions Arise

- Britain, American colonies win French and Indian War in 1763
- Britain taxes colonists to help pay war debts
- Colonists argue that British cannot tax them without their consent

Growing Hostility Leads to War

- Colonists protest tea tax with "Boston Tea Party" in 1773
- Colonists meet in Philadelphia to address British policies (1774)
- British and Americans exchange fire at Lexington and Concord in 1775 *[Visual]*

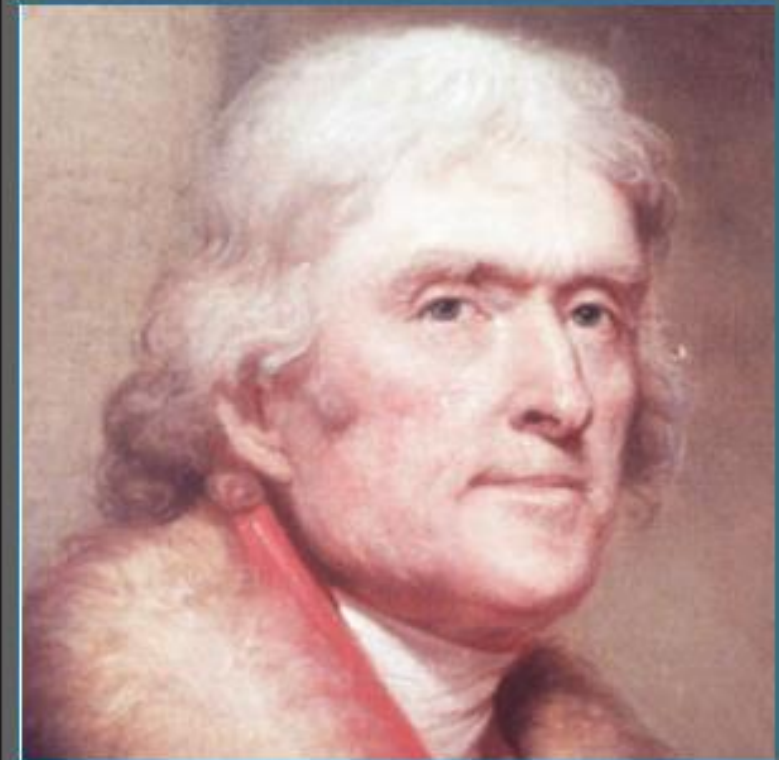



 American colonists and British soldiers exchange fire at Battle of Lexington—first skirmish in U.S. War of Independence.

Americans Win Independence

The Influence of the Enlightenment

- Colonial leaders push for independence, rely on Enlightenment ideas
- **Declaration of Independence**—document justifying colonial rebellion
- Leader **Thomas Jefferson** writes Declaration, uses ideas of Locke *[Visual]*



 Thomas Jefferson (1743–1826), 3rd U.S. president. Portrait, George Peter Alexander Healy.

Americans Win Independence

Success for the Colonists

- Despite British military might, colonists have advantages:
 - motivating cause of freedom
 - French assistance
 - war's expense for Britain
- British surrender at Yorktown in 1781; colonists win the war

Americans Create a Republic

A Weak National Government

- Articles of Confederation set government plan for new republic
- Articles create legislature only, no executive or judicial branches
- Result is weak national government fails to provide unity and order

A New Constitution

- Leaders call Constitutional Convention in 1787 to revise articles
- Group instead creates a new government under U.S. Constitution
- Constitution contains many political ideas of the Enlightenment

Americans Create a Republic

The Federal System

- Constitution creates three branches of government
- Provides **checks and balances**—ensures branches share power equally
- Promotes **federal system**—power divided between nation and states

The Bill of Rights

- Some fear too much national power, few protections of rights
- Leaders win support for Constitution by adding a **Bill of Rights**
 - ten amendments to Constitution that protect freedoms

The image is a horizontal composition. On the left side, there is a classical oil painting of Thomas Jefferson's face, showing him from the chest up, looking slightly to the right. He has white powdered hair and a serious expression. On the right side, there is a photograph of the original parchment of the United States Declaration of Independence. The text "In CONGRESS, July 4, 1776" is clearly visible at the top. Below it, the words "The unanimous Declaration of the thirteen united States of America" are written in a large, elegant cursive script. Further down, smaller text begins with "We hold these truths to be self-evident..." and "that all men are created equal...". The parchment is aged and yellowed, with some creases and shadows.

