

POWER POINT ACCOMPANIMENT FOR
CAROLINA K-12'S LESSON:

EMERGENCE OF AN AMERICAN IDENTITY



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WARM-UP

- Complete the following in 5 or more sentences of description:

An American is...



FROM ENGLISH COLONIST TO “AMERICAN”



- The colonists who came to live in what was to become the United States of America did not, until around the 1770s, think of themselves as "Americans."
- Most colonists in the New World identified themselves as English citizens. They may have come to live in a place far away from England, but they still identified with that nation.
- Colonists began to develop a greater national identity as various events led them to grow frustrated with England's policies, declare independence, rebel against English rule, and finally form their own government.



THE FRENCH & INDIAN WAR - 1763

- The emergence of an American identity began with the end of the **French and Indian War** in 1763.
 - The war left England in control of virtually all the land east of the Mississippi River.
 - Even though victorious, the war doubled the national debt of England and quadrupled the prospective cost of administering the greatly enlarged empire in America.
 - The British expected the colonies to help pay the costs of the war as well as the increasing expenses of running the colonies.
 - To do this, the British government began imposing various taxes and laws on the colonies, which colonists felt violated the rights from their English heritage.
 - As colonists grew more angry with the English government, they naturally stopped identifying themselves with the enemy country.



ENGLAND FURTHER ANGERS COLONISTS



- The **Stamp Act** was particularly angering to colonists.
 - first direct tax ever laid on the colonies by Parliament
 - felt this violated their rights; “taxation without representation”
 - Stamp Act was repealed in 1766 when it became clear that it could not be enforced effectively due to hostile resistance from the colonies but was followed by other laws from Parliament that similarly angered colonists

- Relations worsened in 1773 with the **Boston Tea Party**.
 - England struck back with a number of laws - the **Intolerable Acts**
 - Acts included closing the Boston port until the cost of the lost tea was repaid, revising the charter that set up the Massachusetts colony to give England more control, and transferring to England the trials of royal officers charged with murder.
 - Another law gave the French-Canadian—and Catholic—royal province of Quebec all of the land west of the Appalachians lying north of the Ohio River and east of the Mississippi. This act alienated much of Protestant America.
 - The **Quebec Act of 1774** was seen as another punitive measure by most colonists and helped muster broad support for a "general congress of all the colonies" proposed by the Virginia and Massachusetts assemblies.



THE FIRST CONTINENTAL CONGRESS

- The call for a "general congress" was well received (only Georgia did not send delegates)
- Met in Philadelphia on September 5, 1774.
- Adopted a **Declaration of Rights & Grievances** against all British acts to which "**Americans** cannot submit" and approved commercial boycotts of many goods traded with England.
- The delegates adjourned in late October, agreeing to meet the following May if necessary.



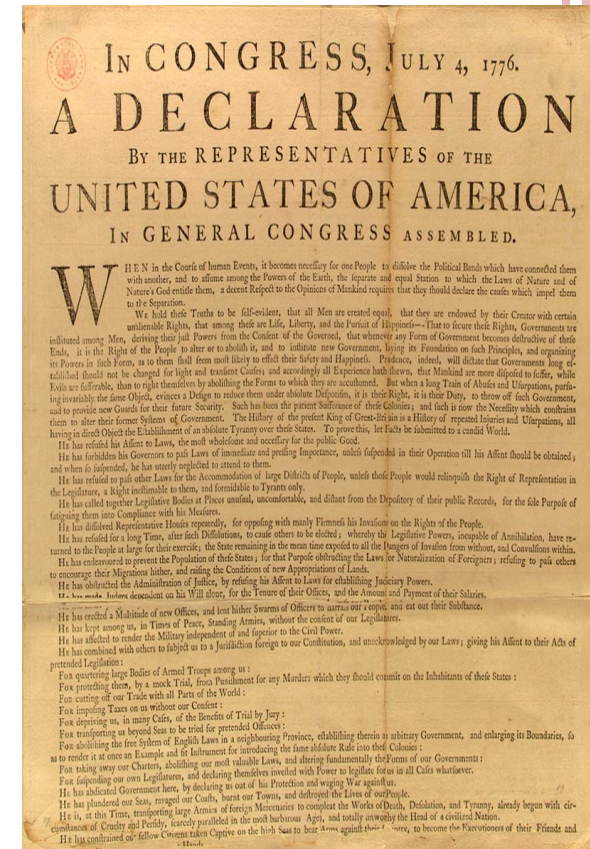
INDEPENDENCE FROM ENGLAND, IDENTITY AS AMERICANS

- In England King George III declared the colonies were "now in a state of rebellion."
- Events escalated the following spring toward declaring independence, which led to war.
- Colonists convened the **Second Continental Congress** in Philadelphia on May 10, 1775.
 - Most delegates still hoped to avoid war with England.
 - However, due to the outbreak of violence at **Lexington and Concord**, delegates agreed to raise an army and ask the colonies for funds to pay for it.
 - George Washington, a delegate from Virginia, was made the Continental Army's commander in chief.
 - The delegates approved a petition to the king asking for a "happy and permanent reconciliation" between the colonies and England.
 - Another declaration disavowed any desire for independence but resolved "to die free men rather than live slaves."
 - The king was not pleased and in August he proclaimed a state of rebellion in the colonies.



DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

- By the following summer, the Continental Congress was under increasing pressure from the most vocal radicals in the colonies to move to independence.
- In June 1776 a group of delegates was named to draft a declaration, but the actual writing fell largely to Thomas Jefferson.
- The Declaration of Independence, celebrated by Americans every year on July 4, was in large part a recitation of every grievance against English colonial policy that had emerged since 1763.
- The Declaration of Independence committed the colonies to wage a war that was already under way.
- The war would drag on for more than five years before England gave up the struggle.



STATE CONSTITUTIONS

- A year after the signing of the Declaration of Independence, all but three of the colonies had written new constitutions and moved to establish new governments.
- Although they varied in detail, all had similarities.
 - All were written—Great Britain had no written constitution.
 - All included or were accompanied by some kind of "Bill of Rights" to secure those English liberties that George III had violated, such as freedom of speech, press, and petition, and the rights of habeas corpus and trial by jury.
 - All paid tribute to the idea of separation of powers between the legislative, executive, and judicial branches, although in every state the legislatures were far stronger than the executive. This reflected the colonists' fear of executive power that grew from their conflicts with the English Crown and the royal governors.
 - All the constitutions recognized the people as sovereign, but few entrusted them with much power. Most states adhered to pre-Revolutionary limits on suffrage. Ownership of some amount of property was generally required as a qualification to vote, and more usually was required to hold office.
- These state constitutions became forerunners of the national Constitution that was to be created years later.



ARTICLES OF CONFEDERATION & THE US CONSTITUTION

- The peace treaty was signed on September 3, 1783.
- Free of England, the colonies needed plan of confederation to join them.
- On November 15, 1777 the Continental Congress adopted the Articles of Confederation & Perpetual Union.
- The Articles reflected the dominant motive of Americans who were rebelling against British rule: to preserve their freedoms from the encroachments of centralized power.
- The Articles were replaced by the US Constitution on June 21, 1788.



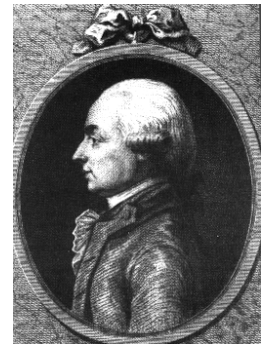
EMERGENCE OF AMERICAN IDENTITY



- For many colonists, the process of American identification took place naturally throughout the late 1700s as ideas about self-government grew into reality.
- As anger with the “Mother Country” grew, war erupted, independence was won from England, and the united colonies formed their own government. Thus, identification with Britain naturally lessened.
- Beyond government and war, everyday life in the American colonies was occurring (people were building homes, working, forming communities...) and thus the emergence of an American society was taking place.



J. HECTOR ST. JOHN DE CRÈVECOEUR – WHAT IS AN AMERICAN?



- In 1782, J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur published a volume of narrative essays - *Letters from an American Farmer*.
- He was the first writer to describe the life on the American frontier to Europeans across the sea.
- He explored the concept of the “**American Dream**”, portraying American society as characterized by the principles of equal opportunity and self-determination.
- The writing celebrated American ingenuity and its uncomplicated lifestyle.
- It also described the religious diversity in America as a **melting pot** being created from a variety of ethnic and cultural backgrounds.
- His work provided useful information and understanding of the "New World", helping create an American identity in the minds of Europeans with his descriptions of the new country of America



THE AMERICAN DREAM

- What is the American Dream? What comes to mind when you hear this phrase?



*"Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning
to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your
teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless,
tempest-tost to me,
I lift my lamp beside the
golden door!"*



THE AMERICAN DREAM



- The American Dream in the United States refers to the democratic ideals and a promise of prosperity the country is known for.
- The phrase became popular after James Truslow Adams about "The American Dream" in his 1931 book.
- He described the American Dream being met when citizens of every rank feel that they can achieve a "better, richer, and happier life."
- The idea of the American Dream is rooted in the second sentence of the Declaration of Independence which states that "all men are created equal" and that they have "certain inalienable Rights" including "Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."
- The American Dream has been credited with helping to build a cohesive American experience but has also been blamed for overinflated expectations.
- The presence of the American Dream has not historically helped the majority of minority race and lower class American citizens to gain a greater degree of social equality and influence. Instead, the American wealth structure has often been observed to sustain class differences in which well-positioned groups continue to be advantaged.
- The term *American Dream* is often used as a synonym for home ownership , since homes have historically been seen as status symbols separating the middle classes and the poor.





SOURCES

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