

CHAPTER 6

CHAPTER THEMES

Theme: As part of their worldwide rivalry, Great Britain and France engaged in a great struggle for colonial control of North America, culminating in the British victory in the Seven Years' War (French and Indian War) that drove France from the continent.

Theme: Before the Seven Years' War, Britain and its American colonies had already been facing some tensions, as can be seen in sporadic British efforts to enforce trade laws and colonial reaction to the peace treaty in 1748. During the Seven Years' War, the relationship between British military regulars and colonial militias added to the tensions. The French defeat in the Seven Years' War created conditions for a growing conflict between Britain and its American colonies. The lack of a threatening European colonial power in North America gave the American colonists a sense of independence that clashed with new British imperial demands, such as stationing soldiers in the colonies and the Proclamation of 1763.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Like Britain, France entered late into the American colonial scramble, eventually developing an extensive though thinly settled empire economically based on the fur trade. During much of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Britain and France engaged in a bitter power struggle that frequently erupted into worldwide wars. In North America, these wars constituted an extended military duel for imperial control of the continent.

The culminating phase of this struggle was inaugurated by young George Washington's venture into the sharply contested Ohio country. After early reversals in the Seven Years' War (French and Indian War), the British, under William Pitt, revived their fortunes and won a decisive victory at Quebec, finally forcing the French from North America.

The American colonials, who had played a large part in Britain's imperial wars with France, emerged with increased confidence in their own abilities. The removal of the French and Spanish threat to British control of North America kindled increasing tensions between the colonists and Britain. The Ottawa chief Pontiac's unsuccessful uprising in 1763 convinced the British of the need to continue stationing troops in America. But with foreign threats gone, the colonists were unwilling to pay taxes for British protection and increasingly resented Britain's authority over them.

CHAPTER 7

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Theme: Tension between the colonies and Britain centered on the issues of mercantilism and its implementation. The British Empire attempted to more strictly enforce laws aimed at maintaining a system of mercantilism, while colonists objected to this change from the earlier salutary neglect.

Theme: The American Revolution occurred because the American colonists, who had long been developing a strong sense of autonomy and self-government, furiously resisted British attempts to impose tighter imperial controls and higher taxes after the end of the French and Indian War in 1763. The sustained conflict over political authority and taxation, enhanced by American agitators and British bungling, gradually moved Americans from asserting rights within the British Empire to openly warring with the mother country.

Theme: At the outset of the Revolutionary War, Britain appeared to be a mighty empire, but it was weaker than it seemed at first glance. Poor leadership in London, along with second-rate generals in the

colonies, reduced the impact of the larger British population and its naval supremacy. Americans, on the other hand, had many advantages such as George Washington's leadership and fighting a defensive war. However, the colonists also faced disorganization, jealousy, and economic difficulties.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

The American War of Independence was a military conflict fought from 1775 to 1783, but the American Revolution was a deeper transformation of thought and loyalty that began when the first settlers arrived in America and finally led to the colonies' political separation from Britain.

One source of long-term conflict was the tension between the considerable freedom and self-government the colonists enjoyed in the American wilderness and their participation in the British Empire's mercantile system. While British mercantilism actually provided economic benefits to the colonies, along with certain liabilities, its limits on freedom and patronizing goal of keeping America in a state of perpetual economic adolescence stirred growing resentment.

The short-term movement toward the War of Independence began with British attempts to impose higher taxes and tighter imperial controls after the French and Indian War. To the British these were reasonable measures, under which the colonists would simply bear a fair share of the costs of the empire. To the colonists, however, the measures constituted attacks on fundamental rights.

Through well-orchestrated agitation and boycotts, the colonists forced repeal of the Stamp Act of 1765 as well as the Townshend Acts that replaced it, except for the symbolic tax on tea. A temporary lull in conflict between 1770 and 1773 ended with the Boston Tea Party, conducted by a network of Boston agitators reacting to the Massachusetts governor's attempt to enforce the law.

In response to the Tea Party, the British imposed the harsh Intolerable Acts, coincidentally passing the Quebec Act at the same time. These twin actions aroused ferocious American resistance throughout the colonies and led directly to the calling of the First Continental Congress and the clash of arms at Lexington and Concord.

As the two sides prepared for war, the British enjoyed the advantages of a larger population, a professionally trained militia, and much greater economic strength. The greatest American asset was the deep commitment of those Patriots who were ready to sacrifice for their rights.

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Theme: When hostilities began in 1775, the colonists were still fighting for their rights as British citizens within the empire, but in 1776, they declared their independence, based on a proclamation of universal, self-evident truths. Inspired by revolutionary idealism, they also fought for an end to monarchy and the establishment of a free republic.

Theme: A combination of Washington's generalship and British bungling in 1776–1777 prevented a quick British victory and brought French assistance, which enabled the Patriots to achieve victory after several more years of struggle.

Theme: American independence was recognized by the British only after the conflict had broadened to include much of Europe. American diplomats were able to secure generous peace terms because of the international political scene: Britain's recently reorganized government that favored peace and France's inability to make good on its promises to Spain.

CHAPTER 8

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Even after Lexington and Concord, the Second Continental Congress did not, at first, pursue independence. The Congress's most important action was selecting George Washington as military commander.

After further armed clashes, George III formally proclaimed the colonists in rebellion, and Thomas Paine's *Common Sense* finally persuaded Americans to fight for independence as well as liberty. Paine and other leaders promoted the Revolution as an opportunity for self-government by the people, though more conservative republicans wanted to retain political hierarchy without monarchy. Jefferson's Declaration of Independence deepened the meaning of the struggle by proclaiming its foundation in self-evident and universal human rights.

The committed Patriots, only a minority of the American population, had to fight both Loyalist Americans and the British. Loyalists were strongest among conservatives, city-dwellers, and Anglicans (except in Virginia), while Patriots were strongest in New England and among Presbyterians and Congregationalists.

In the first phase of the war, Washington stalemated the British, who botched their plan to quash the rebellion quickly at Saratoga. When the French and others then aided the Americans, the Revolutionary War became a world war.

American fortunes fell badly in 1780–1781, but the colonial army in the South held on until Cornwallis stumbled into a French-American trap at Yorktown. Lord North's ministry collapsed in Britain, and American negotiators achieved an extremely generous settlement from the Whigs.