Life, Liberty, & the Pursuit of Happiness:

A HISTORY OF THE AMERICAN EXPERIMENT

An online Advanced Placement U.S. History Resource

What It Is
OpenStax and the Bill of Rights Institute’s AP U.S. History (APUSH) resource is a different kind of history textbook based on narrative, compelling stories. This resource provides the voice of nearly 100 scholars asking a series of questions about American history, and it invites students to do the same. The entire resource will be hosted on an online platform that allows for personalized learning at no cost to your district.

“‘The point-counterpoint component HELPS PROVIDE DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES, which the AP exam asks.’”
—APUSH Teacher

How It Is Structured
The resource is divided into eight units, spanning from 1491 to the present. Each unit is divided into chapters that contain the following components, each aligned to the AP U.S. History framework:

UNIT COMPELLING QUESTION

CHAPTER INTRODUCTORY ESSAY
Longer narrative with accompanying assessments to provide students with an overview of the significant events in a given time period.

Lesson Plans (x3-5)
Teacher-facing instructions, handouts, and answer keys to help students form historical connections and practice the skills needed to prepare for the APUSH exam.

Primary Source Activities (x5-7)
Relevant and engaging audio, visual, and text primary sources for students to analyze.

Narratives (x10)
Brief essays with accompanying assessments that provide an in-depth and exciting look into the compelling stories and individuals that shaped the historical time period.

Decision Points (x3-5)
Narratives with accompanying assessments framed from the perspective of a group or character that was faced with a history-making decision.

Point-Counterpoints (x2-4)
Two scholars in a debate over historical topics, themes, or events to provide viewpoint diversity.

UNIT WRITING ASSIGNMENT

"THE LANGUAGE IS SIMPLE. IT GETS TO THE POINT. That’s really helpful.”
—APUSH Student
FAQs

• **How much will this resource cost my district?**
  This textbook is the first entirely free US history resource that aligns with AP standards. It is available to any student or educator, and it’s also openly licensed for use. Plus, since it’s digital, it means no more heavy books to carry around!

• **My district chooses my textbook for me. How can I still use Life, Liberty, & the Pursuit of Happiness in my classroom?**
  This resource is designed so that it can serve as a primary textbook for an AP U.S. History classroom or support the work you are already doing with your existing text. *Life, Liberty, & the Pursuit of Happiness* provides many rich ancillary activities in addition to the traditional historical narrative found in any textbook: video and audio links, primary sources, lessons, and AP-style assessments interact with and enrich the content. All narrative and ancillary content is carefully aligned to the College Board’s AP U.S. History framework, giving you peace of mind that these activities will help your students prepare for the exam.

• **Can this resource be used outside of an AP U.S. history class?**
  This resource is structured to closely follow the College Board’s AP U.S. history framework, but any of the content is applicable for a high school level U.S. history course.

• **Who wrote the content for this resource?**
  Unlike a traditional textbook, *Life, Liberty, & the Pursuit of Happiness* was written, edited, and reviewed by distinguished scholars from nearly 100 universities and historical organizations, including Yale, Stanford, the University of California-Berkeley, Notre Dame, and Georgetown. Experienced APUSH teachers have piloted and helped create the textbook’s content.

• **What makes Life, Liberty & the Pursuit of Happiness different from other textbooks?**
  In addition to preserving the voice of diverse scholars and teachers in the historical narrative and offering a wealth of supplementary materials, this resource provides an adaptive, customizable learning experience. As a teacher, you can choose the appropriate assignments and assessments that fit your classroom and pacing, and you can review student and class learning metrics in real time. Students can also see their own learning metrics and practice questions that align to their weakest topics. These tools allow students to take ownership of their own learning and instructors to teach more efficiently.

• **I want to learn more! When will this be available, and how do I bring this to my school?**
  The first four chapters of this resource covering 1491-1800 will be available in fall 2019. The full resource will be available in fall 2020. Contact Mallory Kinder from the Bill of Rights Institute at mkinder@mybri.org to learn more about how to get involved.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT:
Bill of Rights Institute at billofrightsinstitute.org
or OpenStax at openstax.org

“It’s a GREAT blend of primary and secondary source documents from a variety of viewpoints that is organized in a way that HELPS students prepare for the APUSH exam.”

–APUSH Teacher
Introduction: To the modern reader, the marriage of John and Abigail Adams seems remarkable in several ways: he was ten years her senior, both were well read and well educated, they were completely devoted to each other, to their family unit, and to their public responsibilities. Abigail served as confidante and policy advisor to her husband at a time when women were discouraged from even thinking about political matters. John and Abigail Adams have been called one of America’s first “power couples”—two people who are each influential or successful in their own right. The Massachusetts Historical Society has preserved more than one thousand letters that John and Abigail exchanged between 1762 and 1801. Their letters often began with the salutation, “Dearest Friend.”

Abigail Adams: “Remember the Ladies”

A DBQ Lesson from the Bill of Rights Institute and OpenStax’s forthcoming online AP U.S. History resource, Life, Liberty, & the Pursuit of Happiness: A History of the American Experiment
Abigail Smith was born in 1744, met John Adams in 1759, and married him in 1764. They had six children, four of whom survived childhood, and their fifty-four year marriage spans the revolutionary and early republic eras of the United States. From 1774 to 1784, they lived mostly apart because of John’s responsibilities to the new nation. While Abigail stayed at the family’s farm in Braintree, Massachusetts, raising and educating their children, John at first rode the judicial circuit earning the family’s livelihood as an attorney. Next, he served in the Massachusetts Assembly, and then in the First and Second Continental Congress in 1774 and 1776, respectively. In the early years of the new nation, John Adams served as commissioner to France, and then as Minister to Great Britain.

Following the Boston Tea Party of 1773, Boston remained the seat of opposition to British control of the colonies, with frequent clashes between those who supported the British and those who believed Parliament was violating the ancient rights of Englishmen. John and Abigail moved with their four children from Boston to the family farm at Braintree, thirteen miles away, because of the violent atmosphere in Boston. John served in the Continental Congress meeting in Philadelphia, and entrusted to Abigail the management of their children, farm, and financial affairs.

In this exchange of letters, Abigail famously protests coverture, laws that eliminated the legal personality of married women. Coverture was a principle of British common law. Under coverture, once a woman married, her husband exercised almost exclusive power and responsibility over her legal matters and property. A married woman could not sue or be sued, execute a will on her own behalf without her husband’s consent, nor control her property. In essence, a woman’s independent legal status did not exist once she married.

The legal status of married women was a major issue in the struggle for women’s suffrage in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

1. Who was the audience for these letters?

2. Where was John Adams and what was he doing when he wrote these letters?

3. What extraordinary challenges did Abigail have in caring for her family during the 1770s?

4. What is coverture?

5. Why do you think Abigail would protest coverture?

**Document 1**

**John to Abigail, July 7, 1775**

“It gives me more Pleasure than I can express to learn that you sustain with so much Fortitude, the Shocks and Terrors of the Times. You are really brave, my dear, you are an Heroine. And you have Reason to be. For the worst that can happen, can do you no Harm. A soul, as pure, as benevolent, as virtuous and pious as yours has nothing to fear, but every Thing to hope and expect from the last of human Evils.”

**John to Abigail, October 29, 1775**

“It should be your care, therefore, and mine, to elevate the minds of our children and exalt their courage; to accelerate and animate their industry and activity; to excite in them an habitual contempt of meanness [cruelty], abhorrence of injustice and inhumanity, and an ambition to excel in... every capacity, faculty, and virtue. If we suffer their minds to grovel and creep in infancy, they will grovel all their lives.”
1. John wrote the first letter to Abigail in July of 1775. What events were going on around the Adams’s home during that time?

2. List at least three terms John uses to describe Abigail in his July 7 letter.

3. In the second letter, what does John say is his and Abigail’s main responsibility?

4. Do you think this responsibility fell more to Abigail or John as of 1775? Why?

5. Based on your answers to questions 3 and 4 above, what do these letters reveal about the role of women in the 1770s?

6. How do you think Abigail felt when she received these letters from her husband?

**Document 2**

**Abigail to John, March 31, 1776**

[1] I have sometimes been ready to think that the passion for Liberty cannot be equally strong in the breasts of those who have been accustomed to deprive their fellow creatures of theirs. Of this I am certain that it [slavery] is not founded upon that generous and Christian principal of doing to others as we would that others should do unto us…

[2] I feel very differently at the approach of spring to what I did a month ago. We knew not then whether we could plant or sow with safety, whether when we had toiled we could reap the fruits of our own industry, whether we could rest in our own cottages, or whether we should not be driven from the sea coasts to seek shelter in the wilderness, but now we feel as if we might sit under our own vine and eat the good of the land…

[3] I long to hear that you have declared an independency -- and by the way in the new Code of Laws which I suppose it will be necessary for you to make I desire you would remember the Ladies, and be more generous and favourable to them than your ancestors. Do not put such unlimited power into the hands of the husbands. Remember all Men would be tyrants if they could. If particular care and attention is not paid to the Ladies we are determined to foment a Rebellion, and will not hold ourselves bound by any Laws in which we have no voice, or representation.

[4] That your Sex are naturally tyrannical is a truth so thoroughly established as to admit of no dispute, but such of you as wish to be happy willingly give up the harsh title of Master for the more tender and endearing one of Friend. Why then, not put it out of the power of the vicious and the lawless to use us with cruelty and indignity with impunity. Men of sense in all ages abhor those customs which treat us only as the vassals of your Sex. Regard us then as beings placed by Providence under your protection and in imitation of the Supreme Being make use of that power only for our happiness.

**Abigail to John, April 5, 1776**

[5] [Abigail described the serious illness suffered by several neighbors.] It rages much in other towns. The Mumps too are very frequent. Isaac is now confined with it. Our own little flock are yet well. My heart trembles with anxiety for them. God preserve them.

[6] I want to hear much oftener from you than I do. March 8 was the last date of any that I have yet had… Adieu. I need not say how much I am your ever faithful friend.
1. According to paragraph 1, what does Abigail think of slavery?

2. These letters were written in the spring of 1776. Where was John Adams during this time?

3. What troubles does Abigail have to deal with while managing the family home during this time, according to paragraph 2?

4. What specific actions do you think Abigail had in mind when she wrote her “Dearest Friend” and asked him to “Remember the Ladies, and be more generous and favourable to them than your ancestors...”?

5. Before going on to the next document, explain what you think John’s response may have been to Abigail’s request regarding the legal position of women.

**Document 3**

John to Abigail, April 14, 1776

[1] As to your extraordinary Code of Laws, I cannot but laugh. We have been told that our Struggle has loosened the bands of Government every where. That Children and Apprentices were disobedient -- that schools and Colledges were grown turbulent -- that Indians slighted their Guardians and Negroes grew insolent to their Masters.

[2] But your Letter was the first Intimation that another Tribe more numerous and powerfull than all the rest were grown discontented. -- This is rather too coarse a Compliment but you are so saucy, I wont blot it out.

[3] Depend upon it, We know better than to repeal our Masculine systems. Altho they are in full Force, you know they are little more than Theory. We dare not exert our Power in its full Latitude. We are obliged to go fair, and softly, and in Practice you know We are the subjects. We have only the Name of Masters, and rather than give up this, which would completely subject Us to the Despotism of the Peticote, I hope General Washington, and all our brave Heroes would fight. I am sure every good Politician would plot, as long as he would against Despotism, Empire, Monarchy, Aristocracy, Oligarchy, or Ochlocracy. -- A fine Story indeed. I begin to think the Ministry as deep as they are wicked. After stirring up Tories, Landjobbers, Trimmers, Bigots, Canadians, Indians, Negroes, Hanoverians, Hessians, Russians, Irish Roman Catholicks, Scotch Renegadoes, at last they have stimulated the [women] to demand new Priviledges and threaten to rebell.

1. How did John respond to Abigail’s suggestion in her April 5 letter asking him to “Remember the ladies”?

2. John implied that women seeking rights and protection will lead to what other effects in society?

3. What does this first paragraph reveal about the role of women in this time?

4. How do you think Abigail felt when she received this letter from her husband?

5. Considering Documents 1, 2, and 3 together, what can you infer about the relationship between John and Abigail? For example, what emotions and attitudes do you believe were conveyed by each writer and what emotions and attitudes were stirred in each recipient? To what extent do you think each respected the opinion of the other?
Document 4
Abigail to John, May 7, 1776
I can not say that I think you very generous to the Ladies, for whilst you are proclaiming peace and good will to
Men, Emancipating all Nations, you insist upon retaining an absolute power over Wives. But you must remember
that Arbitrary power is like most other things which are very hard, very liable to be broken -- and notwithstanding
all your wise Laws and Maxims we have it in our power not only to free ourselves but to subdue our Masters, and
without violence throw both your natural and legal authority at our feet.
"Charm by accepting, by submitting sway
Yet have our Humour most when we obey."

1. What hypocrisy does Abigail point out to John in her May 6, 1776 letter?

2. The couplet at the end of this passage is a quote from Alexander Pope, a well-known British poet. Why do you
think Abigail quoted him here? What point was she making by doing so?

Questions for Discussion

a. What was the overall tone of John and Abigail’s correspondence? What does this reveal about their
relationship?

b. What specific passages in these letters reflect “job responsibilities” of women at the time of the revolution?

c. How did Abigail Adams respond to these responsibilities? Cite specific passages from the documents to support
your answer.

d. In what ways does this conception of the proper role of women reflect inconsistencies?

e. How should the Declaration of Independence and/or the Constitution have “remembered the ladies?”

f. How should the founding documents have remembered other marginalized groups, such as Native Americans,
enslaved individuals, and indentured servants?

Thesis

Based on your reading of the documents and the class discussion, write a thesis statement that addresses the follow-
ing prompt:

Analyze the nascent impact of the American Revolution on the status of women.
Document Answer Key

Introduction

1. Who was the audience for these letters?

John and Abigail Adams

2. Where was John Adams and what was he doing when he wrote these letters?

He was in Philadelphia serving in the Continental Congress.

3. What extraordinary challenges did Abigail have in caring for her family alone during the second decade of her marriage to John?

The family evacuated the city of Boston because it was too dangerous during British occupation of the city, and moved to the Adams farm in Braintree. John was away most of the time during that decade, leaving Abigail to manage the children's education, running the farm, and making wise economic decisions during wartime.

4. What is coverture?

Coverture refers the British common-law custom that denied women legal status once married. Women could not hold property, sue or be sued, nor create a will without their husband's consent.

5. Why do you think Abigail would protest coverture?

Abigail likely resented that she had no legal power. She dealt with extraordinary challenges in her lifetime and was highly intelligent and capable. To be denied legal status on the basis of sex likely frustrated her.

Document 1

John to Abigail, 1775

1. John wrote this letter to Abigail in July of 1775. What events were going on around the Adams's home during that time?

The siege of Boston and British troops occupying the city.

2. List at least three terms John uses to describe Abigail in his July 7 letter.

John describes Abigail as brave, a heroine, benevolent, virtuous, pious.

3. In this second letter, what does John say is his and Abigail's main responsibility?

To raise their children so they work hard and behave well.

4. Do you think this responsibility fell more to Abigail or John as of 1775? Why?

This responsibility likely fell to Abigail, since she was the one at home with the children and managing the farm.

5. Based on your answers to questions 3 and 4 above, what do these letters reveal about the role of women in the 1770s?

Women were looked to as pure and good, the conscience and center of the family who ensured that children were raised with good values and a good work ethic.

6. How do you think Abigail felt when she received these letters from her husband?

Accept reasoned answers. The letters affirm John's confidence in her character, her diligence, and her devotion to the family. It is likely that she appreciated his confidence.
Document Answer Key

Document 2
Abigail to John, March 31 and April 5, 1776
1. According to paragraph 1, what does Abigail think of slavery?
   She points out the hypocrisy of calling for liberty while slaves have none, and she also points out that it goes against the golden rule to treat others as you wish to be treated.

2. These letters were written in the spring of 1776. Where was John Adams during this time?
   He was attending the Continental Congress (From intro).

3. What troubles does Abigail have to deal with while managing the family home during this time, according to paragraph 2?
   She is unsure if it is safe to plant their crops or if they should even stay in their home or flee into woods.

4. What specific actions do you think Abigail had in mind when she wrote her “Dearest Friend” and asked him to “Remember the Ladies, and be more generous and favourable to them than your ancestors…?”
   Abigail is protesting coverture and likely wanted legal quality with her husband.

5. Before going on to the next document, explain what you think John’s response may have been to Abigail’s request regarding the legal position of women.
   Accept reasoned answers.

Document 3
John to Abigail, April 14, 1776
1. How did John respond to Abigail’s suggestion in her April 5 letter asking him to “Remember the ladies”?
   He laughed.

2. John implies that women seeking rights and protection will lead to what other effects in society?
   Everything will be turned upside down—apprentices and children won’t listen, students, Native Americans, and enslaved individuals won’t listen. All of these figures have the same legal status as women under coverture.

3. What does this first paragraph reveal about the role of women in this time?
   Women have no political power and no civil rights once married. Women have no legal personhood—they cannot sue or be sued, uphold contracts, etc.

4. How do you think Abigail felt when she received this letter from her husband?
   Accept reasoned responses.

5. Considering Documents 1, 2, and 3 together, what can you infer about the relationship between John and Abigail? For example, what emotions and attitudes do you believe were conveyed by each writer and what emotions and attitudes were stirred in each recipient? To what extent do you think each respected the opinion of the other?
   Accept reasoned responses.
Document 4
Abigail to John, May 7, 1776

1. What hypocrisy does Abigail point out to John in her letter?
Abigail was disappointed in John’s response to her request, and pointed out the inconsistency in fighting for liberty while rejecting equality for women. She warned that arbitrary power is likely to be broken.

2. The couplet at the end of this passage is a quote from Alexander Pope, a well-known British poet. Why do you think Abigail quoted him here? What point was she making by doing so?
Abigail quoted Pope because both she and John, as very well-read individuals, would have been familiar with his writings. She may have been making the point that women can covertly exercise the control that men deny them.
## Inquiry Organizer
### Unit 2: Chapter 3 (1763–1789)

**Chapter Objectives:**
- Students will be able to identify and evaluate the causes of the American Declaration of Independence.
- Students will be able to evaluate the causes and effects of key events in the Revolutionary War.
- Students will be able to compare various perspectives on constitutional principles and assess arguments surrounding the structure of the new Union under the Constitution.

**Compelling Question:** What is the “American Experiment”?

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**Additional Resources:**
- George Washington at Newburgh (Decision Point)
- Natural Rights Republic: True or False? (Point-Counterpoint)
- Unit Writing Assessment
Chapter Assessment(s): What is the “American Experiment”?
Through this inquiry, students will evaluate primary and secondary sources in order to write an explanatory essay exploring how and why colonists decided to split with Britain, fight for independence, and embark on their “American experiment.” Drawing from the voices present in these resources, they will describe how colonists’ felt their natural rights were violated by the British, and how they attempted to further protect these rights by structuring government to prevent tyranny, both in the Articles of Confederation and the US Constitution. Students should be evaluated using the AP Long Essay Rubric [link].
John Trumbull’s 1819 depiction of the signing of the Declaration of Independence shows an orderly scene, but the decision to declare independence in 1776 only occurred after prolonged, contentious debate.

**Signing the Declaration of Independence**

A Decision Point from the Bill of Rights Institute and OpenStax’s forthcoming online AP U.S. History resource, *Life, Liberty, & the Pursuit of Happiness: A History of the American Experiment*

**Author:** Kevin R. C. Gutzman, Western Connecticut State University

To those who made the American Revolution, July 4, Independence Day, was the United States’ chief civic holiday and it has been ever since, while the Founders, especially General George Washington and the leaders of the Continental Congress, have grown grander in American national memory. Yet, they did not rush into immortality. Far from it.

By sundown on April 19, 1775, Britain’s appointed Governor of Massachusetts, General Thomas Gage, retained authority only over greater Boston. Earlier that day, his troops had arrived in Lexington, but not before colonial riders had warned John Hancock and Samuel Adams that “The Redcoats are coming!” Instead of arresting the rebels, proceeding to Concord to seize the colonial store of gunpowder, and returning to the capital having struck a mighty blow against colonial resistance, Gage’s men had kicked a hornet’s nest.

By sundown, all Massachusetts beyond Boston was in open revolt. Hancock and Adams had new moral authority thanks to Gage’s botched attempt to have them arrested—probably for transportation to treason trials in England. Their triumphant progress to Philadelphia for the Second Continental Congress was marked by military escorts and celebratory dinners at every stage: Gage had made them into continental heroes.
Congress responded by naming Virginian George Washington commander-in-chief of the newly christened Continental Army. Samuel Adams’ cousin John, another Massachusetts congressman, had his way in choosing Washington because of his considerable military experience and because he was a Southerner who would bring geographical balance to the New England army outside Boston. Washington’s character and military bearing were also beyond reproach.

Radical John Adams wanted the colonists to declare their independence immediately, in part because he knew diplomatic recognition of a new nation would add weight to its cause. Soon enough, French agents replied to American feelers by saying that yes, King Louis XVI would aid the rebels—under the table. On the cheap. A little bit. If the thirteen colonies declared independence, on the other hand, His Most Christian Majesty would happily and publicly lend his aid.

Yet, one year, two months, and nineteen days elapsed between the Battles of Lexington and Concord and promulgation of the Declaration of Independence. With the British government making war on colonists up and down the Atlantic coast of North America, the time lag requires some explanation.

There were several reasons why what seems to be the obvious course was not taken right away—despite the increasingly vociferous demands of radical congressmen like John Adams. First, North American colonists generally had been loyal Britons. In fact, they were never so patriotically British as in 1763, the year the French and Indian War ended. Britain emerged from that first world war as the greatest European power, and mighty France was reduced to runner-up in the contest for international power. Britons were freer than other Europeans, they were more prosperous, they were Protestant, and they were more powerful. The colonists considered themselves loyal subjects of the king. Why would anyone want to leave that situation?

As the chief beneficiaries of the victory of 1763, they also had greater reason for contentment than anyone else in the Empire. Their colonial governmental systems, with local legislation mainly by colonial assemblies under a general system of legislation by Parliament, taxed them less than Englishmen were taxed and were more representative than the British government in the Home Islands and did not even require them to pay a fair share of the cost of the mighty military establishment that had driven the French off their continent.

Yes, this same line of reasoning had led Parliament to endeavor, with the Stamp Act taxes of 1764-1775 to pass off some of the burden of maintaining troops to defend the colonists. Yet even if they had paid all the taxes Parliament enacted, the colonists still would have been paying only 10% of the cost of their own defense.

In short, being in the British Empire was a sweet deal for the colonies—and not only geographically. In the era of mercantilism, it was also highly advantageous economically. Great Britain had a huge colonial empire all over the world, and the general rule was that only people within the empire could trade with any part of the empire. The colonists’ chief market was a highly lucrative trade with Great Britain and her colonies in the Caribbean. Leaving the British Empire would mean disrupting long-standing business relationships, followed by an uncertain future. It would also mean the loss of protection by the powerful Royal Navy.
Perhaps equally importantly, while there were significant numbers of Germans in Pennsylvania and Dutchmen in New York, most white inhabitants of the colonies were British. This is why even years after independence was declared, prominent revolutionaries such as New York’s John Jay and Virginia’s Edmund Pendleton could still think of the rupture as “unnatural.” The Declaration itself included a poignant paragraph drawing British attention to the fact that the colonists had repeatedly over many years appealed to their “British brethren,” their “common kindred,” to intercede with the British government on their behalf. Yet, Britons had proven “deaf to the voice of … consanguinity.” Only “necessity” impelled the colonists to declare independence in the face of this consideration.

Another reason independence was not declared before July 4, 1776 is that the colonists commonly understood their quarrel to be with Parliament, not with King George III. As Thomas Jefferson explained in “A Summary View of the Rights of British America” (1774), these colonists saw George III as their rightful king with authority to exercise certain government powers on their behalf, but they thought the British Parliament was “foreign to our Constitution, and unacknowledged by our Laws.” Although the power had been unused since the time of Queen Anne (d. 1714), the British Crown still had the option to use a veto to stymie Parliament’s initiatives to intervene in colonial governance.

So, the colonists devoted their attention to rousing George III to come to their aid. His failure to do so, they finally concluded, marked him as a tyrant. Ironically, from where George sat, it would have been tyrannical for him to claim wide-ranging authority in North America over Parliament’s will. Britons found colonial calls for George to intervene in the lawmaking process on colonists’ behalf very strange, even ridiculous. The idea that Parliament was the problem and George the potential solution had long bedazzled the colonists, however.
Finally, and perhaps most obviously, fear held the colonists back. After all, by proclamation in August 1775 George III had declared participants in armed resistance to be rebels, and the prospect of all-out war with Britain was frightening. There seemed a very good likelihood that the colonists would lose a war with the world’s greatest power. In that event, Patriot leaders likely would all be hanged, and the colonies’ virtually republican political systems almost certainly would be transformed into something far less congenial.

On the other hand, they might win a war for independence. That prospect was frightening too. To win a war required an army. An army would have officers and, yet more worrisome, a victorious general. In Europe at that time—in the world at virtually any time—a victorious general and his officers seized power and took over the government. Britain’s monarchy and lords traced their origins directly to just such a sequence of events in 1066, and everyone knew it. No one knew that George Washington would be George Washington. It had been millennia since a man had been given ultimate executive authority and had given it back.

The last holdouts to declaring independence, the central colonies, came around only slowly. When Virginia’s Richard Henry Lee rose in the Second Continental Congress on June 7, 1776 to move that Congress declare “That these United Colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and independent States,” delegates from New York, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Delaware, and New Jersey had not yet been authorized to vote for independence. Thus, Congress voted to put off a decision on independence until early July.

Military affairs were urgent by the time Congress came to voting on July 2: a huge British naval force had assembled near New York City, and another flotilla approached South Carolina. Still, the New York delegation had to put off voting until it received new instructions. Twelve states voted for independence on July 2 (South Carolina did so only for the sake of unanimity), and New York’s congressmen added their state to the roster the following week.

Independence was no foregone conclusion on July 2, 1776. The American colonists only reluctantly embraced independence even after more than a year of war. They had close historical, cultural, economic, and political ties to Great Britain that were not easily broken. After a decade of perceived tyranny and war, the colonists finally decided on a permanent split from their motherland.
This original printing of the Declaration of Independence was sent to the army and the states in 1776.

Review Questions

1. Colonists' loyalty to the British Empire was especially high after which conflict?
   A. The Boston Massacre  
   B. Queen Anne's War  
   C. The French and Indian War  
   D. King Philip's War

2. Why was George Washington considered an exceptional choice for Commander in Chief of the Continental Army?
   A. Washington's military prowess was cemented at the Battle of Fort Necessity during the French and Indian War where he led a victorious campaign.  
   B. Washington's southern affiliation would bring in more geographical support for the cause and strengthen the chances of victory.  
   C. Washington's affluence meant that he would be able to personally fund much of the army's needs.  
   D. Trained from a young age to be a military man, Washington was well versed in multiple styles of fighting the enemy.

3. All the following were arguments for remaining in the British Empire except:
   A. Colonists had fair representation in Parliament.  
   B. Colonists benefited from the protection of the Royal Navy.  
   C. Colonists participated in a lucrative trade with Great Britain and her Caribbean colonies.  
   D. Most colonists shared a strong cultural identity with their British brethren.

4. Which of the following was true about the taxes Britain imposed on the colonies after 1763?
   A. Because colonists received protection from the British military, most perceived these taxes as fair and paid them without protest.  
   B. Even if colonists did pay the taxes enacted upon them, they would still be paying far less than the cost of their own defense.  
   C. American colonial governments had the power to accept or veto the taxes enacted by Parliament, which caused tension when they vetoed more and more of them.  
   D. American colonists felt their needs were being addressed in Parliament because of virtual representation, so they paid the taxes without protest.

5. Which of the following best explains colonists' shift toward the Patriotic cause?
   A. After multiple failed attempts to reconcile with the King and Parliament, Patriots resorted to stronger measures.  
   B. Immediately following Lexington and Concord, most colonists were convinced to join the Patriots in their quest for independence against the tyrant King.  
   C. Many of the German and Dutch immigrants in the colonies quickly came to the Patriot cause against their political rivals, the British.  
   D. The promise of trade within the empire kept most colonists loyal to the crown.
6. If the Patriots achieved military victory over the British, what result was most widely feared?

A. The colonists would uphold their values of republican virtue and liberty to create a successful government.
B. Following international precedent, the commanding general would take over the government and begin dictatorial rule.
C. Ideas of inalienable rights would materialize in an egalitarian society where men and women were equal.
D. Patriots would become staunch supporters of the mother country regardless of their victory.

7. Despite the importance of a unanimous vote for the Declaration of Independence, which region of the colonies took the most time in voting ‘aye’ for the document?

A. Southern colonies
B. Mid-Atlantic colonies
C. New England colonies
D. The Western territories

AP Practice Questions

Questions 1-2 refer to the excerpts below.

“We must be unanimous; there must be no pulling different ways; we must hang together.”
— John Hancock, 1776

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.--That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, --That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness.”
— Declaration of Independence, 1776

1. Which of the following was a direct result of the sentiments expressed in the above excerpt?
   A. Debate over the Declaration of Independence was inconclusive because the colonies could not agree on a course of action.
   B. A unanimous vote to adopt the Declaration of Independence was achieved.
   C. Complete uniformity existed in the colonies, with each person committed to Patriot ideals of liberty.
   D. Each signer of the document was tried for treason and hung at the conclusion of the war

2. Which of the following political ideas influenced the ideas expressed in the above excerpts?
   A. The right of people to participate in their government
   B. The idea of following your dream
   C. The right to worship freely without persecution
   D. The idea that local and federal government must share power
AP Practice Questions

Questions 3-4 refer to the excerpts below.

“You inquire why so young a man as Mr. Jefferson was placed at the head of the Committee for preparing a Declaration of Independence, I answer… Jefferson proposed to me to make the draft. I said, ‘I will not,’ ‘You should do it.’ ‘Oh! no.’ ‘Why will you not? You ought to do it.’ ‘I will not.’ ‘Why?’ ‘Reasons enough.’ ‘What can be your reasons?’ ‘Reason first, you are a Virginian, and a Virginian ought to appear at the head of this business. Reason second, I am obnoxious, suspected, and unpopular. You are very much otherwise. Reason third, you can write ten times better than I can.’ ‘Well,’ said Jefferson, ‘if you are decided, I will do as well as I can.’ ‘Very well. When you have drawn it up, we will have a meeting.’”

— John Adams in a letter to Timothy Pickering, 1822

3. Which of the following events unfolded due to reasons similar to those described in the excerpt above?
   A. George Washington being appointed Commander in Chief
   B. Robert Morris personally financing the American Revolution
   C. Patrick Henry giving his “Give Me Liberty or Give Me Death” speech
   D. Abigail Adams imploring her husband to include ladies in the new government

4. Which of the following reflects the main idea about the events described in the excerpt above?
   A. Jefferson’s politics were not important in his selection as principal author of the Declaration.
   B. Jefferson’s background and writing skill ensured his selection as principal author of the Declaration.
   C. Jefferson and Adams each had a clearly defined role in the authoring the Declaration.
   D. Jefferson and Adams agreed upon the exact language to be used in the Declaration.

Free Response Questions

1. Explain why the colonists were exceptionally patriotic after the French and Indian War ended in 1763.

2. Explain three reasons why independence was not declared before July 4, 1776.
1. Patriotism was high in the colonies immediately after the end of the French and Indian War because Great Britain emerged as the greatest European power. The British and their American colonists had comparatively more freedoms than other people across the world, were more prosperous, and had earned prestige by defeating their rival France. In addition, colonists were taxed less by their colonial governments than their British counterparts were taxed back in Europe. They also celebrated removing a fierce enemy and imperial rival to the north and west of the colonies.

2. Economically, leaving the British empire would mean disruption of long-standing business relationships under mercantilism, and it was uncertain what would replace them. Colonists commonly understood their quarrel to be with Parliament, not King George III, and they appealed to the king to come to their aid over Parliament. Fear also held the colonists back from declaring independence. The likelihood of winning a war against Great Britain, arguably the world’s greatest power at the time, seemed extremely low.

Answers to Review Questions
1 — C. The French and Indian War
2 — B. Washington’s southern affiliation would bring in more geographical support for the cause and strengthen the chances of victory
3 — A. Colonists had fair representation in Parliament
4 — B. Even if colonists did pay the taxes enacted upon them, they would still be paying far less than the cost of their own defense
5 — A. After multiple failed attempts to reconcile with the King and Parliament, Patriots resorted to stronger measures
6 — B. Following international precedent, the commanding general would take over the government and begin dictatorial rule
7 — B. Mid-Atlantic colonies

Answers to AP Practice Questions
1 — B. A unanimous vote to adopt the Declaration of Independence was achieved
2 — A. The right of people to participate in their government
3 — A. George Washington being appointed Commander in Chief
4 — B. Jefferson’s background and writing skill ensured his selection as principal author of the Declaration

Answers to Free Response Questions
1. Patriotism was high in the colonies immediately after the end of the French and Indian War because Great Britain emerged as the greatest European power. The British and their American colonists had comparatively more freedoms than other people across the world, were more prosperous, and had earned prestige by defeating their rival France. In addition, colonists were taxed less by their colonial governments than their British counterparts were taxed back in Europe. They also celebrated removing a fierce enemy and imperial rival to the north and west of the colonies.

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Mercy Otis Warren

A Narrative from the Bill of Rights Institute and OpenStax’s forthcoming online AP U.S. History resource, Life, Liberty, & the Pursuit of Happiness: A History of the American Experiment

Author: Alan Taylor, University of Virginia

Mercy Otis Warren belonged to a family of famous and powerful men in colonial Massachusetts. Her father was a judge, militia colonel, and political power-broker. Her older brother, James Otis, was a fiery lawyer who rallied the initial Patriot challenges to new British taxes and commercial regulations during the 1760s. Her husband, James Warren, exercised great political clout and exhibited Patriot zeal for the cause of liberty. These family ties enabled Warren to befriend the ambitious young lawyer John Adams and his talented wife Abigail. Through visits and many letters, Warren helped the younger Abigail develop confidence in her own good judgment in politics as well as household management.

Wealth and connections brought Mercy Otis Warren close to power, but society denied her the respect and influence granted to men, for social conventions reserved civic life to men and domesticity to women. Although her husband and brothers graduated from Harvard, she was educated at home by a family tutor. Fortunately, her talents inspired that tutor to teach her far more than the household duties deemed appropriate for colonial girls. He introduced her to classical literature, ancient history, and political theory. Curious to know more, she read widely in many books.
from the family library, cultivating a mind superior to nearly all others in Massachusetts. She also had the good fortune to marry someone thoughtful and loving who respected her intellect.

Committed to the cause of liberty, Warren resisted being excluded from the inner circle of Patriots and thought all men and women should be interested in public events. “As every domestic enjoyment depends on the decision of the mighty contest, who can be an unconcerned silent spectator?” she asked. Barred from serving in the legislature or the military, she nevertheless recognized that the Patriot movement depended on the power of words to persuade and inspire, so she cultivated influence through her talents as a writer. Patriot writers had to sway conservative colonists toward new convictions before they would make the political leap into the dangerous unknown by defying the British Empire. Through broadsides, pamphlets, plays, and newspaper essays, Patriot writers discredited British rule as corrupt. They also had to breed confidence in a brighter future of American autonomy and even independence. Almost all the Patriot writers were men, but few were as talented, productive, and influential as Mercy Otis Warren.

In a daring move for a time that insisted women had no place in the public world of print, in 1772 Warren anonymously published a mock epic that derided the royal governor and Massachusetts native Thomas Hutchinson as greedy and insidious, trading the liberties of his countrymen and women for British gold. In subsequent published poems and two plays, The Defeat (1773) and The Group (1775), she extended that critique to the conservative justices and council members in Hutchinson’s circle. Once war broke out, she went on to ridicule the allegedly misguided men and women who clung to British rule as an essential source of stability. She drew a hard and fast line between true Americans she praised as Patriots and those who dreaded revolutionary change, whom she demonized as traitors. Understanding the motivating power of words, Warren helped the Patriots build a mass movement.

During the early 1770s, Patriot politics increasingly moved beyond the formal politics of the colonial legislature, which the royal governors often frustrated by vetoes and dissolutions. As an alternative, Patriots created extra-legal committees, conventions, and meetings. Smaller groups of elite Patriots often hatched agendas in secret, beyond the surveillance of government informers. That shift provided another opportunity for Warren, who joined the covert planning sessions held by Patriots gathered in her home in Barnstable. Apparently, it was she who first suggested the creation of a network of committees of correspondence to link the top Patriot leaders with their counterparts in every town in Massachusetts—and ultimately beyond to the entire thirteen colonies. She also cultivated her own correspondence with John Adams, who valued her advice.

Despite her unusual accomplishments, Warren did not openly confront the conventions that limited women to a strictly domestic sphere. “Whatever delight we may have in the use of the pen, or however eager we may be in the pursuit of knowledge . . . yet heaven has so ordained the lot of female life that every literary attention, must give place to family avocations,” she advised a younger woman. Fearing public ridicule for overstepping her bounds, she published her early works anonymously. Patriot men encouraged her political writing, not as any challenge to social rules, but from a desperate need for her special literary talents for political persuasion. Warren worked within traditional gender norms, stretching without breaking them.

The Patriots won American independence, but after the war they were divided about how best to consolidate a stable yet republican government. Worried about post-war anarchy, most nationalist leaders, including John Adams, favored a stronger federal Constitution, written in 1787 and ratified by state conventions in 1788. Warren and her husband, however, regarded the Constitution as a betrayal of the Revolution, a power grab by elitists. She was loath, Warren explained, “to relinquish . . . the rights of man for the dignity of government.” Returning to print, she published an Antifederalist pamphlet in early 1788.

Politics strained the friendship between the Warrens and the Adams and ruined James Warren’s political career. At that point, Warren turned to writing history. She published her masterwork, the three-volume History of the Rise, Progress and Termination of the American Revolution, in 1805. Newly confident in her authority, she did so under her own name, becoming the first U.S. woman to produce a history, a genre considered far more substantial than poems, plays, and novels. Although it was a rousing celebration of the Patriots, Warren’s work also settled scores with the Federalists, whom she accused of compromising on liberty.
In particular, she accused John Adams of “partiality in favor of monarchical government.” Feeling betrayed, the hypersensitive Adams responded with bitter misogyny, “History is not the Province of the Ladies.” Warren reacted in the press with dignity and dismay, assuring Adams that it “was not the design of my historic work to write a panegyric [a tribute] on your life and character.” She would never accept “the assertion that all political attentions lay out of the road of female life.” In 1811 Abigail Adams made peace with Warren, but John Adams offered only a tense armistice.

Mercy Otis Warren never openly pushed for greater legal and political rights for women. But she was hardly alone in her restraint. Instead, like Abigail Adams and Judith Sargent Murray (a contemporary and an advocate for women’s rights), Warren sought public respect for women to venture their opinions in print. She, Murray, and Abigail Adams advanced the concept of “Republican Motherhood,” which held that women played a key role in educating their sons to become active citizens. In a letter Warren assured one young woman, “Let us by no means acknowledge such an inferiority as would check the ardour of our endeavours to equal in all mental accomplishments the most masculine heights.” She spoke of gender differences as “temporary distinctions” that would give way to true equality in America.

### Review Questions

1. Mercy Otis Warren’s family and friends did not include ________.
   A. John Hancock
   B. James Warren
   C. James Otis
   D. Abigail Adams

2. Mercy Otis Warren’s most important work was ________.
   A. a poem
   B. a play
   C. a novel
   D. a history

   Additional response:

3. During the Revolution Mercy Otis Warren actively supported:
   A. Loyalists
   B. Patriots
   C. Native Americans
   D. Freed Peoples

   Additional response:

4. After the Revolution, Mercy Otis Warren was known for her critique of:
   A. The Articles of Confederation
   B. The Constitution
   C. The Bill of Rights
   D. Alien and Sedition Acts

5. Warren and her contemporaries advanced the idea of Republican Motherhood because:
   A. It elevated the status of motherhood to civic importance and respect by making mothers responsible for instilling patriotic values in their children.
   B. It emphasized the ideal role of women as staying in the home and advising their husbands on political matters.
   C. It encouraged women to stand equal with their husbands in national matters.
   D. It relied on conservative beliefs about child-rearing as designed to protect children from oppositional political parties.

6. Warren’s accomplishments do not include which of the following?
   A. Publishing the first history by a U.S. woman.
   B. Participating in and influencing the ratification debate with well-written pamphlets.
   C. Advancing the war effort by advocating for committees of correspondence throughout the colonies.
   D. Shattering gender norms by remaining unmarried and demanding the right to vote.
1. Explain how Mercy Otis Warren’s gender affected her position in society.

2. What did Mercy Otis Warren do to overcome the limits on her influence?

3. Explain how Mercy Otis Warren sought to advance the ideals of the American Revolution.
AP Practice Questions

Excerpt 1

Even some Americans who have fought for their country and been instrumental in her emancipation from a foreign yoke, seem to be at war with every Democratic principle—and some men of genius, professed republicans, who formerly shared the confidence of the people, are now become the advocates for Monarchy and all the trappings of Royalty.

— Mercy Otis Warren to Catharine Sawbridge Macauley, May 31, 1791

1. Which of the following best describes the major characteristics of American politics in the 1790s?
   A. After the Revolution loyalists in America worked to undermine the new government.
   B. The political debates of the 1790s took place between monarchists and democrats.
   C. Those who professed republican principles no longer held the confidence of the people.
   D. The political debates in the 1790s centered around the constitutional powers of the national government.

2. What does this passage reveal about the side Warren took in the political debates of the 1790s?
   A. It reveals Warren to be a Federalist, because of her insistence on Democratic principles.
   B. It reveals Warren to be a Jeffersonian-Republican, because of her fear that the government will no longer be responsive to the people.
   C. It reveals Warren to be a Federalist, because of her insistence on a strong executive.
   D. It reveals Warren to be a Jeffersonian-Republican, because of her allusions to the American Revolution.

Excerpt 2

There is no security in the system [under the proposed new U.S. Constitution] either for the rights of [people with different ideas] or the liberty of the press . . . The executive and the legislature are so dangerously [combined] that [it should cause people to be alarmed] . . . There is no [system] for [making sure that power does not stay] in the same hands for life.


3. Which of the following groups would agree with Warren’s excerpt above?
   A. Patriot
   B. Loyalist
   C. Federalist
   D. Anti-Federalist

4. The sentiments expressed in the above excerpt contributed to which of the following events?
   A. Jail time for Warren for being a woman in open defiance of the majority opinion.
   B. Public demands that a Bill of Rights be added to the Constitution to address some of these concerns.
   C. A third convention that once again debated a new form of government agreeable to all citizens.
   D. The end of Warren’s ability to publicly publish her writings.

5. What outside information would a historian use to contextualize the sentiment in this document?
   A. Warren’s attack on the Adams family, which ruined their friendship and prevented reconciliation.
   B. Warren’s strict adherence to Revolutionary values of liberty and self-government.
   C. Warren’s viewpoint as a woman, which gave her insight her male peers missed.
   D. Warren’s provocative nature, which meant she wrote incendiary notes intentionally.
Answers to AP Practice Questions

1. The political debates in the 1790s centered around the constitutional powers of the national government.
2. It reveals Warren to be a Jeffersonian-Republican, because of her fear that the government will no longer be responsive to the people.
3. D. Anti-Federalist
4. B. Public demands for a bill of rights
5. B. Warren’s strict adherence to Revolutionary values
Primary Sources


Further Reading


