

America's Pathways to Independence

Discussion Question (with Vocabulary Resource following)

1. The primary reason that many colonists objected to British taxes was because they had no representation in Parliament. These colonists often gathered at Liberty Tree meetings to discuss their opposition and protest these taxes. Imagine you are a colonist planning to attend one of these meetings. Design a notice to be posted in the town square that will announce and describe this meeting. What do you think the colonists that were still loyal to British rule (Loyalists) thought of these meetings?
2. What is a boycott and how is it an effective form of protest?
3. Who/What were the Sons and Daughters of Liberty? Describe their activities and the impact they had in the colonies.
4. Why did Boston Patriots throw tea into the harbor in December 1773? What steps did King George take to punish the colonists and how did these actions lead to the meeting of the First Continental Congress in 1774?
5. On April 19, 1775, minutemen and British soldiers clashed in Lexington and Concord, MA in the first battles of the American Revolution. In 1837, Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote a poem about these battles. He referred to the first shot fired as the 'Shot Heard Round the World'? What did that mean and why do you think it was so important?
6. The Declaration of Independence was adopted by the Continental Congress on July 4, 1776, and signed by the delegates on August 2, 1776. Pennsylvania delegate Benjamin Rush described the "pensive and awful silence" as each delegate was called to sign the document. Why was it such a dangerous decision for these men to sign the Declaration of Independence?
7. Why is the 1777 Battle of Saratoga considered to be the turning point of the Revolutionary War?
8. British General Charles Cornwallis sent a representative to surrender to General George Washington at Yorktown, VA on October 17, 1781. Was this the end of the Revolutionary War? What happened after this surrender? When did the Revolutionary War officially end?
9. The Articles of Confederation was an agreement among the 13 original states of America that served as its first constitution. It was ratified by all the states on March 1, 1781. What were the weaknesses of this document? Why did the states meet at a convention to change this document in 1787? What new document was the result of this convention?
10. What are the three branches of government outlined in the United States Constitution? Describe the responsibilities of each.
11. Imagine you are a delegate at the Constitutional Convention in the hot summer of 1787. The convention is almost over, the Constitution has been written and the delegates are debating the articles. Write a letter to a family member in your home state describing the convention and the work that has taken place over the summer. What were the most important debates? What do you like – or dislike – about this document? Will you sign this document – why or why not?

Vocabulary for Discussion Questions

<u>Opposition:</u>	To think, act, or be against; resist
<u>Impact:</u>	To have a strong effect of someone or something
<u>Pensive:</u>	Lost in serious or sad thought
<u>Representative:</u>	A person who acts on behalf of others
<u>Constitution:</u>	A written plan for government
<u>Delegate:</u>	A person chosen to act for or represent another person or group of people
<u>Ratify:</u>	To approve in an official way; confirm