

Power Notes: The American Revolution

LEARNING OBJECTIVE: Understand the events leading to the American Revolution (1775-1783) and the Declaration of Independence (July 4, 1776).

- 1) The Proclamation of 1763--Colonists could not move west of the Appalachian mountains..
- 2) The Sugar Act of 1764--first British attempt to raise revenue.
- 3) Enforcement of Navigation Acts--hurt American trade.
- 4) The Stamp Act of 1765--effected colonial leaders: lawyers, businessmen, and tavern keepers. Repealed in 1766 after the colonists met in the Stamp Act Congress, but Parliament passed the Declaratory Act which reaffirmed its supremacy.
- 5) The Townshend Acts of 1767--repealed in 1770 except for tea tax.
- 6) The Boston Massacre of 1770--colonial propaganda victory.
- 7) The *Gaspee* incident (1772)--Colonists burned a British customs ship.
- 8) The granting of the British East India Company a monopoly on tea in 1773 led to the December Boston Tea Party.
- 9) The Intolerable (Coercive) Acts of 1774--passed in response to the Boston Tea Party. Provisions: a) closed the port of Boston; b) suspended self-government in Massachusetts; c) moved colonial trials to other locations; and, d) soldiers quartered in private homes.
- 10) The Quebec Act of 1774--blocked western expansion & gave rights to Canadian Catholics.
- 11) The battles of Lexington & Concord, April 1775 started the Revolutionary War.
- 12) In Common Sense Thomas Paine argued that all kings were tyrants and that independence was the only solution to the colonists' problems.
- 13) In the Declaration of Independence (July 4, 1776) Thomas Jefferson attempted to rally support to the rebels' cause from sympathetic Englishmen, and other countries, and to justify the revolution.

Importance: Understanding the causes of the American Revolution and the Declaration of Independence enables us to understand what the Americans and British were fighting over, and it enables us to understand the ideology of early America (and, by extension, modern America).

LEARNING OBJECTIVE: Understand the American Revolution and the results of the war.

- 1) America achieved its independence because: a) French aid--the battle of Saratoga (1777) convinced the French the rebels could win; b) the colonists fought on their home ground; c) the colonists did not have to defeat Britain, they just had to avoid defeat themselves; d) there was a lack of support for the war in Britain; e) the British army and navy leadership made some major errors; and, f) the generalship of George Washington.
- 2) The Battle of Yorktown, VA (1781) was the last major battle of the war.
- 3) The war was terminated with the Treaty of Paris, 1783. In the treaty: a) The U.S. received all British land north of Florida, south of Canada, and east of the Mississippi River; and, b) Britain recognized the independence of the United States.
- 4) The American Revolution did not change the social or economic system of the United States.
- 5) France benefited little from the war.
- 6) America became a symbol of freedom and opportunity.

Importance: The American Revolution led to an independent America, future world-wide revolutions, and set the example that "the people" could be trusted to run their own government.

LEARNING OBJECTIVE: Understand the framework of the U.S. government under the Articles of Confederation.

- 1) Ratified in 1781.
- 2) No executive or judicial system.
- 3) In Congress each state had one vote. Nine states required to pass a law; unanimous agreement to amend articles.
- 4) States, not the national government, were sovereign (have ultimate decision-making power).
- 5) Framers of the Articles wanted a weak government; liberty was a more important value than efficiency.

Importance: Understanding the Articles of Confederation (the first government of the U.S.) helps us understand the values that the Americans were fighting for in the Revolution. These values are the foundation of our republic.

LEARNING OBJECTIVE: Understand the provisions of the Northwest Ordinances of 1785 & 1787.

- 1) Organized the Old Northwest into 5 territories, townships, and sections.
- 2) Set aside one section per township for education.
- 3) Forbade slavery.
- 4) Set the procedures for future statehood; gave Congress the power over the territories.

Importance: A major success of the Articles of Confederation. All future states (except Texas) come into the Union under the general provisions of the Northwest Ordinances. Emphasized the importance of education to the U.S. Helps keep slavery out of the North.

LEARNING OBJECTIVE: Understand why the Constitution was written to replace the Articles of Confederation.

- 1) The British would not leave their forts on U.S. territory for the following reasons: a) trade with the Indians; b) wanted the U.S. to pay Loyalists for confiscated property; and, c) to protect Canada. U.S. government was too weak to make them leave.
- 2) In 1784 Spain, nervous about an expanding America, closed the Mississippi River to U.S. trade.
- 3) National government could not regulate foreign trade.
- 4) National government could not tax directly.
- 5) National government could not raise a national army.
- 6) Shays' Rebellion (1786) by farmers in western Massachusetts over taxes, showed the weakness of the Confederation government, and it was used as a rationale for the Constitutional Convention.
- 7) Constitutional Convention met in 1787. James Madison did most of actual drafting of Constitution. Constitution ratified by last two states in 1789 after Washington elected President. Anti-federalists opposed ratification primarily because they feared too much government control. The Bill of Rights was added to the Constitution to mollify their fears.

Importance: Efficiency replaces liberty as the overriding objective of the new government. Protecting citizens' liberty is still important.

LEARNING OBJECTIVE: Understand the provisions of the Constitution of the U.S.

1) The framers of the Constitution tried to solve the most basic dilemma of politics: how can a government be made powerful enough to perform its essential tasks without becoming so strong that it threatens the rights of its citizens?

The following provisions of the Constitution dealt with the above issue:

- a) Federalism--political decision making power is shared between the state and national government. Some powers are reserved for the states (the police power, intra-state commerce, education), some powers are reserved for the national government (foreign policy, coining money, inter-state commerce, the postal service), and some are shared (taxation, public works).
- b) Separation of powers--on the national level decision making power is divided between the legislative branch (Congress--enacts legislation), the executive branch (the President--enforces legislation and administers the government), and the judicial branch (the Supreme Court--reviews and interprets legislation).
- c) Checks & balances--each branch of government has the power to check the other. President has veto power but it can be overridden by two-thirds vote of both houses of congress. Congress has the power to impeach & convict government officials (including the President). Senate must approve treaties by a two-thirds vote, and presidential appointments of ambassadors, judges, and cabinet officials by majority vote. Amendments to the Constitution are originated in Congress (two-thirds vote of membership of both houses) and approved by the state legislatures (three-fourths of them must approve).
- d) "The Great Compromise" based representation in the House of Representatives on population and gave the Senate two Senators per state.
- e) The Three-fifths Clause, for purposes of representation in the House and taxation, counted 5 slaves as equal to 3 freemen.
- f) The president is elected through the Electoral College, Senators were elected by state legislatures (until the 17th amendment, 1913), and Representatives are elected by "the people."
- g) Representatives serve 2 year term, President 4 year term (maximum of 10 years, 22nd amendment, 1951), Senators 6 year term, and federal judges for life.

Importance: The Constitution is the "highest law of the land." Every citizen needs to understand its basic provisions in order to effectively participate in the political process.

LEARNING OBJECTIVE: Understand the Bill of Rights.

- 1) Freedom of religion, speech, press, assembly, and petition.
- 2) Freedom to "bear arms."
- 3) No quartering of troops in private homes in peacetime.
- 4) No unreasonable search and seizure; search warrant needed.
- 5) Right to a grand jury; no double jeopardy; can't be forced to be a witness against yourself; due process; government must give you a "fair price" for your property if it takes it for the public good.
- 6) Speedy & public trial; impartial jury of your peers; knowledge of charges; know witnesses against you; right to witnesses in your behalf; right to a lawyer.
- 7) Jury trial guaranteed.
- 8) No excessive bail, fines or "cruel & unusual punishments."
- 9) Unlisted rights are not automatically denied.
- 10) Powers not given to the national government are reserved to the states.

Importance: The Bill of Rights lists the fundamental rights of American citizens, as interpreted by the Supreme Court. Knowing these rights is necessary to understand the political and economic system of America.