

LESSON 4

The Move Toward Independence



 **BOUNCE**
TO ACTIVATE

 VIDEO

GET READY TO READ

START UP


Examine the illustration of crowds celebrating the reading of the Declaration of Independence. Write a question you have about the Declaration.

GUIDING QUESTIONS


- What are the main ideas of the Declaration of Independence?
- What challenges faced the Continental Army at the beginning of the war?
- What helped turn the tide of the war?

TAKE NOTES

Literacy Skills: Use Evidence

Use the graphic organizer in your  Active Journal to take notes as you read the lesson.

PRACTICE VOCABULARY

Use the vocabulary activity in your  Active Journal to practice the vocabulary words.

Vocabulary

blockade natural rights
mercenary unalienable rights
traitor
preamble

Academic Vocabulary

evident
ensure

Lexington and Concord marked the start of armed conflict between colonists and the British—the beginning of the American Revolution. As the fighting spread, many colonists came to believe that Parliament did not have the right to make any laws for the 13 colonies. After all, they argued, the colonies had their own elected legislatures. Many felt it was time for the colonies to become completely independent from Britain.

The War Comes to Boston

During the first year of conflict, much of the fighting centered around Boston. About 6,000 British troops were stationed there. Colonial militia surrounded the city and prevented the British from marching out.

War Breaks Out Near Boston Harbor

Even before Washington reached Boston, the Patriots took action. On June 16, 1775, Colonel William Prescott led 1,200 minutemen up Bunker Hill, across the Charles River from Boston. From there, they could fire on British ships in Boston Harbor. Prescott, however, noticed that nearby Breed's Hill was an even better place.



Analyze Images In this illustration, British military forces clash with colonial militia atop Breed's Hill during the Battle of Bunker Hill on June 17, 1775.

Synthesize Visual Information Which forces did the artist want the viewer to believe were winning this battle? State visual clues that support your answer.

He could use the local geography to his advantage. A hilltop would be easier to defend, so he ordered his men to move there.

At sunrise, the British general, William Howe, spotted the Americans. He ferried about 2,400 redcoats across the river to attack the rebels' position. As the British approached, the Patriots held their fire.

When the Americans finally fired, the British were forced to retreat. A second British attack was also turned back. On the third try, the British pushed over the top. They took both Bunker Hill and Breed's Hill, but they paid a high price for their victory. More than 1,000 redcoats lay dead or wounded. American losses numbered only about 400.

The Battle of Bunker Hill was the first major battle of the Revolution. It proved that the Americans could fight bravely. It also showed that the British would not be easy to defeat. Furthermore, it hinted that one effect of the Revolution would be continued bloodshed from a long and bitter war.

Washington Forces the British out of Boston When Washington reached Boston a few weeks after the Battle of Bunker Hill, he found about 16,000 troops camped in huts and tents around the city.

General Washington quickly began to turn raw recruits into a trained army. His job was especially difficult because soldiers from different colonies mistrusted one another. He wrote about their behavior.



INTERACTIVE

Thomas Paine's
Common Sense

“Connecticut wants no Massachusetts men in her corps.” And “Massachusetts thinks there is no necessity for a Rhode Islander to be introduced into her [ranks].” However, Washington won the loyalty of his troops. They, in turn, learned to take orders and work together.

In January 1776, Washington had a stroke of good fortune. The cannons that the Green Mountain Boys had captured at Fort Ticonderoga arrived in Boston. Soldiers had dragged them across the mountains from Fort Ticonderoga. Washington had the cannons placed in a strategic location on Dorchester Heights, overlooking the harbor.

Once General Howe saw the American cannons in place, he knew that he could not hold Boston. In March 1776, he and his troops sailed from Boston to Halifax, Canada. About 1,000 American Loyalists went with them.

Although the British left New England, they did not give up. King George III ordered a blockade of all colonial ports. A **blockade** is the shutting of a port to keep people or supplies from moving in or out. The king also used **mercenaries**, or troops for hire, from Germany to help fight the colonists.

 **READING CHECK** **Identify Supporting Details** How did the colonists use the physical geography of Boston to their advantage?

What Did Thomas Paine Say in *Common Sense*?

Thomas Paine was a British writer and editor who moved to Philadelphia in 1774. After Lexington and Concord, Paine wrote the pamphlet *Common Sense*, in which he set out to change the colonists' attitudes toward Britain and the king. Colonists, he said, did not owe loyalty to George III or any other monarch. The very idea of having kings and queens was wrong, he said.

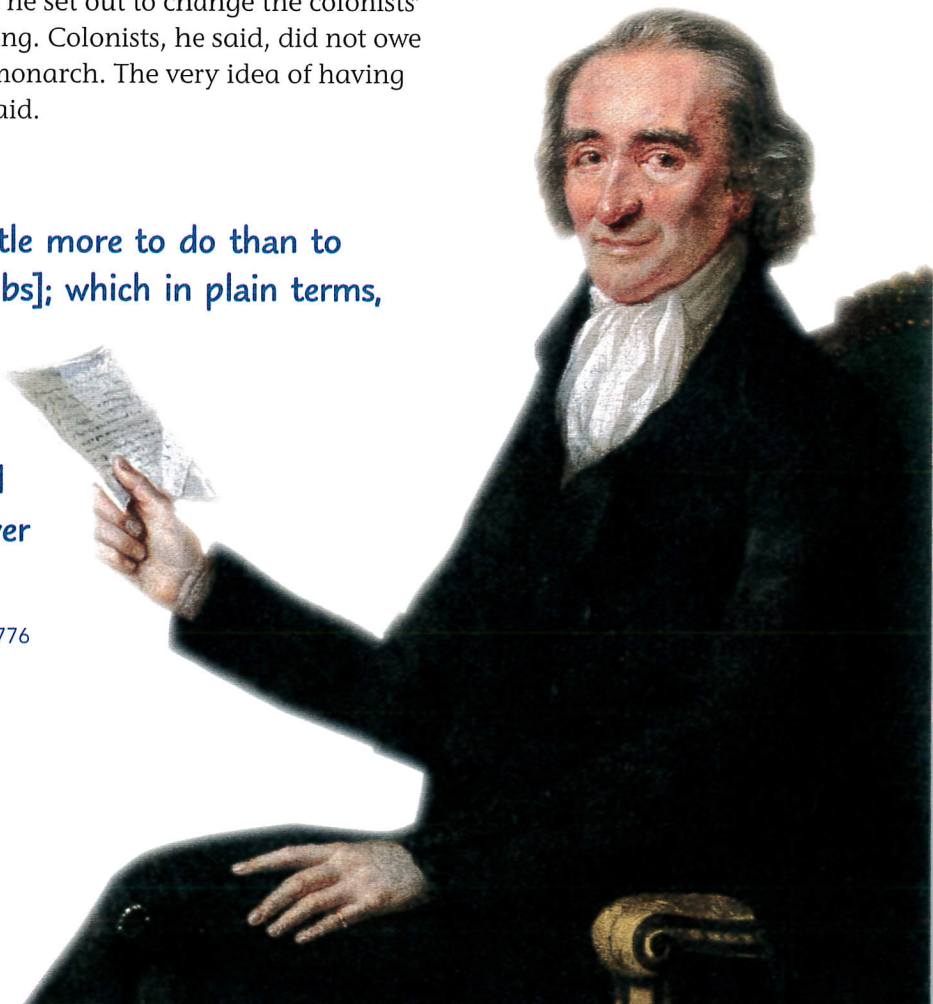
Primary Source

“In England a King hath little more to do than to make war and give away [jobs]; which in plain terms, is to impoverish the nation.


... Of more worth is one honest man to society and in the sight of God, than all the crowned ruffians that ever lived.”

—Thomas Paine, *Common Sense*, 1776

▼ Thomas Paine's criticism of British rule in *Common Sense* prompted many colonists to consider the option of declaring full independence from Britain.



The colonists did not owe anything to Britain, either, Paine went on. If the British had helped the colonists, they had done so for their own profit. It could only hurt the colonists to remain under British rule. “Everything that is right or reasonable pleads for separation,” he concluded. “ ‘Tis time to part.” *Common Sense* was a great success, selling over 500,000 copies in six months. Paine’s writing played an important role in moving toward revolution.

 **READING CHECK** **Identify Main Ideas** What was the main idea of *Common Sense*?

What Steps Did Colonial Leaders Take Toward Independence?

Common Sense caused many colonial leaders to move toward declaring independence from Britain. It also deeply impressed many members of the Continental Congress. Richard Henry Lee of Virginia wrote to Washington, “I am now convinced . . . of the necessity for separation.” In June 1776, Lee rose to his feet in Congress to introduce a resolution in favor of independence:

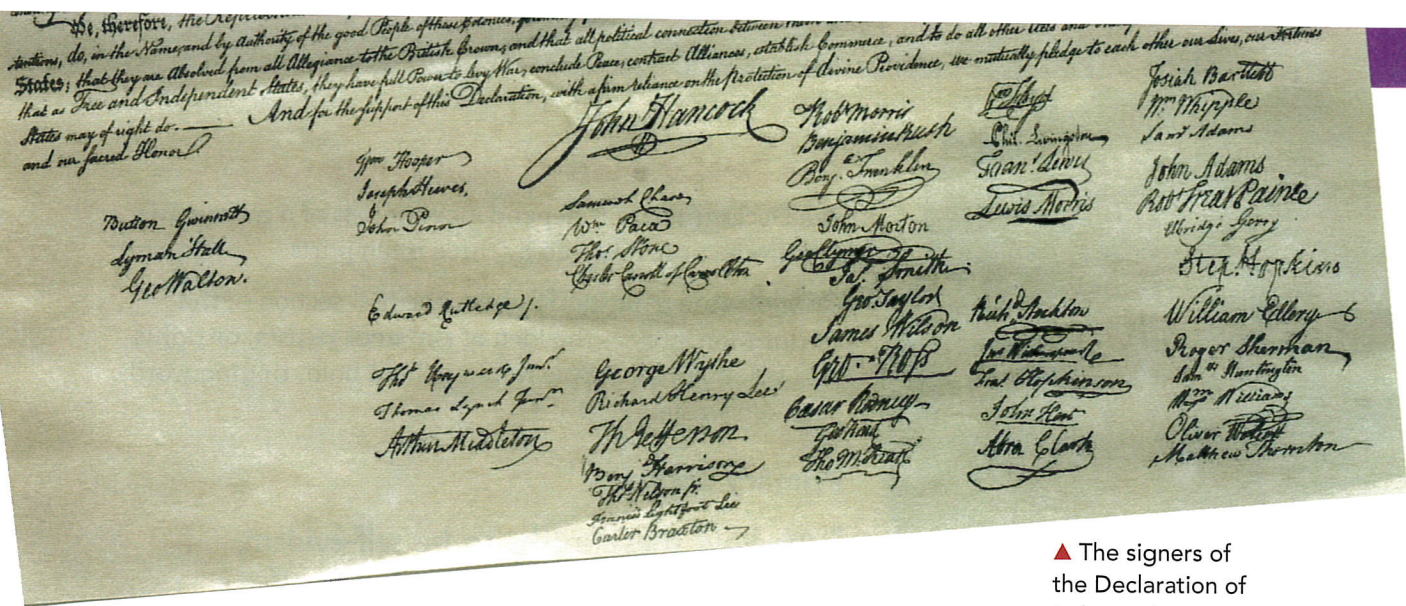
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“Resolved, That these United Colonies are and of right ought to be, free and independent States, that they are absolved from all allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain is, and ought to be, totally dissolved.”

—Richard Henry Lee, Resolution at the Second Continental Congress, June 7, 1776

Analyze Images Thomas Jefferson labored several days writing the Declaration of Independence. In this painting, Jefferson and other committee members present the Declaration to the Continental Congress. **Infer** Why do you think a painting was made of this particular event?





▲ The signers of the Declaration of Independence

Drafting the Declaration of Independence The delegates faced a difficult decision. There could be no turning back once they declared independence. If they fell into British hands, they would be hanged as traitors. A **traitor** is a person who betrays his or her country.

After long debate, the Congress took a fateful step. It appointed a committee to draft a formal declaration of independence. The committee included John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, Robert Livingston, and Roger Sherman. Their job was to tell the world why the colonies were breaking away from Britain.

The committee asked Thomas Jefferson to write the document. Jefferson was one of the youngest delegates. He was a quiet man who spoke little at formal meetings.

Among friends, however, he liked to sprawl in a chair with his long legs stretched out and talk for hours. His ability to write clearly and gracefully had earned him great respect.

Adopting the Declaration of Independence In late June, Jefferson completed the Declaration, and it was read to the Congress. On July 2, the Continental Congress voted that the 13 colonies were “free and independent States.” After polishing Jefferson’s language, the delegates adopted the document on the night of July 4, 1776. They then ordered the Declaration of Independence to be printed.


John Hancock, president of the Continental Congress, signed the Declaration first. He penned his signature boldly, in large, clear letters. “There,” he said, “I guess King George will be able to read that.”

Copies of the Declaration were distributed throughout the colonies. Patriots greeted the news of independence with joyous—and sometimes rowdy—celebrations.

In New York, colonists tore down a statue of King George III. In Boston, the sound of cannons could be heard for hours.

READING CHECK **Understand Effects** What were the potential consequences for the delegates who chose to declare independence?

Quick Activity

See how the delegates edited Jefferson’s language to the preamble in your  Active Journal.

INTERACTIVE

Interactive Declaration of Independence

Did you know?

The Declaration of Independence was not actually signed on July 4, but on August 2.



The Declaration of Independence

The Declaration of Independence consists of a **preamble**, or introduction, followed by three main parts.

Unalienable Human Rights The first section of the Declaration stresses the idea of **natural rights**, or rights that belong to all people from birth. In bold, ringing words, Jefferson wrote:

Primary Source

“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.”

—The Declaration of Independence

▲ Bells such as these were rung at the reading of the Declaration of Independence.

According to the Declaration of Independence, people form governments in order to protect their natural rights and liberties. Some of these principles were also part of the Magna Carta, a document that challenged the power of King John of England 500 years before the writing of the Declaration.

These **unalienable rights**—including the rights to be free and to choose how to live—cannot be taken away by governments, for governments can exist only if they have the “consent of the governed.” If a government fails to protect the rights of its citizens, then it is the people’s “right [and] duty, to throw off such government, and to provide new guards for their future security.” Ideas such as unalienable rights, adopted by the Founding Fathers (men such as George Washington, John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, and Thomas Jefferson), are good examples of the civic virtues that have since become the cornerstone of American government. These values continue to **ensure** that human rights are protected and human needs are met in our nation.

Academic Vocabulary

evident • *adj.*, obvious, apparent

ensure • *v.*, to make certain, to secure

Colonial Grievances The second part of the Declaration lists the wrongs, or grievances, that led the Americans to break away from Britain. Jefferson condemned King George III for disbanding colonial legislatures and for sending troops to the colonies in peacetime. He complained about limits on trade and about taxes imposed without the consent of the people.

Jefferson listed many other grievances to show why the colonists had the right to rebel. He also pointed out that the colonies had petitioned the king to correct these injustices. Yet, the injustices remained. A ruler who treated his subjects in this manner, he boldly concluded, is a tyrant and not fit to rule:

Primary Source

"In every state of these oppressions, we have petitioned for redress [remedy] in the most humble terms; our repeated petitions have been answered only by repeated injury. A prince whose character is thus marked by every act which may define a tyrant is unfit to be the ruler of a free people."

—The Declaration of Independence

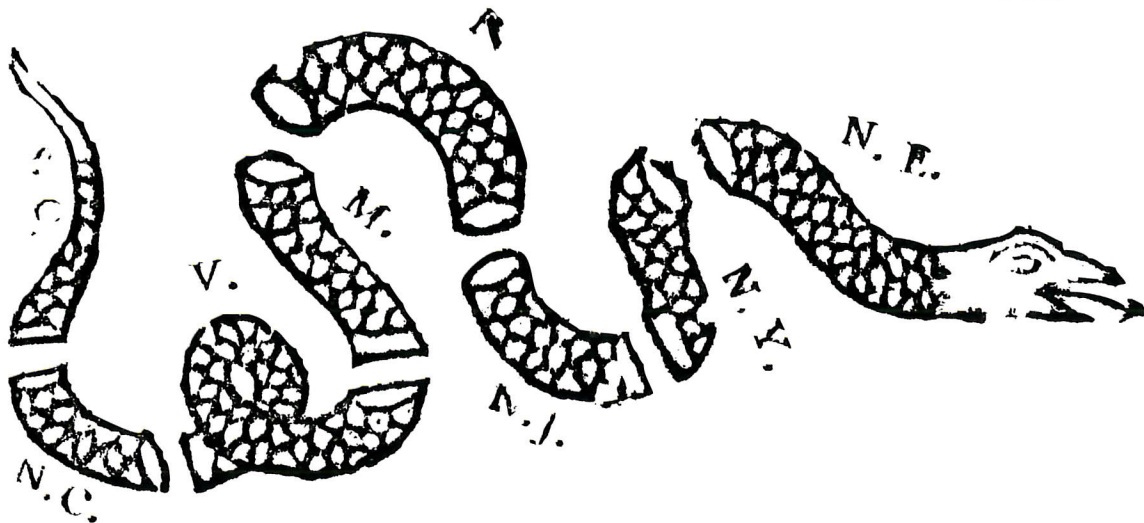
Independence The last part of the Declaration announces that the colonies are the United States of America. All political ties with Britain have been cut.

As a free and independent nation, the United States has the full power to "levy war, conclude peace, contract alliances, establish commerce, and to do all other acts and things which independent states may of right do."

The signers closed the declaration with a solemn pledge: "And, for the support of this declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor."

READING CHECK **Identify Main Ideas** What are some of the grievances Jefferson included in the Declaration?

Analyze Images Benjamin Franklin created this illustration encouraging colonists to band together in 1754 during the French and Indian War. It was later used for the same purpose during the American Revolution. **Draw Conclusions** What about this image made it appropriate and popular during the Revolutionary War era?



JOIN, or DIE.



Analyze Images The British hired Hessian mercenaries to compensate for a shortage of British troops. At the time, British troops were fighting in other wars. **Identify Cause and Effect** What would be the effect of Britain hiring mercenaries to fight in North America?

What Challenges Faced the Continental Army?

Through an odd coincidence, the British began landing troops in New York in the same month that the Continental Congress voted for independence, July 1776. General George Washington, expecting the attack, had led his forces south from Boston to New York City. His army, however, was no match for the British under the command of General Howe. Howe had about 34,000 troops and 10,000 sailors. He also had ships to ferry them ashore. Washington had fewer than 20,000 poorly trained troops, which he spread in various locations to defend New York. Worse, he had no navy.

An Early Defeat In August, Howe's army landed on Long Island. In the Battle of Long Island, more than 1,400 Americans were killed, wounded, or captured. The rest retreated to Manhattan. The British pursued. To avoid capture, Washington hurried north.

Throughout the autumn, Washington fought a series of battles with Howe's army. In November, he crossed the Hudson River into New Jersey. Chased by the British, the Americans retreated across the Delaware River into Pennsylvania.

Early Heroes During the campaign for New York, Washington needed information about Howe's forces. Nathan Hale, a young Connecticut officer, volunteered to go behind British lines. On his way back with the information, Hale was seized by the British and searched. Hidden in the soles of his shoes was information about British troop movements.

There was no trial. Howe ordered Hale to be hanged the next morning. As Hale walked to the gallows, he is said to have declared: "I only regret that I have but one life to lose for my country."

Even as Washington's army retreated and the British took New York City, many people there remained loyal to the American cause as Hale. Haym Salomon (HY um SAL uh mun), was a Jewish immigrant.

He came from Poland, was arrested by the British in September 1776 and thrown into prison. Salomon had supported the American cause from the start, helping the new government get loans. Salomon even gave his own money to soldiers for equipment. He managed to escape to Philadelphia and continued to aid the fight.

READING CHECK **Identify Main Ideas** What advantage did the British have in the Battle of Long Island?



▲ Haym Salomon helped the Patriots' cause and was imprisoned by the British for it.

A Surprise Attack Leads to Victory

Months of hard campaigning took a toll on the Continental Army. In December 1776, Washington described his troops as sick, dirty, and “so thinly clad as to be unfit for service.” Every day, soldiers deserted. Washington wrote to his brother: “I am wearied to death.”

Washington then decided on a bold move: a surprise attack on Trenton, New Jersey. The Delaware River separated the British in Trenton and the Americans, and the soldiers guarding Trenton would not expect American troops to cross it. On Christmas night, Washington secretly led his troops across the icy river. Soldiers shivered as spray from the river froze on their faces. Once ashore, they marched through swirling snow. Some had no shoes. They tied rags around their feet. “Soldiers, keep by your officers,” Washington urged.

Early on December 26, the Americans surprised the Hessian troops guarding Trenton and took most of them prisoner. The Hessians were soldiers from Germany. An American summed up the Battle of Trenton: “Hessian population of Trenton at 8 A.M.—1,408 men and 39 officers; Hessian population at 9 A.M.—0.”

Continental vs. British Forces

	CONTINENTAL	BRITISH
TOTAL FORCES	about 90,000 as a peak estimate	more than 70,000
COMPOSITION OF FORCES	Continental Army, State Militias	Army, Navy, hired mercenaries
ALLIES	France, Spain	Native Americans, Loyalists
QUALITY OF FORCES	untrained, unconventional	trained, disciplined
MOTIVATION	freedom from British control	regain British control
SUPPLIES	very limited weapons, food, and clothing	better availability of weapons, food, and clothing, but moving supplies was difficult

Analyze Charts Study the chart. **Summarize** Which forces, the Continental or the British, appear to be better prepared for battle? Why?



▲ At the Battle of Bennington in August 1777, the Continental Army defeated part of John Burgoyne's army.

British General Charles Cornwallis set out at once to retake Trenton and to capture Washington. Late on January 2, 1777, he saw the lights of Washington's campfires. "At last we have run down the old fox," he said, "and we will bag him in the morning."

Washington fooled Cornwallis. He left the fires burning and slipped behind British lines to attack a British force that was marching toward Princeton. There, the Continental Army won another victory. From Princeton, Washington moved to Morristown, where the army would spend the winter. The victories at Trenton and Princeton gave the Americans new hope.

READING CHECK Identify Supporting Details What advantages did Washington have in the Battle of Trenton?

▼ General John Burgoyne surrenders to General Horatio Gates after the British defeat at Saratoga.

How Did the Tide Turn for the Americans?

In London, British officials were dismayed by the army's failure to crush the rebels. Early in 1777, General John Burgoyne (bur GOIN) presented a new plan for victory. If British troops cut off New England from the other colonies, he argued, the war would soon be over.

The New England Strategy Burgoyne wanted three British armies to march on Albany, New York, from different directions to crush American forces there. Once they controlled the Hudson River, the British could stop the flow of soldiers and supplies from New England to Washington's army.



Burgoyne's plan called for General Howe to march on Albany from New York City. George III, however, wanted Howe to capture Philadelphia first.

In July 1777, Howe sailed from New York to the Chesapeake Bay, where he began his march on Philadelphia. Howe captured Philadelphia, defeating the Americans at the battles of Brandywine and Germantown. But instead of moving toward Albany to meet Burgoyne as planned, he retired to comfortable quarters in Philadelphia for the winter. For his part, Washington retreated to Valley Forge, Pennsylvania.

Meanwhile, British armies under Burgoyne and Barry St. Leger (lay ZHAIR) marched from Canada toward Albany. St. Leger tried to take Fort Stanwix. However, a strong American army, led by Benedict Arnold, drove him back.

American Troops Prevail at Saratoga Only Burgoyne was left to march on Albany. His army moved slowly because it had many heavy baggage carts to drag through the woods. To slow Burgoyne further, Patriots cut down trees and dammed up streams to block the route.

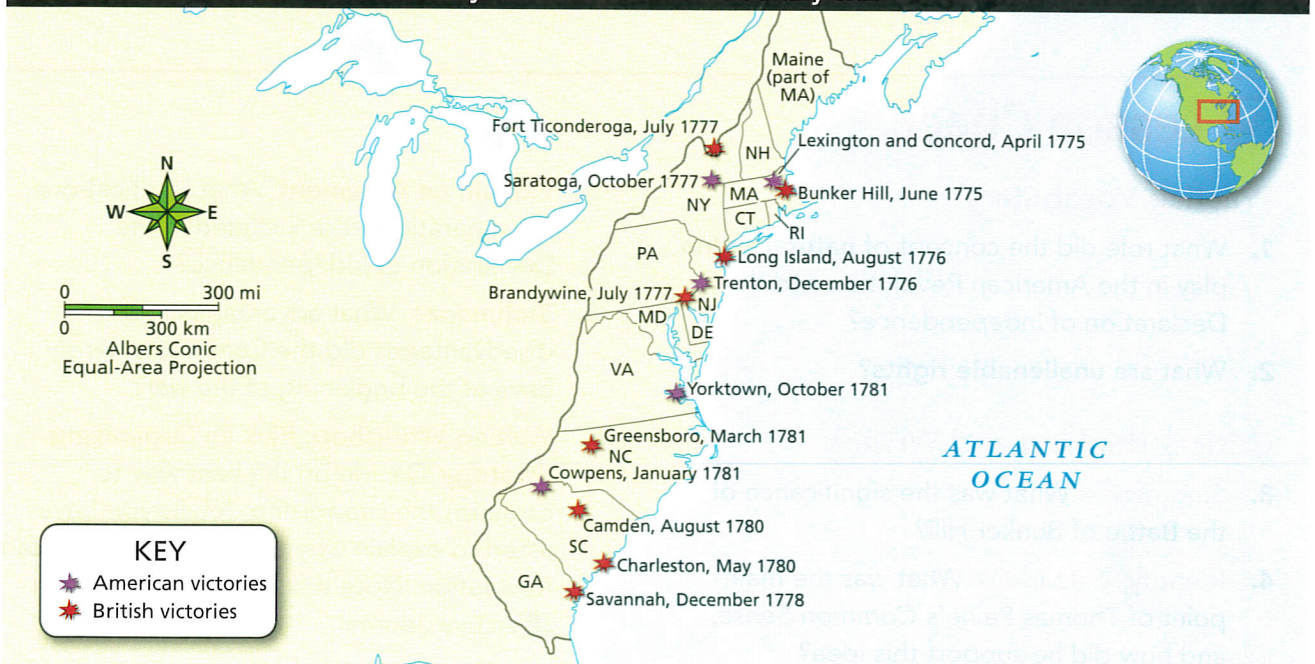
Despite these obstacles, Burgoyne recaptured Fort Ticonderoga, shocking Americans. However, he delayed at the fort, giving American forces time to regroup. He also sent troops into Vermont to find food and horses. There, Patriots attacked the redcoats. At the Battle of Bennington, they wounded or captured nearly 1,000 British.

GEOGRAPHY SKILLS

The battles of the American Revolution took place in every region of the 13 colonies.

1. **Region** During the early years of the war, in what region did the fighting mostly take place?
2. **Summarize** What were the results of the battles of 1777 that were part of General Burgoyne's plan?

Key Battles of the Revolutionary War






▲ King Louis XVI of France aided the American Revolution, but he would later face revolution in his own country.

Burgoyne's troubles grew. The Green Mountain Boys hurried into New York to help American forces there. At the village of Saratoga, the Americans surrounded the British. When Burgoyne tried to break free, the Americans beat him back. Realizing that he was trapped, Burgoyne surrendered his entire army to the Americans on October 17, 1777.

The American victory at the Battle of Saratoga was a major turning point in the war. It ended the British threat to New England. It boosted American spirits at a time when Washington's army was suffering defeats. Most importantly, it convinced France to become an ally of the United States. Nations that are allies work together to achieve a common goal.

France Aids the American Cause The Continental Congress had long hoped for French aid. In 1776, the Congress had sent Benjamin Franklin to Paris to persuade Louis XVI, the French king, to give the Americans weapons and other badly needed supplies. In addition, the Congress wanted France to declare war on Britain.

The French were eager to defeat Britain, but they were also cautious. Louis XVI did not want to help the Americans openly unless he was sure that they could win. The American victory at Saratoga convinced France that the United States could stand up to Britain. In February 1778, France became the first nation to sign a treaty with the United States. It recognized the new nation and agreed to provide military aid.


 **READING CHECK Identify Cause and Effect** Why was the American victory at Saratoga significant to the Patriots?

Lesson Check

Practice Vocabulary

1. What role did the concept of **natural rights** play in the American Revolution and the Declaration of Independence?
2. What are **unalienable rights**?

Critical Thinking and Writing

3. **Summarize** What was the significance of the Battle of Bunker Hill?
4. **Identify Main Ideas** What was the main point of Thomas Paine's *Common Sense*, and how did he support this idea?
5. **Explain an Argument** What justifications for separation were included in the Declaration of Independence?
6. **Summarize** What advantages and disadvantages did the Continental Army have at the beginning of the war?
7. **Writing Workshop: Pick an Organizing Strategy** Decide on the best way to organize the supporting details you have listed to explain why there was an American Revolution. Note this organization in your  Active Journal.