

The American Revolution

- **Why did we revolt against Great Britain?**
 - **TAXES!**
 - Britain was in bad shape financially
 - By 1763, **British citizens were the most heavily taxed people in the world.**
 - **Britain's empire was massive and expensive to maintain.**
 - The colonies in America were prospering.

"Why shouldn't these colonists begin to pay some of the costs of government and defense?"

-George Grenville, British finance minister

- These new taxes came in many forms and were in addition to the taxes on imports that had been in place for many years



"The Sun Never Sets on the British Empire."

- **Why did we revolt against Great Britain?**
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- **The Sugar Act of 1764**
 - A tax on imported molasses (for rum)
 - Smugglers who were caught bringing rum into the colonies without paying the tax were arrested
 - Colonists upset because the accused smugglers were tried in British, not colonial courts
 - Lots of corruption...British judges were given a 5% commission on all illegal cargoes and fines.
 - This encouraged judges to find accused smugglers guilty



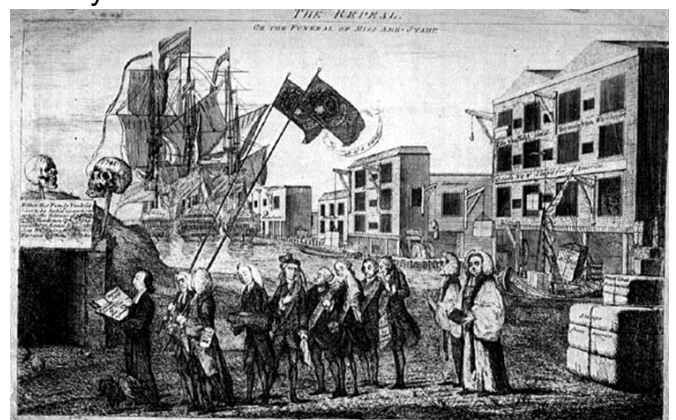
- **Why did we revolt against Great Britain?**
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- **The Quartering Act (1765)**
 - This law required the colonies and colonists to provide housing and supplies for the British troops who remained in America after the French & Indian War
 - It cost a lot of money to house and feed a soldier...many people couldn't afford it



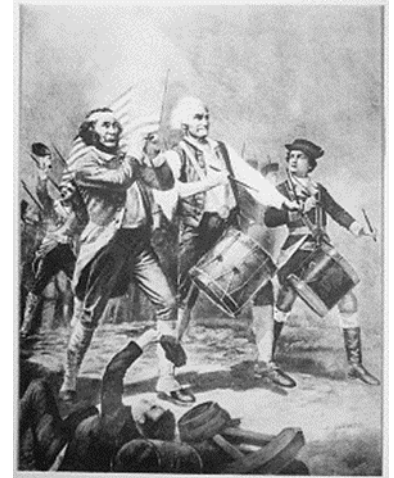
- **Why did we revolt against Great Britain?**
 - **TAXES!**
- **The Stamp Act (1765)**
 - This law placed a tax on newspapers, pamphlets, legal documents, and most other printed materials
 - Required an official government stamp be printed on or attached to the materials to show that the tax had been paid
 - The colonists reacted with widespread and extreme protests



- **Why did we revolt against Great Britain?**
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- **The Stamp Act Congress**
 - Delegates met in October, 1765 in New York City
 - Belief that Britain had no right to force laws on colonists. Why?
 - Colonists had NO REPRESENTATION!
 - There were no colonial representatives in Parliament, the British lawmaking body
 - **“No Taxation Without Representation!”**
 - They argued that colonists should have the same rights and liberties that the people of Great Britain enjoyed



- **Why did we revolt against Great Britain?**
 - **TAXES!**
- **The Sons of Liberty**
 - Colonists began organizing boycotts, or a refusal to purchase certain goods/services
 - Groups were formed to enforce the boycotts and to organize other ways to resist British policies
 - The Sons of Liberty out of Boston were the most famous
 - Threatened and ransacked British government officials in the colonies
 - By Nov. 1765, most stamp distributors had resigned or fled, leaving no one to sell the stamps



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Gadsden Flag, 1775

- **Why did we revolt against Great Britain?**
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- **The Boston Massacre**
- Britain sent troops to Boston to help stop the violent colonial protests against the taxes
- March 5, 1770, British soldiers opened fire on an unruly group of colonists...snowball fight
 - 5 colonists died
 - The soldiers responsible were placed on trial...defended by founding father John Adams
 - Their thumbs were branded as punishment and they were released



- **Why did we revolt against Great Britain?**
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- **The Boston Tea Party**
- May 1773, Parliament passed the **Tea Act**
 - This law gave the British East India Co. exclusive right to sell it's tea in America without paying taxes
 - This would drive American shipping and merchants out of business... dependent on the illegal smuggled tea shipments
 - Several ports and cities refused to allow BEI Co. ships to dock and unload
 - Dec. 16, 1773...a group of colonists dressed as native Americans boarded the tea ships in Boston Harbor and dumped every crate of tea into the bay



- **Why did we revolt against Great Britain?**
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- **The Coercive Acts (Intolerable Acts)**
- In response, Parliament passed the Coercive Acts
 - The colonists called these series of laws the Intolerable Acts because they were so harsh
 - Dropped the Canadian border to the Ohio River (into Conn., Mass., and Vermont)
 - Made British General Thomas Gage the new governor of Mass.
 - The colonists responded by convening the First Continental Congress on Sept. 5, 1774
- 56 delegates met in Philadelphia to discuss boycotting Britain and forming armed militias



The First Continental Congress

- The delegates also made a direct appeal to King George

“The foundation of English liberty, and of all free government, is a right of the people to participate in their legislative council; and as the English colonists are not represented, and...cannot properly be represented in the British parliament, they are entitled to a free and exclusive power of legislation in their several provincial legislatures, where their right of representation can alone be preserved.”



- **Lexington and Concord**
- Massachusetts patriots formed militias and began gathering guns and ammunition
 - A major stockpile of weapons were stored in Concord, about 20 miles outside of Boston
- April 18, 1777 ... 700 British soldiers marched towards Concord with orders to seize the weapons
- Patriots in Boston learned about the move and sent Paul Revere and two others to warn that the British soldiers were on the move
- The British force reached Lexington at dawn on April 19, where they encountered 70 armed militia, known as minutemen
- The British warned the minutemen, then a shot was fired...the British shot a volley at the militia-men
- Within minutes, 8 militia members were dead and another 10 were wounded

Lexington and Concord

- The British then burned the militia's stockpile of supplies
 - On their return to Boston, the British troops were surrounded by 4,000 Patriots gathered along the road, shooting at the from behind trees and walls
 - By the time the British returned to Boston, they had lost 70 troops, with another 170 wounded
 - The Revolutionary War had begun

“Gentlemen may cry, ‘Peace! Peace!’ – but there is no peace...The next gale that sweeps from the North will bring to our ears the clash of resounding arms!...Is life so dear, or peace so sweet, as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God! I know not what course others may take; but as for me, give me liberty or give me death!”

-Patrick Henry

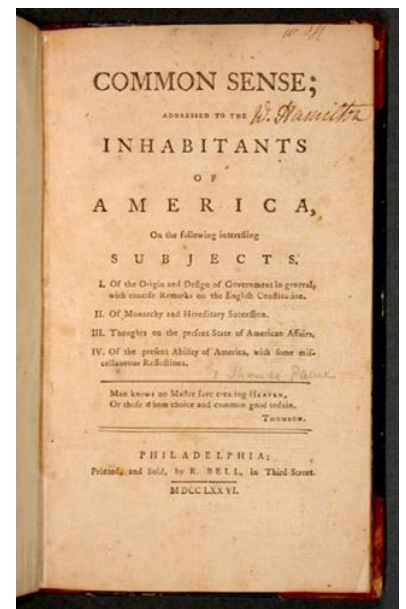
Common Sense

- This 47-page pamphlet was written by **Thomas Paine** to **convince the readers to support a complete break with Britain**.
- **Common Sense** first appeared in Philadelphia in January, 1776.
- Paine had a very direct writing style that made it easy for everyone to **understand the conflict between Great Britain and the colonies**

*“The period of debate is closed. Arms as the last resource decide the contest...**Every thing that is right or reasonable pleads for separation. The blood of the slain, the weeping voice of nature cries, 'TIS TIME TO PART!**”*

-*Common Sense*, 1776

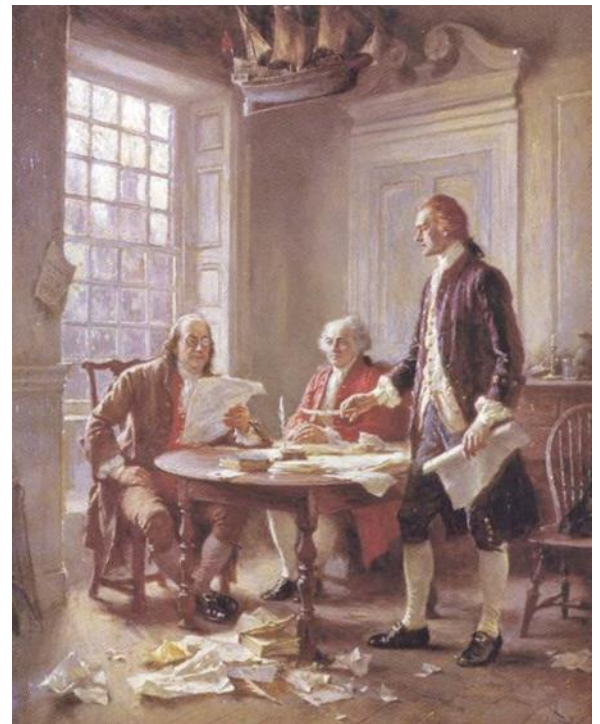
- Within a year, 500,000 copies of *Common Sense* were sold



The Declaration of Independence

Declaration of Independence

- **Second Continental Congress** met in Philadelphia in May 1775 to discuss the conflict with Great Britain
 - They decided to send what became known as the **Olive Branch Petition** to King George
 - This petition was **written to express the continued loyalty of the colonists to the monarch and their desire for peace, begging the king to halt the fighting until a solution could be found**.
 - In November, 1775 the delegates learned that **King George had refused the petition**
 - In June, 1776, after more than a year of war, the **Congress decided it was time for the colonies to cut their ties with Great Britain**
- Congress put together a **committee to prepare a statement of the reasons for the separation from Britain...this became known as the Declaration of Independence**
 - **Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, Roger Sherman, John Adams, and Robert Livingston** were the committee
- The Declaration was adopted on **July 4th, 1776** the day now known as **Independence Day**
- The declaration **did much more than declare independence from Great Britain**
 - It also **defined the basic principles on which American government and society would rest**



Declaration of Independence

The Declaration is divided up into 5 sections:

1. **Preamble:** The introduction or “*statement of purpose*”, which explained the need for the Declaration
2. **Beliefs:** The second section explained the political ideas on which the document was based – “Roots of American Government”
3. **Grievances:** The third section lays out a long list of wrongs the colonists believed had been committed by King George III
4. **Attempts to Address Grievances:** The conclusion reads: “these United Colonies are...and of Right ought to be free and Independent States” – colonists outlined all of their previous attempts to work with the British
5. **Declaring Independence:** Breaking up with Great Britain...finally.

