**Chapter 5**

The American Revolution

*Reviewing Objectives*

**A thorough study of Chapter Five should enable the student to understand:**

1. The history debate concerning the nature of the American Revolution and the reasons for disagreement.
2. American war aims and the problems experienced by the Revolutionary governments in carrying on a protracted war.
3. The aim of the Declaration of Independence, the reasons for its issuance, and its influence throughout the world since 1776.
4. The indispensable contributions of George Washington to the successful outcome of the Revolution.
5. The diplomatic triumph for American negotiators embodied in the Treaty of Paris.
6. The impact of the Revolution on women, African-Americans, Native-Americans, and other minorities.
7. The types of governments created by the new states, and the important features in their governments.
8. The features of the Articles of Confederation, and the reasons for its creation.
9. The problems faced by the government under the Articles of Confederation and how they were addressed.
10. How America’s revolution, and the whole modern notion of revolution, was to a large degree a product of the ideas of the enlightenment.

**Pertinent Questions**

**Chapter Five**

**The United States**

1. List the divisions within the Second Continental Congress and give the aim of each faction. How did the factions attempt to gain their ends?
2. How did the Pamphlet *Common Sense* address the problem of the aim of the war, and what was its impact on American opinion?
3. What were the philosophical roots of the Declaration of Independence, and what effect did the Declaration have on the struggle?
4. What were the characteristics of the governments, state and national, set up by Americans to conduct the war?
5. What problems did the Americans face in providing the necessary supplies and equipment for the war and paying for them?
6. How were the problems in questions 5 overcome, at least initially?

**The War for Independence**

1. What were the American advantages in the struggle, and why was George Washington selected as the best person to make the most of these advantages?
2. What were the initial setbacks in the war during 1776, and what was the significance of the Battle of Trenton and Princeton in this regard?
3. What was the initial plan for the British campaign of 1777? How was this altered, and what effect did this alteration have on the outcome?
4. What were the American diplomatic goals at the start of the war? What problems did they face, and what efforts were made to overcome them?
5. How did the victory at Saratoga affect American diplomatic efforts? How did England and France respond to this news? What was the result?
6. Why did the British decide to launch a campaign against the southern colonies in 1778? What advantages and disadvantages did each side have in this region?
7. How was the campaign in the South conducted, and why was the victory at Yorktown so significant for the Americans?
8. How was Spain an obstacle to the American hopes for peace with independence? How did this affect American diplomacy before the Battle of Yorktown?
9. What were the provisions of the Treaty of Paris in 1783, and how did the Treaty affect relations among the United States, France, and Spain?

**War and Society**

1. Who were the Loyalists? What elements in America remained loyal to the king, and for what reasons?
2. What happened to the Loyalists? Why was there a “tragic story,” at least in some cases?
3. What effect did the war have on other minorities? How was its significance to African-Americans both limited and yet significant?
4. What impact did the American Revolution have on Native Americas?
5. How did the Revolution affect the way American women thought about their status, and what changes result from this new awareness?
6. What changes did the Revolution produce in the structure of the American economy?

**The Creation of State Governments**

1. What was it about the concept of a republican government that so appealed Americans?
2. How did Americans propose to avoid what they considered to be the problems of the British system they were repudiating?
3. What was unique about the constitution drawn up by Massachusetts?
4. How did these new constitutions deal with the question of religious freedom? How did they deal with slavery?

**The Search for a National Government**

1. Why type of government did the Articles of Confederation create? What were its major features?
2. Why was the Confederation organized as it was? What caused the delay in its ratification, and how were the obstacles to its ratification overcome?
3. How did the Treaty of Paris of 1783 fail to resolve, or in some cases help to create, strain between the United States, England, and Spain?
4. Above all, what commercial arrangements did American shippers and traders want after the war had ended? Why did they feel this was needed, and how successful were they in accomplishing their aims?
5. What postwar problems existed between the United States and Spain? What attempts were made to solve the problems, and why did these attempts fail?
6. How did the Confederation Congress attempt to solve the problem of the status of western territory that the states had ceded to it? Which interest groups favored which plans for the sale and distribution of land?
7. How did the Confederation deal with the Indians who also claimed the western land?
8. What were the sources of the Confederation’s postwar economic problems, and how did the government attempt to solve them? What were the results?
9. How was paper money seen as a solution to the economic problems of one element in American society? Who opposed this and why?
10. How did the action of Daniel Shays and his followers relate to the economic problem of the Confederation period? What was the significance of the movement he led?

**Where Historians Disagree**

1. What are the major interpretations of the origins of the American Revolution that have been advanced by historians?
2. Which historians highlighted in “Where Historians Disagree” fit into which schools?

**The American Environment**

1. Explain how different versions of the cadastral system have “profoundly different consequences for the way colonial lands and societies developed.”
2. How did the government of the United States determine which cadastral system was most appropriate for the new republic?

# America in the World

1. What Enlightenment ideas most influenced America’s revolution?
2. How did Enlightenment ideas and the American Revolution inspire other people to oppose unpopular regimes? Where did these revolutions occur?

#### **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.