

TOPIC

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LESSON 3

Lesson Summary

THE COLONISTS DECLARE INDEPENDENCE

MODIFIED CORNELL NOTES

On April 19, 1775, war erupted with battles at Lexington and Concord, small towns west of Boston. British troops that had been sent to seize Patriot weapons **stockpiled** in Concord encountered the Patriot **militia**, full-time farmers who were part-time soldiers. The British were pushed back to Boston, and provincial assemblies of Patriots seized control of the New England colonies. **Loyalists**, or colonists who remained loyal to Britain, fled to take refuge with the British troops in Boston. In May 1775, delegates from all the colonies assembled in Philadelphia for the Second Continental Congress. The Congress assumed responsibility for the war and gave the command of the new Continental Army to George Washington.

Most colonists supported the actions of the Continental Congress, but a large minority preferred British rule. The Loyalists feared that the resistance would lead to a deadly and destructive war that Britain would certainly win. According to **stereotype**, Loyalists were wealthy elitists. In reality, many were ordinary farmers and artisans.

In January 1776, Thomas Paine published a pamphlet called *Common Sense* in which he made a radical proposal: independence from Britain, a republican government, and a union of the colonies. Paine argued that ordinary people should elect their entire government. Although the colonies had enormous social and economic differences, Paine insisted that Americans could create a model that would inspire common people everywhere.

By the spring of 1776, Paine's ideas had built momentum for American independence. Congress selected a committee to draft a document declaring American independence. On July 4, Congress approved the Declaration of Independence. Drafted by Thomas Jefferson, it drew on Paine's ideas to denounce the king. Congress embraced the Enlightenment ideas that all men are born with **natural rights** that cannot be taken away by a government. Jefferson called them "inalienable rights." However, to achieve independence, the poorly organized colonists would have to fight against one of the strongest military powers on Earth.

Lesson Vocabulary

stockpile to gather a large supply of something, such as weapons or food

militia trained citizens who serve as soldiers during an emergency

Loyalists colonists who remained loyal to Britain during the Revolution

stereotype an oversimplified image of a group or people

natural rights universal rights, such as life and liberty that derive from nature rather than a government, according to philosophers

Create a vocab paragraph using all 5 vocab words correctly from the Lesson Vocabulary on the reverse side of this paper.

Lesson 3: The Colonists Declare Independence

5. How did the Second Continental Congress respond to the beginning of the war?

6. Identify Cause and Effect What role did the publication of *Common Sense* play in leading the colonies to declare their independence?
