

American Revolution

American Heritage Discussion Series for Learners with Littles
Caregivers' Conversation

Essential Questions

How were state constitutions revolutionary?

What was revolutionary about the ideas in the Declaration of Independence?

How did the exchange between Abigail and John Adams reflect social changes inspired by the American Revolution?

What ideas did General George Washington promote at the end of the Revolutionary War to preserve American freedom and independence?

AMERICAN FEDERALISM BEGAN IN 1776 WITH THE CREATION OF STATE CONSTITUTIONS

1. South Carolina's constitution adopted March 1776
2. Virginia's constitution adopted June 12, 1776
3. Delaware's constitution adopted June 15, 1776
4. New Jersey's constitution adopted July 2, 1776
5. Pennsylvania's constitution adopted September 28, 1776
6. Maryland's constitution adopted November 11, 1776
7. North Carolina's constitution adopted December 18, 1776
8. Georgia's constitution adopted February 1777
9. New York's constitution adopted April 20, 1777
10. Vermont's constitution adopted July 8, 1777
11. New Hampshire's constitution adopted October 31, 1783
12. Massachusetts' constitution adopted October 25, 1780
13. Rhode Island's constitution adopted in 1842

Characteristics of Revolutionary era state constitutions:

- ▶ Written when British constitution was not written
- ▶ Most led with a bill of rights
- ▶ Introduced the practice of separation of powers
- ▶ Many were adopted by the first ratifying conventions (by consent of the governed)

U.S. Confederacy under the Articles of Confederation—1777 to 1788

U.S. Constitution—1788 to present

State Constitutions

Essential Question: How were state constitutions revolutionary?

- Why was it revolutionary that the Americans wrote down their constitutions?
- Why did many state constitutions lead with a bill of rights?
- How did state constitutions separate powers in a way that had not been done before?
- How did state ratifying conventions expand who was involved in the political process? Why was this revolutionary?

Declaration of Independence

Essential Question: What was revolutionary about the ideas in the Declaration of Independence?

- What did the Declaration of Independence do?
- What new ideas became part of the American political tradition because of the Declaration of Independence?
- How was the Declaration used in later generations to lay claim to rights for more Americans?

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— That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed,

That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness.



Premises



Conclusion

Abigail Adams to John Adams: Remember the Ladies

- **Essential Question:** How did the exchange between Abigail and John Adams reflect social changes inspired by the American Revolution?
- How did women draw on the ideals of the Revolution in later years to claim their right to participation in the political process?

them - O they have time & warning given them to see
 the evil & shun it - I long to hear that you have de-
 -clared an independency - and by the way in the new
 code of laws which I suppose it will be necessary for you
 to make I desire you would remember the ladies &
 be more generous & favourable to them than your ancestors
 do not put such an unlimited power into the hands of the
 Husbands, remember all Men would be tyrants if they
 could. if particular care & attention is not paid to the
 Ladies we are determined to foment a rebellion, and will
 not hold ourselves bound by any laws in which we have
 no voice, or the representation

George Washington's Circular Letter to the States, June 8, 1783

Essential Question: What ideas did General George Washington promote at the end of the Revolutionary War to preserve American freedom and independence?

- In your opinion, why would Washington emphasize the relationship of citizens to one another in the community as a pillar of independence and national character?
- In your opinion, how are we doing today on Washington's pillars to maintain the Union?



Next Session:

Federal Constitution-Making

- The Articles of Confederation (Extra History YouTube video)
- Benjamin Franklin's Closing Speech at the Constitutional Convention
- Excerpt from *Essay No. 1* by Brutus
- Excerpt from *Federalist 10* by Publius
- Excerpt from *Federalist 51* by Publius
- Danielle Allen's The Washington Post op-ed, "How Social Media Has Undermined our Constitutional Architecture"



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