



English Learning for Curious Minds



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Episode #151
The American Revolution
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[00:00:00] Hello, hello hello, and welcome to English Learning for Curious Minds, by Leonardo English.

[00:00:22] The show where you can listen to fascinating stories, and learn weird and wonderful things about the world at the same time as improving your English.

[00:00:23] I'm Alastair Budge and today we are going to be talking about The American Revolutionary War, or as it's more often called, The American Revolution.

[00:00:33] This is the second part of this three part series on The Age of Revolution.

[00:00:40] In part one we talked about The Industrial Revolution, and in the next part, part three, we will talk about The French Revolution.

[00:00:49] And before that there was actually a related episode on The Enlightenment, without which perhaps none of these revolutions would have happened.



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[00:00:59] So, you can of course listen to all of these episodes individually, but they are probably even more interesting as a [trio¹](#), or even as a [quartet²](#).

[00:01:10] You might think it's a bit strange to have someone from Britain talking about The American Revolution, because, well, it's not something that people in Britain [tend³](#) to talk about a lot, as the British lost.

[00:01:24] But it is a fascinating story, and for better or for worse, the American Revolution, and the [subsequent⁴](#) creation of The United States of America, has had a global impact that is hard to match.

[00:01:38] It is a long and complicated story, so we will focus on the most interesting parts, and tell it through the formula of causes, [course⁵](#), and consequences.

[00:01:50] So, why did it happen, what actually happened, and what has this meant for America, for Britain, and for the world.

[00:02:01] OK then, let's get [stuck into it⁶](#).

¹ a group of three things

² a group of four things

³ are likely

⁴ happening after something else

⁵ the way in which something develops

⁶ start doing something with enthusiasm



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[00:02:05] Before we dive right into the causes of The American Revolution, let's just remind ourselves of what was actually going on in the mid 18th century.

[00:02:16] Firstly, America.

[00:02:17] Now, America as a term, and as a concept, didn't really exist.

[00:02:23] The [continent](#)⁷ we now know as North America had been [colonised](#)⁸ by the British, French and Spanish, starting with Christopher Columbus in 1492.

[00:02:34] While the Spanish conquered most of what is now Mexico and the south of North America, the eastern and northern parts were [colonised](#) by French and British [settlers](#)⁹.

[00:02:46] The French and the British got into some [territorial](#)¹⁰ [disputes](#)¹¹, there was the 9 year French and Indian war, the British won, and the French handed control of everything to the east of the river Mississippi over to the British.

⁷ one of the seven large land masses of earth

⁸ controlled by sending people to move and live there

⁹ people moved from a country to live in another one

¹⁰ related to the ownership and control of an area

¹¹ disagreements



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[00:03:04] Meanwhile, in Europe, the French and the British had been fighting something called the Seven Years War, which was a struggle for global domination, and [sucked in](#)¹² countries such as Spain, Prussia, Russia, Portugal and Sweden.

[00:03:21] The result was, technically at least, a British victory, but it left Britain with huge debts.

[00:03:28] Wars, as we all know, are expensive.

[00:03:32] In order to try to raise money to pay these debts, Britain looked to its [colonies](#)¹³ in America for money.

[00:03:41] To [clarify](#)¹⁴ exactly which [colonies](#) we are talking about here, we're talking about 13 [colonies](#) on the eastern coast of what we now call The United States of America, so that's: Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, Pennsylvania, Delaware, New Jersey, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia.

[00:04:08] Now, who were the people actually living in these states?

[00:04:13] Were they Americans?

[00:04:15] Well, yes and no.

¹² involved someone without being their choice

¹³ countries controlled politically by a more powerful country

¹⁴ make clear



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[00:04:17] Yes, because they lived in America.

[00:04:20] But no, because [the vast majority](#)¹⁵ of them were relatively recent immigrants from Europe, and they were still technically British citizens.

[00:04:31] 85% of the immigrant population came from Great Britain, which included Ireland at the time, but there were also lots of people from countries like the Netherlands and Germany.

[00:04:45] Although the 13 [colonies](#) were mainly made up of immigrants from Europe, there were other significant populations – about 250,000 slaves, transported [barbarically](#)¹⁶ from Africa, who worked on the [cotton](#)¹⁷, rice, and tobacco [plantations](#)¹⁸ of the southern states.

[00:05:06] And there were the tribes of the Native Americans whose unhappy story of [gradual](#)¹⁹ [submission](#)²⁰ to the [colonists](#)²¹ is a sad story for another time.

¹⁵ almost all

¹⁶ in an extremely unpleasant and cruel way

¹⁷ a soft white material used for making clothes

¹⁸ a big area where crops (plants) are grown

¹⁹ happening slowly over a period of time

²⁰ the action of surrendering to a superior force

²¹ people moved from a country to live in another one



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[00:05:17] Other European nations will **feature**²² too in our story – German **mercenaries**²³ on the British side and, as is so often the case with anything involving the British **military**²⁴ adventures abroad, this won't be the last time we'll hear from the French.

[00:05:34] So, that's the **context**²⁵, what then were some of the immediate causes that brought about the start of the American Revolutionary war?

[00:05:45] As ever, it is a **combination**²⁶ of **underlying**²⁷, background factors and immediate **sparks**²⁸ which **lit the blaze**²⁹ and caused the **outbreak**³⁰ of **hostilities**³¹, caused the fighting to start.

²² take an important part

²³ professional soldiers hired to serve in a foreign army

²⁴ relating to the armed forces

²⁵ the conditions in which something exists

²⁶ a joining of different parts or factors

²⁷ not obvious

²⁸ tiny bright pieces of burning material

²⁹ started the fire

³⁰ a sudden and violent start

³¹ acts of war



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[00:06:00] The most significant **underlying** cause was the **deteriorating**³² relationship between Britain and its fast-growing, increasingly **prosperous**³³, increasingly rich, and independent-minded **colonies**.

[00:06:14] Let's use the image or **metaphor**³⁴ of a family.

[00:06:19] One could say that this is a bit like the natural development of any fast-growing, independent-minded teenager who **seeks**³⁵ independence from their parents.

[00:06:30] In the end they need their own space and to be able to run their own lives.

[00:06:36] However, there was nothing **inevitable**³⁶ about the initial rebellion.

[00:06:42] In 1763 Britain was **broke**³⁷, it had large debts, after financing the war in North America as well as the Seven Years War in Europe.

[00:06:52] The British **colonies** in North America were **prosperous**, they were doing well economically, and King George III of Britain decided to raise taxes on the 13

³² becoming worse

³³ successful financially

³⁴ a way of describing something by referring to something else than has similar characteristics or behaviour

³⁵ tries to find

³⁶ certain to happen, unavoidable

³⁷ without money at all



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colonies, which had relied heavily on the **military** support of Britain in the French and Indian War.

[00:07:11] The raising of taxes wasn't in itself the problem, but rather the way in which it was done.

[00:07:19] There was a well established **principle**³⁸ in British law that you should not be taxed unless you are democratically represented in government, but these 13 British **colonies** in America had no representation in the British parliament.

[00:07:36] They simply had to do whatever was decided in Westminster, in the Houses of Parliament back in London.

[00:07:44] Starting in 1765, the British **imposed**³⁹ taxes on the British **colonies** in America, and these were deeply unpopular.

[00:07:55] The first large tax, called The **Stamp**⁴⁰ Act, required British **colonists** to pay taxes on **stamps**⁴¹ on a whole range of things, from official documents through to playing cards.

³⁸ a belief that acts as a basis for something

³⁹ forced something unwelcome on someone

⁴⁰ a small piece of paper that is stuck on something to show that an amount of money has been paid

⁴¹ small pieces of paper that are stuck on something to show that an amount of money has been paid



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[00:08:09] Before long, there was a popular movement against this tax, with the [slogan](#)⁴² “no taxation without representation”, meaning you couldn’t be taxed if you weren’t represented democratically.

[00:08:24] There was an increasing anti-British feeling, with people [boycotting](#)⁴³ British goods, not buying British goods, and some [small-scale](#)⁴⁴ protests.

[00:08:35] It wasn’t for another five years though, not until 1770, that things really [came to a head](#)⁴⁵.

[00:08:44] The Boston [Massacre](#)⁴⁶ was when British soldiers shot and killed five protestors, and then three years later, in 1773, again in Boston, there was the Boston Tea Party, when [volunteer](#)⁴⁷ American soldiers dressed as native Americans, went onto British ships in the Boston [harbour](#)⁴⁸ and threw the precious tea [overboard](#)⁴⁹.

⁴² a short and easily remembered phrase

⁴³ refusing to buy a product as a way of expressing disapproval

⁴⁴ of limited extent

⁴⁵ reached a point where action must be taken

⁴⁶ brutal killing

⁴⁷ people who do something helpful willingly, without being forced to do so

⁴⁸ a place on the coast where ships and boats are kept safe

⁴⁹ from the ship to the water



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[00:09:10] Britain sent soldiers to Boston to control the situation, but [tensions](#)⁵⁰ continued to grow.

[00:09:18] The American [colonists](#) started to arm themselves, they started to form small armies, in anticipation of the conflict that was to come.

[00:09:28] Then, in a place called Lexington, in Massachusetts on 19 April 1775, the real fighting broke out, with the so-called “shot heard around the world”.

[00:09:42] It was a [full-blown](#)⁵¹ battle between British soldiers and the Massachusetts [militia](#)⁵², and resulted in the death of over a hundred men.

[00:09:53] Britain was now at war with its American [colonies](#).

[00:09:57] Now, I said earlier that there was nothing [inevitable](#) about the revolution.

[00:10:03] This was because the natural [tendency](#)⁵³ of so many of the [colonists](#) was to have considerable loyalty towards the mother nation, which had after all protected them and, through victory in the recent war, it had won them the opportunity to expand West into lands that were previously under the control of the French.

⁵⁰ state of difficulties and hostilities between two groups

⁵¹ fully developed

⁵² a military force raised from civil population

⁵³ direction, approach



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[00:10:27] A number of the **founding fathers**⁵⁴ of The United States had spent time in England as a way of completing their education.

[00:10:35] They had very strong family links with Britain.

[00:10:39] Most importantly, perhaps, the people who led the revolution, such as Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Madison and George Washington, they were **prosperous**, successful men who had many reasons to want to keep the **status quo**⁵⁵ - or things being as they were.

[00:10:59] In so many ways they were unusual revolutionaries. Through rebelling and being **traitors**⁵⁶ to their mother country they risked everything.

[00:11:10] So it is not surprising that there were powerful **ideals**⁵⁷ that united them and drove them on, not only to rebel, but also to design the system of government or **constitution**⁵⁸ of the new United States that was based on a very **distinctive**⁵⁹ set of beliefs.

⁵⁴ a group of men who started the United States and wrote its constitution

⁵⁵ the present state of things

⁵⁶ a person who betrays, acts against their country

⁵⁷ standards or principles (beliefs that act as a basis for something)

⁵⁸ the set of political ideas by which a state is governed

⁵⁹ easy to recognise because it is different from other similar things



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[00:11:31] Here it is perhaps helpful to revisit some of the ideas of the European Enlightenment from the episode on The Enlightenment.

[00:11:40] Key figures in the American revolution, such as Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson, were **profoundly**⁶⁰ influenced by Enlightenment thinking and also by the writings and actions of the thought leaders of the English Revolution [or the English Civil War], such as John Milton, who worked closely with the English republican leader, Oliver Cromwell and who is best known for his famous **epic**⁶¹ poem, Paradise Lost.

[00:12:10] Of even more importance and immediate impact was a **pamphlet**⁶², a short document, of a **mere**⁶³ 47 pages that was published in 1775 by an Englishman called Thomas Paine, who had only just recently **emigrated**⁶⁴ to Pennsylvania.

[00:12:30] This **anecdote**⁶⁵ is a fascinating insight into how a small book can have a dramatic impact on world history.

⁶⁰ deeply or very much

⁶¹ a poem that is long, impressive and grand in character

⁶² a small booklet that gives information about something

⁶³ just, simply

⁶⁴ moved from one country to another to live there permanently

⁶⁵ a short and interesting story about something someone has done



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[00:12:39] Paine's [pamphlet](#), which is called Common Sense, was written in the simplest of English with the desire that it should reach a very [broad](#)⁶⁶ audience and that it could also be listened to by everyone when it was published in Pennsylvania early in 1775.

[00:12:59] It was a [sensation](#)⁶⁷.

[00:13:00] It is estimated that almost half of the 2.5 million people living in the [colonies](#) would have either read or listened to it. This means that it still holds the record for being read or heard by a higher proportion of the population of the United States than any other publication.

[00:13:22] In this work, Paine [demolishes](#)⁶⁸ the arguments in favour of trying to remain under British [sovereignty](#)⁶⁹ or under British control.

[00:13:32] Perhaps his greatest achievement is to paint a [vivid](#)⁷⁰ picture of what an independent, republican United States could be like, ruled by themselves and through [elected](#)⁷¹ representatives, [elected](#) annually, [elected](#) every year.

⁶⁶ very wide or big

⁶⁷ a wide reaction of interest and excitement

⁶⁸ destroys, proves that they are completely wrong

⁶⁹ authority, the governing power of a country

⁷⁰ clear and detailed

⁷¹ chosen by the people after a vote



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[00:13:51] This [sensational](#)⁷² and brave piece of work was instrumental in [galvanising](#)⁷³ – or setting in motion – a process of rebellion.

[00:14:02] Have a look, even if you just read the first few paragraphs, it really is quite inspiring, and is written in an English I'm sure you will be able to understand.

[00:14:14] It also has such a modern feel to it.

[00:14:17] For example, when the author gets particularly excited or wants to [stress](#)⁷⁴ something, he “shouts” in capital letters, so, he tells us, do not mistake King George III [“the [sullen-tempered](#)⁷⁵ [Pharaoh](#)⁷⁶ of England”] as someone [noble](#)⁷⁷ and powerful, “an ASS FOR A LION” (An ass for a lion is all in capital letters).

[00:14:43] You can appreciate how so many of the words used in such a [pamphlet](#), which would have become a common reference point as the revolution [gathered pace](#)⁷⁸ would have had a powerful [sound bite](#)⁷⁹ quality to them.

⁷² causing great public interest

⁷³ causing someone to take action

⁷⁴ point out something important

⁷⁵ bad-tempered, easily annoyed or made angry

⁷⁶ an Egyptian ruler (used here to show the absolute rule of the king)

⁷⁷ honourable and righteous

⁷⁸ started to happen more quickly and had more success

⁷⁹ a small interesting and effective phrase



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[00:14:59] For example, it is, he argues, “very **absurd**⁸⁰“ to think “a continent to be **perpetually**⁸¹ governed by an island.”

[00:15:08] Even reading it now, it is easy to get **fired up**⁸², and I’m from the country that lost this war.

[00:15:15] And perhaps an even more inspiring document was one that was to come a few months later, on the fourth of July of 1776, The Declaration of Independence.

[00:15:28] This stated, amongst other more important things such as that the United States was an independent country, it stated that “all men are created equal, that they are **endowed**⁸³ by their Creator with certain **unalienable**⁸⁴ Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the **pursuit**⁸⁵ of Happiness.”

[00:15:49] Quite inspiring, right?

⁸⁰ very unreasonable

⁸¹ for ever

⁸² very excited or angry

⁸³ provided, given

⁸⁴ incapable of being taken away because it is their right

⁸⁵ the act of trying to achieve something



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[00:15:51] But it is an important and **sobering**⁸⁶ reminder of this **bold**⁸⁷ statement's limitations that the Declaration had no reference to the slave trade; in fact, the version originally drafted by Thomas Jefferson had a **clause**⁸⁸ which **condemned**⁸⁹ the slave trade; sadly this was removed in order to secure the agreement of the southern **colonies**, where the economy relied so much on this **inhuman**⁹⁰ practice.

[00:16:22] Now, moving onto what actually happened during the American Revolutionary War.

[00:16:28] So, by 1776 Britain was at war with its American **colonies**.

[00:16:34] It was a slightly strange situation, because the divisions between who was fighting for Britain, and who was fighting for America weren't completely clear - there were Englishmen, like Thomas Paine, who had only been living in America for two years before becoming a fierce believer in revolution, and **backer**⁹¹ of independence.

[00:16:56] And there were plenty of what we could consider Americans, who fought on the side of the British army.

⁸⁶ making you think seriously

⁸⁷ risky but not afraid

⁸⁸ a separate section of a writing

⁸⁹ showed or said that something is wrong

⁹⁰ without the human qualities of love and mercy

⁹¹ supporter



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[00:17:03] Not everyone on the American side was looking for independence from Britain, and indeed before independence was declared, the [colonies](#) had simply proposed to [put down their arms](#)⁹² in exchange for the British reducing the taxes.

[00:17:19] But King George III, the King of Britain, refused.

[00:17:23] In terms of the people involved, the [standing](#)⁹³ armies of both sides were relatively small, fewer than 50,000 men.

[00:17:32] At its [peak](#)⁹⁴, the British had 22,000 British soldiers as well as 25,000 what's called [loyalists](#)⁹⁵, so Americans who were loyal to Britain and fought for the British.

[00:17:44] There were also another 30,000 or so German [mercenaries](#), soldiers who were paid to fight for the British.

[00:17:53] And let's not forget the slaves.

[00:17:55] The British, out of [self-interest](#)⁹⁶ I should add, offered freedom to slaves who worked on their opponents' [plantations](#), meaning that somewhere between 25-50,000 black slaves served with the British army.

⁹² stop fighting

⁹³ permanent and professional

⁹⁴ the point of its highest quantity

⁹⁵ a group that strongly supports a ruler

⁹⁶ interest in one's own benefit



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[00:18:11] All in all, the soldiers fighting for the British numbered almost 150,000.

[00:18:18] Meanwhile, the [colonists](#)' army was smaller, no more than 48,000 men at any one time.

[00:18:26] It was, at the start at least, not a professional army, they weren't professional soldiers, and for the first years of the war they suffered several heavy defeats against the better trained and better armed British army.

[00:18:41] The leader of the American army, a man called George Washington who was later to become the first president of The United States of course, he realised this, and he [enlisted](#)⁹⁷ the help of Prussian soldiers to train his army, to turn his [amateur](#)⁹⁸ soldiers into professionals.

[00:19:01] The Prussians arrived in the winter of 1777 and turned the American army from a group of untrained [amateurs](#)⁹⁹ into a [force](#)¹⁰⁰ [to be reckoned with](#)¹⁰¹.

⁹⁷ secured the support of

⁹⁸ not professional

⁹⁹ not professionals

¹⁰⁰ organised military body

¹⁰¹ worth taking seriously because of being powerful



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[00:19:13] Now, we have skipped over a lot of the details of the battles and fighting, but it can be summarised as relatively small battles not involving vast¹⁰² numbers of soldiers. The British had some early success, as did the Americans.

[00:19:30] By 1778 though, despite the improvements that the American army had made, the British looked like they had the upper hand¹⁰³, and that they were on the cusp of¹⁰⁴ victory, they were about to win the war.

[00:19:45] In order to prevent its archrival¹⁰⁵ Britain from this great victory, France decided to enter the war, joining forces with the Americans, providing considerable¹⁰⁶ money, troops¹⁰⁷ and a fleet¹⁰⁸ of over 100 ships.

[00:20:01] Now, one can see why the French decided to enter the war - to stop Britain.

¹⁰² extremely big

¹⁰³ had the advantage

¹⁰⁴ at the point just before

¹⁰⁵ main opponent

¹⁰⁶ large amount of

¹⁰⁷ armed forces, soldiers

¹⁰⁸ the ships of a country's naval military forces



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[00:20:07] Yet when we think of what was to happen in France just 10 years later, it does seem like a slightly **foolish**¹⁰⁹ decision for the French king to support a movement to seek independence from a central ruler.

[00:20:21] No doubt Louis XVI was so convinced of his own power and **god-given**¹¹⁰ right to rule that the idea that his own people might try a similar thing in France didn't even cross his mind.

[00:20:35] We should also not forget the Spanish, who joined the French in 1779, who hoped to **regain**¹¹¹ territory that they had lost in America, and to **regain** the territories of Menorca and Gibraltar back in Europe.

[00:20:50] Were it not for the entry of France, and to a lesser extent, Spain, there is little doubt Britain would have won the war.

[00:20:59] And who knows how the world might have been different if that had happened.

[00:21:04] But France and Spain did join the war, and there was no way back for the British.

¹⁰⁹ lacking good sense, unwise

¹¹⁰ coming from God and not people

¹¹¹ take back



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[00:21:10] On September 3, 1783, the Treaty of Paris was signed, which ended the war and [acknowledged](#)¹¹² the existence of the United States of America as a free and independent country.

[00:21:25] Although the entirety of this story, with its [idealism](#)¹¹³, [bloodshed](#)¹¹⁴, [vivid](#) and various characters, is [gripping](#)¹¹⁵ – [enthraling](#)¹¹⁶ and exciting – perhaps the most [intriguing](#)¹¹⁷ part of the whole story lies in the consequences of the American revolution.

[00:21:45] I do not think it is an [exaggeration](#)¹¹⁸ to say that these consequences have affected [virtually](#)¹¹⁹ every country in the world.

¹¹² accepted, admitted

¹¹³ strong belief that you will achieve what you think is right

¹¹⁴ killing and violence

¹¹⁵ having a strong effect, very interesting

¹¹⁶ charming and fascinating

¹¹⁷ very interesting

¹¹⁸ to say that something is more important than it is

¹¹⁹ almost



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[00:21:54] Firstly, and perhaps obviously, the American Revolution resulted in the foundation of the United States of America, with its [emphasis](#)¹²⁰ on its [ground-breaking](#)¹²¹ [founding](#)¹²² [ideals](#) and in particular on its [distinctive](#) civil liberties.

[00:22:11] Secondly, at the heart of its foundation was a written [constitution](#) which had at its core the revolutionary principle that the government [derives](#)¹²³ its “just powers from the [consent](#)¹²⁴ of the [governed](#)¹²⁵”.

[00:22:26] This, the world’s first written [constitution](#), has provided the model for so many other countries’ [constitutions](#)¹²⁶.

[00:22:34] Similarly the process of throwing off colonial rule and abandoning the old model of rule by a [monarch](#)¹²⁷ and a [hereditary](#)¹²⁸ [aristocracy](#)¹²⁹ - meaning people who simply were born into the ruling class - this was an inspiration to other countries.

¹²⁰ attention to something important

¹²¹ bringing a big change

¹²² that established, brought something new

¹²³ takes, obtains

¹²⁴ permission or agreement

¹²⁵ the citizens of a governing state

¹²⁶ sets of political ideas by which states are governed

¹²⁷ a ruling head of state, usually a king or queen

¹²⁸ that is passed on as a right by a parent to a child

¹²⁹ the highest class in certain societies that is considered superior



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[00:22:52] **Comparable**¹³⁰ revolutions followed in places as **diverse**¹³¹ as Latin America, France of course, and especially in the 19th and early 20th centuries, across old Europe.

[00:23:05] Unsurprisingly, when you listen to part three of this mini-series, the one on the French Revolution, you will find many **echoes**¹³² of the American one in it.

[00:23:16] Finally, there is one other consequence which is perhaps a little more **controversial**¹³³. It has to do with the idea of the new America as a symbol of human **aspiration**¹³⁴ and **idealism**.

[00:23:30] Remember that the country was originally settled by people **fleeing**¹³⁵ religious **persecution**¹³⁶ in Europe and **seeking**¹³⁷ greater control over their own lives and freedom from **interference**¹³⁸. This **thread**¹³⁹ in American culture has, I think, continued with the country's tradition of immigration.

¹³⁰ similar

¹³¹ very different

¹³² similar ideas or feelings

¹³³ causing public disagreement

¹³⁴ hope or ambition to achieve something

¹³⁵ running away from danger

¹³⁶ hostility

¹³⁷ looking for

¹³⁸ involvement of others in their own affairs

¹³⁹ a continuing characteristic



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[00:23:50] Tom Paine calls it “an [asylum](#)¹⁴⁰ for mankind”.

[00:23:54]As is famously written in the poem on the Statue of Liberty which would’ve greeted many millions of immigrants arriving by ship in New York, “Give me your tired, your poor, Your [huddled](#)¹⁴¹ [masses](#)¹⁴² [yearning](#)¹⁴³ to breathe free...”

[00:24:11] The combination of all these factors has made the United States of America a source of continued fascination and interest for the rest of the world.

[00:24:21] This has been particularly evident during the final three months of the Trump presidency when so many of those [founding ideals](#) and the strength of the American [constitution](#) have been put under such severe pressure and have generated both [scrutiny](#)¹⁴⁴ and [anxiety](#)¹⁴⁵ around the world.

[00:24:42] For many people, it can seem strange that Americans have such a fascination, and almost [cult-like](#)¹⁴⁶ obsession with the [founding fathers](#) of the country, with the idea that everything in the [constitution](#) is almost holy and must be preserved.

¹⁴⁰ a safe place

¹⁴¹ crowded together

¹⁴² a large number of people crowded together

¹⁴³ intense feeling of wanting something

¹⁴⁴ a very careful examination

¹⁴⁵ a feeling of worry and nervousness

¹⁴⁶ similar to a cult (a system of beliefs that are considered sacred)



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[00:25:01] But with a knowledge of the unlikely story of the American Revolution, it becomes much easier to understand some of the reasons why.

[00:25:12] OK then, that is it for today's episode on The American Revolution.

[00:25:18] I hope it's been an interesting one, that you've learnt something new, and that you feel like you now have a slightly better understanding of the history of a country that has an influence on every single one of us.

[00:25:31] As always, I would love to know what you thought of this episode.

[00:25:34] We actually have quite a few members who live in America, so I would be particularly interested to know what you thought of this episode.

[00:25:43] You can head right in to our community forum, which is at community.leonardoenglish.com and get chatting away to other curious minds.

[00:25:52] And as a final reminder, the next episode is going to be on the French Revolution, part three of this mini series of The Age of Revolution and I hope you'll enjoy it.

[00:26:02] You've been listening to English Learning for Curious Minds, by Leonardo English.

[00:26:08] I'm Alastair Budge, you stay safe, and I'll catch you in the next episode.

[END OF EPISODE]



Key vocabulary

Word	Definition
Trio	a group of three things
Quartet	a group of four things
Tend	are likely
Subsequent	happening after something else
Course	the way in which something develops
Stuck into it	start doing something with enthusiasm
Continent	one of the seven large land masses of earth
Colonised	controlled by sending people to move and live there
Settlers	people moved from a country to live in another one
Territorial	related to the ownership and control of an area
Disputes	disagreements
Sucked in	involved someone without being their choice



The American Revolution

Colonies	countries controlled politically by a more powerful country
Clarify	make clear
The vast majority	almost all
Barbarically	in an extremely unpleasant and cruel way
Cotton	a soft white material used for making clothes
Plantations	a big area where crops (plants) are grown
Gradual	happening slowly over a period of time
Submission	the action of surrendering to a superior force
Colonists	people moved from a country to live in another one
Feature	take an important part
Mercenaries	professional soldiers hired to serve in a foreign army
Military	relating to the armed forces
Context	the conditions in which something exists
Combination	a joining of different parts or factors
Underlying	not obvious



The American Revolution

Sparks	tiny bright pieces of burning material
Lit the blaze	started the fire
Outbreak	a sudden and violent start
Hostilities	acts of war
Deteriorating	becoming worse
Prosperous	successful financially
Metaphor	a way of describing something by referring to something else than has similar characteristics or behaviour
Seeks	tries to find
Inevitable	certain to happen, unavoidable
Broke	without money at all
Principle	a belief that acts as a basis for something
Imposed	forced something unwelcome on someone
Stamp	a small piece of paper that is stuck on something to show that an amount of money has been paid
Stamps	small pieces of paper that are stuck on something to show that an



The American Revolution

amount of money has been paid

Slogan

a short and easily remembered phrase

Boycotting

refusing to buy a product as a way of expressing disapproval

Small-scale

of limited extent

Came to a head

reached a point where action must be taken

Massacre

brutal killing

Volunteer

people who do something helpful willingly, without being forced to do so

Harbour

a place on the coast where ships and boats are kept safe

Overboard

from the ship to the water

Tensions

state of difficulties and hostilities between two groups

Full-blown

fully developed

Militia

a military force raised from civil population

Tendency

direction, approach

Founding fathers

a group of men who started the United States and wrote its constitution



The American Revolution

Status quo	the present state of things
Traitors	a person who betrays, acts against their country
Ideals	standards or principles (beliefs that act as a basis for something)
Constitution	the set of political ideas by which a state is governed
Distinctive	easy to recognise because it is different from other similar things
Profoundly	deeply or very much
Epic	a poem that is long, impressive and grand in character
Pamphlet	a small booklet that gives information about something
Mere	just, simply
Emigrated	moved from one country to another to live there permanently
Anecdote	a short and interesting story about something someone has done
Broad	very wide or big
Sensation	a wide reaction of interest and excitement
Demolishes	destroys, proves that they are completely wrong
Sovereignty	authority, the governing power of a country



The American Revolution

Vivid	clear and detailed
Elected	chosen by the people after a vote
Sensational	causing great public interest
Galvanising	causing someone to take action
Stress	point out something important
Sullen-tempered	bad -tempered, easily annoyed or made angry
Pharaoh	an Egyptian ruler (used here to show the absolute rule of the king)
Noble	honourable and righteous
Gathered pace	started to happen more quickly and had more success
Sound bite	a small interesting and effective phrase
Absurd	very unreasonable
Perpetually	for ever
Fired up	very excited or angry
Endowed	provided, given
Unalienable	incapable of being taken away because it is their right



The American Revolution

Pursuit	the act of trying to achieve something
Sobering	making you think seriously
Bold	risky but not afraid
Clause	a separate section of a writing
Condemned	showed or said that something is wrong
Inhuman	without the human qualities of love and mercy
Backer	supporter
Put down their arms	stop fighting
Standing	permanent and professional
Peak	the point of its highest quantity
Loyalists	a group that strongly supports a ruler
Self-interest	interest in one's own benefit
Enlisted	secured the support of
Amateur	not professional
Amateurs	not professionals



The American Revolution

Force	organised military body
To be reckoned with	worth taking seriously because of being powerful
Vast	extremely big
Had the upper hand	had the advantage
On the cusp of	at the point just before of
Archrival	main opponent
Considerable	large amount of
Troops	armed forces, soldiers
Fleet	the ships of a country's naval military forces
Foolish	lacking good sense, unwise
God-given	coming from God and not people
Regain	take back
Acknowledged	accepted, admitted
Idealism	strong belief that you will achieve what you think is right
Bloodshed	killing and violence



The American Revolution

Gripping	having a strong effect, very interesting
Enthralling	charming and fascinating
Intriguing	very interesting
Exaggeration	to say that something is more important than it is
Virtually	almost
Emphasis	attention to something important
Ground-breaking	bringing a big change
Founding	that established, brought something new
Derives	takes, obtains
Consent	permission or agreement
Governed	the citizens of a governing state
Constitutions	sets of political ideas by which states are governed
Monarch	a ruling head of state, usually a king or queen
Hereditary	that is passed on as a right by a parent to a child
Aristocracy	the highest class in certain societies that is considered superior



The American Revolution

Comparable	similar
Diverse	very different
Echoes	similar ideas or feelings
Controversial	causing public disagreement
Aspiration	hope or ambition to achieve something
Fleeing	running away from danger
Persecution	hostility
Seeking	looking for
Interference	involvement of others in their own affairs
Thread	a continuing characteristic
Asylum	a safe place
Huddled	crowded together
Masses	a large number of people crowded together
Yearning	intense feeling of wanting something
Scrutiny	a very careful examination



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The American Revolution

Anxiety a feeling of worry and nervousness

Cult-like similar to a cult (a system of beliefs that are considered sacred)

We'd love to get your feedback on this podcast.

What did you like? What could we do better?

What did you struggle to understand?

Let us know in the forum community.leonardoenglish.com

