

Period 3: 1754-1800

AP United States History

The Seven Years' War and Its Consequences

Period 3 runs from **1754** to **1800** - from the outbreak of the Seven Years' War to the end of John Adams's presidency. It contains the Revolution, but the exam treats the Revolution as an *effect*, so start with its cause.

Colonial rivalry between Britain and France intensified in the mid-eighteenth century as a growing colonial population pressed westward. The **Seven Years' War** 七年战争, known in North America as the **French and Indian War** 法印战争, settled that rivalry.

Britain won, and three consequences follow directly:

- A **major expansion of territory** 领土大扩张 - France was removed from mainland North America.
- An **enormous war debt** 巨额战争债务, which Britain decided the colonies should help repay.
- **Restrictions on westward movement**, notably the **Proclamation of 1763** 1763年公告线, intended to prevent costly conflict with American Indians but resented by colonists who wanted the land they had just helped win.

That is the chain the exam wants: victory produced debt and new territory, and managing both required tighter control of the colonies.

Taxation Without Representation

New British efforts to **collect taxes** 征税 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** 英国臣民的权利, on the **ideals of the Enlightenment** 启蒙思想, 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** 军事占领, **men and women** both took part: boycotts of British goods, home manufacture, crowd action, and committees of correspondence. Leaders such as **Benjamin Franklin** 富兰克林 energised the movement, and the slogan of the period is "**no taxation without representation**" 无代表不纳税.

The Ideas Behind the Revolution

Enlightenment ideas led American political thinkers to emphasise **individual talent over hereditary privilege** 才能重于世袭特权, and to assert the **natural rights** 天赋权利 of the people and the **sovereignty of the people** 人民主权.

Two ideas do most of the work in essays:

- **Republicanism** 共和主义 - government rests on the consent of the governed, and citizens must show virtue by placing the public good above private interest.
- **Natural rights** - rights that exist before government, which government is created to protect, and whose violation justifies resistance.

The War and Its Wider Effects

The war for independence succeeded through a combination of colonial resolve, difficult terrain, and crucially **foreign assistance** 外国援助, above all from France.

The Revolution's ideals then spread further than its leaders intended:

- They inspired **movements to abolish slavery** 废奴运动, especially in the North, and gradual emancipation laws.
- They raised questions about the **status of women** 妇女地位, expressed in the idea of **republican motherhood** 共和母亲身份 - that women shaped the republic by raising virtuous citizens.
- They influenced later revolutions elsewhere in the Atlantic world.

At the same time the **expansion of slavery** into the deep South and adjacent western lands continued, alongside rising **antislavery** 反奴隶制 sentiment - a contradiction the course returns to repeatedly.

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** 宪法与权利宣言 that reflected republican ideals, generally limiting executive power.

The **Articles of Confederation** 邦联条例 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** 西北法令, but could not manage debt, trade disputes, or unrest.

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

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

The New Republic

Under **George Washington** 华盛顿 and **John Adams** 亚当斯, political leaders disagreed sharply over the **relationship between the national and state governments** 联邦与各州的关系, economic policy, and foreign policy. Those disagreements hardened into the **first party system** 第一政党体系.

War between France and Britain after the **French Revolution** 法国大革命 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** 华盛顿告别演说 urged national unity and warned against political factions and permanent foreign alliances.

Meanwhile a distinctive **national culture** 民族文化 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** 重新评估并调整结盟 with European powers and the new United States as circumstances changed.

Growing numbers of migrants moved west, intensifying competition over **resources, boundaries, and trade** 资源、边界与贸易. The relationship between the federal government and American Indian tribes remained **ambiguous** 含混不清, contributing to recurring conflict. In the Southwest, the Spanish expanded their **mission system** 传教团体体系, supported by the bonded labour of local American Indians.

Continuity and Change in Period 3

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

Worked example (a real AP exam question). The 2025 exam asked, as part B of a short-answer question, *"Briefly describe one effect of the Seven Years' War from 1754 to 1765."* A full-mark answer names one effect and shows it is an effect: *"Britain emerged from the war with a large debt, which led Parliament to impose new taxes such as the*

Stamp Act on the colonies to help pay for imperial defence.” Notice the shape: **describe one effect** needs the causal link stated, not just a fact from the period. ”Britain won the war” is a result, not an effect on what followed; ”the colonies were angry” is too vague to credit.

Exam tips

- Learn the causal chain: **war** → **debt and new territory** → **taxes and the Proclamation of 1763** → **colonial resistance** → **independence**.
- **Republicanism** and **natural rights** are the two ideas to name; do not just write ”Enlightenment ideas”.
- 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.