Chapter 6: The Road to Revolution, 1763–1776

Section 1: Tighter British Control

Main Idea: Americans saw British efforts to tax them and to increase control over the colonies as violations of their rights.

After the French and Indian War, the British Parliament passed the Proclamation Act of 1763. This law said that colonists could not move west of the Appalachian Mountains. The purpose of the act was to keep peace with the Native Americans. Many colonists settled the area despite the act. In 1764, Parliament passed the Quartering Act, which required colonists to supply and house, or quarter, British troops.

To raise revenue, or income, Parliament passed the Sugar Act in 1764. This law placed a tax on sugar, molasses, and other products shipped to the colonies. By passing this law, Parliament voted to tax the colonists directly.

In 1765, Parliament passed the Stamp Act, which required the colonists to buy and place stamps on many goods such as diplomas, contracts, and newspapers. Along with other colonial leaders, Patrick Henry protested. The colonists believed that they were being taxed unfairly because they had no voice in Parliament.

The colonists protested “taxation without representation.” At the Stamp Act Congress, they drew up a petition to the king to protest the Stamp Act. Colonial merchants organized a boycott, or a refusal, to buy British goods. Some colonists joined the Sons of Liberty and other secret groups that actively protested British policies. Parliament responded by repealing the Stamp Act in 1766. But it soon passed the Declaratory Act, a law stating that Parliament had the right to govern and tax the colonies.

Section 2: Colonial Resistance Grows

Main Idea: Many Americans began to organize to oppose British policies.
In 1767, Parliament passed the Townshend Acts. These acts stated that New York’s legislative assembly could not meet until the colonists agreed to house British troops. The Townshend Acts also placed taxes on certain goods brought into the colonies. To enforce the acts, British officers used “writs of assistance.” These search warrants allowed the officers to search for smuggled goods in the homes or businesses of the colonists.

The colonists felt that the Townshend Acts threatened their rights and freedoms. Samuel Adams, a leader of the Boston Sons of Liberty, led the colonists in protesting the acts. The colonists called for a boycott of British goods. As a result, trade with Britain dropped off. When British officials tried to search the merchant ship Liberty for smuggled goods, riots broke out. This led the British to request that more troops be sent to the colonies.

In 1768, about 1,000 additional British soldiers arrived in Boston. Tensions mounted. Then, on March 5, 1770, violence broke out between British soldiers and some colonists. The soldiers fired on the colonists, killing an African-American sailor named Crispus Attucks and four other men. John Adams defended the soldiers on the grounds that they acted in self-defense. The jury agreed.

After this incident, called the Boston Massacre, Parliament did away with all taxes except the one on tea. Despite the easing of tensions, Samuel Adams helped form “committees of correspondence.” These committees worked in various Massachusetts towns for freedom. Soon the groups began exchanging letters with committees formed in other colonies.

In 1773, Britain passed the Tea Act. This law gave a British company the right to control the tea trade. The colonists protested. On December 16, 1773, a group of colonists dressed as Native Americans boarded three tea ships. They dumped 342 chests of tea into Boston Harbor, an event that became known as the Boston Tea Party.

**Section 3: The Road to Lexington and Concord**

**Main Idea:** The tensions between Britain and the colonies led to armed conflict in Massachusetts.
In 1774, Parliament passed a group of laws designed to punish Massachusetts. The colonists called these laws the Intolerable Acts. One law closed Boston Harbor until the colonists paid for the tea they ruined. Another banned the “committees of correspondence.” A third allowed Britain to house troops wherever it was convenient.

The colonists held the First Continental Congress in September, 1774. Its representatives voted to stop all trade with Britain until Parliament repealed the Intolerable Acts.

Britain sent more troops to the colonies. By the end of 1774, some colonists formed militias. A militia was a force of armed civilians who pledged to defend their community. Some of the militia were called Minutemen, because they were trained to be ready at a minute’s notice.

The British and the colonists began to spy on each other. When the British learned that Massachusetts colonists had guns and ammunition stored at Lexington and Concord, they sent troops to investigate. The Sons of Liberty were prepared. Paul Revere and William Dawes, both members, galloped over the countryside warning the colonists. Dr. Samuel Prescott also joined them.

British troops reached Lexington on April 19, 1775. There, eight Americans were killed when they refused to drop their weapons. At Concord a battle broke out, and the militia forced the British to retreat. Lexington and Concord were the first battles of the Revolutionary War. Forced to choose sides, colonists who sided with the British were called Loyalists. Those who sided with the colonial rebels were called Patriots.

Section 4: Declaring Independence

Main Idea: Fighting between American and British troops led the colonies to declare their independence.

The British moved back into Boston. Meanwhile, colonial rebel Ethan Allen and the Green Mountain Boys captured the British fort, Fort Ticonderoga, in New York. On the same
day, colonial leaders at the Second Continental Congress made George Washington the commanding general of the Continental Army. At the Battle of Bunker Hill near Boston, the British won but suffered heavy losses.

Most colonists still hoped for peace. King George, however, rejected their Olive Branch Petition, which asked him to restore peace. Soon afterwards, the Continental Army surrounded British forces in Boston. As a result, the British moved out of the city. In 1775, Benedict Arnold led colonial militia in an attack on Canada. When the attack failed, the Americans returned home.

In early 1776, Thomas Paine published *Common Sense*. In this pamphlet, Paine argued for independence from Britain. Many colonists became convinced to join the fight for independence after reading *Common Sense*.

On July 2nd, 1776, the Second Continental Congress passed a resolution introduced by Richard Henry Lee of Virginia. The resolution stated that all political ties between the colonies and Britain were ended.

On July 4th, the Congress adopted the Declaration of Independence. Written primarily by Thomas Jefferson, the document is based on the ideas of John Locke. The Declaration explains why the American people had decided to break away from Britain. It also states that all people have certain unalienable rights, including life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Because the British government had taken away these rights from the colonists, the Declaration states that Americans had the right to form a new government.

Also listed are 27 grievances, or offenses, by the British king and others against the colonies. This list helps to explain why it became necessary to seek independence. Finally, the Declaration of Independence declares the colonies free and independent states, with no loyalty to Britain or the king. Fifty-six representatives from the thirteen original states signed the Declaration.