

CHAPTER
17
SECTION 3

Section Summary
BIRTH OF THE AMERICAN REPUBLIC

In the mid-1700s, Britain was a global power. The new king, George III, wanted to assert his leadership and expand his rule. Britain’s huge territories included colonies in North America. However, society and politics in these colonies developed in their own way. Some colonists began to feel that maybe they would do better if they did not belong to Britain.

Tensions between the colonists and Britain grew. The British Parliament passed laws, such as the **Stamp Act**, that increased colonists’ taxes. The colonists felt they should not be taxed because they had no one to speak for them in the British Parliament. A series of violent clashes with British soldiers strengthened the colonists’ anger. Leaders from each colony, including **George Washington**, met in a Continental Congress to decide what to do. In April 1775, however, tensions exploded into war. The American Revolution began.

On July 4, 1776, American leaders adopted the Declaration of Independence. Written mostly by **Thomas Jefferson**, it includes John Locke’s ideas about the rights to “life, liberty, and property.” It outlines the reasons for wanting to be free of British rule and claims **popular sovereignty**. This principle states that all government power comes from the people.

At first, it did not look like the Americans could win. Britain had trained soldiers and a huge fleet. However, later France and other European nations joined the American side, and helped bring about the British surrender at **Yorktown, Virginia**. In 1783, the **Treaty of Paris** ended the war.

Leaders of the new American nation, such as **James Madison** and **Benjamin Franklin**, wrote the Constitution creating a **federal republic**. The new government was based on the separation of powers, an idea borrowed from Montesquieu, an Enlightenment thinker. The Constitution included the Bill of Rights, which listed basic rights that the government must protect.

Review Questions

1. Why did colonists feel they should not be taxed?

2. What ideas of John Locke are in the Declaration of Independence?

READING CHECK

What kind of government did the Constitution create?

VOCABULARY STRATEGY

Find the word *assert* in the underlined sentence. What context clues can you find in the surrounding words, phrases, or sentences that hint at its meaning? Think about what a king would do if he wanted to *assert* his leadership. Circle the word below that has the same meaning as *assert*.

1. declare
2. deny

READING SKILL

Recognize Sequence Place the following events in order:

- Declaration of Independence written
- Continental Congress meets
- Treaty of Paris signed
- Parliament passes Stamp Act.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____