World History Notes

2/2/2024

* Weeks before the Second Continental Congress convened in May 1775, the Battles of Lexington and Concord took place.
* The radical wing of the congress took charge and insisted on breaking free from British rule.
* Many supported the movement, but not all. A significant number of English Loyalists, especially in parts of New York, New Jersey, and the Carolinas, opposed the Patriots.
* The members of Congress chose George Washington to command the Continental Army.
* In June 1776, the Continental Congress appointed a committee to prepare a document declaring the colonies’ independence.
* Jefferson wrote the first draft. After some debate and revisions, the members of Congress signed the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776.
* It did not take long for the British to respond. By September, armed with about 32,000 troops and a huge fleet of warships, they had taken New York City.
* To escape, the Continental Army had to cross the Delaware River into Pennsylvania.
* Just when the Patriot cause looked bleakest, Washington pulled off a daring move. On Christmas night, 1776, he led his army back across the ice-choked river to attack the British at Trenton, New Jersey.
* Washington’s men decisively defeated the British force at Trenton. Ten days later, they won another victory at Princeton.
* [Battles of Trenton and Princeton](https://youtu.be/HyUyT_l9hzM)
* Washington showed that he was a superb strategist, but he knew that he owed much of his success to foreign powers. Specifically, the French.
* France, along with two other British enemies, Spain and Holland, had been secretly sending vital supplies to the Continental Army.
* The French were willing to do more, but they needed proof that the Americans could indeed win the war.
* That proof came with the Battle of Saratoga, in upstate New York. By winning there, the Americans stopped the British from taking control of the Hudson River Valley.
* This was a vitally important victory strategically. Had they been defeated, the Patriots in New England would have been surrounded and isolated from the rest of the colonies.
* After that victory, France started to take an active role in the war. Thus, Saratoga was a turning point in the revolution.
* Eventually, with the help of French troops and ships, the Continental Army trapped the main British army at Yorktown, in Virginia.
* The surrender of that army in October 1781 marked the end of major hostilities. The Americans had won their independence.
* [Now or Never: Yorktown Campaign](https://youtu.be/7tXmpIp6_7c)
* The official end of the Revolutionary War came in 1783 when American and British delegates signed the Treaty of Paris.
* **Constitution and Bill of Rights**
* In 1781, the states had ratified, or approved, the Articles of Confederation.
* This written constitution spelled out the role of the central government and its relationship to the states.
* Americans were in no mood to invest much power in a central government after dealing with the British Monarchy.
* The Articles gave Congress certain powers, but it needed support and money from the states, which the states did not willingly provide.