

U.S. FOUNDING DOCUMENTS

Lessons & Activities

includes

Declaration of Independence

U.S. Constitution

Bill of Rights



Integrate literacy into social studies!

GALLOPADE

By Carole Marsh

EARLY INDEPENDENCE

Read the text and answer the questions.

Many factors limited Great Britain's control over the colonies. From the beginning, the colonists enjoyed a good amount of independence from King George III. The vast distance of the Atlantic Ocean between Britain and the colonies made communication difficult. Britain could not control the colonies directly, so it gave the colonies charters to form their own governments. However, the French and Indian War caused Britain to seek to increase its control over the colonies.

The French and Indian War was a small part of a much larger war between Britain and France called The Seven Years' War. In the colonies, British and colonial forces defended the colonies against the French and France's Indian allies. Britain and the colonists won in 1763, but the war was very expensive for Britain.

The British government had to raise money to replenish funds used for the war. Since Britain defended the colonies in the war, they decided to tax the colonies. They passed several "acts" to raise taxes on colonial goods. The Sugar Act of 1764 and the Stamp Act of 1765 charged taxes on sugar and paper goods, and the Townshend Acts of 1767 taxed many imported goods. These new taxes angered colonists. To make matters worse, the colonists did not have a representative in Parliament. Many colonists argued that "taxation without representation" was unfair.

When colonists protested, King George III decided that the colonists had too much freedom to create laws. Thus, he removed the colonial governments. Many colonists saw King George III as a tyrant and began to suggest complete colonial independence.

- Use a dictionary to define the following words.
 - charter _____
 - tax _____
 - representation _____
 - tyrant _____
- What factors allowed the colonists to have some independence from Britain before the French and Indian War? _____

- Why did the British government think it necessary to tax the colonies? _____

- In your own words, explain "taxation without representation." _____

“JOIN, OR DIE”

Analyze the cartoon and answer the questions.

This political cartoon was first published in 1754 and reproduced in 1765 as a symbol supporting the American Revolution.



Courtesy of Library of Congress

1. What is the main message of this cartoon and who is the intended audience?

2. Is the message stated directly or indirectly?

3. What symbols and words communicate that message?

4. Which colonies are represented?

5. Do you agree with the message presented? Explain.

6. From what political point of view is this cartoon depicted?

7. How does this picture relate to the Declaration of Independence?



CREATED EQUAL?

Read the text and answer the questions in paragraph form.

The Declaration of Independence states, "all men are created equal." It also claims that all men are given certain unalienable rights. However, in early American history, black men and women were not equal and had few rights. Thomas Jefferson himself owned approximately 200 slaves, and slavery was an important form of labor in the agricultural south until 1865.

Jefferson's first draft of the Declaration included a paragraph against slavery. He claimed that King George III had promoted the slave trade in America. In fact, at the outbreak of the American Revolution, Great Britain offered freedom to all slaves who would fight with the British against the colonies. Both southern and northern slaveholders wanted the paragraph against slavery removed. Slavery was a cheap form of labor for the colonies. When Congress reviewed the first draft on July 1, 1776, the section against slavery was removed.

Although the Declaration of Independence celebrates human rights and freedom, slavery existed in America until 1865. For approximately a century after the Declaration of Independence, African American men and women were denied their "unalienable Rights."

1. Why did the colonies want Thomas Jefferson to remove the paragraph about slavery?

2. Explain how Great Britain used slavery against the colonies. _____

3. Predict what might have happened if the Declaration of Independence specifically outlawed slavery in the United States. _____

4. In a well-organized speech, share your response to the question "If all men are created equal, why did slavery exist?"

5. In American history, women did not receive the right to vote until 1920. Is it possible that Thomas Jefferson meant "all MEN are created equal," while excluding women? Discuss your thoughts as a class.

