Chapter 5: The American Revolution, 1763–1783

I. Thomas Hutchinson

II. The Crisis Begins
   A. Consolidating the Empire
      1. Prior to the Seven Years’ War, London had loosely tried to regulate some of the colonies’ economy.
      2. After the Seven Years’ War, London insisted that the colonists play a subordinate role to the mother country and help pay for the protection the British provided.
      3. Members of the British Parliament had virtual representation.
      4. The colonists argued London could not tax them because they were underrepresented in Parliament.

   B. Taxing the Colonies
      1. The Sugar Act of 1764 and a revenue act threatened the profits of colonial merchants and aggravated an economic recession.

   C. The Stamp Act Crisis
      1. The Stamp Act of 1765 was a direct tax on all sorts of printed materials.
      2. The act was wide reaching and offended virtually every free colonist.
      3. Opposition to the Stamp Act was the first great drama of the Revolutionary era and the first major split between the colonists and Great Britain over the meaning of freedom.

   D. Taxation and Representation
      1. American leaders viewed the British empire as an association of equals in which free settlers overseas enjoyed the same rights as Britons at home.
      2. The Stamp Act Congress met in 1765 to endorse Virginia’s House of Burgesses’ resolutions.
         a. Patrick Henry

   E. Liberty and Resistance
      1. No word was more frequently invoked by critics of the Stamp Act than “liberty”:
         a. Liberty tree
         b. Liberty hall
         c. Liberty pole
      2. A Committee of Correspondence was created in Boston and other colonies to exchange ideas about resistance.

   F. Politics in the Streets
      1. The Sons of Liberty were organized to resist the Stamp Act and enforce a boycott of British goods.
      2. London repealed the Stamp Act, but issued the Declaratory Act.

   G. The Regulators
      1. Settlers also cried “liberty” in regard to land disputes.
      2. The Regulators in the Carolinas used liberty to promote their cause.

   H. Land and Liberty
      1. Land disputes were behind the creation of Vermont.
         a. Ethan Allen

III. The Road to Revolution
   A. The Townshend Crisis
      1. The 1767 Townshend Act imposed taxes on imported goods.
      2. By 1768 colonies were again boycotting British goods.

   B. Homespun Virtue
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1. Rather than rely on British goods, colonists relied on homespun clothing; use of American goods came to be seen as a symbol of American resistance.
2. Urban artisans strongly supported the boycott.

C. The Boston Massacre
   1. The March 1770 conflict between Bostonians and British troops left five Bostonians dead.
      a. Crispus Attucks
   2. The boycott ended after the Townshend duties were repealed, except for a tax on tea.

D. Wilkes and Liberty
   1. The treatment of John Wilkes and the rumors of Anglican bishops being sent to America convinced many settlers that England was succumbing to the same pattern of political corruption and decline of liberty that afflicted other countries.

E. East Indian Tea
   1. The East Indian Company was in financial crisis, and the British government decided to market the company’s Chinese tea in North America.
   2. The Tea Act was intended to aid the East India Company and help to defray the costs of colonial government.
   3. December 16, 1773, colonists threw over 300 chests of tea into Boston Harbor.

F. The Intolerable Acts
   1. London’s response to the Bostonians’ action was swift and harsh with the so-called Intolerable Acts.
   2. The Quebec Act granted religious toleration for Catholics in Canada.

IV. The Coming of Independence
A. The Continental Congress
   1. To resist the Intolerable Acts, a Continental Congress convened in Philadelphia in 1774.

B. The Association
   1. The congress adopted the Continental Association, which called for an almost complete halt to trade with Great Britain and the West Indies.
      a. Committees of Safety were established to enforce the boycotts.
   2. The Committees of Safety enlarged the political nation.

C. The Sweets of Liberty
   1. By 1775 talk of liberty pervaded the colonies.
   2. As the crisis deepened, Americans increasingly based their claims not simply on the historical rights of Englishmen but on the more abstract language of natural rights and universal freedom.
      a. John Locke
      b. Thomas Jefferson

D. The Outbreak of War
   1. In April 1775, war broke out at Lexington and Concord.
   2. The Battle of Bunker Hill was a British victory, but the colonists forced General Howe from Boston by March 1776.
   3. The Second Continental Congress raised an army and appointed George Washington its commander.

E. Independence?
   1. That the goal of this war was independence was not clear by the end of 1775.
   2. Opinions varied in the colonies as to the question of independence.

F. Common Sense
   1. Thomas Paine wrote Common Sense in January 1776.
a. It called for a democratic system based on frequent elections and a written constitution.
2. Paine tied the economic hopes of the new nation to the idea of commercial freedom.

G. Paine’s Impact
1. Paine dramatically expanded the public sphere where political discussion took place.
2. He pioneered a new style of political writing, engaging a far greater audience than anyone before him.
3. His persuasions led the Second Continental Congress to sever the colonies ties with Great Britain.

H. The Declaration of Independence
1. The Declaration of Independence declared that Britain’s aim was to establish “absolute tyranny” over the colonies and, as such, congress declared the United States an independent nation.
2. Jefferson’s preamble gave the Declaration its enduring impact.

I. The Declaration and American Freedom
1. The Declaration of Independence completed the shift from the rights of Englishmen to the rights of mankind as the object of American independence.
   a. The “pursuit of happiness” was unique.

J. An Asylum for Mankind
1. The idea of “American exceptionalism” was prevalent in the Revolution.

V. Securing Independence
A. The Balance of Power
1. Britain had the advantage of a large, professional army and navy.
2. Patriots had the advantage of fighting on their own soil and a passionate desire for freedom.
3. British soldiers alienated Americans, while citizen-soldiers displayed great valor.

B. Fighting for Liberty
1. George Washington accepted black recruits after Lord Dunmore’s proclamation.
   a. Five thousand African-Americans enlisted.
   b. Some slaves gained freedom by serving in place of an owner.
2. Siding with the British offered far more opportunities to slaves for liberty.

C. The First Years of the War
1. The war went badly for Washington; many of his troops went home.
2. He managed a surprise attack on Trenton and Princeton.

D. The Battle of Saratoga
1. The Battle of Saratoga in October 1777 gave the patriots a victory and boost to morale.
   a. The victory convinced the French to aid the Americans in 1778.

E. The War in the South
1. The focus of the war shifted to the South in 1778.
2. British commanders were unable to consolidate their hold on the South.

F. Victory at Last
1. American and French troops surrounded General Cornwallis at Yorktown, where he surrendered in October 1781.
2. The treaty of Paris was signed in September 1783.
   a. The American delegation was made up of John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, and John Jay