

Chapter 5 Overview

Main Themes:

1. How the thirteen American colonies were able to win their independence from one of the most powerful nations on earth.
2. How the American Revolution was not only a war for independence, but also a struggle to determine the nature of the nation being created.
3. How Americans attempted to apply revolutionary ideology to the building of the nation and to the remaking of society.
4. How Americans dealt with the problems that remained after or were created by the American Revolution.
5. That the American Revolution was the first and in many ways the most influential of the Enlightenment-derived uprisings against established orders.

Objectives: [You should be able to explain each of these in some detail]

1. The historical debate concerning the nature of the American Revolution and the reasons for disagreement.
2. American war aims and the problems experienced by the revolutionary governments in carrying on a protracted war.
3. The aim of the Declaration of Independence, the reasons for its issuance, and its influence throughout the world since 1776.
4. The indispensable contributions of George Washington to the successful outcome of the Revolution.
5. The diplomatic triumph for American negotiators embodied in the Treaty of Paris.
6. The impact of the Revolution on women, African Americans, Native Americans, and other minorities.
7. The type of governments created by the new states, and the important features in their governments.
8. The features of the Articles of Confederation, and the reasons for its creation.
9. The problems faced by the government under the Articles of Confederation and how they were addressed.
10. How the ways in which property boundaries were established influenced the way early American societies developed.
11. How America's revolution and the whole modern notion of revolution, was to a large degree a product of the ideas of the Enlightenment.

Chapter 4

Assignment 1

textbook: pg. 127 to mid-pg. 133; pg. 142 - 143 {"The Age of Revolutions"}

Questions:

1. List the divisions within the *Second Continental Congress* and give the aim of each faction. How did the factions attempt to gain their ends?
2. What were the major arguments presented by Thomas Paine in *Common Sense*?
3. How did the pamphlet, *Common Sense*, address the problem of the aim of the war? What was its impact on American opinion?
4. What were the philosophical roots of the *Declaration of Independence*? What effect did the Declaration have on the struggle?
5. What are the major interpretations of the origins of the American Revolution that have been advanced by historians?
6. What were the characteristics of the governments--state and national--set up by Americans to conduct the war?
7. What problems did the Americans face in providing the necessary supplies and equipment for the war and in paying for them? How were these problems, at least initially, overcome?

Assignment 2

textbook: mid-pg. 133 to mid-pg. 148.

Questions:

1. Identify the advantages and disadvantages of both the Patriots and the British on the eve of the Revolutionary War.
2. Why was George Washington selected as the best person to make the most of these advantages?
3. What were the initial setbacks in the war during 1776? What was the significance of the Battles of Trenton and Princeton in this regard?
4. What was the initial plan for the British campaign of 1777? How was this altered? What affect did this alteration have on the outcome?
5. What were the American diplomatic goals at the start of the war? What problems did they face? What efforts were made to overcome them?
6. How did the victory at Saratoga affect American diplomatic efforts? How did England and France respond to this news? What was the result?
7. Why did the British decide to launch a campaign against the southern colonies in 1778? What advantages and disadvantages did each side have in this region?
8. Why did the British "Southern Strategy" backfire?
9. How was Spain an obstacle to the American hopes for peace with independence? How did this affect American diplomacy before the Battle of Yorktown?
10. What was the significance of the Yorktown victory for the colonists? for the British?
11. What were the provisions of the Treaty of Paris in 1783? How did the Treaty affect relations among the United States, France, and Spain?
12. Who were the Loyalists? What elements in America remained loyal to the King, and for what reasons?
13. What happened to the Loyalists?
14. What effect did the war have on other minorities? How was its significance to African-Americans both limited, and yet significant?
15. How did the Revolution affect the way American women thought about their status? What changes resulted from this new awareness?
16. What changes did the Revolution produce in the structure of the American economy?

Assignment #3

textbook: mid-pg. 148 to mid-pg. 166.

Questions:

1. What was it about the concept of a republican government that so appealed to Americans?
2. How did Americans propose to avoid what they considered to be the problems of the British system they were repudiating?
3. What was unique about the constitution drawn up by Massachusetts?
4. How did these new constitutions deal with the question of religious freedom? How did they deal with slavery?
5. What type of government did the Articles of Confederation create? What were its major features?
6. Why was the Confederation government organized as it was?
7. Why was there a delay in its ratification? How were the obstacles to its ratification overcome?
8. How did the Treaty of Paris of 1783 fail to resolve, or in some cases help to create, strain between the United States, England, and Spain?
9. What commercial arrangements did American shippers and traders want after the war had ended? Why did they feel this was needed, and how successful were they in accomplishing their aims?
10. What postwar problems existed between the United States and Spain? What attempts were made to solve the problems? Why did these attempts fail?
11. Explain how different versions of the cadastral system have profoundly different consequences for the way colonial lands and societies developed.
12. How did the government of the United States determine which cadastral system was most appropriate for the new republic?
13. How did the Confederate Congress attempt to solve the problem of the status of western territory that the states had ceded to it?
14. Which interest groups favored which plans for the sale and distribution of land?
15. How did the Confederation deal with the Indians who also claimed the western land?
16. What were the sources of the Confederation's postwar economic problems? How did the government attempt to solve them? What were the results?
17. Why was paper money seen as a solution to the economic problems of one element in American society? Who opposed this and why?
18. How did the action of Daniel Shays and his followers relate to the economic problems of the Confederation period? What was the significance of the movement he led?
19. Who were the advocates of centralization? Why did they want to alter or abolish the Articles of Confederation?
20. What did those who favored centralization see as the most serious problem of the Articles? How would they have changed them? What had prevented any changes?
21. What were the characteristics of the men who met at the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia? What were their socio-economic backgrounds?
22. What were the main positions of the Virginia and New Jersey Plans?
23. How did the Great Compromise draw from those Plans?

24. How did sectionalism and the issue of slavery influence the Constitution?
25. List the provisions and the underlying principles of the U. S. Constitution.
26. Explain the ongoing debate between historians over the motives of the men who framed the American Constitution.
27. How has the debate over the origins of the Constitution mirrored the debate over the causes of the American Revolution?