Overview
During the 1600-1700s, many Europeans had migrated to the various parts of the world. During the 1750s, there was these ideas began to spread: What is the purpose of Government? What is the best type of Government? Who should be in charge? How much should religion be involved in a government? Which persons should be protected by the laws of the government? Who counts as a person?

The questions spread throughout Europe as well as their Empires (thanks to the Industrial Revolution and the printing press). These ideas spurred the European colonies to question whether they wanted to still be ruled by their European masters. Even though these colonies had been originally found by Europeans, it was now four or five generations of people since those original colonists. The majority of the people who lived there had been born and raised in the colonies and had never been to Europe. They felt that they were their own nation and didn’t need the Europeans any more.

Old & New Englands
Ever since the beginnings of settlement in 1636, England and America had been growing apart. By 1760, England was still an aristocracy, ruled by people born and bred to a high station in life. Their society was one of culture and refinement. The common people, deprived of abundant opportunity at home, accepted a position of dependence. They regarded hard work, deference to superiors, and submission to rulers as their lot in life.

But in America things had taken a different turn. The tone of society was favored democracy, where the people have the power in government. There were no lords or hereditary offices. Manners were yet crude and society wore a garb of rustic simplicity. The wilderness had attracted people of independent spirit, and the stern conditions of the frontier had bred self-reliance and self-respect. The Americans did not like to look up to superiors, nor were their leaders set apart by privileges of birth and inherited wealth. The opportunities of the New World made people enterprising, energetic, and aggressive. Restraints were few, custom counted for little, and rank for less.

Between these two societies there could not be much in common. Convention, decorum, and formality guided the aristocracy of England. Its leaders looked down upon the crude manners of the Americans—their uncouth dress and speech, their boisterous ways, their lack of formal education, and their aspirations for independence and self-rule. Most ancestors of the Americans had belonged to that humble class which was still without political rights or influence in England. What magic of the American woods could transform these lowly folk into peers of the chosen few who lived on the fat of England's fertile soil?
Equally wide was the gulf that separated the colonists and England in their political thinking. By 1750 Britain believed that Parliament had complete authority over the colonies. Parliament could tax them, make laws for them, and even abolish their elected assemblies. In summary the Parliament felt the Colonists did not have any real rights.

**French & Indian War (7 Years War)**
The Seven Years war saw extensive fighting in North America. The fighting that took place in North America was referred to as the French & Indian War. The treaty of 1763 ending the French and Indian War made England master of Canada and of the land between the Appalachian Mountains and the Mississippi River. The whole cost of governing this vast region was suddenly shifted from France to Britain. Yet the British people were already staggered under an immense national debt, and their taxes were higher than ever before. In the view of Britain’s ministers, England had made great sacrifices in order to expel the French from the New World. The chief motive had been mercantilism, or government protection of trade and profits. An additional result was that the 13 colonies might now live in peace. As a result of the benefits the Colonists received, they should be taxed to help pay for them.

Settlers were pouring into the Ohio Valley, gobbling up the land won from the French. Such activity excited the worst fears of the Native Americans. Land, fur-bearing animals, the Indians’ very existence—all would be engulfed by the relentless advance of the Europeans. The Indians discontent grew and began a series of destructive raids on the advancing frontier. For the Colonists’ defense England decided to station a large army on the frontier. Should the colonies contribute toward the expense of this protection? England decreed that they should—by paying taxes imposed by Parliament.

**Sugar, Stamps, Quartering Act**
Parliament issued a series of taxes to pay for the military action in North America. In 1764, the Sugar Act was passed. The colonists now had to pay import duties on foreign molasses, sugar, wine, and other commodities. More important, measures were adopted to prevent smuggling, including giving officers permission to search people’s homes. In 1765 the Stamp Act levied a direct tax on all newspapers printed in the colonies and on most commercial and legal documents used in business. A third measure—the Quartering Act—required each colony to pay part of the cost for having British troops stationed in their colony. A fourth—The Currency Act of 1764—made the colonists pay the whole debt which had been created in waging the French and Indian War.
Opposition quickly spread through the colonial assemblies. It came to a head in 1765, when the colonists stated that they, as English subjects, could not be taxed without their consent. Alarmed by the refusal of the colonial towns to buy any taxed goods, British merchants petitioned Parliament for its repeal. The Stamp Act was repealed in 1766. At the same time, however, Parliament declared that it had full power to tax the colonies whenever and however it thought best.

The Tea Party
Then, in 1773, Parliament passed another act that set all the elements of discord in motion. This measure allowed the British East India Company (BEIC) to ship tea to the colonies without paying any of the import duties, or taxes, that the other merchants had to pay. The merchants everywhere were alarmed. In Boston, a group of citizens disguised as Indians tossed £15,000 worth of the tea into the harbor. This incident, afterward known as the Boston Tea Party, brought about the greatest pre-Revolutionary War crisis. Since the BEIC was carrying out a British law, King George III felt that the colonial opposition must not go unchallenged.

Intolerable Acts
Parliament replied to the Boston Tea Party with the five “punitive,” or “intolerable” acts of 1774. The first of these closed the port of Boston until the BEIC was paid for the lost tea. Since commerce was the lifeblood of Boston, this act inflicted hardships on all the townspeople—the innocent and the guilty alike. The second modified the Massachusetts charter of 1691, taking away many highly prized rights of self-government which that province had long enjoyed. The third measure provided that British officials accused of committing crimes in a colony might be taken to England for trial. The fourth measure allowed the English appointed Governor of Massachusetts to quarter soldiers at Boston in taverns and unoccupied buildings. The fifth act was not intended to punish the colonies. It extended the boundaries of the province of Quebec to the Ohio River and gave the Roman Catholics in the province both religious liberty and the double protection of French and English law.

Acceptance of the “intolerable acts” by the colonists would have meant yielding nearly all their claims to the right of self-government. Neither the colonists nor England could now back down without a complete surrender. This led the a revolution, the forcible overthrowing of one government system for another.

Organizing the Revolution
In order to act together in resisting the measures of Britain, the colonists established an effective revolutionary organization. In structure it resembled a pyramid. The bottom stones consisted of committees of correspondence. Committees of correspondence were generally established in the counties. They enabled the people of each locality to act together and to communicate with fellow colonists in remote places. The next layer of the pyramid consisted of provincial congresses. At the apex of the pyramid stood the Continental Congress. The Congress denounced parliamentary
taxation and the five “intolerable acts.” It intended to destroy all trade with England if the British did not yield.

All of the tension officially came to a head on July 4th, 1776, when the Continental Congress signed Declaration of Independence. Crafted by Thomas Jefferson, the document declared the 13 Colonies as separated from Britain, creating a new nation founded on the enlightenment principles of the natural rights of man. The revolution and the “Great Experiment,” as George Washington would later call it, had begun.

**Handicaps of the Americas**

Five and a half years elapsed before the land again enjoyed peace. Why did the war last so long? At the start the Americans did not have a unified army. The soldiers were untrained, undisciplined and poorly equipped. The “Generals” were of poor quality and made serious mistakes. Nearly a third of the people remained faithful to the king. The colonies themselves were suspicious and jealous of each other, which made it difficult for them to work together. The Continental Congress had major financial issues; which led them to borrow immense amounts of money to pay for increasing expenses.

**Advantages of the Americas**

But in the long run stronger influences favored the Americans. They knew the lay of the land where the fighting had to be done better than the British did, and they were used to the rough living conditions which war brought in its train. Britain's soldiers had no real interest in the war, while the Americans were defending their firesides and their settled way of life.

If the colonists were really to be subdued, the whole countryside had to be conquered. Their communities were largely self-sufficient units that could not be crushed by the capture of a single city or an important road. This meant that England had to wage a series of campaigns on land. The difficulties of moving an army over miry roads were enormous. Moreover, England could not occupy all regions at once. It could not keep soldiers in every village, and when its troops were withdrawn the people took up arms again. At a time when an army could march only a few miles a day, it was a stupendous task to subdue isolated settlements stretching from Maine to Georgia and extending in places 300 miles (480 kilometers) into the interior. Having to bring troops and supplies across the ocean made England's task all the greater.

The needs of the time brought forward an unusual group of leaders. George Washington, as commander in chief of the Army, kept the American cause on its feet, inspiring hope by his courage, patience, and firmness during its darkest hours. To Benjamin Franklin belongs much of the credit for securing aid from France that helped win the war. As an agent of Congress, he became the idol of Paris, using every art of diplomacy to win the good will of all classes. Others, such as John Adams and Thomas Jefferson, struggled against discord in Congress and rallied the people against despair.

One other factor favored the American: England was not united at home. Setting out to be a more absolute ruler, George III attempted to make the king superior to Parliament. His opponents, the Whigs, believed that he was ready to destroy the liberties of all the English people. One group of
Whigs believed that the colonies could not be subdued and wanted to give them their freedom. Others favored compromise, believing that the trade of free states in America would be as profitable to England as keeping them as colonies.

**Peace**

Alarmed by military defeats to the Colonists in 1781 and uprisings in Ireland and India, Parliament in 1782 demanded that King George III end the war. Congress named a total of five commissioners - including John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, and Thomas Jefferson - to make a treaty of peace. The conference took place in France. Fearing—not without reason—that Spain and France were ready to betray the United States, the US negotiated a secret preliminary peace treaty with England without France or Spain’s knowledge. Under the treaty, which was signed at Paris on Nov. 30, 1782, the Americans secured the independence of the 13 Colonies and the land west of it to the Mississippi River. It did not, however, end England’s possessions in North America. England still controlled large swaths of territory in Canada. Many Loyalists (those loyal to England) fled from the 13 states to Canada; encouraging the Canadians to remain separate from the United States.

The American Revolution was a great social movement toward democracy and equality. The next seven years were an ugly experiment in national union. In 1787, the ideals upon which the nation had fought for were forged into the US Constitution and Bill of Rights; creating a democracy with separated powers and protection of basic human rights.

**Conclusion**

The American Revolution sent a shock wave through the rest of Europe. If the powerful British could be kicked out of its colonies in America... what does that mean for other countries and their colonies? What does that mean for Kings who rule cruelly over a people who do not like them?

**Questions**

1) Update the following items on the Content Matrix: George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Revolution, Mercantilism, American Revolution, Democracy,

2) Create a timeline of the following events: Boston Tea Party, Treaty of Paris, Stamp Act, French & Indian War, Founding of the American Colonies, Intolerable Acts

3) If the American Colonies were founded by England in 1636, why didn’t a large number of colonists view themselves as English/British by 1750? Create a Logic Tree & write a 1 paragraph response

4) Should the British Parliament have been allowed to tax the American Colonies? Create a Logic Tree & write a 1 paragraph response.

5) The British had a superior army, navy, and economy. Why did the British lose the war? Create a Logic Tree & write a 1 paragraph response.