

Patriots vs. Loyalists

Which side of the Revolution would you fight for?

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Objectives

Students will learn about the difference between Patriots and Loyalists.

Students will learn reasons why colonists would choose either side.

Students will choose sides by writing their own list of reasons to support either the Patriots or the Loyalists.



VOCABULARY

- **PATRIOT** - those who rebelled against British rule and fought for independence from the British empire to create the United States. A patriot also means a person who supports their country.
- **LOYALIST**- a person who remains loyal to a ruler or government, especially in the case of a political revolt. In the Revolutionary War, those who supported British rule.

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VOCABULARY

- **PARLIAMENT** - a legislative part of government, like Congress in the United States. Parliament represents the people, makes laws, and oversees the functions of government. The British Parliament works with the King or Queen to govern their nation.
- **INDIRECT TAX** - a tax collected by the colonial governments from the people of the colonies and given to Parliament.
- **DIRECT TAX** - a tax collected by Parliament from the people of the colonies, without consulting the colonial governments.

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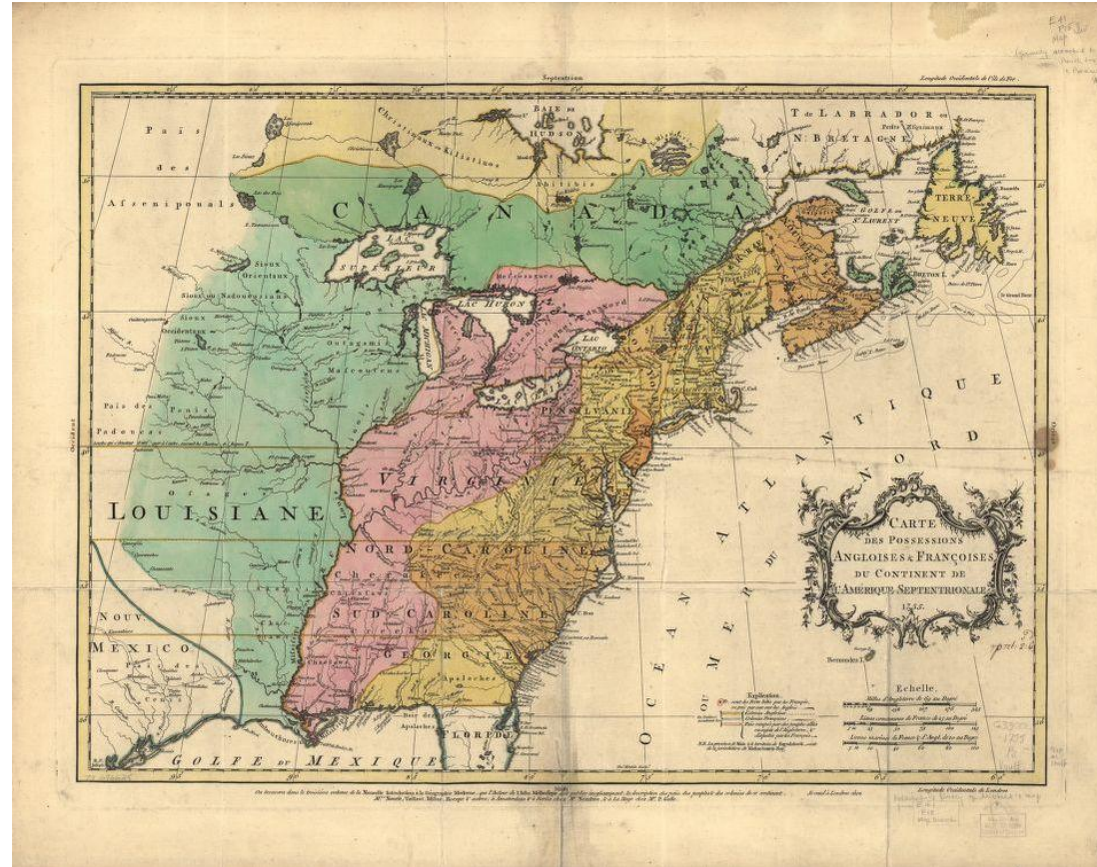
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The Thirteen Colonies

The British government was deeply in debt after sending soldiers to protect their American colonies during the French and Indian War.

In the 1760s, Parliament began to pass a series of taxes as a way to pay off this debt and to pay for the British soldiers that remained in the North American colonies.

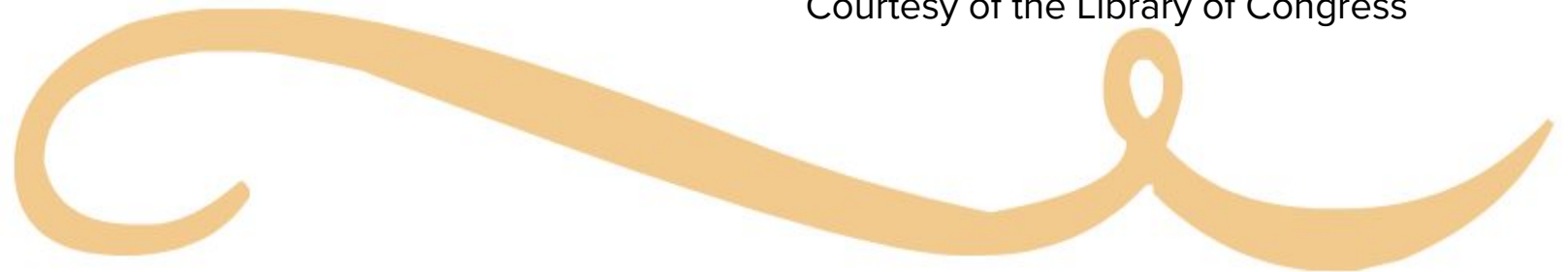


This map from 1755 shows the North American colonies of Great Britain in yellow. Courtesy of the Library of Congress

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“No Taxation Without Representation”



Under the Stamp Act, paper products being taxed had to have stamps like the ones pictured here.
Courtesy of the Smithsonian's National Postal Museum.

The colonists did not have any representation in Parliament, which meant that they did not have any say in what kinds of laws and taxes were passed. Many colonists saw these taxes as a violation of their rights as British citizens, since Parliament passed these direct taxes without consulting the colonial government. The phrase “**no taxation without representation**” became a slogan of resistance.

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What did Parliament tax?

The Sugar Act (1764) taxed sugar, coffee, and molasses, which was used to produce rum. This was the first major tax on the colonists.

The Stamp Act (1765) taxed printed materials, like newspapers, playing cards, and legal documents.

The Townshend Act (1767) taxed lead, paint, glass, and paper.

The Tea Act (1773) was created to help the British East India Company. This meant that colonists had to buy the East India Tea, no matter how expensive it was.



How do you think these taxes affected colonists?

Did the Patriots not want to pay taxes?

Because the Patriots chose to rebel largely based on Parliament's taxes, it is easy to forget that the colonies paid taxes long before the French and Indian War, and that Americans continued to pay taxes long after the Revolution was over.

Benjamin Franklin famously said, "In this world, nothing can be said to be certain, except death and taxes." He meant that no country can exist without collecting taxes.



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What else did Parliament do?

In addition to taxes, Parliament also began passing laws that angered some colonists. Examples of these laws are the **Quartering Act (1764)**, which required colonists to provide shelter and supplies for British troops in North America, and the **Declaratory Act (1766)**, which stated that Parliament could officially make any laws they wanted for the colonies, despite the colonists not having representation in the government.

Colonists were upset not only about the taxes and laws themselves, but about the lack of participation they had in their government.



What did it mean to be a Loyalist?



The Union Flag was created in 1701, to represent to Union of England and Scotland. Ireland was not yet part of Great Britain, which is why the flag does not have diagonal red lines, as it does today.

Because the Patriots won the American Revolution, many people today do not have a very good opinion of the Loyalists.

It is important to remember that at the beginning of the Revolutionary War, the United States did not exist. The colonists were British citizens. Being a Loyalist meant that you refused to betray Great Britain, the empire in which you lived.

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Why might people choose to be Loyalists?

Family - Many people living in the colonies still had family living in Great Britain. Some of these people feared that becoming a rebel would put those family members in danger.

Patriotism - Being a Loyalist meant that you supported your country, Great Britain, and your ruler, King George III. People who still loved the country they were raised in wanted to protect it from rebels.

Protection - The British Empire was the strongest military power in the world in the 18th century. Being part of that Empire kept the colonies safe and gave them access to trade.



What did it mean to be a Patriot?



The Sons of Liberty flag, also known as the Rebellious Stripes, represented the 9 colonies that participated in the Stamp Act Congress, a meeting held to discuss colonial problems with the British Empire.

Although most Americans today think of the Patriots as the heroes of the Revolution, it is important to remember that in their own time, Patriots were rebels. They risked everything they had to fight for what they believed.

If the Patriots lost, they risked being arrested and convicted of treason against Great Britain, a crime that was punishable by death.

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Why might people choose to be Patriots?

Desire for Equality - Although the colonists were British subjects, the British officers who were sent to the colonies often treated them as if they were less important or uncivilized, and incapable of governing themselves.

Frustration - After decades of building the society of the American colonies, including methods of self-government, many colonists became frustrated that Great Britain ignored these institutions when issuing laws and taxes.

Fear - Patriot leaders were very passionate about their beliefs, and they often used fear—such as vandalizing the homes and businesses or tar and feathering known Loyalists—to intimidate people to join their side.



Were Patriot and Loyalist the only options?

There were many colonists who chose to be Neutralists, meaning they did not support either side of the American Revolution.

There were many reasons to be a Neutralist: if you did not think either side was right, if you did not want to become a rebel, or if you were trying to avoid being targeted in case the other side invaded your city.

In places like New York that were occupied by the British army, it was safer to be a Neutralist than a Patriot.



Landing of British troops in New York, 1776
Courtesy of the National Army Museum

Which side was right?

Because one side lost and the other won, many people today tend to think that the Patriots were the right side and the Loyalists were the wrong side. However, both sides of the war had many reasons for fighting. Both Patriots and Loyalists believed they were doing the best thing for their country and their families.

All the colonists—whether they were Patriots, Loyalists, or Neutralists—were raised in the same culture, and continued to be one another's neighbors after the war ended.



What did you think about the Loyalists before this lesson? What about the Patriots? Have you changed your mind?

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Activity

Now that you have learned more about the Patriots and Loyalists, it is your turn to pick a side!

Use the next slide to make your own *Declaration of Independence* or *Declaration of Loyalty* by listing at least three reasons why you would support the cause of the Patriots or remain loyal to the British Empire.

Try to think like a person from the 18th century who is living through the events of the American Revolution— which side do you think you would support if you didn't know who was going to win?

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Declaration of _____

1)

2)

3)

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