Chapter 6 Lesson 1

**The War for Independence**

The Two Armies Face Off:

April 1776 colonial leader John Adams predicted “We shall have a long …and bloody war to go through.” With that said each side thought they would win the war quickly. The British planned to crush the colonists by force and the Patriots thought the British would give up after losing 1 or 2 major battles.

British Advantages:

The British seemed to hold the advantage:

1. A well trained army and the strongest navy in the world
2. Wealth of the empire
3. More people 8 million to the colonists 2.5 million

Patriots had no regular army and a weak navy, they lacked experience and their volunteer soldiers only fought for a short period of time. Not all Americans wanted war, the Quakers stayed neutral and some stayed loyal to Britain.

Loyalists in the Colonies:

20% were thought to be “Loyalists” or a “Tory”. It may have been as high as 33%. Some Americans changed sides during the war and Loyalist support varied from region to region. In general support for Britain was strongest in the Carolinas and Georgia and weakest in New England.

Loyalists had reasons to support Britain

1. Depended on Britain for their job
2. Revolution would throw America into chaos
3. Patriot complaints seemed minor and not worth fighting about

British actives sought support of African Americans. Virginia’s royal governor Lord Dunmore, promised them freedom if they fought. Of those that did some ended up free and moved to Canada or in the British colony Sierra Leone in Africa.

Loyalty to Britain was divided among friends and family. William Franklin, son of Benjamin Franklin, was a Loyalist and had served as the royal governor of New Jersey. This damaged the relationship between father and son forever.

1. “Neighbor was …against neighbor, father against son and son against father, and he that would not thrust his own blade through his brother’s heart was called an infamous villain.”

Advantages of the Patriots

1. Fighting on their own ground, the British had to move men from thousands of miles away and this took time and money
2. Greater motivation. British relied heavily mercenaries “Hessian” soldiers from Germany. Freedom was a powerful motivator. Americans would also lure some Hessians away with promises of land.
3. George Washington, few could match his courage and determination.

The Continental Army

After declaring for independence the Continental Congress served as the national government. However congress lacked the power to tax and raise money. James Madison led some delegates who called for a stronger national government, they believed winning was possible only under a strong national government.

Not all Americans agreed with this. They placed great value on liberty and personal freedom and were worried about the consequences of a strong national government.

Not everyone agreed, they were unwilling to transfer power to their own Continental Congress. In a way the American Revolution was fought as 13 separate wars with each state fighting for its own interests. Local militia made up the key part of the Patriot forces. Thus Congress established a Continental Army to allow for more seasoned and well trained troops.

Originally soldiers signed up for 1 year terms, eventually they encouraged 3 year terms, most soldiers still only signed up for 1 year. The army had difficulty finding officers, some were recruited from the ranks the best officers had previous experience from earlier wars.

Men did most of the fighting with some notable exceptions. Margaret Corbin of Pennsylvania went with her husband with the Continental Army, when he died she took his place in battle. Mary Ludwig Hays McCauley joined her husband in battle as well, calling her Moll of the Pitcher or Molly Pitcher she carried water pitchers to the soldiers. On Feb 21, 1822 she was granted a pension of $40 per month for her service. Deborah Sampson joined the army disguising herself as a man.

Early Campaigns

Few soldiers fought the war’s early battles, at Bunker Hill 2,200 British troops fought and about 1,200 Americans. The British realized they were going to need more troops. Summer of 1776 the British sent 32,000 troops commanded by General William Howe.

Patriot Defeat on Long Island

20,000 troops made up the Patriot forces. The 2 sides clashed in late August 1776, the British badly defeated the Colonial Army. Patriot Nathan Hale showed unique bravery by disguising himself as a Dutch schoolteacher and spying on British troops. He was captured and hung stating “I only regret that I have but one life to lose for my country.”

Even though the Patriots fought hard but could not overcome the larger and better equipped British forces. A British officer noted many Patriot soldiers killed had not been wearing shoes, socks, or jackets. Washington retreated from New York which became a Loyalist stronghold. T British chased Washington across New Jersey and into Pennsylvania satisfied they had beaten him they let him go.

A Low Point for the Patriots

Washington’s forces numbered less than 5,000 and the army was desperate for troops. If troops were not secured soon Washington thought “I think the game is pretty near up.” He suggested letting African Americans to sign up. This was originally decided against by the Southern Colonies, many feared that arming and training African Americans might lead to revolt among the enslaved peoples.

African Americans in Battle

The growing need for soldiers led most states to ignore this order. Rhode Island raised an all-African regiment in 1778 and by war’s end every state save South Carolina enlisted African Americans to fight. Historians believe 5,000 African Americans joined the Patriot cause, such as Peter Salem an enslaved African American from Mass. He fought at Concord and the Battle of Bunker Hill and served the Patriot cause throughout the war eventually earning his freedom. Some fought for the Patriot cause and some for the chance to earn freedom.

The Battles of Trenton and Princeton

As the Patriots struggled through the winter the British troops were settling in New York. The British also left some troops in Trenton and Princeton. Washington saw an opportunity to catch them by surprise. On Christmas night 1776, Washington led 2,400 troops across the icy river to surprise the enemy at Trenton the next day, he then escaped and marched to Princeton and his army scattered the troops that were there.

British Strategy

1777, British began a 3 pronged attack, seize Albany, New York in order to control the Hudson River, this would allow them to cut off New England from the Middle Colonies. General John Burgoyne led troops south from Canada at the same time that Lt Col Barry St. Leger would move east from Lake Ontario a third group led by Howe would move north up the Hudson. The 3 British forces would then attack the Patriots.

The British Capture Philadelphia

Before the attack on Albany Howe sought to capture Philadelphia. Howe won battles in September 1777 at Brandywine and Paoli, near Philadelphia. He then captured Philadelphia forcing the Continental Congress to flee. With winter coming Howe decided to stay in Philadelphia instead of going to Albany.

The Battle of Saratoga

The British plan for Albany was in trouble. In August troops led by Benedict Arnold stopped St. Leger at Fort Stanwix, New York. General Burgoyne’s army hadn’t reached Albany either. In July he captured Fort Ticonderoga, but he needed supplies. He sent a force to attack the American supply base, Bennington, Vermont but was defeated by the local militia the Green Mountain Boys. Burgoyne retreated to Saratoga, New York. Here Burgoyne was in trouble and alone, the Patriots had defeated St. Leger and Howe was still in Philadelphia. American troops led by General Horatio Gates blocked and surrounded Burgoyne’s army. Burgoyne made a desperate attack on October 7, 1777, the Patriots held firm and on October 17, 1777 he surrendered. The British plan had failed and the Continental Army had won an enormous victory that changed the course of the war.