

# ENGLISH LEARNING FOR CURIOUS MINDS





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**Episode #151**  
**The American Revolution**  
**20th Apr, 2021**

[00:00:00] Hello, hello hello, and welcome to English Learning for Curious Minds, by Leonardo English.

[00:00:22] The show where you can listen to fascinating stories, and learn weird and wonderful things about the world at the same time as improving your English.

[00:00:23] I'm Alastair Budge and today we are going to be talking about The American Revolutionary War, or as it's more often called, The American Revolution.

[00:00:33] This is the second part of this three part series on The Age of Revolution.

[00:00:40] In part one we talked about The Industrial Revolution, and in the next part, part three, we will talk about The French Revolution.

[00:00:49] And before that there was actually a related episode on The Enlightenment, without which perhaps none of these revolutions would have happened.

## The American Revolution

[00:00:59] So, you can of course listen to all of these episodes individually, but they are probably even more interesting as a [trio](#)<sup>1</sup>, or even as a [quartet](#)<sup>2</sup>.

[00:01:10] You might think it's a bit strange to have someone from Britain talking about The American Revolution, because, well, it's not something that people in Britain [tend](#)<sup>3</sup> to talk about a lot, as the British lost.

[00:01:24] But it is a fascinating story, and for better or for worse, the American Revolution, and the [subsequent](#)<sup>4</sup> creation of The United States of America, has had a global impact that is hard to match.

[00:01:38] It is a long and complicated story, so we will focus on the most interesting parts, and tell it through the formula of causes, [course](#)<sup>5</sup>, and consequences.

[00:01:50] So, why did it happen, what actually happened, and what has this meant for America, for Britain, and for the world.

[00:02:01] OK then, let's get [stuck into it](#)<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> a group of three things

<sup>2</sup> a group of four things

<sup>3</sup> are likely

<sup>4</sup> happening after something else

<sup>5</sup> the way in which something develops

<sup>6</sup> start doing something with enthusiasm

## The American Revolution

[00:02:05] Before we dive right into the causes of The American Revolution, let's just remind ourselves of what was actually going on in the mid 18th century.

[00:02:16] Firstly, America.

[00:02:17] Now, America as a term, and as a concept, didn't really exist.

[00:02:23] The [continent](#)<sup>7</sup> we now know as North America had been [colonised](#)<sup>8</sup> by the British, French and Spanish, starting with Christopher Columbus in 1492.

[00:02:34] While the Spanish conquered most of what is now Mexico and the south of North America, the eastern and northern parts were [colonised](#) by French and British [settlers](#)<sup>9</sup>.

[00:02:46] The French and the British got into some [territorial](#)<sup>10</sup> [disputes](#)<sup>11</sup>, there was the 9 year French and Indian war, the British won, and the French handed control of everything to the east of the river Mississippi over to the British.

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<sup>7</sup> one of the seven large land masses of earth

<sup>8</sup> controlled by sending people to move and live there

<sup>9</sup> people moved from a country to live in another one

<sup>10</sup> related to the ownership and control of an area

<sup>11</sup> disagreements

## The American Revolution

[00:03:04] Meanwhile, in Europe, the French and the British had been fighting something called the Seven Years War, which was a struggle for global domination, and [sucked in](#)<sup>12</sup> countries such as Spain, Prussia, Russia, Portugal and Sweden.

[00:03:21] The result was, technically at least, a British victory, but it left Britain with huge debts.

[00:03:28] Wars, as we all know, are expensive.

[00:03:32] In order to try to raise money to pay these debts, Britain looked to its [colonies](#)<sup>13</sup> in America for money.

[00:03:41] To [clarify](#)<sup>14</sup> exactly which [colonies](#) we are talking about here, we're talking about 13 [colonies](#) on the eastern coast of what we now call The United States of America, so that's: Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, Pennsylvania, Delaware, New Jersey, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia.

[00:04:08] Now, who were the people actually living in these states?

[00:04:13] Were they Americans?

[00:04:15] Well, yes and no.

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<sup>12</sup> involved someone without being their choice

<sup>13</sup> countries controlled politically by a more powerful country

<sup>14</sup> make clear

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[00:04:17] Yes, because they lived in America.

[00:04:20] But no, because [the vast majority](#)<sup>15</sup> of them were relatively recent immigrants from Europe, and they were still technically British citizens.

[00:04:31] 85% of the immigrant population came from Great Britain, which included Ireland at the time, but there were also lots of people from countries like the Netherlands and Germany.

[00:04:45] Although the 13 [colonies](#) were mainly made up of immigrants from Europe, there were other significant populations – about 250,000 slaves, transported [barbarically](#)<sup>16</sup> from Africa, who worked on the [cotton](#)<sup>17</sup>, rice, and tobacco [plantations](#)<sup>18</sup> of the southern states.

[00:05:06] And there were the tribes of the Native Americans whose unhappy story of [gradual](#)<sup>19</sup> [submission](#)<sup>20</sup> to the [colonists](#)<sup>21</sup> is a sad story for another time.

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<sup>15</sup> almost all

<sup>16</sup> in an extremely unpleasant and cruel way

<sup>17</sup> a soft white material used for making clothes

<sup>18</sup> a big area where crops (plants) are grown

<sup>19</sup> happening slowly over a period of time

<sup>20</sup> the action of surrendering to a superior force

<sup>21</sup> people moved from a country to live in another one

## The American Revolution

[00:05:17] Other European nations will [feature](#)<sup>22</sup> too in our story – German [mercenaries](#)<sup>23</sup> on the British side and, as is so often the case with anything involving the British [military](#)<sup>24</sup> adventures abroad, this won't be the last time we'll hear from the French.

[00:05:34] So, that's the [context](#)<sup>25</sup>, what then were some of the immediate causes that brought about the start of the American Revolutionary war?

[00:05:45] As ever, it is a [combination](#)<sup>26</sup> of [underlying](#)<sup>27</sup>, background factors and immediate [sparks](#)<sup>28</sup> which [lit the blaze](#)<sup>29</sup> and caused the [outbreak](#)<sup>30</sup> of [hostilities](#)<sup>31</sup>, caused the fighting to start.

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<sup>22</sup> take an important part

<sup>23</sup> professional soldiers hired to serve in a foreign army

<sup>24</sup> relating to the armed forces

<sup>25</sup> the conditions in which something exists

<sup>26</sup> a joining of different parts or factors

<sup>27</sup> not obvious

<sup>28</sup> tiny bright pieces of burning material

<sup>29</sup> started the fire

<sup>30</sup> a sudden and violent start

<sup>31</sup> acts of war

## The American Revolution

[00:06:00] The most significant [underlying](#) cause was the [deteriorating](#)<sup>32</sup> relationship between Britain and its fast-growing, increasingly [prosperous](#)<sup>33</sup>, increasingly rich, and independent-minded [colonies](#).

[00:06:14] Let's use the image or [metaphor](#)<sup>34</sup> of a family.

[00:06:19] One could say that this is a bit like the natural development of any fast-growing, independent-minded teenager who [seeks](#)<sup>35</sup> independence from their parents.

[00:06:30] In the end they need their own space and to be able to run their own lives.

[00:06:36] However, there was nothing [inevitable](#)<sup>36</sup> about the initial rebellion.

[00:06:42] In 1763 Britain was [broke](#)<sup>37</sup>, it had large debts, after financing the war in North America as well as the Seven Years War in Europe.

[00:06:52] The British [colonies](#) in North America were [prosperous](#), they were doing well economically, and King George III of Britain decided to raise taxes on the 13

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<sup>32</sup> becoming worse

<sup>33</sup> successful financially

<sup>34</sup> a way of describing something by referring to something else than has similar characteristics or behaviour

<sup>35</sup> tries to find

<sup>36</sup> certain to happen, unavoidable

<sup>37</sup> without money at all



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[colonies](#), which had relied heavily on the [military](#) support of Britain in the French and Indian War.

[00:07:11] The raising of taxes wasn't in itself the problem, but rather the way in which it was done.

[00:07:19] There was a well established [principle](#)<sup>38</sup> in British law that you should not be taxed unless you are democratically represented in government, but these 13 British [colonies](#) in America had no representation in the British parliament.

[00:07:36] They simply had to do whatever was decided in Westminster, in the Houses of Parliament back in London.

[00:07:44] Starting in 1765, the British [imposed](#)<sup>39</sup> taxes on the British [colonies](#) in America, and these were deeply unpopular.

[00:07:55] The first large tax, called The [Stamp](#)<sup>40</sup> Act, required British [colonists](#) to pay taxes on [stamps](#)<sup>41</sup> on a whole range of things, from official documents through to playing cards.

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<sup>38</sup> a belief that acts as a basis for something

<sup>39</sup> forced something unwelcome on someone

<sup>40</sup> a small piece of paper that is stuck on something to show that an amount of money has been paid

<sup>41</sup> small pieces of paper that are stuck on something to show that an amount of money has been paid

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[00:08:09] Before long, there was a popular movement against this tax, with the [slogan](#)<sup>42</sup> “no taxation without representation”, meaning you couldn’t be taxed if you weren’t represented democratically.

[00:08:24] There was an increasing anti-British feeling, with people [boycotting](#)<sup>43</sup> British goods, not buying British goods, and some [small-scale](#)<sup>44</sup> protests.

[00:08:35] It wasn’t for another five years though, not until 1770, that things really [came to a head](#)<sup>45</sup>.

[00:08:44] The Boston [Massacre](#)<sup>46</sup> was when British soldiers shot and killed five protestors, and then three years later, in 1773, again in Boston, there was the Boston Tea Party, when [volunteer](#)<sup>47</sup> American soldiers dressed as native Americans, went onto British ships in the Boston [harbour](#)<sup>48</sup> and threw the precious tea [overboard](#)<sup>49</sup>.

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<sup>42</sup> a short and easily remembered phrase

<sup>43</sup> refusing to buy a product as a way of expressing disapproval

<sup>44</sup> of limited extent

<sup>45</sup> reached a point where action must be taken

<sup>46</sup> brutal killing

<sup>47</sup> people who do something helpful willingly, without being forced to do so

<sup>48</sup> a place on the coast where ships and boats are kept safe

<sup>49</sup> from the ship to the water

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[00:09:10] Britain sent soldiers to Boston to control the situation, but [tensions](#)<sup>50</sup> continued to grow.

[00:09:18] The American [colonists](#) started to arm themselves, they started to form small armies, in anticipation of the conflict that was to come.

[00:09:28] Then, in a place called Lexington, in Massachusetts on 19 April 1775, the real fighting broke out, with the so-called “shot heard around the world”.

[00:09:42] It was a [full-blown](#)<sup>51</sup> battle between British soldiers and the Massachusetts [militia](#)<sup>52</sup>, and resulted in the death of over a hundred men.

[00:09:53] Britain was now at war with its American [colonies](#).

[00:09:57] Now, I said earlier that there was nothing [inevitable](#) about the revolution.

[00:10:03] This was because the natural [tendency](#)<sup>53</sup> of so many of the [colonists](#) was to have considerable loyalty towards the mother nation, which had after all protected them and, through victory in the recent war, it had won them the opportunity to expand West into lands that were previously under the control of the French.

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<sup>50</sup> state of difficulties and hostilities between two groups

<sup>51</sup> fully developed

<sup>52</sup> a military force raised from civil population

<sup>53</sup> direction, approach

## The American Revolution

[00:10:27] A number of the [founding fathers](#)<sup>54</sup> of The United States had spent time in England as a way of completing their education.

[00:10:35] They had very strong family links with Britain.

[00:10:39] Most importantly, perhaps, the people who led the revolution, such as Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Madison and George Washington, they were [prosperous](#), successful men who had many reasons to want to keep the [status quo](#)<sup>55</sup> - or things being as they were.

[00:10:59] In so many ways they were unusual revolutionaries. Through rebelling and being [traitors](#)<sup>56</sup> to their mother country they risked everything.

[00:11:10] So it is not surprising that there were powerful [ideals](#)<sup>57</sup> that united them and drove them on, not only to rebel, but also to design the system of government or [constitution](#)<sup>58</sup> of the new United States that was based on a very [distinctive](#)<sup>59</sup> set of beliefs.

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<sup>54</sup> a group of men who started the United States and wrote its constitution

<sup>55</sup> the present state of things

<sup>56</sup> a person who betrays, acts against their country

<sup>57</sup> standards or principles (beliefs that act as a basis for something)

<sup>58</sup> the set of political ideas by which a state is governed

<sup>59</sup> easy to recognise because it is different from other similar things

## The American Revolution

[00:11:31] Here it is perhaps helpful to revisit some of the ideas of the European Enlightenment from the episode on The Enlightenment.

[00:11:40] Key figures in the American revolution, such as Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson, were [profoundly](#)<sup>60</sup> influenced by Enlightenment thinking and also by the writings and actions of the thought leaders of the English Revolution [or the English Civil War], such as John Milton, who worked closely with the English republican leader, Oliver Cromwell and who is best known for his famous [epic](#)<sup>61</sup> poem, Paradise Lost.

[00:12:10] Of even more importance and immediate impact was a [pamphlet](#)<sup>62</sup>, a short document, of a [mere](#)<sup>63</sup> 47 pages that was published in 1775 by an Englishman called Thomas Paine, who had only just recently [emigrated](#)<sup>64</sup> to Pennsylvania.

[00:12:30] This [anecdote](#)<sup>65</sup> is a fascinating insight into how a small book can have a dramatic impact on world history.

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<sup>60</sup> deeply or very much

<sup>61</sup> a poem that is long, impressive and grand in character

<sup>62</sup> a small booklet that gives information about something

<sup>63</sup> just, simply

<sup>64</sup> moved from one country to another to live there permanently

<sup>65</sup> a short and interesting story about something someone has done



## The American Revolution

[00:12:39] Paine's [pamphlet](#), which is called Common Sense, was written in the simplest of English with the desire that it should reach a very [broad](#)<sup>66</sup> audience and that it could also be listened to by everyone when it was published in Pennsylvania early in 1775.

[00:12:59] It was a [sensation](#)<sup>67</sup>.

[00:13:00] It is estimated that almost half of the 2.5 million people living in the [colonies](#) would have either read or listened to it. This means that it still holds the record for being read or heard by a higher proportion of the population of the United States than any other publication.

[00:13:22] In this work, Paine [demolishes](#)<sup>68</sup> the arguments in favour of trying to remain under British [sovereignty](#)<sup>69</sup> or under British control.

[00:13:32] Perhaps his greatest achievement is to paint a [vivid](#)<sup>70</sup> picture of what an independent, republican United States could be like, ruled by themselves and through [elected](#)<sup>71</sup> representatives, [elected](#) annually, [elected](#) every year.

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<sup>66</sup> very wide or big

<sup>67</sup> a wide reaction of interest and excitement

<sup>68</sup> destroys, proves that they are completely wrong

<sup>69</sup> authority, the governing power of a country

<sup>70</sup> clear and detailed

<sup>71</sup> chosen by the people after a vote

## The American Revolution

[00:13:51] This [sensational](#)<sup>72</sup> and brave piece of work was instrumental in [galvanising](#)<sup>73</sup> – or setting in motion – a process of rebellion.

[00:14:02] Have a look, even if you just read the first few paragraphs, it really is quite inspiring, and is written in an English I'm sure you will be able to understand.

[00:14:14] It also has such a modern feel to it.

[00:14:17] For example, when the author gets particularly excited or wants to [stress](#)<sup>74</sup> something, he “shouts” in capital letters, so, he tells us, do not mistake King George III [“the [sullen-tempered](#)<sup>75</sup> [Pharaoh](#)<sup>76</sup> of England”] as someone [noble](#)<sup>77</sup> and powerful, “an ASS FOR A LION” (An ass for a lion is all in capital letters).

[00:14:43] You can appreciate how so many of the words used in such a [pamphlet](#), which would have become a common reference point as the revolution [gathered pace](#)<sup>78</sup> would have had a powerful [sound bite](#)<sup>79</sup> quality to them.

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<sup>72</sup> causing great public interest

<sup>73</sup> causing someone to take action

<sup>74</sup> point out something important

<sup>75</sup> bad-tempered, easily annoyed or made angry

<sup>76</sup> an Egyptian ruler (used here to show the absolute rule of the king)

<sup>77</sup> honourable and righteous

<sup>78</sup> started to happen more quickly and had more success

<sup>79</sup> a small interesting and effective phrase

[00:14:59] For example, it is, he argues, “very [absurd](#)<sup>80</sup>” to think “a continent to be [perpetually](#)<sup>81</sup> governed by an island.”

[00:15:08] Even reading it now, it is easy to get [fired up](#)<sup>82</sup>, and I’m from the country that lost this war.

[00:15:15] And perhaps an even more inspiring document was one that was to come a few months later, on the fourth of July of 1776, The Declaration of Independence.

[00:15:28] This stated, amongst other more important things such as that the United States was an independent country, it stated that “all men are created equal, that they are [endowed](#)<sup>83</sup> by their Creator with certain [unalienable](#)<sup>84</sup> Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the [pursuit](#)<sup>85</sup> of Happiness.”

[00:15:49] Quite inspiring, right?

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<sup>80</sup> very unreasonable

<sup>81</sup> for ever

<sup>82</sup> very excited or angry

<sup>83</sup> provided, given

<sup>84</sup> incapable of being taken away because it is their right

<sup>85</sup> the act of trying to achieve something

## The American Revolution

[00:15:51] But it is an important and [sobering](#)<sup>86</sup> reminder of this [bold](#)<sup>87</sup> statement's limitations that the Declaration had no reference to the slave trade; in fact, the version originally drafted by Thomas Jefferson had a [clause](#)<sup>88</sup> which [condemned](#)<sup>89</sup> the slave trade; sadly this was removed in order to secure the agreement of the southern [colonies](#), where the economy relied so much on this [inhuman](#)<sup>90</sup> practice.

[00:16:22] Now, moving onto what actually happened during the American Revolutionary War.

[00:16:28] So, by 1776 Britain was at war with its American [colonies](#).

[00:16:34] It was a slightly strange situation, because the divisions between who was fighting for Britain, and who was fighting for America weren't completely clear - there were Englishmen, like Thomas Paine, who had only been living in America for two years before becoming a fierce believer in revolution, and [backer](#)<sup>91</sup> of independence.

[00:16:56] And there were plenty of what we could consider Americans, who fought on the side of the British army.

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<sup>86</sup> making you think seriously

<sup>87</sup> risky but not afraid

<sup>88</sup> a separate section of a writing

<sup>89</sup> showed or said that something is wrong

<sup>90</sup> without the human qualities of love and mercy

<sup>91</sup> supporter

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[00:17:03] Not everyone on the American side was looking for independence from Britain, and indeed before independence was declared, the [colonies](#) had simply proposed to [put down their arms](#)<sup>92</sup> in exchange for the British reducing the taxes.

[00:17:19] But King George III, the King of Britain, refused.

[00:17:23] In terms of the people involved, the [standing](#)<sup>93</sup> armies of both sides were relatively small, fewer than 50,000 men.

[00:17:32] At its [peak](#)<sup>94</sup>, the British had 22,000 British soldiers as well as 25,000 what's called [loyalists](#)<sup>95</sup>, so Americans who were loyal to Britain and fought for the British.

[00:17:44] There were also another 30,000 or so German [mercenaries](#), soldiers who were paid to fight for the British.

[00:17:53] And let's not forget the slaves.

[00:17:55] The British, out of [self-interest](#)<sup>96</sup> I should add, offered freedom to slaves who worked on their opponents' [plantations](#), meaning that somewhere between 25-50,000 black slaves served with the British army.

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<sup>92</sup> stop fighting

<sup>93</sup> permanent and professional

<sup>94</sup> the point of its highest quantity

<sup>95</sup> a group that strongly supports a ruler

<sup>96</sup> interest in one's own benefit



## The American Revolution

[00:18:11] All in all, the soldiers fighting for the British numbered almost 150,000.

[00:18:18] Meanwhile, the [colonists](#)' army was smaller, no more than 48,000 men at any one time.

[00:18:26] It was, at the start at least, not a professional army, they weren't professional soldiers, and for the first years of the war they suffered several heavy defeats against the better trained and better armed British army.

[00:18:41] The leader of the American army, a man called George Washington who was later to become the first president of The United States of course, he realised this, and he [enlisted](#)<sup>97</sup> the help of Prussian soldiers to train his army, to turn his [amateur](#)<sup>98</sup> soldiers into professionals.

[00:19:01] The Prussians arrived in the winter of 1777 and turned the American army from a group of untrained [amateurs](#)<sup>99</sup> into a [force](#)<sup>100</sup> [to be reckoned with](#)<sup>101</sup>.

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<sup>97</sup> secured the support of

<sup>98</sup> not professional

<sup>99</sup> not professionals

<sup>100</sup> organised military body

<sup>101</sup> worth taking seriously because of being powerful

## The American Revolution

[00:19:13] Now, we have skipped over a lot of the details of the battles and fighting, but it can be summarised as relatively small battles not involving [vast](#)<sup>102</sup> numbers of soldiers. The British had some early success, as did the Americans.

[00:19:30] By 1778 though, despite the improvements that the American army had made, the British looked like they [had the upper hand](#)<sup>103</sup>, and that they were [on the cusp of](#)<sup>104</sup> victory, they were about to win the war.

[00:19:45] In order to prevent its [archrival](#)<sup>105</sup> Britain from this great victory, France decided to enter the war, joining forces with the Americans, providing [considerable](#)<sup>106</sup> money, [troops](#)<sup>107</sup> and a [fleet](#)<sup>108</sup> of over 100 ships.

[00:20:01] Now, one can see why the French decided to enter the war - to stop Britain.

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<sup>102</sup> extremely big

<sup>103</sup> had the advantage

<sup>104</sup> at the point just before

<sup>105</sup> main opponent

<sup>106</sup> large amount of

<sup>107</sup> armed forces, soldiers

<sup>108</sup> the ships of a country's naval military forces

## The American Revolution

[00:20:07] Yet when we think of what was to happen in France just 10 years later, it does seem like a slightly [foolish](#)<sup>109</sup> decision for the French king to support a movement to seek independence from a central ruler.

[00:20:21] No doubt Louis XVI was so convinced of his own power and [god-given](#)<sup>110</sup> right to rule that the idea that his own people might try a similar thing in France didn't even cross his mind.

[00:20:35] We should also not forget the Spanish, who joined the French in 1779, who hoped to [regain](#)<sup>111</sup> territory that they had lost in America, and to [regain](#) the territories of Menorca and Gibraltar back in Europe.

[00:20:50] Were it not for the entry of France, and to a lesser extent, Spain, there is little doubt Britain would have won the war.

[00:20:59] And who knows how the world might have been different if that had happened.

[00:21:04] But France and Spain did join the war, and there was no way back for the British.

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<sup>109</sup> lacking good sense, unwise

<sup>110</sup> coming from God and not people

<sup>111</sup> take back

## The American Revolution

[00:21:10] On September 3, 1783, the Treaty of Paris was signed, which ended the war and [acknowledged<sup>112</sup>](#) the existence of the United States of America as a free and independent country.

[00:21:25] Although the entirety of this story, with its [idealism<sup>113</sup>](#), [bloodshed<sup>114</sup>](#), [vivid](#) and various characters, is [gripping<sup>115</sup>](#) – [enthraling<sup>116</sup>](#) and exciting – perhaps the most [intriguing<sup>117</sup>](#) part of the whole story lies in the consequences of the American revolution.

[00:21:45] I do not think it is an [exaggeration<sup>118</sup>](#) to say that these consequences have affected [virtually<sup>119</sup>](#) every country in the world.

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<sup>112</sup> accepted, admitted

<sup>113</sup> strong belief that you will achieve what you think is right

<sup>114</sup> killing and violence

<sup>115</sup> having a strong effect, very interesting

<sup>116</sup> charming and fascinating

<sup>117</sup> very interesting

<sup>118</sup> to say that something is more important than it is

<sup>119</sup> almost

## The American Revolution

[00:21:54] Firstly, and perhaps obviously, the American Revolution resulted in the foundation of the United States of America, with its [emphasis<sup>120</sup>](#) on its [ground-breaking<sup>121</sup>](#) [founding<sup>122</sup>](#) [ideals](#) and in particular on its [distinctive](#) civil liberties.

[00:22:11] Secondly, at the heart of its foundation was a written [constitution](#) which had at its core the revolutionary principle that the government [derives<sup>123</sup>](#) its “just powers from the [consent<sup>124</sup>](#) of the [governed<sup>125</sup>](#)”.

[00:22:26] This, the world’s first written [constitution](#), has provided the model for so many other countries’ [constitutions<sup>126</sup>](#).

[00:22:34] Similarly the process of throwing off colonial rule and abandoning the old model of rule by a [monarch<sup>127</sup>](#) and a [hereditary<sup>128</sup>](#) [aristocracy<sup>129</sup>](#) - meaning people who simply were born into the ruling class - this was an inspiration to other countries.

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<sup>120</sup> attention to something important

<sup>121</sup> bringing a big change

<sup>122</sup> that established, brought something new

<sup>123</sup> takes, obtains

<sup>124</sup> permission or agreement

<sup>125</sup> the citizens of a governing state

<sup>126</sup> sets of political ideas by which states are governed

<sup>127</sup> a ruling head of state, usually a king or queen

<sup>128</sup> that is passed on as a right by a parent to a child

<sup>129</sup> the highest class in certain societies that is considered superior



## The American Revolution

[00:22:52] [Comparable](#)<sup>130</sup> revolutions followed in places as [diverse](#)<sup>131</sup> as Latin America, France of course, and especially in the 19th and early 20th centuries, across old Europe.

[00:23:05] Unsurprisingly, when you listen to part three of this mini-series, the one on the French Revolution, you will find many [echoes](#)<sup>132</sup> of the American one in it.

[00:23:16] Finally, there is one other consequence which is perhaps a little more [controversial](#)<sup>133</sup>. It has to do with the idea of the new America as a symbol of human [aspiration](#)<sup>134</sup> and [idealism](#).

[00:23:30] Remember that the country was originally settled by people [fleeing](#)<sup>135</sup> religious [persecution](#)<sup>136</sup> in Europe and [seeking](#)<sup>137</sup> greater control over their own lives and freedom from [interference](#)<sup>138</sup>. This [thread](#)<sup>139</sup> in American culture has, I think, continued with the country's tradition of immigration.

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<sup>130</sup> similar

<sup>131</sup> very different

<sup>132</sup> similar ideas or feelings

<sup>133</sup> causing public disagreement

<sup>134</sup> hope or ambition to achieve something

<sup>135</sup> running away from danger

<sup>136</sup> hostility

<sup>137</sup> looking for

<sup>138</sup> involvement of others in their own affairs

<sup>139</sup> a continuing characteristic

## English Learning for Curious Minds | Episode #151

### The American Revolution

[00:23:50] Tom Paine calls it “an [asylum](#)<sup>140</sup> for mankind”.

[00:23:54] As is famously written in the poem on the Statue of Liberty which would’ve greeted many millions of immigrants arriving by ship in New York, “Give me your tired, your poor, Your [huddled](#)<sup>141</sup> [masses](#)<sup>142</sup> [yearning](#)<sup>143</sup> to breathe free...”

[00:24:11] The combination of all these factors has made the United States of America a source of continued fascination and interest for the rest of the world.

[00:24:21] This has been particularly evident during the final three months of the Trump presidency when so many of those [founding ideals](#) and the strength of the American [constitution](#) have been put under such severe pressure and have generated both [scrutiny](#)<sup>144</sup> and [anxiety](#)<sup>145</sup> around the world.

[00:24:42] For many people, it can seem strange that Americans have such a fascination, and almost [cult-like](#)<sup>146</sup> obsession with the [founding fathers](#) of the country, with the idea that everything in the [constitution](#) is almost holy and must be preserved.

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<sup>140</sup> a safe place

<sup>141</sup> crowded together

<sup>142</sup> a large number of people crowded together

<sup>143</sup> intense feeling of wanting something

<sup>144</sup> a very careful examination

<sup>145</sup> a feeling of worry and nervousness

<sup>146</sup> similar to a cult (a system of beliefs that are considered sacred)

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### The American Revolution

[00:25:01] But with a knowledge of the unlikely story of the American Revolution, it becomes much easier to understand some of the reasons why.

[00:25:12] OK then, that is it for today's episode on The American Revolution.

[00:25:18] I hope it's been an interesting one, that you've learnt something new, and that you feel like you now have a slightly better understanding of the history of a country that has an influence on every single one of us.

[00:25:31] As always, I would love to know what you thought of this episode.

[00:25:34] We actually have quite a few members who live in America, so I would be particularly interested to know what you thought of this episode.

[00:25:43] You can head right in to our community forum, which is at [community.leonardoenglish.com](https://community.leonardoenglish.com) and get chatting away to other curious minds.

[00:25:52] And as a final reminder, the next episode is going to be on the French Revolution, part three of this mini series of The Age of Revolution and I hope you'll enjoy it.

[00:26:02] You've been listening to English Learning for Curious Minds, by Leonardo English.

[00:26:08] I'm Alastair Budge, you stay safe, and I'll catch you in the next episode.

[END OF EPISODE]

## Key vocabulary

| Word          | Definition  |
|---------------|---|
| Trio          | a group of three things                             |
| Quartet       | a group of four things                              |
| Tend          | are likely  |
| Subsequent    | happening after something else                      |
| Course        | the way in which something develops                 |
| Stuck into it | start doing something with enthusiasm               |
| Continent     | one of the seven large land masses of earth         |
| Colonised     | controlled by sending people to move and live there |
| Settlers      | people moved from a country to live in another one  |
| Territorial   | related to the ownership and control of an area     |
| Disputes      | disagreements                                       |
| Sucked in     | involved someone without being their choice         |

## The American Revolution

|                          |   |
|--------------------------|---|
| <b>Colonies</b>          | countries controlled politically by a more powerful country |
| <b>Clarify</b>           | make clear  |
| <b>The vast majority</b> | almost all  |
| <b>Barbarically</b>      | in an extremely unpleasant and cruel way                    |
| <b>Cotton</b>            | a soft white material used for making clothes               |
| <b>Plantations</b>       | a big area where crops (plants) are grown                   |
| <b>Gradual</b>           | happening slowly over a period of time                      |
| <b>Submission</b>        | the action of surrendering to a superior force              |
| <b>Colonists</b>         | people moved from a country to live in another one          |
| <b>Feature</b>           | take an important part                                      |
| <b>Mercenaries</b>       | professional soldiers hired to serve in a foreign army      |
| <b>Military</b>          | relating to the armed forces                                |
| <b>Context</b>           | the conditions in which something exists                    |
| <b>Combination</b>       | a joining of different parts or factors                     |
| <b>Underlying</b>        | not obvious   |



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|                      |  |
|----------------------|--|
| <b>Sparks</b>        | tiny bright pieces of burning material   |
| <b>Lit the blaze</b> | started the fire   |
| <b>Outbreak</b>      | a sudden and violent start   |
| <b>Hostilities</b>   | acts of war  |
| <b>Deteriorating</b> | becoming worse   |
| <b>Prosperous</b>    | successful financially   |
| <b>Metaphor</b>      | a way of describing something by referring to something else than has similar characteristics or behaviour |
| <b>Seeks</b>         | tries to find  |
| <b>Inevitable</b>    | certain to happen, unavoidable   |
| <b>Broke</b>         | without money at all   |
| <b>Principle</b>     | a belief that acts as a basis for something  |
| <b>Imposed</b>       | forced something unwelcome on someone  |
| <b>Stamp</b>         | a small piece of paper that is stuck on something to show that an amount of money has been paid            |
| <b>Stamps</b>        | small pieces of paper that are stuck on something to show that an  |

## The American Revolution

amount of money has been paid

### Slogan

a short and easily remembered phrase

### Boycotting

refusing to buy a product as a way of expressing disapproval

### Small-scale

of limited extent

### Came to a head

reached a point where action must be taken

### Massacre

brutal killing

### Volunteer

people who do something helpful willingly, without being forced to do so

### Harbour

a place on the coast where ships and boats are kept safe

### Overboard

from the ship to the water

### Tensions

state of difficulties and hostilities between two groups

### Full-blown

fully developed

### Militia

a military force raised from civil population

### Tendency

direction, approach

### Founding fathers

a group of men who started the United States and wrote its constitution

## The American Revolution

|                     |   |
|---------------------|---|
| <b>Status quo</b>   | the present state of things   |
| <b>Traitors</b>     | a person who betrays, acts against their country                    |
| <b>Ideals</b>       | standards or principles (beliefs that act as a basis for something) |
| <b>Constitution</b> | the set of political ideas by which a state is governed             |
| <b>Distinctive</b>  | easy to recognise because it is different from other similar things |
| <b>Profoundly</b>   | deeply or very much   |
| <b>Epic</b>         | a poem that is long, impressive and grand in character              |
| <b>Pamphlet</b>     | a small booklet that gives information about something              |
| <b>Mere</b>         | just, simply  |
| <b>Emigrated</b>    | moved from one country to another to live there permanently         |
| <b>Anecdote</b>     | a short and interesting story about something someone has done      |
| <b>Broad</b>        | very wide or big  |
| <b>Sensation</b>    | a wide reaction of interest and excitement                          |
| <b>Demolishes</b>   | destroys, proves that they are completely wrong                     |
| <b>Sovereignty</b>  | authority, the governing power of a country                         |

## The American Revolution

|                        |   |
|------------------------|---|
| <b>Vivid</b>           | clear and detailed  |
| <b>Elected</b>         | chosen by the people after a vote                                   |
| <b>Sensational</b>     | causing great public interest                                       |
| <b>Galvanising</b>     | causing someone to take action                                      |
| <b>Stress</b>          | point out something important                                       |
| <b>Sullen-tempered</b> | bad -tempered, easily annoyed or made angry                         |
| <b>Pharaoh</b>         | an Egyptian ruler (used here to show the absolute rule of the king) |
| <b>Noble</b>           | honourable and righteous  |
| <b>Gathered pace</b>   | started to happen more quickly and had more success                 |
| <b>Sound bite</b>      | a small interesting and effective phrase                            |
| <b>Absurd</b>          | very unreasonable   |
| <b>Perpetually</b>     | for ever  |
| <b>Fired up</b>        | very excited or angry   |
| <b>Endowed</b>         | provided, given   |
| <b>Unalienable</b>     | incapable of being taken away because it is their right             |

## The American Revolution

|                            |   |
|----------------------------|---|
| <b>Pursuit</b>             | the act of trying to achieve something        |
| <b>Sobering</b>            | making you think seriously                    |
| <b>Bold</b>                | risky but not afraid                          |
| <b>Clause</b>              | a separate section of a writing               |
| <b>Condemned</b>           | showed or said that something is wrong        |
| <b>Inhuman</b>             | without the human qualities of love and mercy |
| <b>Backer</b>              | supporter                                     |
| <b>Put down their arms</b> | stop fighting                                 |
| <b>Standing</b>            | permanent and professional                    |
| <b>Peak</b>                | the point of its highest quantity             |
| <b>Loyalists</b>           | a group that strongly supports a ruler        |
| <b>Self-interest</b>       | interest in one's own benefit                 |
| <b>Enlisted</b>            | secured the support of                        |
| <b>Amateur</b>             | not professional                              |
| <b>Amateurs</b>            | not professionals                             |

## The American Revolution

|                            |   |
|----------------------------|---|
| <b>Force</b>               | organised military body                                     |
| <b>To be reckoned with</b> | worth taking seriously because of being powerful            |
| <b>Vast</b>                | extremely big   |
| <b>Had the upper hand</b>  | had the advantage   |
| <b>On the cusp of</b>      | at the point just before of                                 |
| <b>Archrival</b>           | main opponent   |
| <b>Considerable</b>        | large amount of   |
| <b>Troops</b>              | armed forces, soldiers                                      |
| <b>Fleet</b>               | the ships of a country's naval military forces              |
| <b>Foolish</b>             | lacking good sense, unwise                                  |
| <b>God-given</b>           | coming from God and not people                              |
| <b>Regain</b>              | take back   |
| <b>Acknowledged</b>        | accepted, admitted  |
| <b>Idealism</b>            | strong belief that you will achieve what you think is right |
| <b>Bloodshed</b>           | killing and violence  |

## The American Revolution

|                        |  |
|------------------------|--|
| <b>Gripping</b>        | having a strong effect, very interesting                           |
| <b>Enthralling</b>     | charming and fascinating   |
| <b>Intriguing</b>      | very interesting   |
| <b>Exaggeration</b>    | to say that something is more important than it is                 |
| <b>Virtually</b>       | almost   |
| <b>Emphasis</b>        | attention to something important                                   |
| <b>Ground-breaking</b> | bringing a big change  |
| <b>Founding</b>        | that established, brought something new                            |
| <b>Derives</b>         | takes, obtains   |
| <b>Consent</b>         | permission or agreement  |
| <b>Governed</b>        | the citizens of a governing state                                  |
| <b>Constitutions</b>   | sets of political ideas by which states are governed               |
| <b>Monarch</b>         | a ruling head of state, usually a king or queen                    |
| <b>Hereditary</b>      | that is passed on as a right by a parent to a child                |
| <b>Aristocracy</b>     | the highest class in certain societies that is considered superior |

## The American Revolution

|                      |  |
|----------------------|--|
| <b>Comparable</b>    | similar                                    |
| <b>Diverse</b>       | very different                             |
| <b>Echoes</b>        | similar ideas or feelings                  |
| <b>Controversial</b> | causing public disagreement                |
| <b>Aspiration</b>    | hope or ambition to achieve something      |
| <b>Fleeing</b>       | running away from danger                   |
| <b>Persecution</b>   | hostility                                  |
| <b>Seeking</b>       | looking for                                |
| <b>Interference</b>  | involvement of others in their own affairs |
| <b>Thread</b>        | a continuing characteristic                |
| <b>Asylum</b>        | a safe place                               |
| <b>Huddled</b>       | crowded together                           |
| <b>Masses</b>        | a large number of people crowded together  |
| <b>Yearning</b>      | intense feeling of wanting something       |
| <b>Scrutiny</b>      | a very careful examination                 |



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### The American Revolution

**Anxiety** a feeling of worry and nervousness

**Cult-like** similar to a cult (a system of beliefs that are considered sacred)

*We'd love to get your feedback on this podcast.*

*What did you like? What could we do better?*

*What did you struggle to understand?*

*Let us know in the forum [community.leonardoenglish.com](https://community.leonardoenglish.com)*