



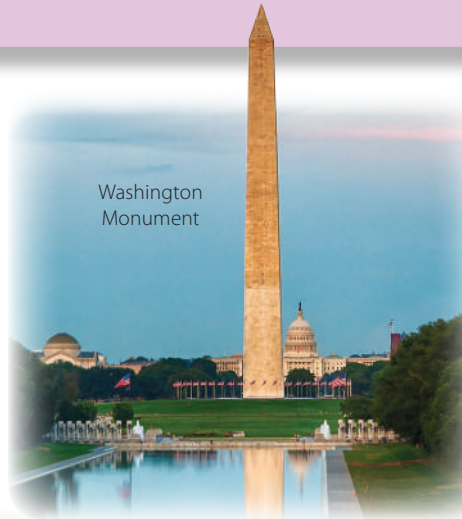
The Founding of the United States of America



American flag

Reader

George Washington's inauguration



Washington Monument



Independence Day celebration

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A full-length portrait of George Washington in military uniform. He is wearing a black bicorne hat, a buff waistcoat with buff lapels and cuffs, and buff breeches. He holds a sword in his right hand. The background is a dark, wooded landscape.

The Founding of the United States of America

Reader



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ISBN: 979-8-88970-020-3



The Founding of the United States of America

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Chapter 1

The Declaration of Independence and the American Revolution

Life in the Colonies It is a summer day in 1750. A ship carrying four hundred German people arrives in Philadelphia. These travelers are about to begin their lives in a new place. People like them have been arriving in the British-controlled land in North America for about one hundred years.

Why are so many people coming to the **colonies**? The answer is simple: opportunity. Some **immigrants** arrive hoping for a chance to own land they can farm. Others hope to find work in a town or a city. Many want to worship freely. They want to escape the past and start a new life.

The Framing Question

What actions and ideas led to the founding of the United States of America?

Vocabulary

colony, n. an area, region, or country that is controlled and settled by people from another country

immigrant, n. a person from one country who moves to another country to live



Immigrants arrived by the hundreds in the American colonies in the 1700s.

As time went on, more and more immigrants arrived. And some came not of their own free will. They were enslaved people, sold by Africans and brought to the colonies from different parts of Africa by Europeans. They were used as a source of labor, often on large farms called plantations. Those enslaved were not free; they worked without pay. Their efforts made the colonies richer.

The number of people living in the towns and cities of the British colonies in North America grew. The colonies were under the rule of the British **monarchy** and **Parliament**. But there was a huge ocean between the colonies and the British king. The colonists lived independently. They made the things they needed. They grew their own food.

For many years, the colonists were happy because they enjoyed a great deal of **self-government**. They had a say in writing their own laws. But things began to change in the middle of the 1700s, after the French and Indian War. This war was part of an ongoing power struggle between France and Britain. In this case, they fought over control of certain lands in North America. The British won this war, but they had spent a lot of money fighting it. Parliament decided that the colonies should help pay for some of the cost of the war through **taxes**.

Vocabulary

monarchy, n. a government led by a queen or a king

Parliament, n. in Great Britain, a lawmaking group made up of elected and nonelected representatives who govern with the king or queen

self-government, n. the ability of people to rule themselves and make their own laws

tax, n. money that people pay to the government

The Stamp Act

One of the first, and most hated, taxes was the Stamp Act of 1765. This law made the colonists pay a tax on just about every kind of printed paper. They even had to pay tax on playing cards! This made many colonists angry. They did not have a voice in the British government. Yet they had to pay taxes voted on by that government. The colonists called this “taxation without representation.” This tax, and others that followed, caused many colonists to protest against the British government. They refused to pay the taxes.

The Boston Tea Party

In Boston, on the evening of March 5, 1770, tensions between British soldiers and an angry crowd led to the deaths of five colonists. One of them was Crispus Attucks, who had once been enslaved and now worked as a sailor. This incident became known as the Boston Massacre. Then, in December of 1773, a group of colonists in Boston, Massachusetts, angry about a tax on tea, took action. They dressed as Native Americans and boarded British ships loaded with tea. They dumped every chest of tea into the water. This event became known as the Boston Tea Party.

When Parliament heard about the Boston Tea Party, they passed laws to punish the people of Boston. These laws closed the port of Boston. They also took away Boston’s self-government. The laws became known as the Intolerable Acts.

They were called this because the colonists would not tolerate, or accept, them.



The costumes that colonists wore at the Boston Tea Party did not fool anyone—including Parliament.

The First Continental Congress

The Intolerable Acts not only made the colonists angry, they also united them. In September 1774, fifty-six colonial leaders met in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, for the First Continental Congress.

Among the **delegates** were George Washington, Patrick Henry, and Sam Adams. The delegates shared their anger at the British government. They issued a **Declaration of Rights**. This statement said that as colonists living in a British colony, they should have all the same rights as those people living in Great Britain itself.

Vocabulary

delegate, n. a representative

declaration, n. a formal statement

militia, n. a group of armed citizens prepared for military service at any time

Battles of Lexington and Concord

For a while, the colonists hoped that the British government would listen to them. They wanted to avoid a war. But they soon realized that the king and his government would not change their ways. In many colonies, **militias** prepared to fight. Each militia was made up of citizens who volunteered to be part-time soldiers. In the town of Concord, near Boston, people stored cannonballs, gunpowder, and weapons.

The British found out about these stored weapons. They wanted to capture Concord and the town of Lexington by surprise in order to seize the weapons. But the colonists discovered this British plan. Two of them, Paul Revere and William Dawes, rode their horses along the route to Lexington, warning members of the militia. The British did march to Concord, where they burned some of the stored weapons. But the militias fired at the British, causing them

to return to Boston. The Americans did not know it at the time, but a war for independence had begun.

The Second Continental Congress

In 1775, leaders from the colonies again gathered in Philadelphia, for the Second Continental Congress. The delegates decided to write a **petition** to King George III of Great Britain. This petition was like a request. It told the king that the colonies were still loyal to him.

The petition explained that the colonists did not wish to break away from him. Instead, they were asking the king to make his government change its **policies** and restore colonial rights.

At the same time, and just in case, the Congress prepared for more fighting. The delegates chose an experienced military leader, George Washington, to lead what would become the new Continental Army.

Vocabulary

petition, n. a formal written request for change, signed by many people

policy, n. an official course of action



George Washington was chosen to lead the Continental Army.

Soon after, King George III's answer to their petition arrived. He had no intention of backing down. Instead, he was eager for a fight.

The Declaration of Independence

Although some colonists wanted to be free from British rule, not all of them were willing to take this risk. They knew that breaking away from the home country would not be easy. Gradually though, and thanks in part to the writings of Thomas Paine, more people began to think that independence was worth pursuing. Paine wrote a **pamphlet** called *Common Sense* that many colonists read.

Vocabulary

pamphlet, n. a small booklet that includes information or ideas about a single topic

Paine did not only tell readers about his ideas. He also asked what they thought about those ideas. Did it make any sense for America to be ruled by a small nation three thousand miles away? Did it make sense for people to be ruled by one man who became king because of his family? Would it not be better if the colonists chose their own rulers?

In June 1776, the Second Continental Congress agreed that they knew the answers to these questions. It was time for the colonies to separate from Great Britain. The Congress chose a small group to write a declaration that would explain why the colonies were breaking away. The people chosen to write the declaration included John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, and Thomas Jefferson.

Jefferson soon wrote most of what is now one of the most famous documents in history. The Virginia delegate wanted the world to know all the bad actions the king had taken. So he listed each of them. He also explained why the king's actions made it acceptable for the colonists to break away from Britain. Jefferson wrote that "all men are created equal." That means that everyone is born



Americans celebrate the signing of the Declaration of Independence with fireworks on July 4 each year.

with equal rights. This is very possibly the most important idea in the document.

On July 4, 1776, the Congress adopted this “Declaration of Independence.” The American colonies chose to become independent and united states. Today, Americans celebrate the fourth day of July as their Independence Day.

An Uneven Match

When the delegates in the Congress signed the Declaration of Independence, a **revolution** began. The delegates knew that a full-blown war was likely to soon follow and that Britain would likely execute them if they were to lose.

Vocabulary

revolution, n. the act of overthrowing the government with the hopes of starting a new and different one

The chances of the Continental Army winning a war against Great Britain were not good. For one thing, some people called Loyalists or Tories in the new thirteen states still supported Great Britain. They joined the British army and even worked as spies. The British also had a large army with well-trained fighters. General George Washington had to build an army from scratch. His army was mainly made up of farmers, not professional soldiers.

Washington knew his army was unlikely to win big battles against the British. He decided to keep the Continental Army moving. They would stop and quickly fight the British now and then. Washington could build and train his army along the way.

A Surprise Attack

The summer and winter of 1776 was a tough time for Washington and the Continental Army. The British had captured New York City and most of New Jersey. It was cold, and Washington's men were hungry. Some didn't even have coats or shoes. Washington wanted to raise the spirits of his soldiers and of the rest of the nation. Washington planned a surprise attack on German soldiers hired by the British. The German soldiers were camped in Trenton, New Jersey, across the Delaware River from Washington and his men. Who would expect the Continental Army to row across the ice-filled Delaware River in the dead of winter?

And so, on Christmas night in 1776, shivering American soldiers crossed the river. The Continental Army marched to Trenton, hidden by the darkness of night. As day broke, they attacked the camp. The German soldiers surrendered after a short fight. Eight

days later, Washington won another victory in Princeton, New Jersey. The victories at Trenton and Princeton cheered Americans. They also encouraged the men of the Continental Army.

Major Battles of the American Revolution



Several American victories changed the direction of the war, including the Battles of Saratoga and Yorktown.

The Battle of Saratoga

In Saratoga, New York, the Continental Army had another unexpected victory during the autumn of 1777. Winning the Battle of Saratoga was a turning point in the war because it brought the Americans a new fighting partner—France.

The French still wanted revenge on the British after losing to them in the French and Indian War. One way for France to get this revenge was to help America become independent. France had secretly been sending America money and supplies during the war. This helped, but the Americans wanted France to join the war on their side.

The American victory at Saratoga convinced the French that the Continental Army had a real chance of defeating the British. The French now officially became involved in the revolution. This included sending soldiers and a large number of warships to help the Americans. It is quite possible that without this help from the French, the Americans would not have won the war.

Valley Forge

Even with its new ally France, the winter of 1777–78 was a low point for the Continental Army. Washington's soldiers had suffered several defeats. With cold weather again coming, Washington had to set up camp for the winter. He chose Valley Forge, an open field near Philadelphia. The winter in Valley Forge was terrible. Supplies did not arrive. Blankets were scarce. Food, boots, and shoes were in short supply. The men wrapped their feet in rags.

In February, a German military officer called Baron von Steuben arrived at Washington's headquarters. He offered to help the Continental Army. Washington could tell that Steuben knew how to train men to be soldiers. By spring, General Washington had a well-trained army for the very first time.

British Surrender

In the summer of 1781, Washington faced off against British general Charles Cornwallis in Yorktown, Virginia. Cornwallis set up his camp near a river where they could receive more troops and supplies. But the French naval fleet ruined this plan by stopping the supplies from arriving. For once, General Washington had more men than the British commander. Washington rode into battle at Yorktown alongside his American and French troops. The British were trapped. For several days, American and French cannons roared. Finally, the British general saw that it was useless to continue. On October 17, 1781, Cornwallis surrendered. With this surrender, the British knew they could not stop American independence.

The American Revolution produced many heroes. George Washington became known as the "Father of Our Country." Most of the heroes, though, were ordinary people. Many of their names are not written in history books. They were the soldiers who shivered at Valley Forge. They were the men who marched for days to strike at the British army. They were also the women who brought food and water to the men in battle.

When the war was over, many Americans expressed enormous pride, and even astonishment, at having won a war against one of the greatest military powers in the world.

These same Americans would soon create a new and different kind of government. Even before the struggle for independence began, many Americans had begun to reject the idea of a monarchy. They felt that not having a voice in government was unjust. After the war for independence, the United States Constitution would create a **republic**. In this kind of government, the American people would freely elect their representatives.

Vocabulary

republic, n. a government in which people elect representatives to rule for them

Symbols of America

The history of America and the fight for independence are remembered through different symbols. These symbols are both natural and human-made landmarks. The Delaware River is a natural landmark because it is a waterway. It is part of the country's geography. It is an important landmark because George Washington and his men crossed that icy river to win a surprise victory.

Many of the human-made landmarks are in the nation's capital city, Washington, D.C. It was decided in 1790 that the capital of the United States would be the District of Columbia (D.C.) and that it would be named after George Washington. Plans were made to build a beautiful city with wide avenues and parks. There would be a Capitol building—the place where the Congress of the United States would meet to make laws for the country. Plans were also made to build a house for

the president and the president's family. The house would be called the President's Mansion. This presidential home became known as the White House.

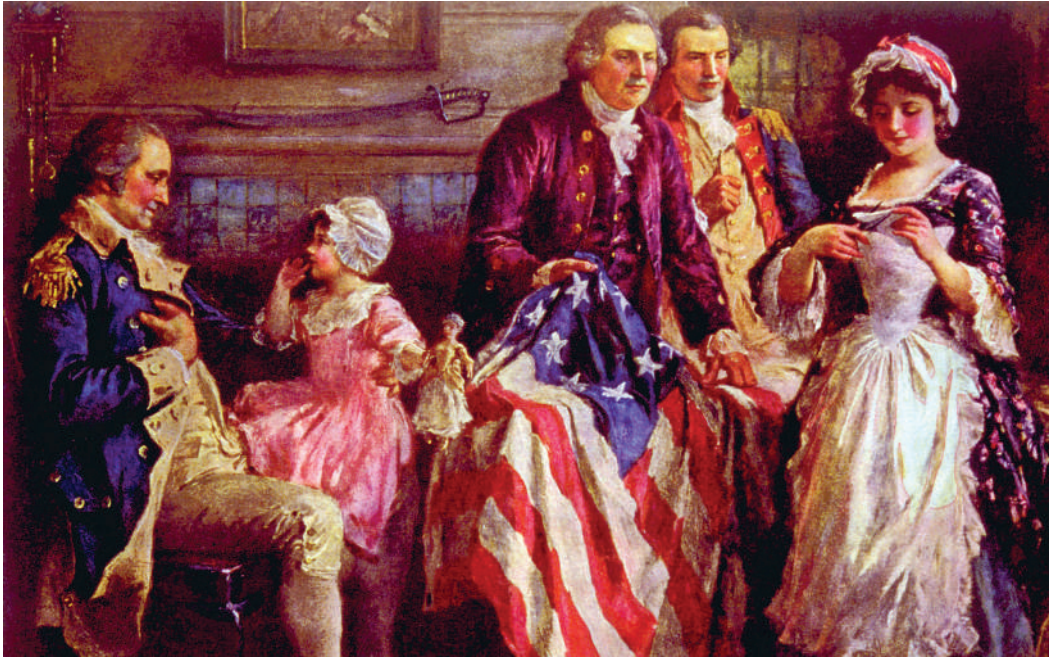
Another important symbol of America is its flag. The first flag of the United States had thirteen stars—one for each of the first states. Today, the American flag has fifty stars, one for each state, and thirteen stripes for the thirteen colonies. There is a story that George Washington asked Betsy Ross to sew the first American flag, but no one knows for sure if



Construction began on the U.S. Capitol building in 1793. Additional buildings and features have been added over the past two hundred years.



In 1776, the American flag had only thirteen stars, to represent the first thirteen states.



No one knows for sure if the story of Betsy Ross and the American flag is true.

this is true. What is true, though, is that Betsy Ross was a supporter of independence who lived in Philadelphia at the time.

The Liberty Bell is another important human-made landmark. This great bell rang in Philadelphia to tell people that the Declaration of Independence had been sent to the king. People gathered to hear the declaration read out loud. From that moment on, the bell has held a special meaning to Americans. It became the Liberty Bell, the bell that told of America's freedom.



The Liberty Bell remains in Philadelphia today.

PRIMARY SOURCE: EXCERPT FROM THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

We hold these truths to be self-evident [easily seen], that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with [given by God] certain unalienable Rights [rights that cannot be taken away], that among these are Life, Liberty [freedom] and the pursuit of Happiness.—That to secure [protect] these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving [getting] their just powers from the consent [approval or agreement] of the governed, —That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter [change] or to abolish [get rid of] 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 [bring about] their Safety and Happiness.

Source: The Declaration of Independence. U.S. National Archives.

Chapter 2

The Constitutional Convention

The Path to Self-Government

Once the war for independence ended, there was a lot more work to be done. A new nation had been formed. Americans were free to govern themselves. But how would they do this? The Americans needed a plan. In the summer of 1787, delegates met in Independence Hall in Philadelphia to do this important work. These leaders were hot, due to the weather, and sometimes angry. They didn't always agree with one another. However, after four months and many debates, the delegates had created a plan for the new United States government.

The Framing Question

What challenges were involved in creating a new constitution?

Vocabulary

liberty, n. freedom

As you read earlier, the belief in self-government came about because colonists wanted a say in British policies that were affecting their **liberties**. This idea was further developed by Thomas Jefferson when he wrote the Declaration of Independence. Then the idea was fought for during the American Revolution.

We the People

Article 1



Delegates at the convention designed a new plan of government for the United States.

The Declaration of Independence includes the idea that all persons are created equal. It also states that people have **rights**. Some of these are **unalienable** rights, such as life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Another important idea in the declaration is that a government's power depends on the **consent** of the governed. "The governed" in this case means the people themselves. It is the people, not a king or queen, who decide what powers a government should have. These ideas would eventually show up in the Constitution of the United States, too.

Vocabulary

right, n. a legal promise

unalienable, adj. unable to be taken away or denied

consent, n. approval or agreement

Limited Government

The idea of a limited government of the people had been around for a long time. Yet it had rarely been put into action. After declaring their independence, Americans had a chance to take the idea of limited government to a whole new level. Each colony became an independent state. Each state had to create a new government for itself. This led to something new. In every state, *ordinary* people discussed what that new government should look like.

Americans were now engaged in a "great experiment." Many of them did not expect to get everything right the first time. But that was okay. The important thing was to start the process. If needed, they could make changes later.

When the Second Continental Congress met, war had just started. As you have read, the delegates met to decide what to

do about British laws that limited the liberties of the colonists. They also began discussing a possible new central government. While the war was being fought in 1777, the Congress voted to approve a plan for the new government. This plan was called the Articles of **Confederation**. After being debated in each state, it finally became real in 1781. The Articles created a national lawmaking body called Congress. The members of Congress were to be chosen by the states.

Vocabulary

confederation, n. a group of states joined together by a formal agreement

Under the Articles, states were given the power to do many things. However, the new national Congress was very limited in its power.



The delegates returned to Independence Hall to write the United States Constitution.

It could not raise money through taxes. It could not force the states or the people to follow its laws. Delegate James Madison from Virginia felt certain that Congress needed more power. Madison would go on to help write the United States Constitution, which replaced the Articles of Confederation. In fact, he is known as the “Father of the Constitution.” Madison, with the help of delegate Alexander Hamilton, convinced Congress to call for a constitutional convention. This was an assembly of all the states. The convention met in Philadelphia in May 1787.

The Constitutional Convention

The first decision that the convention delegates made was choosing George Washington as chairman of the convention. The second decision was to keep all discussions secret. That way, each person could express his ideas freely. They even nailed the windows shut in their meeting room at Independence Hall.

Edmund Randolph of Virginia spoke first. He presented the ideas that Madison and the other Virginians had been working on. These ideas came to be called the Virginia Plan. Randolph said that the central, or national, government should protect the American people against foreign enemies. It should also protect the liberties of the American people and look after their general welfare. He then argued that the central government needed more authority, or power. After much debate, it was decided on June 19, 1787, that a new constitution creating a stronger central government would be written.

The United States Constitution

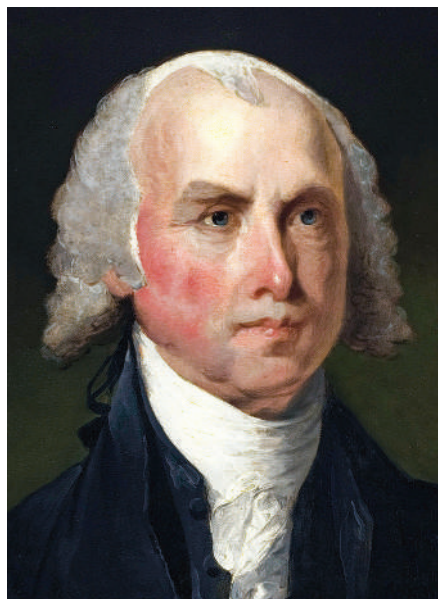
The delegates decided that the new government under the Constitution would divide power between the central government and the states. This is called a **federal** system. But finding the balance between the states and the central government was difficult. On one hand, a central government would need enough power to be able to act when necessary. On the other hand, a too-strong central government might abuse its power, as the British king had. Delegates had different opinions on how much power was too much or too little.

To solve this problem and others, delegates often had to make **compromises**. They designed a central government divided into three equal branches. Each branch had its own duties and powers. This idea is known as the *separation of powers*. The power of each branch would be checked, or limited, by the other two in a system called *checks and balances*. Delegates also decided that the Constitution

Vocabulary

federal, adj. relating to a system of government in which the national government shares power with other levels of government, such as states; can also refer to national government

compromise, n. an agreement reached when each side gives up some of what they want to end a disagreement



After the Constitution was approved, James Madison went back to Virginia and ran for Congress. Once elected, he began to work on the Bill of Rights.

would be the supreme law of the land. By the middle of September 1787, the final document was ready to be signed.

The Bill of Rights

One question that was not answered at the Constitutional Convention was whether the new Constitution should include a bill of rights. A bill of rights would list the basic rights of citizens that the government would protect. It would also make it clear that the new national government could not overstep. This list would include such rights as freedom of speech, freedom of the press, and freedom of religion.

- 
- **First Amendment:** freedom of religion, freedom of speech, freedom of the press, and freedom of assembly
 - **Second Amendment:** the right of the people to keep and bear arms
 - **Third Amendment:** restricts housing soldiers in private homes without the owner's consent
 - **Fourth Amendment:** protects against unreasonable search and seizure
 - **Fifth Amendment:** protects against self-incrimination, being tried twice for the same crime, and the seizure of property under eminent domain
 - **Sixth Amendment:** the rights to a speedy trial, trial by jury, and the services of a lawyer
 - **Seventh Amendment:** guarantees trial by jury in cases involving a certain dollar amount
 - **Eighth Amendment:** prohibits excessive bail or fines and cruel and unusual punishment for crimes
 - **Ninth Amendment:** declares that the listing of certain rights (in the Bill of Rights) does not mean that other rights are not in effect
 - **Tenth Amendment:** declares that powers not granted to the federal government are reserved for states or individual people

Some delegates thought that the new Constitution should list these rights. Most, though, felt that the state constitutions already included these rights. Therefore, there was no need to repeat

them in the Constitution. And so the delegates had decided not to include a bill of rights.

The Constitution had to be approved, or ratified, by nine of the thirteen states. This happened in 1788. The other four states approved the Constitution after a promise was made to add a bill of rights. In 1791, ten amendments, or changes, known as the Bill of Rights were added to the Constitution. These first ten amendments to the Constitution are the most important protectors of liberties that Americans have. They also support the idea of limited government.

A Republic

Before the creation of the U.S. Constitution, the idea of government getting its power from the people was mostly just that: an idea. The Founding Fathers, the leaders who declared America's independence and wrote the Constitution, turned this idea into a reality. Anyone who sees the U.S. Constitution notices that the first three words are the biggest words on the page: *We the People*. This means that the government gets its power to make laws from the people—not from a king or a president. “We the People” means that the citizens decide what the laws should be, and no one can be above the law. “We the People” also means that it is up to Americans whether this is a country of good laws or bad laws.

The Constitution also explains how people elect leaders to represent them. Choosing these representatives is what makes the U.S. government a republic. But a republic only works if its people get involved by voting. The Constitution protects citizens from

being denied the right to vote based on race or gender. Voting is more than a right; it is a responsibility. Before a person votes, they should find out about the people running for office and what they stand for.

The work of the Founding Fathers was long and difficult. But through debate and compromise, they crafted a representative democracy—a republic—that has stood the test of time.



The goal of voting is to elect someone who will represent *your* values.

PRIMARY SOURCE: PREAMBLE TO THE CONSTITUTION

We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility [peace], provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity [descendants], do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.

Source: The Constitution of the United States. U.S. National Archives.

Chapter 3

The First President

Washington Heads Home The candles in the windows of General George Washington's home at Mount Vernon in Virginia shone brightly on Christmas Eve, 1783. The evening was much different from the Christmas night in 1776 that Washington had spent crossing the icy Delaware River with his men to stage a surprise attack. It was also different from the cold, harsh winter that he spent in Valley Forge. The war had ended earlier that year. The United States was a new, independent country.

The Framing Question

Why was George Washington chosen to be the first president of the United States?



It was Christmastime when George Washington returned home after the war.
He hoped to remain there for the rest of his years.

Mount Vernon, Mt. Vernon, Va.

Shortly before Christmas, Washington had said his goodbyes to his fellow officers. He presented Congress with his **resignation** as commander in chief of the Continental Army. His work was done, he told Congress. He was retiring from public life forever.

Vocabulary

resignation, n. the act of stepping down from or leaving a job

Americans called Washington the “Father of Our Country.” They had a great deal of respect for their general. Washington was now free to return to his beloved Mount Vernon. As he rode up to Mount Vernon that Christmas Eve, his wife, Martha, waited in the doorway to welcome him. At last, America’s hero was home.

Washington had told Congress he was leaving public life forever. Have you ever noticed, though, how sometimes things happen that make you take back words like *forever*? That is what happened to George Washington. In 1787, he was asked to return to public life as a Virginia delegate to the Constitutional Convention. How could he say no? He could not turn his back on his country as it struggled under the Articles of Confederation. He had to serve.

Washington Becomes President

As you have read, the delegates to the Constitutional Convention gathered in Philadelphia in 1787. They needed a strong, steady leader to get them through the hard work ahead. They asked Washington to serve as chairman of the convention. Washington agreed.

Then, in 1789, with the Constitution ratified by enough states, Washington understood he would be called to serve again. As expected, he was almost everyone’s choice to be the nation’s

first president. Once again, he knew he could not say no. On April 16 of that year, Washington said goodbye to Mount Vernon and set out for New York. The city was the new federal government's first capital—though Washington would spend more time working in the temporary capital of Philadelphia than he would in New York. His **inauguration** would take place there. Then he would begin his work as president.

Vocabulary

inauguration, n. a formal ceremony at the start of a term of office

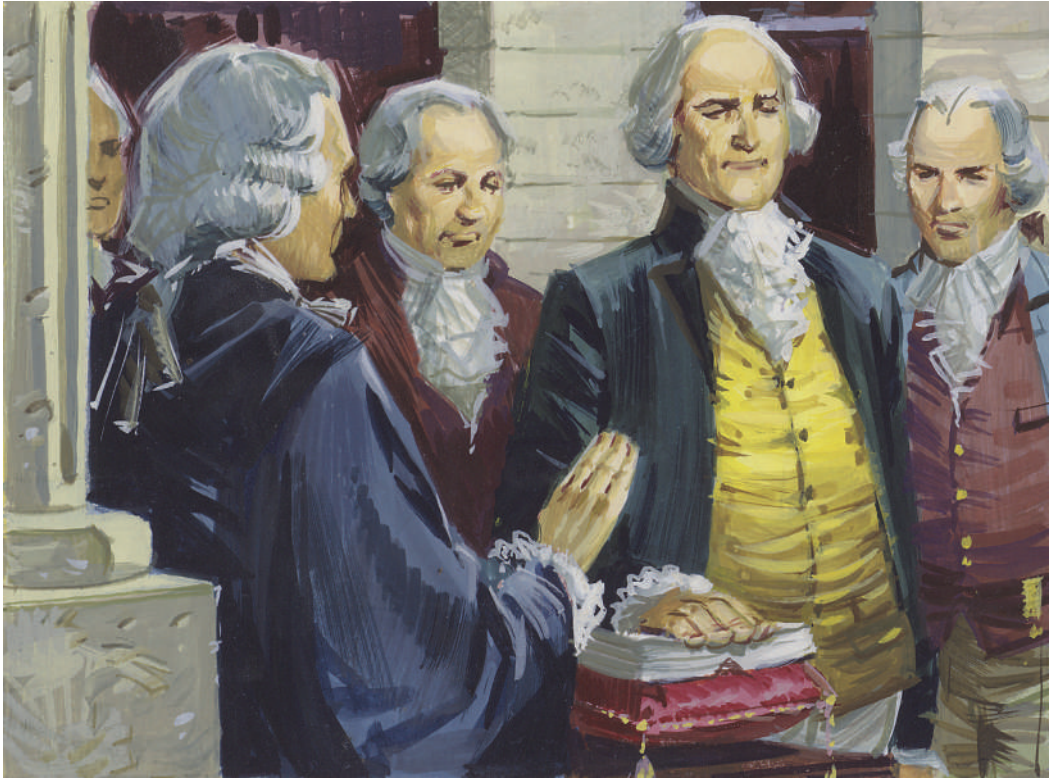
The trip from Mount Vernon to New York City took far longer than Washington expected. Villages and towns he traveled through held parades and dinners in his honor. Citizens lined the streets to cheer as his carriage passed. On the country roads, men on horseback rode in front of, behind, and alongside Washington's carriage. The traffic filled the country air with dust as the journey became one long parade. After eight days, Washington finally arrived in New York.

Inauguration Day

The first Inauguration Day took place on April 30, 1789. A crowd of thousands gathered in front of a building known as Federal Hall. Shortly after noon, Washington and a small group of officials stepped out on the balcony. Placing his hand on a Bible, Washington repeated the **oath of office** written in the new Constitution: "I do solemnly swear that I will faithfully execute the office of president of the United States,

Vocabulary

oath of office, n. a promise made by a government official to obey the law and fulfill the responsibilities of the job



George Washington was sworn in as president on April 30, 1789.

and will to the best of my ability, preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution of the United States.”

Setting Precedent

By now the country had elected both a Congress and a president. The new government was ready to start its work. Washington and Congress wanted to move forward carefully because no one had ever done anything like this before. In the early days of his presidency, Washington tried to identify all of the problems facing the new country.

Washington made sure that his recommendations to Congress and all the duties he carried out closely followed the Constitution.

He knew that every action he took might set a **precedent**.

Vocabulary

precedent, n. an example for future actions or decisions

For example, members of Congress had a hard time deciding how to address the president. Vice President John Adams suggested that the president be called “His Highness, the President of the United States of America and Protector of Their Liberties.” Others said that sounded too much like the way a king is addressed. Some thought “His Excellency” was the right way. In the end, it was agreed to address Washington simply as “Mr. President.” Today, the matter seems more amusing than important. But in 1789, it was taken very seriously.

Other precedents were more important. For example, the Constitution states that there will be “departments” in the government. These departments are set up to help the president. But the Constitution does not say *what* the departments will be, or even how many. It was up to Washington and Congress to fill in that empty space in the Constitution.

Congress decided to create three departments. One was the Department of State. That department was supposed to help the president in their dealings with foreign countries. Another department was the Department of War. That department was in charge of defending the country. A third department was the Department of the Treasury. That one was expected to collect taxes, pay bills, and take care of the government’s money. The head of each department was called a secretary. Washington chose Thomas Jefferson as the secretary of state, Alexander Hamilton as

the secretary of the treasury, and Henry Knox as the secretary of war. Each secretary came from a different part of the country.

Creating these departments led to another precedent. The Constitution says the president can ask for advice from his department heads. At first, Washington just talked to each secretary separately about the work his department was doing. After a while, though, President Washington felt he needed advice on many other matters. He began having all the secretaries meet with him at the same time to get their advice. The department heads came to be called the president's cabinet. A cabinet is a group of advisers. Every president since Washington has had a cabinet.



The first cabinet included Henry Knox, Thomas Jefferson, and Alexander Hamilton. It also included the attorney general, Edmund Randolph, a legal adviser to the president.

In 1794, President Washington once again set the tone for the new government. Congress had passed a law that taxed certain goods, including whiskey. Many poor farmers who made a living by growing corn that they turned into whiskey were upset. Some in western Pennsylvania banded together and refused to pay the tax.

Washington had some sympathy for the farmers. But he felt that the law must be followed. He also felt it was especially important for the new government to show it could carry out its laws.

Washington put on his old general's uniform. He led thirteen thousand volunteer troops to western Pennsylvania to put down the "Whiskey Rebellion." When farmers heard that troops were coming, they dropped their guns and fled. Washington had set another precedent: the new government could not only pass laws but also make people obey them.

Washington's Retirement

During Washington's presidency, disagreements among government leaders began to happen. These disagreements would lead to the creation of different political parties with different views. Washington did not like the division that political parties could bring to the country. He also warned against becoming involved with other countries' conflicts. When war was declared between France and England in 1793, Washington wanted to remain completely **neutral**.

Vocabulary

neutral, adj. not helping either side in a conflict

Washington was tired by the time his second term as president ended. He had served his country for a long time. He had worked hard to bring independence and freedom to the United States. So Washington chose to leave the presidency in 1797. He did not want to be seen as a monarch who stayed on the throne for a lifetime. Not seeking a third term as president was yet another important precedent that Washington set. He died in late 1799 at his beloved Mount Vernon.

George Washington is still honored and remembered today in many ways. His birthday is celebrated every year in February. In 1885, a dedication ceremony was held for the Washington Monument. This monument sits at the west end of the National Mall in Washington, D.C. It is an **obelisk**, or single tall column, and the tallest structure in the city. Visitors can go to the top and take in a wonderful view of the nation's capital—which is, of course, also named for the first president.

Vocabulary

obelisk, n. a pillar carved from a single piece of stone with a square base and a pyramidal top



The Washington Monument is at the west end of the National Mall, a long and landscaped park in the center of Washington, D.C.

PRIMARY SOURCE: EXCERPT FROM WASHINGTON'S FAREWELL ADDRESS

George Washington decided not to run for a third term as president. He delivered his farewell address in September 1796. He wrote the speech with the help of Alexander Hamilton and James Madison. It was meant to inspire future generations and is still read aloud annually in Congress.

Citizens by birth or choice, of a common country, that country deserves your affections. The name of American, which belongs to you, must always respect the just pride of patriotism more than any label that reflects local connections.

With slight shades of difference, you have the same religion, manners, habits, and political principles. You have in a common cause fought and triumphed together. The independence and liberty you possess are the work of joint councils and joint efforts—of common dangers, sufferings, and successes.

Source: Adapted from Washington's Farewell Address to the People of the United States. U.S. Senate Historical Office.

Glossary

C

colony, n. an area, region, or country that is controlled and settled by people from another country (2)

compromise, n. an agreement reached when each side gives up some of what they want to end a disagreement (23)

confederation, n. a group of states joined together by a formal agreement (21)

consent, n. approval or agreement (20)

D

declaration, n. a formal statement (6)

delegate, n. a representative (6)

F

federal, adj. relating to a system of government in which the national government shares power with other levels of government, such as states; can also refer to national government (23)

I

immigrant, n. a person from one country who moves to another country to live (2)

inauguration, n. a formal ceremony at the start of a term of office (31)

L

liberty, n. freedom (18)

M

militia, n. a group of armed citizens prepared for military service at any time (6)

monarchy, n. a government led by a queen or a king (4)

N

neutral, adj. not helping either side in a conflict (35)

O

oath of office, n. a promise made by a government official to obey the law and fulfill the responsibilities of the job (31)

obelisk, n. a pillar carved from a single piece of stone with a square base and a pyramidal top (36)

P

pamphlet, n. a small booklet that includes information or ideas about a single topic (8)

Parliament, n. in Great Britain, a lawmaking group made up of elected and nonelected representatives who govern with the king or queen (4)

petition, n. a formal written request for change, signed by many people (7)

policy, n. an official course of action (7)

precedent, n. an example for future actions or decisions (33)

R

republic, n. a government in which people elect representatives to rule for them (14)

resignation, n. the act of stepping down from or leaving a job (30)

revolution, n. the act of overthrowing the government with the hopes of starting a new and different one (9)

right, n. a legal promise (20)

S

self-government, n. the ability of people to rule themselves and make their own laws (4)

T

tax, n. money that people pay to the government (4)

U

unalienable, adj. unable to be taken away or denied (20)



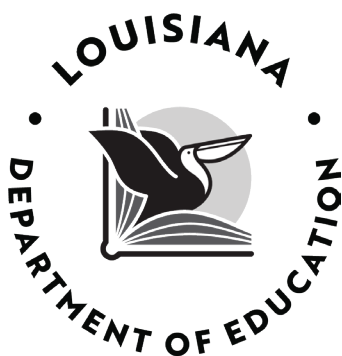
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George Washington being sworn in as the first President of America in New York (gouache on paper)/English School, (20th century) / English/Private Collection/© Look and Learn / Bridgeman Images: Cover B, 32

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