

Summary

Between 1775 and 1787, Americans struggled to win a war, make a peace, and create ideologically sound, stable governments on both the state and the national levels. By the end of the era, there was little doubt that they had accomplished the first two of their goals, but serious questions were being raised concerning the success of the last. Despite problems that would have stopped lesser men, George Washington and his army had been able to successfully keep the British at bay, winning when they could and losing as seldom as possible. Meanwhile, the Continental Congress, blessed with some remarkable diplomats, maintained a foreign policy the success of which can be seen in the Franco-American alliance of 1778 and the Treaty of Paris of 1783. But once the war ended, the government that the British threat had held together found that its member states' unwillingness to centralize power created more problems than it solved. Economic dislocation, exemplified by Daniel Shays and his followers, plagued the nation, as many thoughtful men searched for a way to transform Revolutionary rhetoric into reality and to restore order without sacrificing liberty.

Review Questions

These questions are to be answered with essays. This will allow you to explore relationships between individuals, events, and attitudes of the period under review.

1. Explain how conflicts and rivalries among European nations both helped and hindered the American struggle for independence.
2. Compare and contrast the British and the American conduct of the war. How did each side propose to "win," how realistic was its assessment of the situation, and how did this prewar assessment influence the ultimate outcome of the war?
3. Read carefully the section "Where Historians Disagree," and then read the descriptions of the various schools of historical interpretation in the glossary to this chapter of the guide. Which of these historians fit into which schools? Explain your choices.
4. Examine the relative successes and failures of the Articles of Confederation. Do you think that this government was capable of providing the stability that the new nation needed? Why or why not?
5. How did Revolutionary ideology challenge the way minorities were treated in America? What changes in this treatment resulted from this challenge, and why did some minorities find their circumstances improved while others did not?
6. Explain how the political ideology that was the foundation of the American Revolution influenced the writing of state constitutions and the Articles of Confederation.

Chapter Self Test

After you have read the chapter in the text and done the exercises in the Study Guide, take the following self test to see if you understand the material you have covered. Answers appear at the end of the Study Guide.

MULTIPLE-CHOICE QUESTIONS

Circle the letter of the response that best answers the question or completes the statement.

1. Thomas Paine's Common Sense is an important work because it:
 - a. helped Americans reconcile their differences with England.
 - b. persuaded Americans that no reconciliation with Britain was possible.

- c. supported the concept of the English constitution.
d. argued that Parliament, not the King, was the enemy.
2. The Declaration of Independence stated that governments were formed to:
- give men an opportunity to exert power.
 - reward loyal servants of the state.
 - promote democracy.
 - protect a person's life, freedom, and right to pursue happiness.
3. Most of America's war materials came from:
- American manufacturers.
 - the seizure of British forts and the surrender of British armies.
 - the capture of supply ships by American privateers.
 - foreign aid.
4. Britain enjoyed all of the following advantages in the Revolution except:
- the greatest navy and the best-equipped army in the world.
 - superior industrial resources.
 - greater commitment to the conflict.
 - a coherent structure of command.
5. The Articles of Confederation actually:
- confirmed the weak, decentralized system of government already in operation.
 - drew the states together into a strong government.
 - put power in the hands of the military.
 - put power in the hands of the executive and his appointees.
6. Congress financed the revolution by:
- selling bonds.
 - minting gold and silver coins.
 - borrowing from other nations.
 - taxing the wealthy.
7. The choice of George Washington as commander in chief was a good one because of his:
- knowledge of military affairs.
 - image among the people, who trusted and respected him.
 - successful military experience in the Great War for the empire.
 - relaxed, informal way with his men.
8. At the end of 1776 the American army under Washington had:
- won no victories, major or minor.
 - become badly divided and scattered.
 - retreated into western Pennsylvania.
 - won two minor victories and remained intact.
9. Which of the following was not part of the British strategy to cut the United States in two in 1777?
- To move forces up the Hudson from New York City.
 - To prepare a two-pronged attack along the Mohawk and the upper Hudson.

- e. To capture Charleston.
 - d. To bring an army down from Canada to meet the one coming up from New York.
10. John Burgoyne's surrender at Saratoga:
- a. convinced the French that they should help the Americans.
 - b. caused the British to consider giving up the fight.
 - c. made George Washington a military hero.
 - d. had little effect on the war in the long run.
11. After 1777 the British decided to focus their efforts in the South because:
- a. there was less population there.
 - b. they believed there were more Loyalists there.
 - c. they thought slaves would help them.
 - d. they had more Indian allies there.
12. The treason of Benedict Arnold:
- a. shocked George Washington.
 - b. came as no surprise since he was not highly regarded.
 - c. led to the surrender of the fort at West Point.
 - d. resulted in Arnold's hanging.
13. The British were forced to surrender at Yorktown because:
- a. French troops and a French fleet helped trap the British.
 - b. Washington was able to defeat the British in the field.
 - c. Americans were finally better trained than the British.
 - d. the British commander underestimated the size of Washington's army.
14. Even though the British wanted to end the war, the French were reluctant to negotiate because:
- a. they feared the Americans might take Canada.
 - b. British agents were at work among the common folk of Paris.
 - c. they were committed to staying in the war until Spain got Gibraltar.
 - d. Spain was insisting on getting the Virgin Islands.
15. Of all the Loyalists groups in America, the one which suffered most as a result of the Revolution was:
- a. western farmers.
 - b. slaves.
 - c. traders and trappers.
 - d. Anglicans.
16. White residents in South Carolina and Georgia were more restrained in their revolutionary expressions than were counterparts in other colonies because there were:
- a. primarily rice planters, unaffected by British restrictions.
 - b. Anglican and loyal to the Church of England.
 - c. fearful that talk of rebellion would inspire slaves to revolt.
 - d. closely tied to families back in England.
17. During the Revolution women took on new responsibilities. After the war:
- a. things generally went back to the way they were before and few concrete reforms occurred in the status of women.

- b. women were able to translate wartime gains into peacetime reforms.
 - c. women were recognized and honored for their contributions with new careers.
 - d. women got the right to vote in most northern colonies.
18. In spite of rhetoric proclaiming "all men are created equal," slavery survived in America for nearly a century after the Revolution because whites:
- a. harbored racist assumptions about the natural inferiority of blacks.
 - b. never considered it immoral or wrong.
 - c. feared free blacks would return to Africa.
 - d. refused to consider plans to compensate slaveholders for gradual emancipation of slaves.
19. If postwar Americans agreed on nothing else, they agreed that:
- a. there should be no property qualifications to vote.
 - b. states should have democratic governments.
 - c. new governments should be republican.
 - d. some men were born to govern and some were born to follow.
20. Under the Articles of Confederation, the only institution of national authority was the:
- a. Supreme Court.
 - b. Congress.
 - c. President of the United States.
 - d. Senate.

TRUE-FALSE QUESTIONS

Read each statement carefully. Mark true statements "T" and false statements "F."

1. By the military standards of later wars, the American Revolution was a relatively modest one in that technology was more primitive, and hence, less deadly.
2. When the fighting began, most Americans wanted the colonies to be independent from Great Britain.
3. The rebelling colonies had access to sufficient local resources to fight a successful revolution.
4. After declaring independence, colonies began calling themselves states, a reflection of the belief that each of them represented in some respect a separate and sovereign entity.
5. The British lacked the resources to conduct a war on the American continent.
6. At the outset of the war, American leaders hoped that Canada would become the fourteenth state.
7. The surrender of Burgoyne at Saratoga had no effect on the Iroquois Confederacy, since most of the Indians supported the American cause.
8. By the spring of 1776 it was clear to the British that the conflict was not a local one centered around Boston.
9. The British victory at Saratoga kept the French out of the conflict.
10. There is no actual proof that Benedict Arnold committed treason.
11. As a result of the treaty of Paris of 1783, the new American nation's western boundary was the Blue Ridge Mountains.
12. At least one fifth, and maybe as many as one third, of the American colonists were loyal to Britain during the Revolution.

13. Native Americans were pleased with the outcome of the Revolution because it reduced the desire of colonists for western land.
14. After the Revolution the future role of women in the republic was hardly discussed at all.
15. The first state constitutions written during the American Revolution generally reduced the power of the executive.
16. In the newly created states, the privileges that churches enjoyed in the colonial era were largely stripped away.
17. After independence, the United States quickly and easily persuaded Great Britain to abide by the terms of the treaty of 1783.
18. The system for surveying and selling western lands set up under the Ordinance of 1785 favored small farmers.
19. The Northwest Ordinance of 1787 laid out the requirements for western territories to become states.
20. During the period under consideration in this chapter, Congress did nothing to limit the expansion of slavery.
21. The grid is the most common form by which Americans impose ownership on the landscape.