

Question Sheet (with answers)

1. During the decade before the outbreak of war, what were the two major attitudes of the colonists toward Parliament and the British Empire?

The majority of colonists fully expected a compromise would occur. Even after Lexington and Concord, most colonists simply saw themselves as defending their rights as citizens of the British Empire. They believed in a peaceful settlement.

Others believed that if the Crown could tax them without representation, then other rights might be taken away from them. They felt that, sooner or later, all free colonists would be reduced to slaves, particularly after the passage of the Intolerable Acts, and they felt compelled to fight back.

2. Why were they glad to be in the British Empire?

Possibly the best reason was that because under the benign rule of King George III, Americans were the freest, most prosperous and least taxed people on earth. They may have also seen the British government as the legitimate government of the Empire, which would protect them from harm and protect their financial investments as well.

3. Describe how colonists who were leaders of the colonial opposition to Parliament's authority might have seen themselves and/or what they believed.

They did not see themselves as "Founding Fathers" or even revolutionaries. They simply were defending their rights as citizens of the British Empire. These people more frequently saw themselves as "reluctant revolutionaries," because they wanted more to protect their rights of property as well as protect their wealth.

They also were somewhat reluctant to set up a large scale democracy or a republic. They believed that democracy was synonymous with anarchy and mob rule.

4. Why would George Washington feel it more necessary to join the "other side" against the British?

Some students may note that since Washington was a landholder as well as a man of wealth, it was important to him that he seek ways to protect his livelihood and assets. Other students may note that since Washington also sought ambition, he may have felt that joining the colonial side would give him the recognition and social status he thought he deserved.

5. Is it possible to separate the American Revolution (a new way of thinking about government, where power lay in the hands of the people) from the American

Revolutionary War (American's fight for independence)? Why or why not? How do the views of Thomas Paine in *Common Sense* help to separate the idea of the war from the overall Revolution?

Answers will vary. Some students will note that the *Revolution* came after the war began. In other words, the ideas that Jefferson included in the Declaration of Independence actually postdated the start of the *Revolutionary War* by more than a year.

In addition, students may also note that most Americans simply wanted to maintain the rights of British citizens, which led to the war, but the idea of the Revolution was something entirely different.

6. What could have prevented the colonists' declaring independence and going to war?

Answers will vary. Most students, however, will note that if Parliament had acquiesced to the colonial notion of representation in government, colonists may have been satisfied, and the Revolutionary war might never have occurred. If the war never occurred, the Revolution may not have occurred either.

7. Why did a minority of colonists continue to move toward independence and volunteer to fight for this cause?

Answers will vary. It's possible that some felt the idea of sovereignty was more important than anything else and decided to fight for that idea.