Period 3: 1754-1800

AP United States History

The Seven Years' War and Its Consequences

Period 3 runs from **1754** to **1800**. It begins with the fighting in North America that became part of the Seven Years' War. The Revolution is one development to explain; questions may ask about different causes, effects, comparisons or changes.

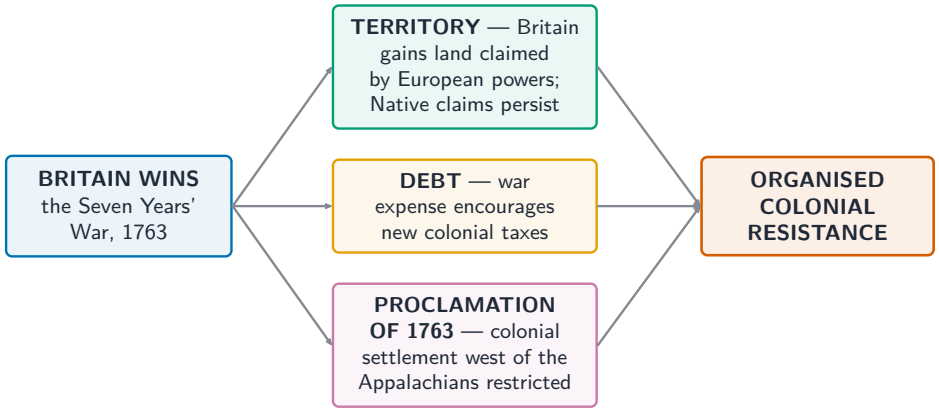
Colonial rivalry between Britain and France intensified as British colonists expanded into the interior. Their expansion threatened French–Indian trade networks and Native autonomy. The **Seven Years' War** , known in North America as the **French and Indian War** , ended with British victory.

Try it – cause and consequence. Before 1763, British colonial expansion threatened trade networks and Native control of land. After 1763, Britain held more territory but faced great war expense. Explain one cause of the war and one problem victory created. Name whose interests were threatened.

Worked reasoning. Inland expansion increased rivalry with France and threatened Native lands and trading relationships. Victory brought Britain a **major expansion of territory** and an **enormous war debt** . Officials sought revenue from the colonies and tighter imperial control. These policies challenged colonial economic interests and traditions of self-government.

Try it – one policy, different interests. The **Proclamation of 1763** 1763 restricted colonial settlement west of the Appalachian Mountains. British officials wanted to limit costly frontier conflict and control settlement. Colonists seeking land wanted access to western territory after helping win the war. Native groups sought to defend their lands while continuing European trade. Why could an attempt to reduce conflict produce colonial opposition? Why did imperial claims not mean Native peoples had surrendered their lands?

Worked reasoning. Settlement restrictions frustrated colonists seeking western land. Their opposition concerned land access as well as taxation. Native groups continued trade and resisted colonial encroachment: a European territorial claim did not remove Native communities or their resistance. Victory created problems of revenue and control, but independence was not an inevitable result.



War expense and territorial expansion encouraged new policies. Colonial opposition concerned revenue, land access and imperial control; independence was not inevitable

Taxation Without Representation

New British efforts to **collect taxes** without the consent of colonial assemblies, and to assert imperial authority, provoked organised resistance.

Colonial leaders based their arguments on **the rights of British subjects**, on the **ideals of the Enlightenment** , and on their own long experience of self-government - the assemblies built up during Period 2.

Resistance was not only argument. Facing shortages and, in some regions, British **military occupation** , **men and women** both took part: boycotts of British goods, home manufacture, crowd action, and committees of correspondence. Leaders such as **Benjamin Franklin** energised the movement, and the slogan of the period is **"no taxation without representation"** .

The Ideas Behind the Revolution

Enlightenment ideas led American political thinkers to emphasise **individual talent over hereditary privilege**, and to assert the **natural rights** of the people and the **sovereignty of the people** .

Try it – distinguish two claims. These are teacher-written claims, not historical quotations. A: People possess rights before government exists; violations can justify resistance. B: Public authority should rest on the people's consent, and citizens should place the public good above private gain. Match each to natural rights or republicanism and explain the difference in focus.

Worked distinction. A describes natural rights: government should protect rights that it did not create. B describes **republicanism** : consent-based government and civic virtue, rather than hereditary rule and only private gain. Supporters

could link the ideas by arguing that republican government would protect natural rights.

Try it – revise a claim. A student says natural rights mattered only during the break with Britain, and republicanism only afterwards. The CED explains that support for republican government based on natural rights appeared in *Common Sense* and the Declaration of Independence. Use that evidence to revise the student's claim.

Worked revision. Both ideas helped colonists criticise British rule and imagine a different government during the independence movement. Natural rights supplied standards for judging authority, while republicanism offered government based on the people's consent. The terms have different meanings but do not belong to separate, fixed stages. Naming them without explaining their role is not an argument.

	REPUBLICANISM	NATURAL RIGHTS
MAIN FOCUS	public government based on consent	rights people possess before government
GOVERNMENT AND CITIZENS	civic virtue — acting for the public good	government should protect rights, not violate them
POLITICAL USE	supports self-government and challenges hereditary rule	provides standards to judge authority and justify resistance

Different focuses, related arguments: republican government could be defended as a way to protect natural rights

The War and Its Wider Effects

Try it – explain victory. Britain had military and financial advantages, and the Patriot cause faced Loyalist opposition. Patriots had colonial militias, the Continental Army, Washington's leadership, commitment and resilience, and **foreign assistance** from European allies, including France. Why is "Britain was too weak to win" a poor explanation? Use an obstacle and two Patriot resources to revise it.

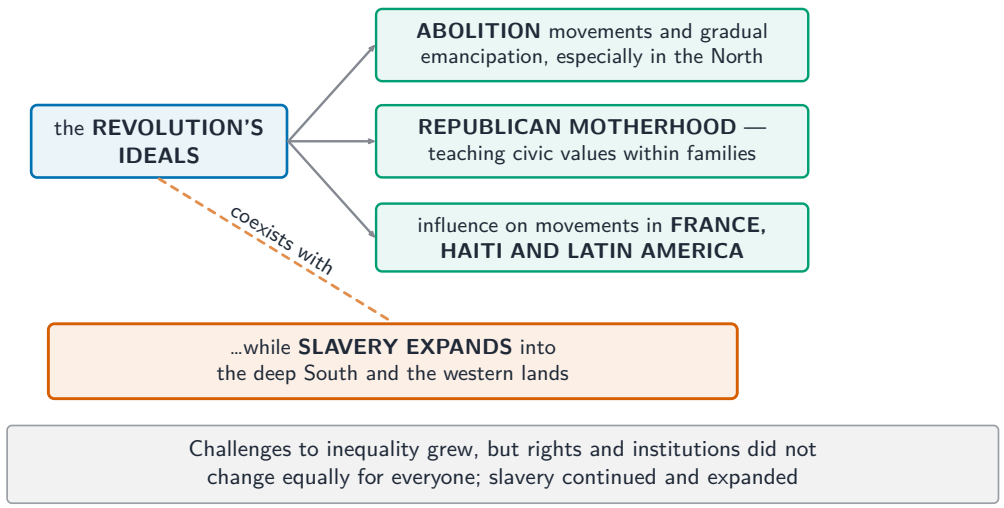
Worked explanation. British advantages did not guarantee victory. Militias and the Continental Army fought the war, while Washington's leadership helped sustain the Patriot effort. Commitment and European assistance helped the movement continue despite opposition and hardship. Neither British weakness nor one isolated Patriot advantage explains the whole outcome.

Try it – assess social change. The following evidence is paraphrased from the CED, not quoted from the original documents. In a 1777 freedom petition, Prince Hall and other free Black men used natural-rights and Christian ideas to argue for enslaved people's freedom. Pennsylvania passed an act for gradual abolition in 1780. The ideal of **republican motherhood** valued women's role teaching republican values within families. Explain one change. Why does the evidence not prove immediate freedom and equal political rights for everyone?

Worked judgment. Rights language supported **movements to abolish slavery** ; Pennsylvania's act shows a change in law, not immediate freedom throughout the country. Slavery continued and expanded into the deep South and adjacent western lands while **antislavery** sentiment grew. Republican motherhood changed ideas about the **status of women** by valuing their political education within families, but did not itself establish equal political rights. A petition shows a demand, an act shows a legal change, and an ideal shows a valued role. These are different kinds of evidence with different limits.

Transfer – global influence. The American Revolution and the Declaration's ideals influenced movements in France, Haiti and Latin America. Does that mean these movements had identical aims or only one cause? Write a qualified claim that distinguishes "inspired" from "fully explains".

Worked transfer. The Revolution and its rights language offered inspiration to movements in France, Haiti and Latin America. That evidence establishes influence, not identical aims or a single cause for each movement. Explaining a particular revolution requires evidence about its own circumstances and participants. Similarly, ideals encouraged challenges to inequality at home without automatically abolishing slavery or creating equal rights.



Exam transfer – 2025 AP US History, Set 1, Question 3(C), paraphrased. Briefly explain how one group responded to debates about British colonists' rights during 1765–1783. Try it: identify a group, its response and the reasoning linking that response to the rights debate. Naming "natural rights" or "the Revolution" alone does not explain a response.

Teacher-written model. Some Patriot colonists argued that British government had violated their natural rights. They therefore supported declaring independence in 1776 as a justified response to a government that failed to protect those rights.

Why this fits. It identifies a group and explains why a rights argument supported a particular response within the dates. The official scheme accepts colonists using natural-rights arguments to justify independence; it also accepts Loyalist defence of the Crown and other relevant responses. This is our model, not an official sample or the response of every colonist.

From Confederation to Constitution

	Articles of Confederation	The Constitution	Why it mattered
Taxation	no power to tax; could only request funds	Congress may lay and collect taxes	*war debts went unpaid*
Commerce	no power to regulate trade between states	Congress regulates interstate and foreign trade	*states taxed each other*
Executive	no president	a single executive with defined powers	*no one could enforce law*
Judiciary	no national courts	a federal judiciary	*no way to settle disputes*
Amendment	unanimous consent of all states	three-quarters of states	*reform was impossible*

The Constitution was written to fix specific, named weaknesses - each row is one of them

After declaring independence, leaders wrote new **constitutions and declarations of rights** that reflected republican ideals, generally limiting executive power.

The **Articles of Confederation** created a deliberately weak central government: no power to tax, no power to regulate commerce, no executive, and no national judiciary. It succeeded in organising western settlement through the **Northwest Ordinance**, but could not manage debt, trade disputes, or unrest.

The **Constitutional Convention** of 1787 produced a stronger national government built on **compromise**, including the **Great Compromise** over representation and compromises over slavery and commerce.

Ratification was contested. **Federalists** argued the new government was strong enough to govern yet checked enough to be safe; **Anti-Federalists** feared centralised power and demanded protection for individual liberties, which produced the **Bill of Rights**.

The New Republic

Under **George Washington** and **John Adams**, political leaders disagreed sharply over the **relationship between the national and state governments**, economic policy, and foreign policy. Those disagreements hardened into the **first party system**.

War between France and Britain after the **French Revolution** forced hard choices, and the government pursued diplomatic initiatives to deal with the continued British and Spanish presence in North America. **Washington's Farewell Address** urged national unity and warned against political factions and permanent foreign alliances.

Meanwhile a distinctive **national culture** developed - in art, literature, and architecture - alongside continued regional variation.

Movement and Conflict in the Early Republic

American Indian groups repeatedly **evaluated and adjusted their alliances** with European powers and the new United States as circumstances changed.

Growing numbers of migrants moved west, intensifying competition over **resources, boundaries, and trade**. The relationship between the federal government and American Indian tribes remained **ambiguous**, contributing to recurring conflict. In the Southwest, the Spanish expanded their **mission system**, supported by the bonded labour of local American Indians.

Continuity and Change in Period 3

The period's reasoning skill is **continuity and change**. The strongest answers hold both: political institutions changed radically, while slavery, westward expansion, and conflict with American Indians continued and intensified.

Exam transfer – 2025 AP US History, Set 1, Question 3(B). The prompt asks students to briefly describe one effect of the Seven Years' War from 1754 to 1765. Try it before reading the model: describe an effect within those dates, with relevant details. Would the Declaration of Independence in 1776 fit?

Teacher-written model. Britain's costly victory encouraged Parliament to raise revenue from its North American colonies. The Stamp Act of 1765 imposed a tax on printed materials in the colonies.

Why this fits. The response describes a postwar tax policy within 1754–1765. The official scheme accepts further British taxation to pay for the war, the end of French colonies, or heightened tensions among colonists, British officials and Native groups. "Describe" requires relevant characteristics beyond an isolated term; it does not require a fixed two-part formula. The Declaration of Independence falls outside the dates of this prompt. This model is our teaching response, not an official sample answer or a guarantee of credit.

Exam tips

- Explain how war expense and territorial expansion led to new revenue measures, settlement restrictions and resistance; avoid treating independence as inevitable.
- Explain how **republicanism** and **natural rights** support an argument, using evidence rather than only naming them.
- For the Constitution, argue from the **specific weakness** it fixed - no power to tax, no power to regulate commerce, no executive.
- Keep **Federalist** and **Anti-Federalist** positions straight, and remember the **Bill of Rights** was the price of ratification.
- The Revolution's effects on **slavery and women** are examinable, and both are partial: ideals spread further than rights did.
- On continuity-and-change prompts, give one of each. An answer that only lists changes has answered half the question.

Vocabulary card meanings

Seven Years' War: The global war, ending in 1763, that left Britain dominant in North America. French and Indian War: The North American fighting of 1754-1763 in the wider war that ended most French mainland rule there. major expansion of territory: Britain's large gain of land in North America after 1763. enormous war debt: The heavy borrowing Britain faced after defeating France. Proclamation of 1763: A British line meant to limit colonial settlement west of the Appalachians. collect taxes: Raising revenue from the colonies to help pay imperial costs. ideals of the Enlightenment: Ideas of natural rights, consent, and limits on government. military occupation: Stationing troops among civilians, resented in the colonies. Benjamin Franklin: A colonial printer, scientist, and diplomat of the revolutionary era. "no taxation without representation": The protest that Parliament had no right to tax colonists who elected no members. sovereignty of the people: The claim that ultimate political authority rests with the citizens. Republicanism: A politics of self-government by citizens, without a king. foreign assistance: Help from abroad, especially France, during the War of Independence. movements to abolish slavery: Campaigns to end the legal ownership of people. status of women: The limited legal and political position of women after independence. republican motherhood: The idea that women should raise sons as virtuous citizens. antislavery: Opposition to the institution of slavery. Articles of Confederation: The first US constitution, which created a weak central government. Northwest Ordinance: The 1787 law for the Northwest Territory that also banned slavery in that territory alone. Constitutional Convention: The 1787 meeting that drafted a new federal constitution. compromise: A bargain in which each side yields part of its demand. Great Compromise: The deal that gave states equal Senate seats and House seats by population. Ratification: Formal approval that brought the Constitution into effect. Federalists: Supporters of the Constitution and of a stronger national government. Anti-Federalists: Opponents who feared a strong central government without a bill of rights. Bill of Rights: The first ten amendments, listing limits on federal power. George Washington: The first president and the commanding general of the revolutionary army. John Adams: The second president, a Federalist from Massachusetts. first party system: The early split between Federalists and Democratic-Republicans. French Revolution: The upheaval in France that divided American opinion in the 1790s. Washington's Farewell Address: The 1796 warning against permanent alliances and party spirit. national culture: Shared stories, symbols, and habits meant to bind the new nation. resources, boundaries, and trade: The concrete issues in early dealings with Indigenous nations and neighbours. ambiguous: Open to more than one reading, as some early policies were. mission system: Spanish religious settlements used to convert and control Indigenous peoples. continuity and change: What stayed the same over time and what did not.