

People to Know

Lessons 6 & 7

As You Read

Who:

- *What did this person do for a living?*
- *Where are they from?*

Importance:

- *What did this person accomplish that made a difference then and/or now?*
- *How did they affect others then and/or now?*

John Adams

John Adams (1735-1826) was born in Massachusetts and received a Harvard education. He eventually studied law and moved to Boston to practice.

In the 1760s, Adams became a patriot and opposed many British policies in America. After the Boston Massacre, Adams out of a sense of duty to justice, successfully defended the British soldiers in court.

Adams attended the First and Second Continental Congresses and quickly began moving delegates toward independence from Britain. He nominated George Washington to command the Continental army. Adams led the Congressional debate to vote for independence and spoke out forcibly for approval of Thomas Jefferson's Declaration of Independence.

During the war, Adams joined Ben Franklin in Paris to negotiate the peace treaty with Britain to end the Revolutionary War.

Charles Cornwallis

Charles Cornwallis (1738-1805) was born in England to a politically powerful family. He served in the Seven Years' War in Europe and moved up the political ranks, first as a member of the House of Commons and then the House of Lords where he often supported the colonists in America. Nonetheless, when war began, Cornwallis sought military service.

In 1776, at the Battle of New York, General Cornwallis chased Washington's retreating army across New Jersey. Only orders from British commander William Howe to halt combat for the winter saved the Continental Army from destruction. In September 1777, Cornwallis helped capture Philadelphia, forcing Congress to flee and Washington to spend the winter at Valley Forge.

In 1780, Cornwallis was given command of the South. There he faced Nathanael Greene, Washington's best general. After British defeats at King's Mountain and the Cowpens, Cornwallis retreated northward to Yorktown for resupply. Here, 17,000 American and French soldiers surrounded Cornwallis' position. Unable to get support from the British army in New York, Cornwallis surrendered his army of 8,000 men on October 19, 1781. This essentially ended the war.

Benjamin Franklin

Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790) was born in Boston, Massachusetts. After learning the printing business from his older brother James, Franklin, at the age of 17, ran away from home to Philadelphia. There he married and went into the printing business. Franklin largely educated himself and became world famous for his invention of the lightning rod.

When war began with Britain in 1775, Franklin became the oldest revolutionary in the Second Continental Congress. In December of 1776, Congress sent him to France to negotiate and acquire financial and military support. Franklin accomplished two things: he met and sent Prussian Baron von Steuben to America to aid in the training of the Continental Army, and he convinced the French to join the Americans after the British defeat at the Battle of Saratoga.

With the war drawing to a close, Benjamin Franklin proposed most of the peace conditions included in the Treaty of Paris of 1783 such as American independence and new borders expanding the United States westward to the Mississippi River.

Thomas Jefferson

Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826) was the third of ten children. He inherited Monticello and several slaves after his father's death in 1757. Jefferson was intensely curious and constantly read books to improve his knowledge. Jefferson became a lawyer in

1768 and the following year became a member of the Virginia legislature.

During the Second Continental Congress, John Adams insisted that Jefferson write a declaration of independence to explain to the world why the colonies had a right to be free. After editing various parts of the document, the Congress approved the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776. Three years later, Jefferson became governor of Virginia. Unfortunately, his good reputation suffered when he fled the capital at Richmond at the approach of a British army. Many people called him a coward.

In all, Jefferson's greatest contribution during the war was the Declaration of Independence. The Declaration explained the purpose of government and the ideas of American democracy.

Thomas Paine

Thomas Paine (1737-1809) was born in England. After serving in a number of failed jobs and separating from his wife, he met Ben Franklin who suggested he move to America. Paine agreed and immigrated to the American colonies in 1774, just in time for the outbreak of war with Britain.

When hostilities began in 1775, Paine joined the Patriot cause. He published a pamphlet called "Common Sense" in January 1776. It became a national bestseller convincing many that the British government was corrupt and only a break from the British Empire could guarantee the liberty of the colonists. As 1776 drew to a close, the British seemed on the verge of victory. In response, Paine began writing

a series of articles called "The Crisis." He opened with "These are the times that try men's souls." He discussed patriotism and the need to continue the war for liberty.

Thomas Paine's writings moved the public to support independence. Six months after publishing "Common Sense," all of the colonies voted for independence. During the dark times of 1776, Paine's writings uplifted the spirits of the American soldiers and people, giving both the courage to continue the war.

George Washington

George Washington (1732-1799) was born in Virginia to a middle class household. As a young man, Washington was intensely ambitious. He wanted to become a part of the Virginia upper class. He studied proper manners, met the right people, and advanced himself in society—inheriting land and marrying into enormous wealth.

As an officer in the Virginia militia, Washington became a hero in the French and Indian War (1754-1763) where he showed his bravery and coolness during combat. When the Revolution began, the Second Continental Congress appointed Washington as Commander-in-Chief of the Continental Army on June 19, 1775. Washington seldom had the resources to defeat the British in battle; however, his leadership kept the Continental Army together.

Throughout the Revolutionary War, Washington remained loyal to the cause of liberty. He never surrendered to the British; he obeyed orders from Congress; and he willingly

gave up power and resigned from the army when the war was over.