



LESSON 1

1775 1776

1777

1779

1781

1783

THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

READ ALOUD

Benjamin Franklin had hoped that Britain and the colonies would make peace. Yet after the Battle of Bunker Hill, Franklin gave up this hope. He wrote to a friend who was a member of Parliament, "You have begun to burn our Towns, and murder our People. Look upon your Hands! They are stained with the Blood of your Relations! You and I were long Friends: You are now my Enemy, and I am, Yours."

THE BIG PICTURE

In 1775 not all Americans were ready to break completely from Britain. Some felt that the colonies were not strong enough to govern themselves. Most colonists spoke English, followed English customs and laws, and had relatives in Britain. Britain was the colonists' major trading partner. British ships protected colonial trade routes.

One fact, however, could not be forgotten. Colonists had died at Lexington, Concord, and Bunker Hill. The fight for liberty had begun.

King George III did not think the colonists would fight very long. He was sure that once they "have felt a small blow, they will submit." In this lesson you will see how the colonists proved the king's prediction wrong.

Focus Activity

READ TO LEARN

What was the purpose of the Declaration of Independence?

VOCABULARY

Second Continental
Congress

Continental Army
traitor

Declaration of
Independence

PEOPLE

Thomas Paine

William Howe

Henry Knox

Thomas Jefferson

John Locke

PLACE

Monticello

THE REBELLION CONTINUES

By 1776 more colonists wanted to declare independence immediately. "We must be content to wait till the fruit is ripe," Sam Adams told them, "before we gather it."

Common Sense

A talented writer helped to ripen the "fruit" of independence. He was **Thomas Paine**, an Englishman who had settled in Pennsylvania in 1774.

In January 1776 Paine wrote a pamphlet titled *Common Sense* that said the colonists owed no loyalty to an unjust ruler. It made no sense, Paine wrote, for "a continent to be . . . ruled by an island. . . . Tis time to part."

In three months, more than 100,000 pamphlets were sold. George Washington said, "*Common Sense* is working a powerful change in the minds of many men."



The British Leave Boston

In Boston, meanwhile, 15,000 American soldiers surrounded the British troops. But British General **William Howe** did not leave. Washington then sent **Henry Knox** to Fort Ticonderoga to get big guns. His men dragged cannons more than 250 miles over frozen rivers and snowy hills to Boston.

When the British woke up on March 5, 1776, they saw the cannons and retreated "in a shameful and precipitate [hurried] manner," Washington told his brother. The colonists had retaken Boston.



Common Sense (left) inspired support for independence. Cannons from Fort Ticonderoga (above) helped the Patriots retake Boston.

SECOND CONTINENTAL CONGRESS

In May 1775, after the battles of Lexington and Concord, the **Second Continental Congress** met in Philadelphia. The year before, the delegates had decided on a peaceful protest. Now the soldiers of Britain and the colonies were fighting in New England. The Congress had to decide what to do.

Preparing for Defense

The delegates knew that they had to take action to protect the colonies from more attacks. So John Adams

suggested that the Congress form a "Grand American Army," with troops from every colony.

Adams nominated George Washington to be commander in chief of the new **Continental Army**. He praised Washington as "a gentleman whose skill as an officer . . . would command the respect of America." Washington accepted the job and promised to use "every power I possess . . . for the support of the glorious cause."

The **Second Continental Congress**, headed by John Hancock (below right), met in Independence Hall (right) in Philadelphia. Today, thousands visit the site of our country's beginnings (below).



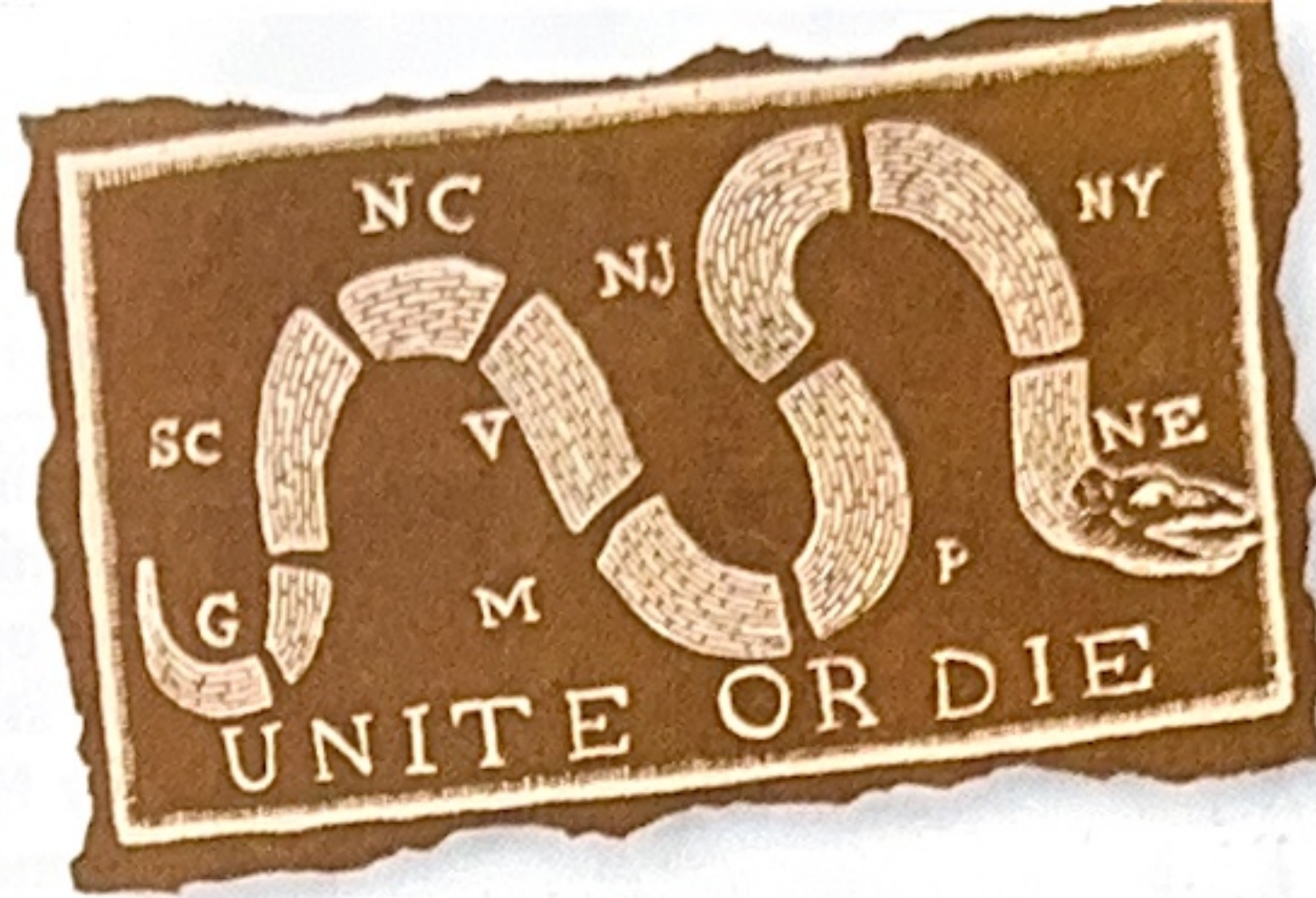
The Congress started a post office so that colonies could share news. It appointed Benjamin Franklin postmaster general. The Congress set up a committee to make peace with the Native Americans so they would not help the British. The Congress asked other countries for support. By taking these steps, the Second Continental Congress acted like the government for a new country.

A Last Chance for Peace

"The war is now heartily entered into," wrote **Thomas Jefferson** of Virginia. Many agreed with him. One was John Hancock from Massachusetts, president of the Congress.



Museum of Fine Arts, Boston



Franklin's cartoon (left) urged the colonies to unite. It was first used to support Britain in the French and Indian War.

In July 1775 the Congress tried one last time to make peace with Britain. The delegates sent what they called the "Olive Branch Petition" to King George. The olive branch is a symbol of peace. The petition promised loyalty to Britain. It asked for the repeal of the Intolerable Acts and an end to the fighting.

Declaring Independence

The king refused to read a petition from what he called an "illegal congress." He threatened to "bring the **traitors** to justice." A traitor is someone who turns against his or her country.

The delegates then took their biggest step. Early in June 1776, Virginia delegate Richard Henry Lee proposed "that these United colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and independent States." So the Congress named a committee to write a statement of independence.

The committee asked John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, Roger Sherman, and Robert Livingston to write the

Declaration of Independence.

Adams asked Jefferson to draft the document, saying "You can write ten times better than I can." Jefferson was then only 33 years old.