

IN CONGRESS, JULY 4, 1776.

WE HOLD

These Truths

2025-2026 CIVIC CALENDAR



Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division



The Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints and Photographs, New York Public Library



The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of John Stewart Kennedy, 1897



National Army Museum



Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division

our
story
CONTINUES 250

NATIONAL
CONSTITUTION
CENTER



Celebrate

AMERICA AT 250

with the

NATIONAL CONSTITUTION CENTER



The year 2026 marks the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. Join the National Constitution Center as we commemorate 250 years of revolutionary spirit—celebrating the people and ideas that shaped this historic moment, and exploring how the revolutionaries' vision continues to guide us toward a "more perfect Union."

We hope that through this thoughtful exploration of the American Revolution, we empower learners everywhere to think more deeply about the principles of the Declaration of Independence and inspire them to explore these ideas, model respectful civil dialogue, and live these principles out in their own civic lives.

We're thrilled to mark this historic milestone with you—here is how you can celebrate with us:

USE THE 2025-2026 CIVIC CALENDAR AS A LEARNING RESOURCE

Our 2025-2026 Civic Calendar is designed to be commemorative, but also to support the integration of key historical dates and themes into civic learning all year long. Each month offers resources and discussion questions to get learners thinking about the American Revolution, its history, and its enduring relevance today.

LOOK CLOSER: A SPECIAL TOOL TUCKED INSIDE

In the middle of this calendar, you'll find a special pull-out inspired by Benjamin Franklin's famous habit of charting his civic virtues. Franklin believed that practicing small virtues each day could shape a better self and a better society. This tool invites you to do the same: track your progress, celebrate growth, and reflect on the values that guide you all year long. Keep it handy, return to it often, and let it spark meaningful moments at home, in the classroom, or wherever you gather.

...by the people toiform the justand bands which have comonited them only in that they have good cause there, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind by giving them a good government, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness— That to secure these Rights, governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. That whenever any Form of Government becomes odious, despotic, and injurious to the Rights of the People, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness.— That government which is best, is that which governs least, except in cases where its protection is absolutely necessary for the happiness of its people.— That the great end of government is to promote the happiness of the people— That the government which best secures these rights, and best protects the people, is the best government.



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VISIT OUR AMERICA AT 250 CIVIC TOOLKIT

Linked throughout the calendar are resources from our new *America at 250 Civic Toolkit*, which features a new *Interactive Declaration of Independence*, with:

- The full text of the document, annotated by renowned legal scholar Akhil Reed Amar
- An audio version of the text
- Digitized images of the original document
- Professionally produced animated videos
- Essays by America's leading scholars and historians:
Danielle Allen, David Armitage, Mary Sarah Bilder, Lindsay M. Chervinsky, Robert P. George, Jane Kamensky, Yuval Levin, Jeffrey Rosen, Eric Slaughter, Hon. Jeffrey S. Sutton, Gordon S. Wood, and Rosemarie Zagarri.



Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division



Architect of the Capitol

PLAN A VISIT TO NEW GALLERIES AT THE CENTER

We're excited to unveil two new galleries at the National Constitution Center focused on America's founding and the separation of powers just in time for America's 250th. We encourage you to plan a trip to the Center to experience them in 2026.

The new gallery on America's founding traces the journey from the American Revolution through the Constitutional Convention and the ratification of the Bill of Rights. The exhibit will feature a rare copy of the U.S. Constitution—one of 14 known original, official printed copies, and from which all subsequent printings of the final text of the Constitution originate—and will tell the story of America's founding principles, exploring how we declared independence, fought a revolution, learned from early challenges, and ultimately developed a new form of government.

The new gallery on the separation of powers explores the three branches of government (the executive, legislative, and judicial) and how they work together—and often clash—over time. The new gallery also explores the principle of federalism and the battles over national and state power that have helped to define America from early debates between Alexander Hamilton and Thomas Jefferson through today.



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Revolution

in the minds of the

PEOPLE



Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division



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From the Boston Tea Party and the debates inside of the Continental Congress to the battles of Lexington and Concord and the signing of the Declaration of Independence, the American Revolution had far-reaching effects. This pivotal story is rooted in the core principles of the Declaration of Independence: liberty, equality, the pursuit of happiness, and government by consent. **These principles inspired the Revolution and continue to shape our nation today.**

The 13 colonies were founded by settlers drawn to the promise of freedom and opportunity in the New World. As more people arrived, the colonies grew into diverse societies, each with its own character and economy. The New England colonies focused on trade, shipbuilding, and fishing; the Middle Colonies thrived through farming and commerce; and the Southern Colonies were heavily dependent on agriculture, particularly tobacco and rice. These economies, both North and South, were supported by enslaved people, who comprised one-fifth of the American population.

For a time, the 13 colonies remained proud subjects who were loyal to the king. However, in the coming years, **a series of events would drive England and her colonies to war, resulting in a struggle for independence that would birth a new experiment in self-government.**

Discussion Questions

1. If you lived in one of the 13 colonies in 1776, which colony would you want to live in and why? What would daily life be like there? Write a diary entry of a day in the life from the perspective of someone living in your colony.
2. How do you think the economies and population makeup of the colonies shaped how people thought about freedom and independence?
3. Choose one of the four founding principles: liberty, equality, pursuit of happiness, or government by consent. Then, write a letter from the perspective of a colonist to a friend or family member explaining how that principle is being violated by the British in the American colonies.

SEPTEMBER



our
story
CONTINUES **250**

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
	1 LABOR DAY	2	3 The Treaty of Paris ends the Revolutionary War (1783)	4	5 First Continental Congress convenes in Philadelphia (1774)	6
7	8 Battle of Eutaw Springs (1781)	9 California is admitted as the 31st state to the Union (1850)	10 Birthday of Carter Braxton , signer of the Declaration of Independence (1736)	11 Battle of Brandywine (1777)	12	13
14 Birthday of James Wilson , signer of the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution (1742)	15 National Hispanic Heritage Month begins	16 Battle of Harlem Heights (1776)	17 CONSTITUTION DAY CELEBRATION Museum Open With Free Admission The U.S. Constitution is signed (1787) Birthday of John Rutledge, Jr. , signer of the U.S. Constitution (1739)	18 U.S. Air Force established (1947) Birthday of George Read , signer of the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution (1733)	19 Birthday of Charles Carroll , signer of the Declaration of Independence (1737) First Battle of Saratoga (1777)	20
21 Benedict Arnold meets with British Major John André to betray West Point (1780)	22	23	24	25	26	27 Birthday of Samuel Adams , signer of the Declaration of Independence (1722)
28 Siege of Yorktown begins (1781)	29	30	CONSTITUTION DAY IS SEPTEMBER 17! Join us in person at the Center in Philadelphia or explore our digital Constitution-focused educational resources. constitutioncenter.org/constitution-day-resources			

AMERICA AT 250
civic Toolkit
FEATURED RESOURCE

In a new essay, “One People: An Introduction to the Declaration and the Constitution,” National Constitution Center President and CEO Jeffrey Rosen explores how the Declaration of Independence’s principle that governments derive power from “the consent of the governed” sparked a lasting debate between Thomas Jefferson’s vision of state sovereignty and Alexander Hamilton’s vision of a strong

national government. This tension shaped pivotal moments in American history—from the framing of the Constitution to the nullification crises and the Civil War. Ultimately, Abraham Lincoln affirmed a united “one people” governed “of, by, and for the people,” blending Jefferson’s democratic ideals with Hamilton’s strong union to realize America’s enduring promise of liberty and equality.



constitutioncenter.org/declaration/essays

The ROAD to *Revolution*

The French and Indian War (1754-1763) was the latest in a series of conflicts between England and France and ended with the near elimination of French power in America. However, the war left Britain with a tremendous amount of debt. To recoup these costs and maintain a standing army on the continent, **the British government began imposing new taxes on its American colonies.**

In earlier decades, colonists had grown used to a degree of self government and believed they were entitled to the full rights of Englishmen. Many were outraged by the new taxes, which were enacted without their representation in Parliament. Measures like the **Sugar Act, the Stamp Act, and the Townshend Acts were widely viewed as unjust, deepening tensions and pushing the colonies closer to revolution.**

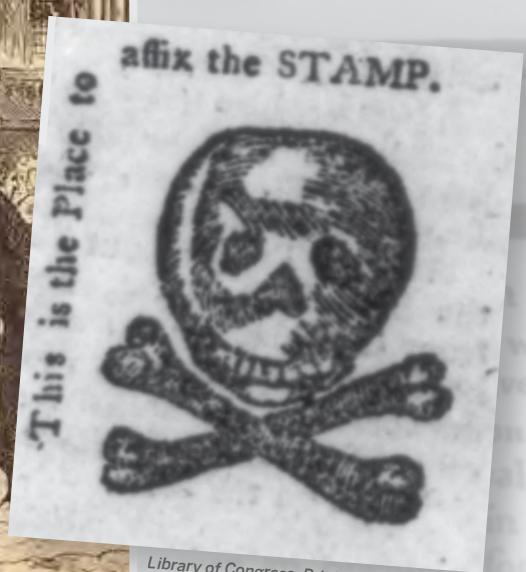
Discussion Questions

1. Colonists protested in many creative ways during the Revolution—some dumped tea, others made their own clothes or stopped buying British goods. How might you have protested the acts of the British government during that time?
2. Imagine you are a newspaper columnist during the American Revolution covering the latest colonial protests. Draft a column for your readers. What is your headline? What message are you trying to send?
3. Which event do you think pushed the colonies past the point of no return, and why? Create a timeline showing key events that shifted the colonies from loyal subjects to revolutionaries.

The Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints and Photographs, New York Public Library



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OCTOBER



our
story
CONTINUES **250**

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	<p>Meet Samuel Adams Samuel Adams of Massachusetts was a passionate advocate for American independence and a key organizer of resistance to British rule who helped spark the Revolution. Learn more about his revolutionary life.</p> <p>constitutioncenter.org/samuel-adams</p>	<p>1</p>	<p>2</p>	<p>3</p>	<p>4 Battle of Germantown (1777)</p>
<p>5</p>	<p>6</p>	<p>7 Second Battle of Saratoga, British General John Burgoyne surrenders (1777) Battle of King's Mountain (1780) Birthday of Caesar Rodney, signer of the Declaration of Independence (1728) Birthday of William Samuel Johnson, signer of the U.S. Constitution (1727)</p>	<p>8</p>	<p>9</p>	<p>10 Battle of Valcour Island (1776) Birthday of Thomas Fitzsimons, signer of the U.S. Constitution (1741)</p>
<p>12</p>	<p>13 U.S. Marine Corps established (1775) Indigenous Peoples' Day Columbus Day</p>	<p>14 Birthday of Francis Lightfoot Lee, signer of the Declaration of Independence (1732)</p>	<p>15 National Hispanic Heritage Month Ends</p>	<p>16 Birthday of Jonathan Dayton, signer of the U.S. Constitution (1760)</p>	<p>17 Birthday of Jacob Broom, signer of the U.S. Constitution (1752)</p>
<p>19 Battle of Yorktown ends, British General Charles Cornwallis surrenders (1781)</p>	<p>20 Continental Association is adopted to enforce boycott of British goods (1774)</p>	<p>21</p>	<p>22</p>	<p>23</p>	<p>24 Birthday of Jared Ingersoll, signer of the U.S. Constitution (1749)</p>
<p>26 Birthday of Charles Pinckney, signer of the U.S. Constitution (1757)</p>	<p>27 First copy of <i>The Federalist Papers</i> is published in support of the newly signed Constitution (1787)</p>	<p>28 Battle of White Plains (1776)</p>	<p>29</p>	<p>30 Birthday of John Adams, signer of the Declaration of Independence (1735)</p>	<p>31 Birthday of William Paca, signer of the Declaration of Independence (1740) Nevada is admitted as the 36th state to the Union (1864) New Hampshire's state constitution ratified (1783)</p>



Liberty was a rallying cry of the American Revolution, deeply woven into the fabric of the new nation. In Robert P. George's **"The Declaration of Independence and the Concept of Liberty,"** explore how the founders viewed liberty as a path to human flourishing and virtuous living, not just simple freedom from rules.

constitutioncenter.org/the-declaration-of-independence-and-the-concept-of-liberty



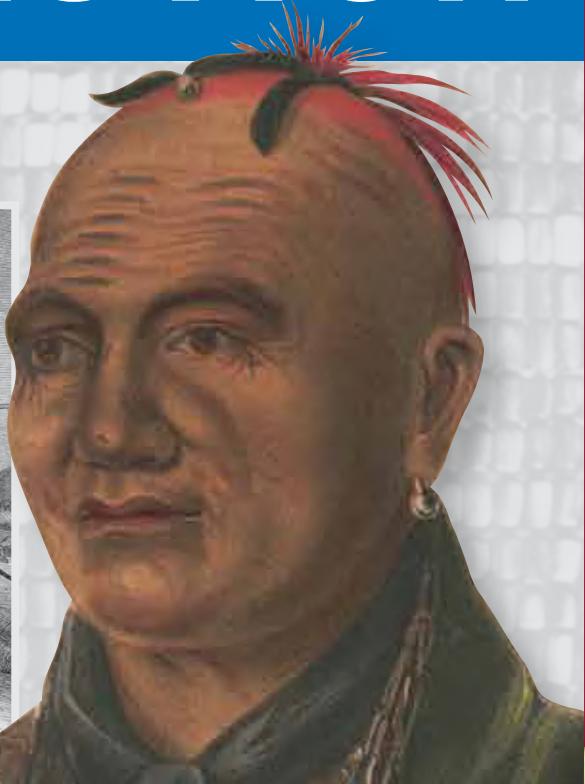
Native Americans

and the

REVOLUTION



Library of Congress,
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Thayendanegea (Joseph Brant)

Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division

Long before European settlers arrived in America, the land was occupied by various tribes of Native Americans. As more settlers arrived from the Old World, these tribes struggled to keep the land and resources that their ancestors had used for centuries.

During the American Revolution, Native Americans played a complex and significant role, with many tribes choosing to support either the British or the American colonists, depending on their interests and relationships.

Those who sided with the British hoped that victory would protect their lands from colonial expansion. Other tribes, particularly those in the northern and western regions, supported the American cause, believing that independence would help safeguard their sovereignty and way of life. Still, many Native Americans chose to remain neutral or fought to protect their own territories. Despite their involvement on both sides, **Native Americans faced increased conflict and uncertainty in their communities as their lands and autonomy were increasingly threatened**, no matter the outcome of the Revolution.

Discussion Questions

1. Native Americans lived on this land long before settlers arrived and many still live here today. Which Native nations first lived where you live? What can you learn about their history and culture?
2. During the American Revolution, many Native nations faced tough decisions—some sided with the British, others with the Americans, and some tried to stay neutral. What factors may have influenced these decisions, and what were the possible risks and benefits of each choice?
3. The Revolution is often seen as a fight for freedom, but many Native nations lost land and sovereignty after the war. How does this complicate that story? What sources could help you explore Native perspectives on the war?

NOVEMBER



our
story
CONTINUES **250**

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CIVIC STORIES

Interested in bringing more Native American history into your classroom? Book a Civic Story and explore powerful artifacts and untold stories that highlight the history, culture, and civic contributions of Native American communities. Civic Stories provide elementary and middle school students the opportunity to engage with the past through artifacts and the stories they tell. constitutioncenter.org/civic-stories



2

North Dakota is admitted as the 39th state to the Union (1889)

South Dakota is admitted as the 40th state to the Union (1889)

3

4

ELECTION DAY

5

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Montana is admitted as the 41st state to the Union (1889)

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VETERANS DAY

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13

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15

U.S. Marine Corps established (1775)

Washington is admitted as the 42nd state to the Union (1889)

Birthday of **John Dickinson**, signer of the U.S. Constitution (1732)

Lord Dunmore's Proclamation is published, offering freedom to enslaved people if they fought for the British (1775)

16

Battle of Fort Washington (1776)

Oklahoma is admitted as the 46th state to the Union (1907)

Birthday of **James McHenry**, signer of the U.S. Constitution (1753)

17

18

19

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21

22

Battle of Fort Lee (1776)

Birthday of **Oliver Wolcott**, signer of the Declaration of Independence (1726)

Birthday of **Josiah Bartlett**, signer of the Declaration of Independence (1729)

North Carolina ratifies the Constitution, becoming the 12th state to join the Union (1789)

Birthday of **Abraham Baldwin**, signer of the U.S. Constitution (1754)

23

Birthday of **Edward Rutledge**, signer of the Declaration of Independence (1749)

Birthday of **William Livingston**, signer of the U.S. Constitution (1723)

24

25

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29

British troops evacuate New York City (Evacuation Day) (1783)

THANKSGIVING DAY

Founders' Library
FEATURED RESOURCE

Vine Deloria Jr. (1933-2005) was a writer and activist for Native American rights. In the mid-1960s, he was executive director of the National Congress of American Indians, working to preserve the rights and increase the sovereign power of Native Americans. Discover how Deloria situates his life story in a chronicle of the long history of Native American sovereignty and its changing relationship with the United States government.

constitutioncenter.org/when-indians-were-running-it



The BOSTON Sea Party

The Boston Tea Party was one of the most significant events leading up to the American Revolution. It took place on the night of December 16, 1773, as a response to the Tea Act passed by the British Parliament earlier that year, which granted the British East India Company the exclusive right to sell tea in the American colonies. While the British government had repealed many of its earlier duties, the tax on tea remained, angering many colonists who saw it as another example of taxation without representation.

In protest of the Tea Act, which lowered the price of tea but cut colonial merchants out of the trade, a group of Bostonians—some disguised as Native Americans—boarded three British ships docked in Boston Harbor: the *Dartmouth*, *Eleanor*, and *Beaver*. They carefully dumped 342 chests of tea into the water. Their goal wasn't random destruction, but a clear and targeted statement against what they saw as taxation without representation. **The Boston Tea Party became a powerful symbol of colonial resistance and helped unite many colonists against British rule.** It also caused a backlash against Bostonians by Parliament in the form of the Coercive Acts.



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Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division

Discussion Questions

1. Imagine you're a museum curator creating an exhibit about the Boston Tea Party. What three objects or images would you include and why?
2. How did the Coercive Acts bring the colonies together? Would they have united without them? Explain your thinking.
3. What did "consent of the governed" mean to colonists in 1776, and how did it connect to their demand for representation and rights, especially in protests like the Boston Tea Party? Use Gordon Wood's essay "Consent of the Governed" to explore how this idea inspired resistance.



DECEMBER



our
story
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	1	2	3	4	5	6	
			Illinois is admitted as the 21st state to the Union (1818)		Birthday of Hugh Williamson , signer of the U.S. Constitution (1735) 21st Amendment ratified—repeals the prohibition of alcohol (1933)	13th Amendment ratified—abolishes slavery (1865)	
7	8	9	10	11	12	13	
Delaware ratifies the Constitution by a vote of 30-0, becoming the first state in the Union (1787)			Mississippi is admitted as the 20th state to the Union (1817)	Indiana is admitted as the 19th state to the Union (1816)	Pennsylvania ratifies the Constitution, becoming the second state in the Union (1787)		
14	15 BILL OF RIGHTS DAY	16	17	18	19	20	
Alabama is admitted as the 22nd state to the Union (1819)	The Bill of Rights is ratified (1791)	Boston Tea Party (1773)	Birthday of William Floyd , signer of the Declaration of Independence (1734)	New Jersey ratifies the Constitution, becoming the third state in the Union (1787)	Washington's army enters winter quarters at Valley Forge (1777)		
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	
	Birthday of William Ellery , signer of the Declaration of Independence (1727)		Birthday of William Patterson , signer of the U.S. Constitution (1745)	General George Washington and his troops successfully cross the Delaware River, surprising the British and Hessian forces at Trenton, New Jersey (1776)	Battle of Trenton (1776) Birthday of Thomas Nelson Jr. , signer of the Declaration of Independence (1738)		
28	29	30	31	CONSTITUTION DAILY BLOG On December 16, 1773, a group of colonists destroyed a large British tea shipment in Boston Harbor. Did this act of defiance light a fire that led to American independence? Learn more about this Revolutionary resistance on our Constitution Daily blog: constitutioncenter.org/boston-tea-party			
Iowa is admitted as the 29th state to the Union (1846)	Texas is admitted as the 28th state to the Union (1845)		Failed American assault on Quebec (1775)				

Virtual

STUDENT PROGRAM

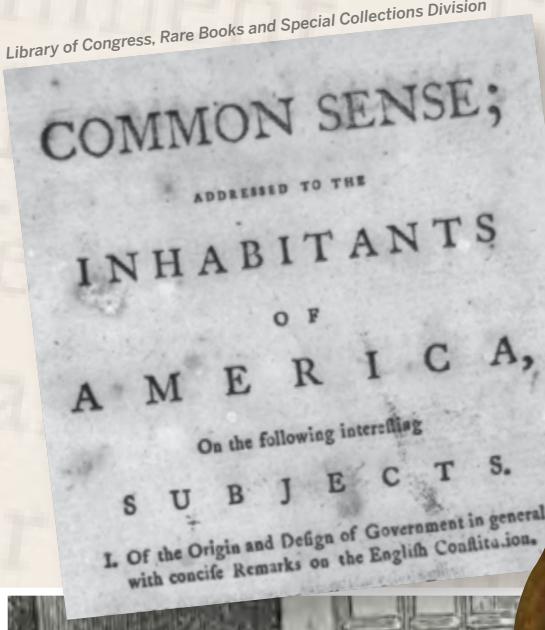
Invite a scholar to join your students for a Scholar Exchange exploring the key events of the American Revolution. Our Scholar Exchanges give students the opportunity to discuss constitutional topics with a lawyer, judge, or constitutional scholar and their peers from around the country. In this setting, students gain deeper constitutional understanding and engage in enhanced civil discourse.

constitutioncenter.org/scholar-exchanges



Writings of the Revolution

Library of Congress, Rare Books and Special Collections Division



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Thomas Paine
National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution

Throughout the American Revolution, the written word was a powerful tool for spreading ideas and rallying support for independence. **Revolutionaries recognized the importance of communicating their ideas, their grievances, and their arguments on behalf of independence to both the colonists and the wider world.** Writers used pamphlets, essays, and books to advocate for the colonies' right to self governance and to unite the population against British rule. Their opponents—the loyalists—did the same.

Thomas Paine's *Common Sense*, published in 1776, was one of the most influential and widely read works of the time, boldly calling for independence and criticizing the monarchy, with 60,000 copies published. Paine's clear and compelling argument resonated deeply with colonists, pushing many to support the cause of independence.

Discussion Questions

1. During the American Revolution, writings helped convince people to fight for a new nation. How can words influence people and events? Can you think of other times throughout history when writing made a big difference? Check out our *Founders' Library* (linked below) to explore other revolutionary texts.
2. Not everyone in the colonies wanted independence at first. But *Common Sense* convinced many to join the cause. If you had to persuade people to support something important today, what would you say in your opening paragraph?
3. Read a short excerpt from *Common Sense* and imagine you're sharing its powerful ideas on social media today. Create a social media post that captures the main message and inspires others to pay attention.

JANUARY



our
story
CONTINUES **250**

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 <p>WRITING RIGHTS</p> <p>Which Revolution-era documents influenced the founders when drafting the Bill of Rights? In this interactive, you can explore the documents that inspired the founders during their drafting process. Follow the twists and turns as the founders deliberated and sometimes disagreed on their path to the final text.</p> <p>constitutioncenter.org/writing-rights</p>				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Birthday of Dr. Benjamin Rush , signer of the Declaration of Independence (1746) Utah is admitted as the 45th state to the Union (1896)		New Mexico is admitted as the 47th state to the Union (1912)			Connecticut ratifies the Constitution, becoming the fifth state in the Union (1788)	Thomas Paine's Common Sense is published (1776) Birthday of Thomas Mifflin , signer of the U.S. Constitution (1744)
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
Birthday of Alexander Hamilton , signer of the U.S. Constitution (1755 or 1757)	Birthday of John Hancock , signer of the Declaration of Independence (1737)		Birthday of William Whipple , signer of the Declaration of Independence (1730)	Birthday of Philip Livingston , signer of the Declaration of Independence (1716)	18th Amendment ratified—prohibits manufacture, sale, and transportation of intoxicating liquors (1919)	Birthday of Benjamin Franklin , signer of the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution (1706) Battle of Cowpens (1781)
18	19 MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. DAY	20	21	22	23 20th Amendment ratified—presidential inauguration moves from March to January (1933) 24th Amendment ratified—abolishes poll tax in national elections (1964)	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31 Birthday of Robert Morris , signer of the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution (1734) Birthday of Gouverneur Morris , signer of the U.S. Constitution (1752)
	Michigan is admitted as the 26th state to the Union (1837)			Kansas is admitted as the 34th state to the Union (1861)		



One of the all-time American bestsellers, Thomas Paine's **Common Sense** exploded onto the scene in January 1776, at a precarious moment when reconciliation with Great Britain seemed unlikely, yet independence still seemed unthinkable to many. Read Paine's case for independence in the *Founders' Library*.

constitutioncenter.org/common-sense



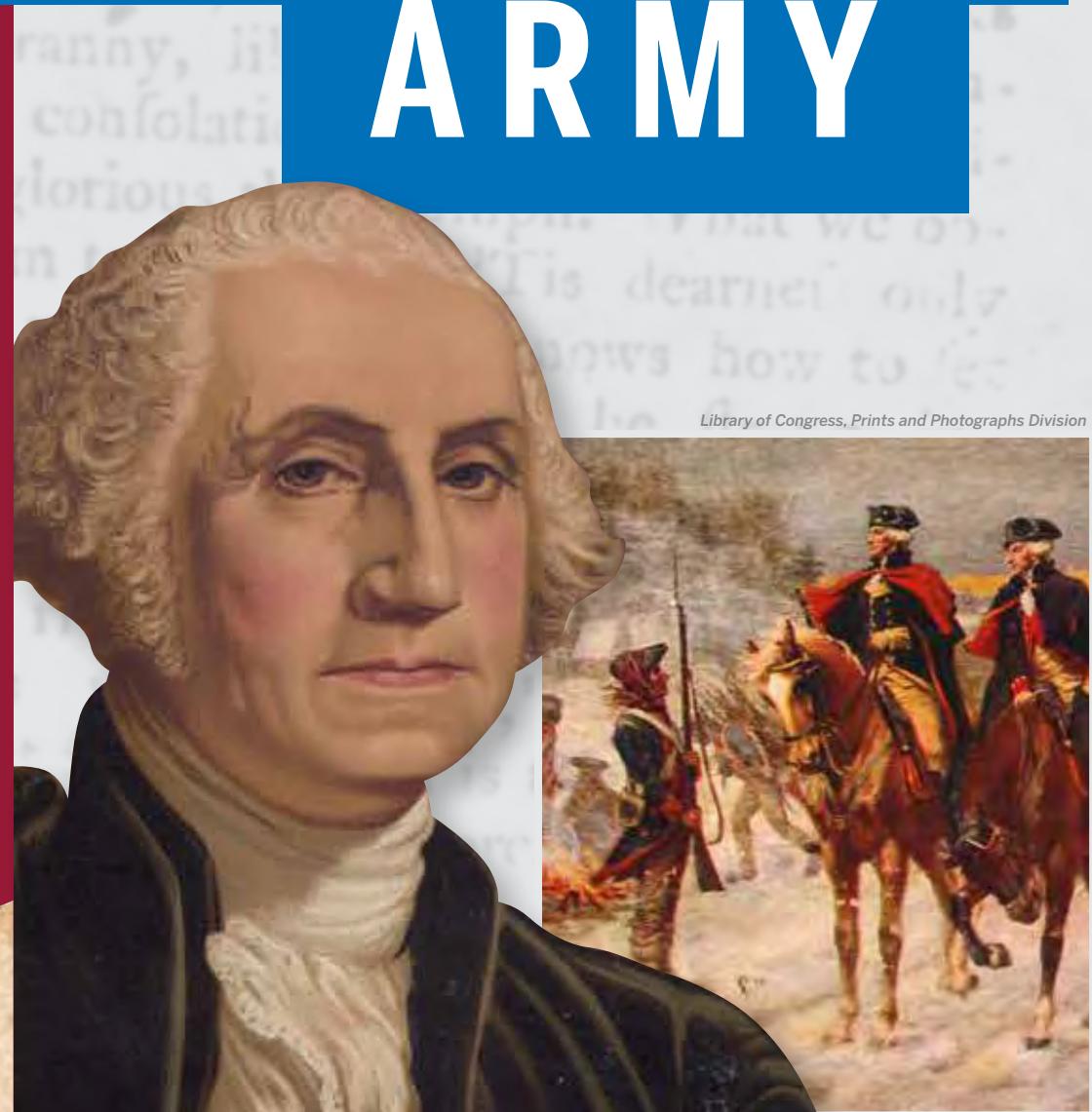
George Washington and the CONTINENTAL ARMY

Known for his strong character, integrity, and unwavering resolve, George Washington emerged as the natural leader of the Continental Army. He was chosen by the Second Continental Congress in 1775 to command the troops, and his leadership was crucial in guiding the fledgling army through difficult battles, harsh winters, and the many challenges of warfare. **Washington's ability to inspire the troops and maintain morale, even in the face of overwhelming odds, earned him the respect of his soldiers, the admiration of his fellow leaders, and the deep affection of the American people.**

Washington's leadership also extended far beyond the battlefield. After the Revolution, he became a unifying figure whose personal sacrifice and commitment to the cause symbolized the American spirit. Later, as president of the Constitutional Convention, Washington's steady presence helped guide the creation of the new government. Finally, as the first president of the United States, Washington set important precedents for his successors, including the peaceful transfer of power.

Discussion Questions

1. Washington had to keep his soldiers motivated through many hardships. If you were the general, what would you say to encourage your troops to keep going?
2. Washington's leadership went far beyond the battlefield. What qualities make a good leader, and how can a leader positively affect the people around them?
3. Washington stepped down from power instead of making himself king. What was the significance of this decision?



George Washington
Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division

USING THE VIRTUE CHART

Benjamin Franklin believed that practicing virtues was a lifelong effort—something that could be improved little by little, week by week. This chart invites children (and the adults guiding them) to follow Franklin’s example by noticing, practicing, and reflecting on virtues in everyday life.

START TOGETHER

Begin by talking about civic virtue—the idea that our choices and actions can strengthen our community. Review the 12 virtues on the chart, read their definitions, and discuss what they mean.

WEEKLY PRACTICE

Each week, encourage children to look for moments—at school, at home, or in the community—where they or others demonstrated these virtues.

INTERACTIVE REFLECTION

Have them write their examples on sticky notes and place them in the boxes. At the end of the week, clear off the notes so the chart can be used again. By returning to the chart again and again, children practice the same kind of ongoing self-reflection Franklin valued—developing habits of character that grow stronger over time.

Tear these pages out!

The

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

Challenge

How did you stay organized or keep your responsibilities in order? How did it help you or others?

Order

Benjamin Franklin was one of the most important figures in early American history: an inventor, writer, diplomat, and a leader in the fight for independence during the American Revolution. But beyond his big accomplishments, Franklin also believed that personal character mattered just as much as public actions. He created a list of civic virtues—qualities that help individuals become better people and contribute to a stronger society.

These values helped guide Franklin and others as they worked toward creating a new, more just society during the Revolution, and they still offer a powerful guide for how we can contribute to our communities today.

Now, it's your turn! In the spirit of Benjamin Franklin, you can track how these virtues look in your own life. Throughout the year, check in on your civic challenge each week to track how you practice these values.

Humility

How did you show humility by listening, learning, or recognizing others' strengths?

Justice

How did you act fairly or stand up for someone? What difference did it make?



Resolution

What promises
or goals did you
follow through on?

Temperance

When did you
show self-control?

Moderation

Can you think of a time
when you kept your actions
or reactions balanced?

Tranquillity

Were there moments when
you stayed calm? How did
it help you or others?

Cleanliness

How did you
practice cleanliness?

Inequality

How did you save, reuse,
or make smart choices?

Integrity

When were you honest or
thoughtful with your words?
How did it affect someone
or yourself?

Silence

When did you think before
speaking? How did being
thoughtful with words help
you or someone else?

Industry

How did you stay busy
with important tasks? What
did you accomplish?

FEBRUARY



our
story
CONTINUES **250**

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
1	2	3 15th Amendment ratified—voting rights cannot be denied on account of race (1870) 16th Amendment ratified—grants Congress power to establish a federal income tax (1913)	4	5 Birthday of John Witherspoon , signer of the Declaration of Independence (1723)	6 France signs Treaty of Alliance with the United States (1778) Massachusetts ratifies the Constitution, becoming the sixth state in the Union (1788)	7 11th Amendment ratified—affirms states' sovereign immunity (1795)
8	9	10 25th Amendment ratified—establishes succession process and issues of presidential disability (1967) The Treaty of Paris ends the Seven Years' War (French and Indian War) (1763)	11	12	13	14 Oregon is admitted as the 33rd state to the Union (1859) Arizona is admitted as the 48th state to the Union (1912)
15	16 PRESIDENTS' DAY	17	18	19	20	21 The Confederation Congress passes a resolution leading to the Constitutional Convention (1787)
22 Birthday of George Washington , signer of the U.S. Constitution (1732)	23 Baron von Steuben arrives at Valley Forge and begins training the Continental Army (1778)	24	25 Birthday of Charles Cotesworth Pinckney , signer of the U.S. Constitution (1746)	26	27 22nd Amendment ratified—sets a two-term limit on the office of the president (1951)	28



AMERICA AT 250 CIVIC TOOLKIT FEATURE: GEORGE WASHINGTON

Discover the life and legacy of George Washington, America's first president and Revolutionary War hero—from his early years to his leadership during the fight for independence, and his role in shaping the new nation.



constitutioncenter.org/george-washington



CONSTITUTION
CURRICULUM
SPOTLIGHT

George Washington shaped the presidency in countless ways, setting lasting precedents for what executive leadership would look like in the new nation. From stepping down after two terms to creating a cabinet to shaping the president's role in foreign policy, Washington's decisions came to define the role of the president. Explore how he helped shape executive power—and what the presidency has looked like ever since—with our *Presidency and Executive Power* module in our *Constitution 101* curriculum.

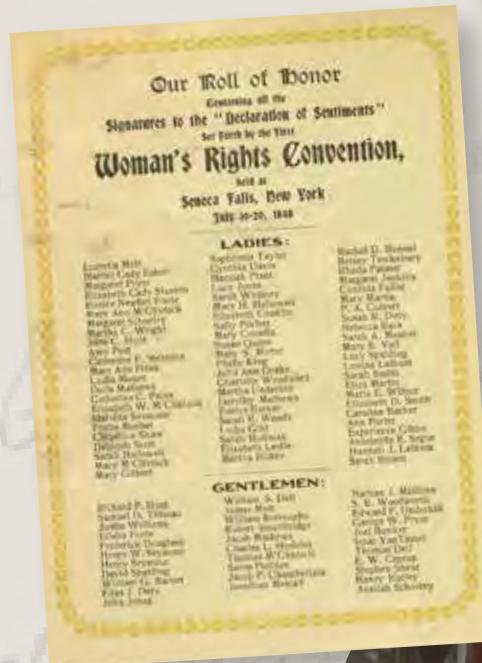
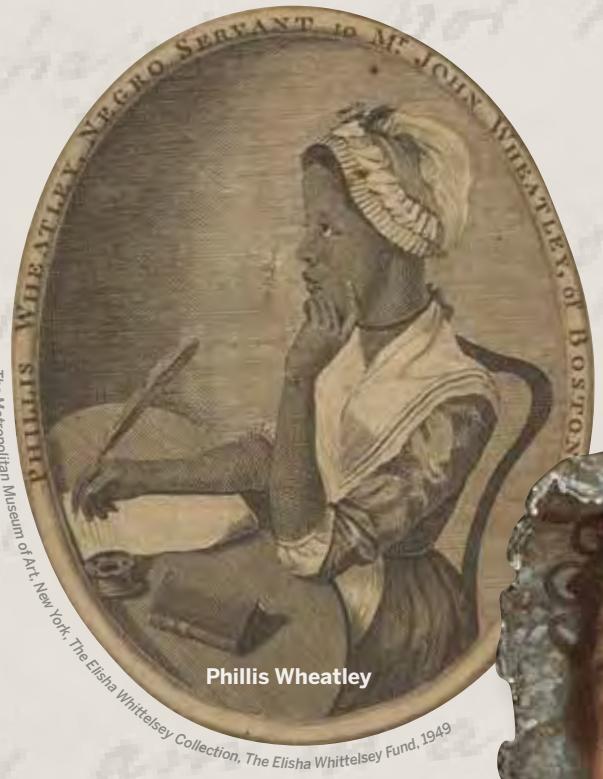
constitutioncenter.org/the-presidency-and-executive-power



REMEMBER

the

BER the leaders



During the American Revolution, women played an integral, yet often overlooked, role in supporting the fight for independence. While forbidden to fight on the battlefield, they contributed in various ways: **serving as nurses, spies, and even managing family businesses and farms while their husbands were at war.**

One of the most notable voices during this time was Abigail Adams. In a letter to her husband John Adams, she famously urged him to “Remember the Ladies” as he pushed for independence and worked to form a new government, with her letter advocating for the protection of women’s rights in the new nation’s laws. Another pioneering figure, Phillis Wheatley, became the first published African American poet, using her poetry to express support for independence and challenge the status quo. Finally, Betsy Ross, often credited with sewing the first American flag, symbolized women’s contributions to the nation’s symbols and ideals. **These women, among many others, helped shape the Revolution’s legacy, both on the front lines and behind the scenes.**

Discussion Questions

1. How might the ideas of liberty and equality during the Revolution have felt different for women compared to men?
2. Abigail Adams told her husband to “Remember the Ladies” when he was helping build a new government. What do you think she meant?
3. Women played key roles in the American Revolution but didn’t gain equal rights afterward. Research one influential woman from the era—such as Abigail Adams, Phillis Wheatley, or Betsy Ross—and write a short biography about them. How did she contribute to the cause, and what can her story teach us about the fight for equality?

MARCH

NATIONAL
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our
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1 The Articles of Confederation are approved (1781) Ohio is admitted as the 17th state to the Union (1803) Nebraska is admitted as the 37th state to the Union (1867)	2	3 Florida is admitted as the 27th state to the Union (1845)	4 Vermont is admitted as the 14th state to the Union (1791)	5 Boston Massacre (1770)	6	7 Birthday of Stephen Hopkins , signer of the Declaration of Independence (1707)
8 International Women's Day	9	10	11 Birthday of Robert Treat Paine , signer of the Declaration of Independence (1731)	12	13	14
15 Battle of Guilford Courthouse (1781) Maine is admitted as the 23rd state to the Union (1820)	16 Birthday of James Madison , signer of the U.S. Constitution (1751) Birthday of George Clymer , signer of the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution (1739)	17	18	19 Birthday of Thomas McKean , signer of the U.S. Constitution (1735)	20	21 Birthday of Francis Lewis , signer of the Declaration of Independence (1713)
22 Passage of the Stamp Act (1765)	23	24 Birthday of Rufus King , signer of the U.S. Constitution (1755)	25 Birthday of Richard Dobbs Spaight , signer of the U.S. Constitution (1758)	26	27	28
29 23rd Amendment ratified—grants electoral votes to Washington, D.C., in presidential elections (1961)	30	31 Abigail Adams writes "Remember the Ladies" letter to John Adams. (1776)		<p>THE DRAFTING TABLE</p> <p>During the women's suffrage movement, many suffragists pushed for a constitutional amendment to ensure voting rights on the national level, drawing on many of the principles at the heart of the American Revolution to push for change. Discover the key documents that inspired the drafting process for the 19th amendment on our Drafting Table:</p> <p>constitutioncenter.org/the-constitution/drafting-table</p> 		

NATIONAL CONSTITUTION CENTER



FEATURED RESOURCE

For generations, women across America fought tirelessly for the right to vote. From early America to the ratification of the 19th Amendment in 1920, the struggle for suffrage was long, complex, and hard-won. Explore this interactive map to trace the fight for women's voting rights—state by state and story by story.

constitutioncenter.org/19th-awakening-map



The Shot

heard 'round the
WORLD

The Battles of Lexington and Concord, fought in Massachusetts on April 19, 1775, marked the opening battles of the American Revolution and are often referred to as the “shot heard 'round the world.” Tensions between the British government and the American colonies had been escalating for years, and these battles were the result of British efforts to seize colonial arms and arrest revolutionary leaders outside of Boston.

At Lexington, a small skirmish erupted between British troops and colonial militias, leading to a swift retreat of the British forces. As the British moved on to Concord, a much larger and more organized colonial force confronted them, forcing their retreat to Boston. **In the wake of these battles, the colonial militias began organizing more strategically, and the conflict quickly escalated, culminating in a full-scale war for independence.**

Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think the Battles of Lexington and Concord are called the “shot heard 'round the world,” and what made these small battles so important? Write a brief news article as if you were reporting on the battles back then, explaining why they mattered.
2. Review the list of grievances from the *Interactive Declaration of Independence* and consider: Do revolutions happen because of one moment or a long series of problems?
3. Why do you think support from local communities was essential for the colonial militias to keep fighting? Write a short letter from the perspective of a militia member recounting the Battles of Lexington and Concord.

National Army Museum



National Archives



Detroit Publishing Company Postcards, The New York Public Library

APRIL



our
story
CONTINUES **250**

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 <div style="background-color: black; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"> Happy Birthday Thomas Jefferson! </div> <p>Born in April 1743, Jefferson was the visionary who penned the Declaration of Independence. This video takes you through his ideas, legacy, and the ways he influenced the formation of the nation from authoring the words of the Declaration, to leading the country as president.</p> <div style="text-align: right; margin-top: -10px;">  constitutioncenter.org/thomas-jefferson </div>			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Sugar Act passed by British Parliament (1764)	Birthday of William Blount , signer of the U.S. Constitution (1749)	Birthday of Benjamin Harrison , signer of the Declaration of Independence (1726)	17th Amendment ratified—establishes direct election of U.S. senators (1913) Birthday of Lewis Morris , signer of the Declaration of Independence (1726)			
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
Birthday of Lyman Hall , signer of the Declaration of Independence (1724)	Birthday of Thomas Jefferson , signer of the Declaration of Independence (1743) Birthday of Gunning Bedford Jr. , signer of the U.S. Constitution (1747)		Tax Day		Birthday of Samuel Chase , signer of the Declaration of Independence (1741) Birthday of John Blair Jr. , signer of the U.S. Constitution (1732)	 Paul Revere's Midnight Ride begins (1775) Birthday of William Williams , signer of the Declaration of Independence (1731)
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
Revolutionary War begins with the Battles of Lexington and Concord (1775) Birthday of Roger Sherman , signer of the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution (1721)			Earth Day			
26	27	28	29	30	<div style="background-color: #0070C0; color: white; padding: 10px; text-align: center;">  WE THE PEOPLE WITH JEFFREY ROSEN </div> <div style="background-color: #0070C0; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"> What happened on that day in April 1775? </div> <p>In this <i>We the People</i> podcast episode, celebrating the 250th anniversary of the Battles of Lexington and Concord, historians explore the events leading to the first shots of the American Revolution.</p> <p style="text-align: right; margin-top: -10px;">constitutioncenter.org/the-day-the-revolution-began</p>	



In “The Declaration’s Grievances Against the King,” Rosemarie Zagarri explores the often-overlooked section of the Declaration of Independence: the 27 grievances against King George III. Discover why the colonists blamed the king instead of Parliament, highlighting his symbolic and actual power over the colonies. The founders organized the grievances into three main themes: violations of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, showing how British actions undermined colonial self-government, legal rights, and personal security.

constitutioncenter.org/the-declarations-grievances-against-the-king

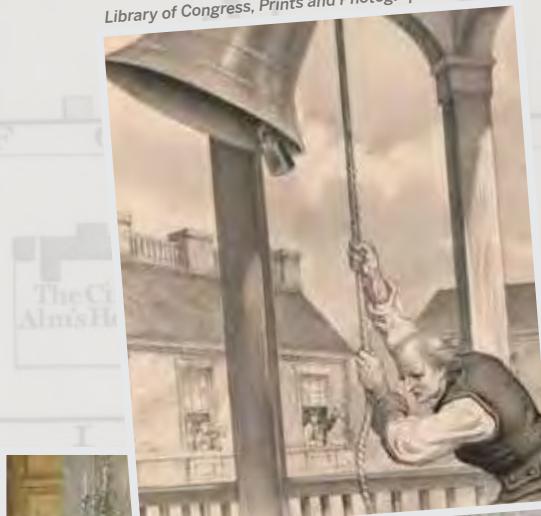


Philadelphia:

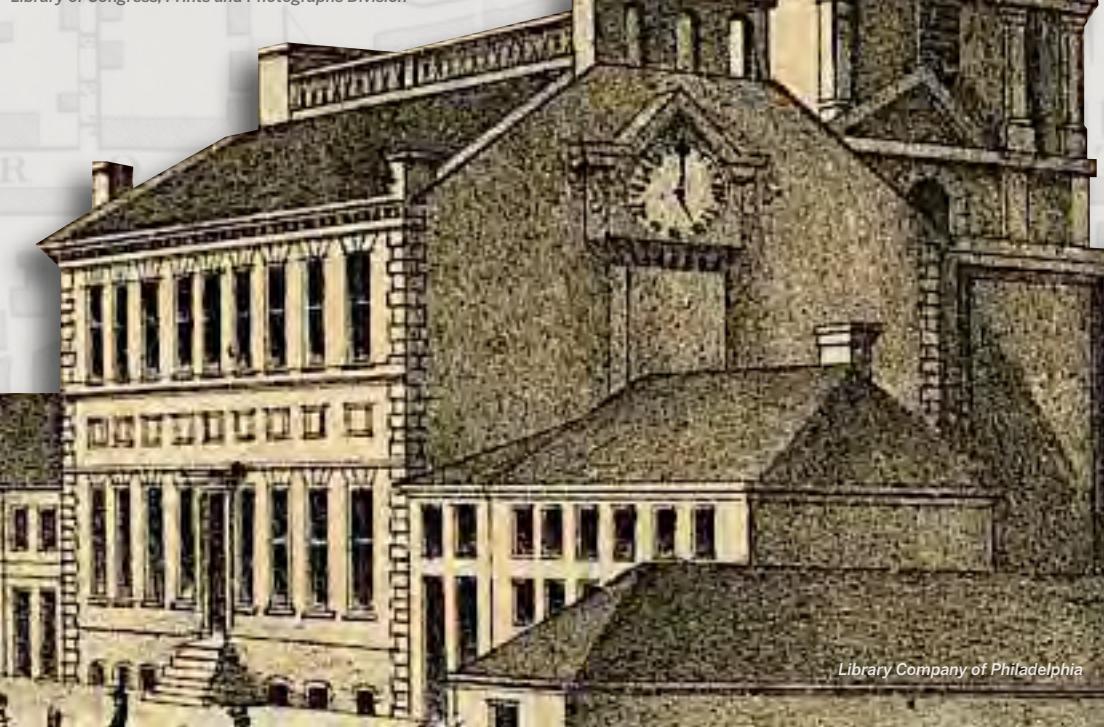
the cradle of

LIBERTY

Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division



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Library Company of Philadelphia

Philadelphia was the beating heart of the American Revolution.

As the largest city in the colonies, it was a center of bold ideas, powerful protests, and political action. The First and Second Continental Congresses met here, and in 1776, delegates signed the Declaration of Independence inside what we now call Independence Hall. It's likely that the Liberty Bell rang nearby days later, calling citizens to hear the news.

During the war, the city was occupied by British forces, but it remained the unofficial capital of the Revolution. Years after the American victory, Philadelphia hosted the Constitutional Convention in 1787—where the U.S. Constitution was debated and signed in the same room as the Declaration. From historic streets to iconic landmarks, **Philadelphia helped shape the nation's founding. It wasn't just the backdrop to history, it was the birthplace of it.**

Discussion Questions

1. What makes a place important in history? Can you think of a place in your life or community that feels important and why?
2. Philadelphia is called the "Cradle of Liberty" because it was the birthplace of American democracy. Think about your own city or hometown. Does it have a nickname, slogan, or something it's known for?
3. If you had to pick one location that best represents the spirit of the American Revolution, what would it be and why? Design a map that highlights that place along with other Revolutionary sites.

MAY

NATIONAL
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our
story
CONTINUES **250**

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
			AMERICA AT 250 CIVIC TOOLKIT FEATURE Dive into Yuval Levin's "The Separation of Powers" to explore how the framework crafted in Philadelphia in 1787 prevents tyranny and preserves liberty, ensuring no one branch holds all the power. The Constitution's system of overlapping powers creates productive tension between branches—an ongoing struggle that sustains freedom through balance, accountability, and debate. constitutioncenter.org/separation-of-powers-essay		1 LAW DAY	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
			TEACHER APPRECIATION WEEK			
			Birthday of John Penn , signer of the Declaration of Independence (1740)	27th Amendment ratified—sets limits on congressional pay raises (1992)		
10 Capture of Fort Ticonderoga (1775) Birthday of George Ross , signer of the Declaration of Independence (1730)	11 Minnesota is admitted as the 32nd state to the Union (1858)	12 British forces capture Charleston, South Carolina (1780)	13	14	15 Virginia calls for independence, leading to the drafting of the Declaration (1776)	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23 South Carolina ratifies the Constitution, becoming the eighth state in the Union (1788)
24	25 MEMORIAL DAY	26	27 Birthday of Nathaniel Gorham , signer of the U.S. Constitution (1738)	28	29 Rhode Island ratifies the Constitution, becoming the 13th state to join the Union (1790) Wisconsin is admitted as the 30th state to the Union (1848)	30
	31 The Constitutional Convention opens (1787)					



At the heart of American government lies a question first wrestled with in Philadelphia's 1787 Constitutional Convention: How should power be shared between the states and the national government? In "Federalism," Judge Jeffrey S. Sutton unpacks federalism, the delicate balance crafted by the framers, and explores how this enduring debate has shaped everything from civil rights to modern policy debates.

constitutioncenter.org/federalism-essay



LIFE, *Liberty*, and the pursuit of HAPPINESS

In the summer of 1776, the Continental Congress appointed a **Committee of Five**—**John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, Robert Livingston, and Roger Sherman**—to draft a declaration of independence from Britain. The committee's task was prompted by escalating tensions, such as the Battles of Lexington and Concord, and growing support for independence among the colonies.

Jefferson quickly wrote the draft, which was revised by the committee. For instance, Franklin is credited with changing the line in Jefferson's text from "sacred and undeniable" to "self-evident" truths. It was finally adopted by Congress on July 4, 1776, formally declaring the United States' independence and changing history forever. **The revolutionaries wrote several core principles into the Declaration: liberty, equality, the pursuit of happiness, and government by consent.**

Discussion Questions

1. Jefferson and the framers believed that "happiness" was defined by doing good, as opposed to feeling good. With that framework in mind, how would you define "happiness," and how would your definition affect others?
2. How do the grievances listed in the Declaration of Independence demonstrate violations of the colonists' rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness?
3. What questions about power and government remained unanswered in 1776, and how did the Constitution begin to address them in 1787?

Read Lindsay Chervinsky's "Concluding Independence" from the *Interactive Declaration of Independence* to trace how these questions continued to evolve.

constitutioncenter.org/concluding-independence



Architect of the Capitol

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IN CONGRESS, July 4, 1776.
The unanimous Declaration of the thirteen united States of America,

When in the Course of human Events, it becomes necessary for one People to dissolve the political Bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the Powers of the Earth, the separate and equal Station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, it is their Right to do this. — We hold these Truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness. — That to Secure these Rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just Powers from the Consent of the Governed, — That whenever any Form of Government becomes Evils to these Ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute a new Government, laying its Foundation on such Principles, and subordinating it to such a Form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness. — We, therefore, the Representatives of the United States of America, in General Assembly, do, in the Name and by Authority of the good People, solemnly publish and declare, — That these United States are, and of Right ought to be, Free and Independent States, — That they are Absolved from all Allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political Connection between them and the State of Great Britain, is and ought to be totally dissolved; — And that as Free and Independent States, they have full Power to levy War, conclude Peace, contract Alliances, establish Commerce, and to do all other Acts and Things which Independent States may of Right do.



JUNE



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	1 Kentucky is admitted as the 15th state to the Union (1792) Tennessee is admitted as the 16th state to the Union (1796)	2	3	4	5	6
7 Lee Resolution introduced in the Second Continental Congress (1776)	8 Birthday of William Few , signer of the U.S. Constitution (1748)	9	10	11 Birthday of David Brearley , signer of the U.S. Constitution (1745)	12	13
14 FLAG DAY U.S. Army established (1775)	15 12th Amendment ratified—amends the Electoral College by combining a party's presidential and vice-presidential candidates onto one ticket (1804) Arkansas is admitted as the 25th state to the Union (1836)	16	17 Birthday of William Hooper , signer of the Declaration of Independence (1742) Battle of Bunker Hill (1775)	18	19 JUNETEENTH The annual commemoration of the end of slavery in America	20 West Virginia is admitted as the 35th state to the Union (1863)
21 The U.S. Constitution is adopted after New Hampshire becomes the ninth state to ratify it, satisfying the ratification requirement listed in Article VII (1788) New Hampshire ratifies the Constitution, becoming the ninth state in the Union (1788)	22	23	24	25 Virginia ratifies the Constitution, becoming the 10th state to join the Union (1788)	26 Birthday of Arthur Middleton , signer of the Declaration of Independence (1742) Birthday of John Langdon , signer of the U.S. Constitution (1741)	27
28 Battle of Sullivan's Island (1776) Battle of Monmouth (1778)	29	30		AMERICA AT 250 CIVIC TOOLKIT FEATURE Explore the early relationship between John Adams and Thomas Jefferson in Jane Kamensky's essay, "Jefferson, Adams, and the Crucible of Revolution," focusing on their initial impressions of each other and how their contrasting personalities and backgrounds shaped their collaboration and their shared work in the Continental Congress, including the drafting of the Declaration of Independence. <small>constitutioncenter.org/jefferson-adams-and-the-crucible-of-revolution</small>		

AMERICA AT 250
civic Toolkit
FEATURED RESOURCE

The founders believed that the pursuit of happiness wasn't about pleasure, but about a lifelong quest striving for personal virtue, self discipline, and moral growth. In Jeffrey Rosen's essay, "**The Pursuit of Happiness**," discover how many of the founders saw managing emotions and practicing self-government as essential not only for personal well being but also for a strong republic. Though they often fell short of their ideals, they took seriously the daily challenge of becoming wiser, better, and more virtuous citizens.

constitutioncenter.org/the-pursuit-of-happiness-essay



Legacy of liberty and EQUALITY



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Frederick Douglass

of liberty and

EQUALITY

As we mark the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, we're reminded of just how much has changed since that historic moment in 1776. **The American Revolution set into motion a series of events that transformed not just the United States, but the world, creating a nation founded on the principles of liberty, equality, the pursuit of happiness, and government by consent that would inspire nations for centuries to come.**

The American Revolution was a pivotal moment in world history. It marked the creation of a new nation founded on a set of ideas. The principles expressed in the Declaration of Independence became a guiding vision for the nation's future and a symbol of hope for people everywhere striving for freedom and equality.

Discussion Questions

1. Fireworks are one way we celebrate Independence Day. If you could create a new way to celebrate, what would it be?
2. The words of the Declaration have inspired many social and political movements. What's one group from history that has fought for equal rights, and how does the Declaration connect to their cause?
3. The Revolution promised freedom but didn't deliver it for everyone (enslaved people, women, Indigenous communities). How do we continue to work toward the ideals of the Revolution today?

JULY

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<p>AMERICA AT 250 CIVIC TOOLKIT FEATURE</p> <p>Listen to a complete audio reading of the Declaration of Independence from the narrator of our series of videos on the signers of the Declaration and Constitution.</p> <p>constitutioncenter.org/audio-declaration</p>					<p>1</p> <p>26th Amendment ratified—protects the right to vote of those 18 and older (1971)</p>	<p>2</p> <p>The Second Continental Congress votes for independence (1776)</p>	<p>3</p> <p>Birthday of Samuel Huntington, signer of the Declaration of Independence (1731)</p> <p>Idaho is admitted as the 43rd state to the Union (1890)</p>	<p>4</p> <p>INDEPENDENCE DAY</p> <p>AMERICA'S 250th BIRTHDAY</p> <p>Adoption of the Declaration of Independence (1776)</p>
5	6	7		<p>8</p> <p>14th Amendment ratified—writing the promises of the Declaration of Independence into the Constitution (1868)</p> <p>Birthday of Joseph Hewes, signer of the Declaration of Independence (1730)</p>		<p>10</p> <p>Wyoming is admitted as the 44th state to the Union (1890)</p>		<p>11</p> <p>Birthday of Pierce Butler, signer of the U.S. Constitution (1744)</p>
12	13	14	<p>15</p>	<p>16</p>		<p>17</p> <p>Birthday of Elbridge Gerry, signer of the Declaration of Independence (1744)</p>		<p>18</p>
19	20	21	<p>22</p>	<p>23</p>		<p>24</p> <p>The Constitutional Convention establishes the Committee of Detail to write the first full draft the Constitution (1787)</p>		<p>25</p>
26	27	28	<p>29</p> <p>Birthday of Thomas Heyward Jr., signer of the Declaration of Independence (1746)</p>	<p>30</p>		<p>31</p>		

THE
Interactive
DECLARATION OF
INDEPENDENCE

Explore the Declaration of Independence like never before with annotations from Yale professor Akhil Reed Amar. Uncover its powerful ideas and historical context.

constitutioncenter.org/declaration/annotated-declaration



The

DECLARATION'S *Influence*

The Declaration of Independence was both a statement of American ideals and a strategic appeal to the wider world. It marked the formal creation of the United States and justified the break from Britain using the legal language of the time. While Americans often focus on its promises of unalienable rights—life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness—the Declaration also asserted the collective right of a people to choose their own government.

That dual message gave the document lasting power.

Over the next two centuries, its influence spread globally as other countries adopted its form and spirit to claim sovereignty.

The Declaration offers a chance to explore how one document can speak to multiple audiences, shift meaning over time, and inspire movements around the world.

Discussion Questions

1. The Declaration of Independence inspired other countries to fight for freedom. What do you think makes an idea powerful enough to change the world?
2. The Declaration was a political and legal document—but also a kind of international advertisement. What “audiences” was it trying to reach, and what kinds of responses were its authors hoping to provoke?
3. How do other countries’ declarations of independence compare to the U.S. Declaration? Research another country’s declaration, then create a Venn diagram to show similarities and differences.

around the
WORLD



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AUGUST

NATIONAL
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our
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RIGHTS AROUND THE WORLD

Explore how the principles enshrined in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution shaped the rights granted to other citizens around the world in our Rights Around the World Interactive.

constitutioncenter.org/rights-around-the-world



1

Colorado is admitted as the 38th state to the Union (1876)

2

3

Birthday of **Nicholas Gilman**, signer of the U.S. Constitution (1755)

4

The Revenue Cutter Service, predecessor to the U.S. Coast Guard, is founded (1790)

5

Birthday of **Thomas Lynch Jr.**, signer of the Declaration of Independence (1749)

6

The Committee of Detail presents its preliminary draft of the Constitution to the Constitutional Convention (1787)
Battle of Oriskany (1777)

7

9

10

Missouri is admitted as the 24th state to the Union (1821)

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17

Battle of Camden (1780)

18

19th Amendment ratified—voting rights cannot be denied on account of sex (1920)

19

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21

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24

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31

Battle of Long Island (1776)

AMERICA AT 250
civic Toolkit
FEATURED RESOURCE

Discover the role of the Declaration of Independence as a catalyst for global movements for freedom, inspiring revolutions and shaping the principles of modern democracy around the world in David Armitage's essay, **"The Declaration of Independence's Influence Around the World."**

constitutioncenter.org/the-declaration-of-independences-influence-around-the-world



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