

The American Revolution

Section 2



MAIN IDEAS

1. Thomas Paine's *Common Sense* led many colonists to support independence.
2. Colonists had to choose sides when independence was declared.
3. The Declaration of Independence did not address the rights of all colonists.

Key Terms and People

Common Sense a 47-page pamphlet that argued against British rule over America

Thomas Paine author of *Common Sense*, who wrote that citizens, not monarchs, should make laws

Thomas Jefferson the main author of the Declaration of Independence

Declaration of Independence the document that formally announced the colonies' break from Great Britain

Loyalists colonists, sometimes called Tories, who remained loyal to Britain

Section Summary

PAINE'S COMMON SENSE

Common Sense was published anonymously, or without the name of its author, who was **Thomas Paine**. At this time the idea that citizens should pass laws made news. As word of the pamphlet spread throughout the colonies, it eventually sold about 500,000 copies. The pamphlet made a strong case for political and economic freedom. It supported the right to military self-defense. *Common Sense* changed the way many colonists viewed their king.

Why do you think *Common Sense* was so popular?

INDEPENDENCE IS DECLARED

The first point argued by **Thomas Jefferson** in the **Declaration of Independence** was that all men possess unalienable rights, or rights that cannot be denied. These rights include "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." Jefferson also maintained that King George III had trampled on the colonists' rights by supporting unfair laws and wrongly

Section 2, continued

meddling in colonial governments. In addition Jefferson argued that the colonies had the right to independence from Britain. He believed in the Enlightenment idea of the social contract. This idea says that citizens should agree to be governed only when rulers and governments support their rights. Jefferson said that King George III had violated the social contract, so the colonies should not obey his laws.

On July 4, 1776, the Continental Congress voted in favor of the Declaration of Independence. In approving the Declaration, the Congress finally broke away from Great Britain. Today we celebrate the Fourth of July as the birthday of our nation.

Not everyone rejoiced over the approval of the Declaration. Patriots and **Loyalists** became divided. Sometimes family members were on opposite sides during the war. More than 50,000 Loyalists left the colonies during the Revolution.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Looking back, we realize that the Declaration paid no attention to many colonists. Abigail Adams, wife of delegate John Adams, tried to influence him to include women in the Declaration. It did not happen. Enslaved African Americans also had no rights under the Declaration. Slavery was legal in all colonies in July 1776. The Revolutionary War would not end the battle over slavery, even though New England states moved to end it by the 1780s.

CHALLENGE ACTIVITY

Critical Thinking: Develop Imagine that you are a delegate to the Second Continental Congress. Deliver a two-minute speech arguing that the Declaration should also give women and slaves rights.

Why did Jefferson think the colonies should not obey King George III?

What did some families experience during the war?

Name two groups who had no rights under the Declaration.

Section 2, *continued*

<i>Common Sense</i>	Thomas Jefferson	Loyalists
Patriots	unalienable	Thomas Paine
tyranny	Declaration of Independence	

DIRECTIONS Answer each question by writing a sentence that contains at least one word from the word bank.

1. What did Thomas Paine write to encourage the colonists to declare independence?

2. What did the Second Continental Congress do to formally declare the colonies free from Great Britain?

3. What group of colonists faced hostility as a result of their views regarding the Declaration of Independence?

4. Who was the main author of the Declaration of Independence, and what three main points did he make in the document?
