

# The Early Years

## Essential Question

What challenges did the American revolutionaries face at the start of the war?

## Reading Guide

### Content Vocabulary

mercenary (p. 155) recruit (p. 155)

### Academic Vocabulary

transfer (p. 155) previous (p. 155)

### Key People and Events

Hessian (p. 155)

Molly Pitcher (p. 155)

General William Howe (p. 156)

Nathan Hale (p. 156)

Lemuel Hayes (p. 157)

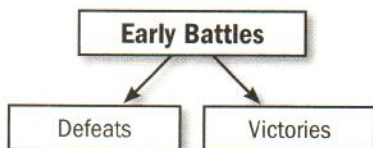
Peter Salem (p. 157)

Benedict Arnold (p. 159)

General Horatio Gates (p. 159)

### Reading Strategy

**Taking Notes** As you read, use a diagram like the one below to list the Patriot defeats and victories during the early years of the American Revolution.



## American Diary

On the night of July 9, 1776, General George Washington asked that the Declaration of Independence be read to his assembled troops in New York City. Later that night, a crowd of American soldiers and civilians marched to a park, where they toppled a gold-leafed statue of Britain's king George III on horseback. "In it were 4,000 Pounds of Lead," a lieutenant in the Continental Army said, "... to be run up into Musquet Balls [bullets] for the use of the Yankies."

—from the Journal of Lieutenant Isaac Bangs

Colonists pull down a statue of King George III in New York City.

## The Opposing Sides

**Main Idea** The British and American forces each had advantages and disadvantages during the war for American independence.

**History and You** What qualities should a leader have? Read to learn how George Washington's leadership qualities were an advantage for the Patriots.

As the toppling of the king's statue demonstrated, tensions between the colonies and Great Britain had reached a critical point after years of disagreement and negotiation. After the colonies declared independence from Britain in July 1776, the war for freedom was unavoidable.

Both sides expected the war for independence to be short. The British planned to crush the rebellion by force. Most of the Patriots—Americans who supported independence—believed the British would give up after losing one or two major battles. Few Patriots believed John Adams when he predicted in April 1776: "We shall have a long . . . and bloody war to go through."

At first glance the British had an overwhelming advantage in the war. They had the strongest navy in the world. They also

had an experienced, well-trained army and the wealth of a worldwide empire. Great Britain also had a much larger population than the United States. More than 8 million people resided in Britain, compared with only 2.5 million in the United States.

The colonists suffered serious disadvantages. They lacked a regular army and a strong navy. American soldiers also lacked experience. Weapons and ammunition were in short supply. Many Patriots belonged to militia groups—local forces. However, they were volunteer soldiers who fought for short periods of time before returning home.

The Patriots faced another obstacle. Not all Americans supported the struggle for independence. Some people were neutral, taking neither side in the conflict. The Quakers, for example, would not participate in the war because they opposed all armed conflict. Still other Americans remained loyal to Britain.

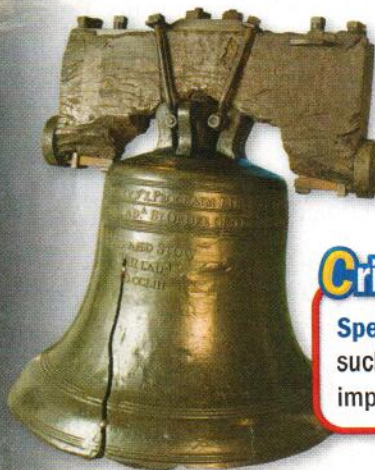
### The Loyalists

Those Americans who remained loyal to Britain and opposed the war for independence were called Loyalists or Tories. At least one American in five were thought to be Loyalists—perhaps as many as one in three. Some people changed sides during the war,

### Primary Source The Liberty Bell

**Symbol of Freedom** "Get us a good bell," wrote Isaac Norris, a Pennsylvania political leader to an aide in London in 1751. Arriving in 1752, the Liberty Bell was hung in the Pennsylvania State House (now Independence Hall). Its most famous ringing, on July 8, 1776, announced the first public reading of the Declaration of Independence. The Liberty Bell was rung every Fourth of

July and for many public events until a crack appeared in about 1846. Today, the Liberty Bell is a symbol of freedom in the United States and throughout the world.



### Critical Thinking

**Speculating** Why do you think symbols, such as statues, flags, and bells, are important to the people of a country?

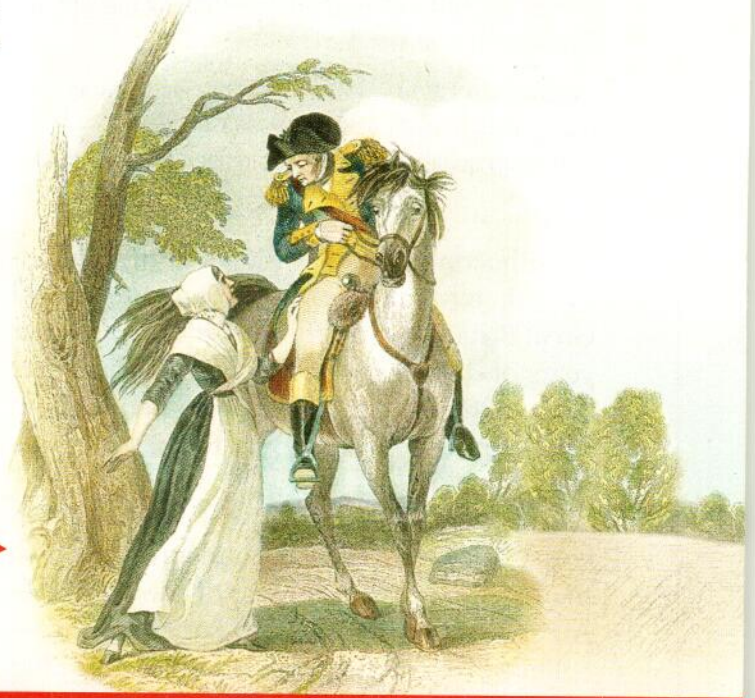


**THEN** In 1776 women could not officially join the army. Yet their contributions proved critical to the war effort. Some women spied on British soldiers while others traveled with the troops, serving as cooks, seamstresses, and nurses. A few women even disguised themselves as men in order to become soldiers.



◀ Female Continental soldier

Colonist Lydia Darrah spied on the British and passed information to the Continental Army. ▶



depending on which army was closer. Loyalist support varied from region to region throughout the war. In general, it was strongest in the Carolinas and Georgia and weakest in New England.

Loyalists supported Britain for different reasons. Some people remained loyal because they were members of the Anglican Church, headed by the British king. Others depended on the British for their jobs. Some Loyalists feared the disorder that might break out from challenging the established government. Others simply could not understand what all the commotion was about and why the colonies wanted independence. No other country, one Loyalist complained, “faced a rebellion arising from such trivial causes.”

Friends and families were divided over their loyalty to Britain. For example, William Franklin, son of Patriot Benjamin Franklin, was a Loyalist who had served as a royal governor. As one Connecticut man observed:

### PRIMARY SOURCE

“Neighbor [was] . . . against neighbor, father against son and son against father, and he that would not thrust his own blade through his brother’s heart was called an infamous villain.”

—from *Less Than Glory*, by Norman Gelb

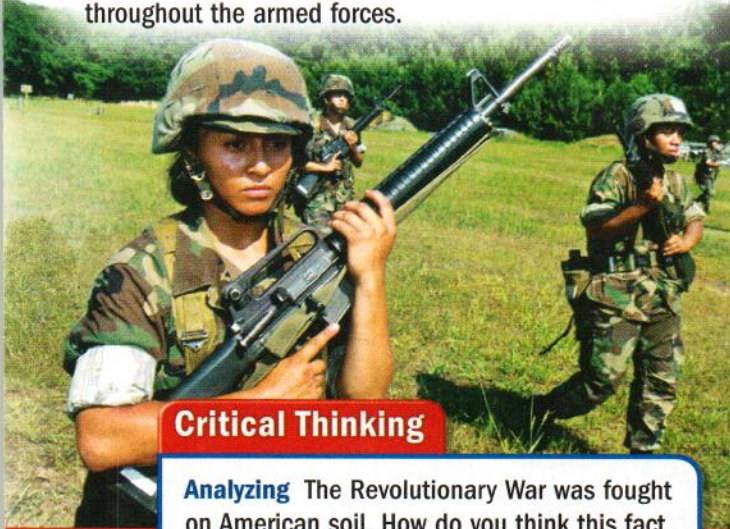
### African Americans in the War

Some African Americans also sided with the Loyalists. At the start of the war, the British appealed to enslaved Africans to join them. Lord Dunmore, the royal governor of Virginia, announced that enslaved people who fought on the British side would be freed. Many men answered his call. Eventually some of them ended up free in Canada. Others settled in the British colony of Sierra Leone in Africa.

### Patriot Advantages

The Americans held some advantages. They were fighting on their own ground and fought with great determination to protect

**Now** Today, women play a critical role in the U.S. military. By the mid-1990s, Congress had opened nearly all military jobs to women, including combat roles. Today, about one in every seven soldiers on active duty is a woman, and many women hold leadership positions throughout the armed forces.



### Critical Thinking

**Analyzing** The Revolutionary War was fought on American soil. How do you think this fact influenced the role of women in the war?

it. The British, however, had to wage war in a faraway land. They were forced to ship soldiers and supplies thousands of miles across the Atlantic.

Another advantage for the Americans was the type of soldiers fighting for the British. The British relied on **mercenaries**—hired soldiers—to fight for them. The Americans called the mercenaries **Hessians**, after the region in Germany from where most of them came. The Patriots were fighting for the freedom of their own land. They believed they had a much greater stake in winning the war than the hired soldiers did, who were fighting for money. This belief gave the Americans an edge over the Hessians in battle.

The Americans' greatest advantage was probably their leader, George Washington. Few could match him for courage, honesty, and determination. The war might have taken a different turn without Washington.

## Raising an Army

The Americans placed great value on liberty and personal freedom for citizens. After throwing off the rule of the British Parliament, they were unwilling to **transfer**—or move—power to their own Continental Congress. In some ways the American Revolution was really 13 separate wars, with each state pursuing its own interests. As a result, the Congress experienced difficulty enlisting soldiers and raising money to fight the war.

The militia played an essential role in the Patriots' forces. However, the Americans also needed well-trained soldiers who could fight anywhere in the colonies. The Congress established the Continental Army but depended on the states to **recruit**, or enlist, soldiers.

At first, soldiers signed up for one year of army service. General Washington appealed for longer terms. "If we ever hope for success," he said, "we must have men enlisted for the whole term of the war." Eventually the Continental Congress offered enlistments for three years or for the length of the war. Most soldiers, however, still signed up for only one year.

It was also difficult to recruit officers. The best officers in the Continental Army were veterans of **previous**, or earlier, wars or young men who were recruited from the ranks.

Women also fought with the Patriot forces. Margaret Corbin of Pennsylvania went with her husband when he joined the Continental Army. After he died in battle, she took his place. Mary Ludwig Hays McCauley also joined her husband in battle. The soldiers called her "Moll of the Pitcher," or **Molly Pitcher**, because she carried water pitchers to the soldiers. As a teenager, Deborah Sampson of Massachusetts watched her brothers and their friends go off to war. She then disguised herself as a boy and enlisted.

**Reading Check** **Summarizing** What disadvantages did the Patriots face?

# Patriot Defeats and Victories

**Main Idea** After suffering defeat at the Battle of Long Island, the Americans rallied and won victories at Trenton and Princeton.

**History and You** Do you think a single victory can help a struggling sports team with a losing record? Read to learn how American troops rallied following a crushing defeat by the British.

Most of the early battles in the war involved few troops. At Bunker Hill, for example, about 2,200 British soldiers fought 1,200 Americans. The British had not yet won a decisive victory over the Patriots, however. They realized they would need more troops to end the war quickly.

During the summer of 1776, Britain sent 32,000 troops across the Atlantic to New York. The British commander, **General William Howe**, hoped the sheer size of his army would convince the Patriots to give up. He was soon disappointed.

## Defeat on Long Island

Although Washington and the Patriots had fewer than 20,000 troops, they were determined to fight. In late August the two sides clashed in the Battle of Long Island. Outnumbered and outmaneuvered, the Continental Army suffered a serious defeat at the hands of the British forces.

One Patriot, **Nathan Hale**, proved himself a hero at Long Island. A teacher from Connecticut, Hale volunteered to spy on British troops. He disguised himself as a Dutch schoolteacher. The British discovered his true identity, however, and hanged him. According to tradition, just before his hanging Hale said, "I only regret that I have but one life to lose for my country."

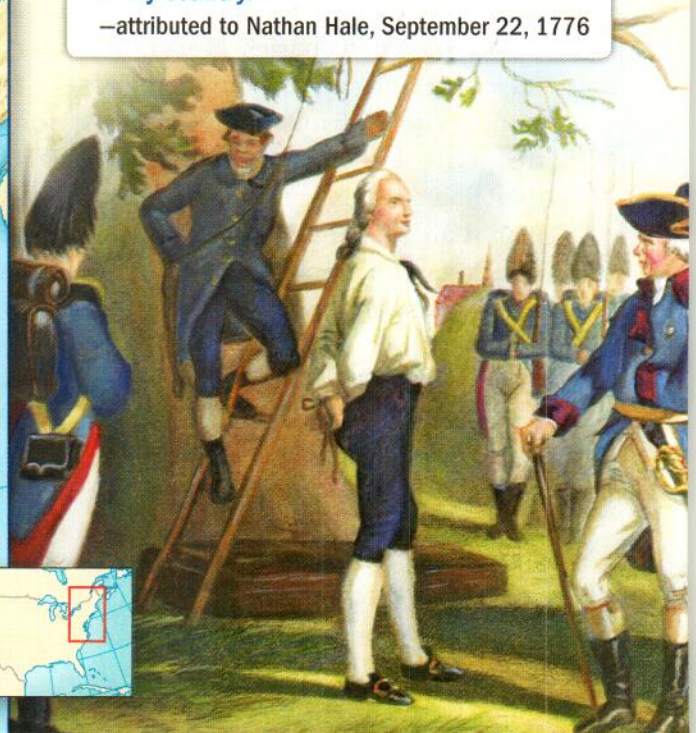
Although the Americans showed bravery, they ran short of supplies for the army. In the autumn of 1776, a British officer wrote that many of the Patriot soldiers killed on Long Island had not been wearing shoes, socks, or jackets. "They are also in great want of blankets," he said, predicting that the rebels would suffer during the winter.

## The Revolutionary War, 1776-1777



*"I only regret that I have but one life to lose for my country."*

—attributed to Nathan Hale, September 22, 1776



After the defeat on Long Island, Washington retreated to Manhattan. With the British in pursuit, the Continental Army retreated across New Jersey into Pennsylvania.

## A Low Point

In the winter of 1776–1777, the Patriots' cause was near collapse. The size of the Continental Army had dwindled. Some soldiers completed their terms of service and went home. Other soldiers ran away.

Washington wrote his brother that if new soldiers were not recruited soon, "I think the game is pretty near up." Still, he could not believe that the fight for liberty would truly fail.

Washington pleaded with the Continental Congress for more troops. He even asked that the Congress allow free African Americans to enlist. Early in the war, however, the Southern states had persuaded the Congress not to allow African Americans in the Continental Army. Many white people in the South felt uncomfortable about giving guns to African Americans and allowing them to serve as

soldiers. In those Southern states that had large enslaved populations, the whites feared revolts.

## African Americans Join the Fight

As the need for soldiers grew, some states ignored the ban and enlisted African Americans. Rhode Island raised an all-African American regiment in 1778. By the war's end, every state except South Carolina enlisted African Americans to fight.

Historians estimate that as many as 5,000 African Americans joined the Patriots. Among them were **Lemuel Hayes** and **Peter Salem**, who fought at Concord. African Americans fought because they believed in the Patriot cause or they needed the money. Some were enslaved Africans who had run away from slaveholders and fought to earn their freedom.

## American Victories in New Jersey

The British settled in New York for the winter, leaving some troops in Princeton and Trenton, New Jersey. Washington saw a chance to catch the British off guard.



▲ George Washington and Nathan Hale plan the spy mission.

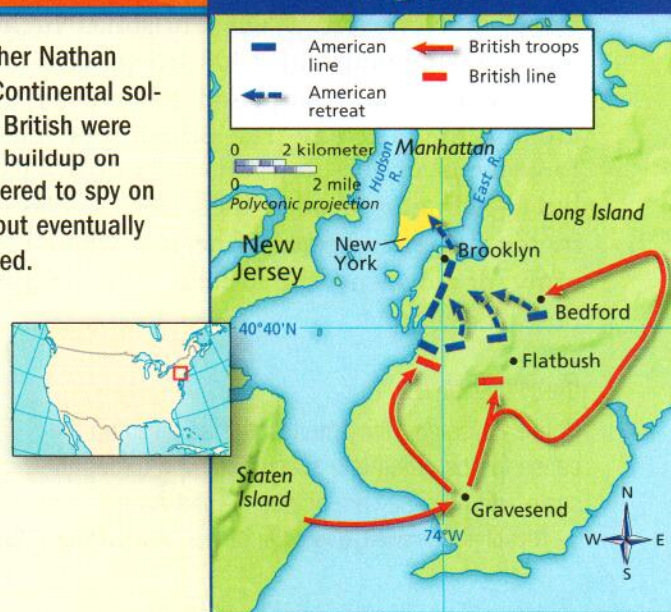
Connecticut schoolteacher Nathan Hale was serving as a Continental soldier in New York as the British were beginning their military buildup on Long Island. He volunteered to spy on British troop positions but eventually was captured and hanged.

## By the Numbers

### The Fighting Forces, 1777



## Battle of Long Island, August 1776

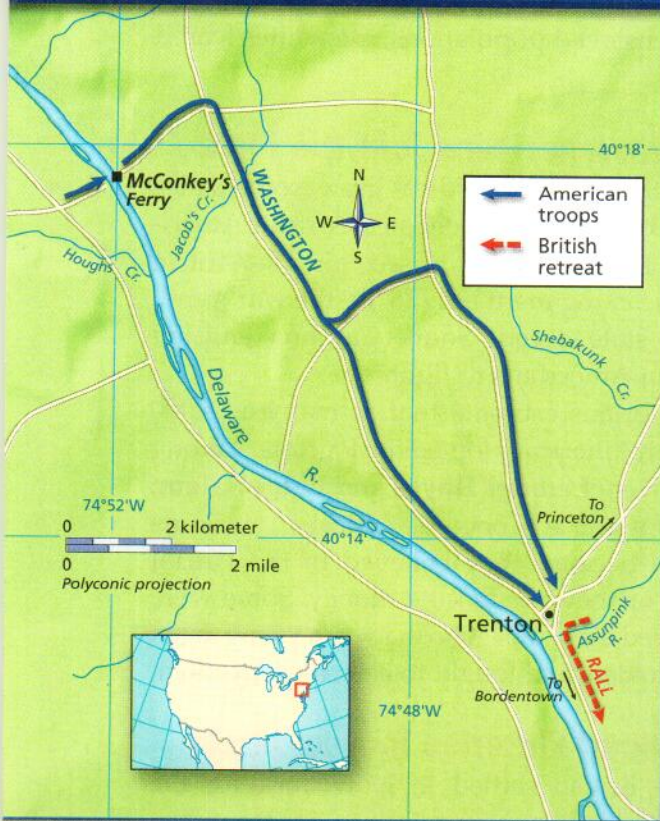


## Map Skills

**Location** In what state was the Battle of Saratoga fought?

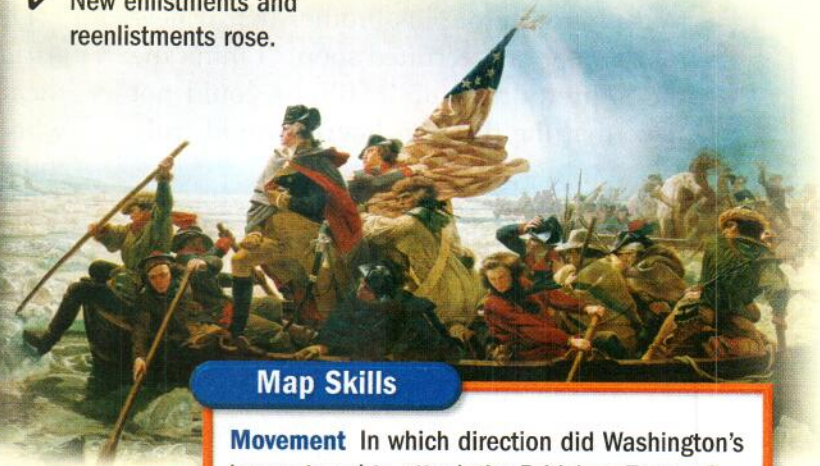
*“Our Men pushed on with such rapidity, that they soon carried four pieces of Cannon out of Six, Surrounded the Enemy, and obliged 30 Officers and 886 privates to lay down their Arms without firing a Shot. Our loss was only two Officers and two or three privates wounded. The Enemy had between 20 and 30 killed.”*

—George Washington, Letter, December 28, 1776



Washington's leadership at the Battle of Trenton led to an important victory for the Patriots:

- ✓ Washington's troops gained confidence.
- ✓ The Continental Army won badly needed supplies.
- ✓ New enlistments and reenlistments rose.



## Map Skills

**Movement** In which direction did Washington's troops travel to attack the British at Trenton?

Washington was stationed in Pennsylvania across the Delaware River from the British camp in New Jersey. On Christmas night 1776, Washington and 2,400 troops crossed the icy river and surprised the enemy at Trenton the next day. The British sent reinforcements under Lord Charles Cornwallis, but Washington evaded those forces. Washington then marched to Princeton, where his army drove away the British. One British observer wrote:

### PRIMARY SOURCE

“A few days ago, [the Americans] had given up the cause for lost. Their late successes have turned the scale and now they are all liberty-mad again.”

—Nicholas Cresswell, quoted in *George Washington's War*

**✓ Reading Check** **Explaining** Why was the winter of 1776–1777 significant?

## A British Plan for Victory

**Main Idea** The British plan to separate New England from the Middle Colonies was foiled at the Battle of Saratoga.

**History and You** Do you like to play chess or other games in which you outmaneuver your opponent? Read how the Americans outmaneuvered a British army and won a stunning victory.

The British worked out a battle plan for 1777. They would take Albany, New York, and gain control of the Hudson River. This would separate New England from the Middle Colonies.

The plan involved a three-pronged attack. General John Burgoyne would lead nearly 8,000 troops south from Canada. A second force, under Lieutenant Colonel Barry St. Leger, would move east from Lake Ontario.

A third group, under General Howe, would move north from New York City. The three British forces would meet at Albany and destroy the Patriot troops.

## The British Capture Philadelphia

Howe won battles in September 1777 at Brandywine and Paoli, near Philadelphia. Then Howe's troops captured Philadelphia, forcing the Continental Congress to flee. In early October, Washington attacked the British at nearby Germantown but had to withdraw. Howe decided to spend the winter in Philadelphia instead of going to Albany.

## Patriots Slow the British

Meanwhile, problems delayed the British from taking Albany. In August, American soldiers halted St. Leger's advance at Fort Stanwix, New York. Led by **Benedict Arnold**, the Americans forced the British to retreat.

General Burgoyne's army was not making much progress toward Albany either. In July he captured Fort Ticonderoga, but trouble followed. Because he enjoyed good food and fine clothes, Burgoyne traveled with 30 wagons of luxury goods. This baggage, along with the trees downed by the Americans to block the British, slowed Burgoyne's journey.

Burgoyne needed supplies. He sent 800 troops and Native Americans to capture the American supply base at Bennington, Vermont. A local militia group, the Green Mountain Boys, attacked and defeated them. Desperate for supplies, Burgoyne retreated in October to Saratoga, New York.

## The Battle of Saratoga

Burgoyne faced serious trouble at Saratoga. The British forces he expected did not arrive. The Americans had stopped St. Leger's army at Fort Stanwix, and Howe's forces were still in Philadelphia. In addition, American troops under the command of **General Horatio Gates** blocked Burgoyne's path to the south. Burgoyne found himself surrounded by a larger army. Burgoyne made a desperate attack on October 7. The Americans held firm.

On October 17, 1777, General Burgoyne surrendered. The British plan had failed. General Howe resigned as commander of the British troops in America. He was replaced by General Henry Clinton.

 **Reading Check** **Analyzing** Why was the Battle of Saratoga a turning point in the war?

# Section 1 Review

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### Vocabulary

1. Use the terms **mercenary**, **transfer**, **recruit**, and **previous** in separate sentences that explain their meanings.

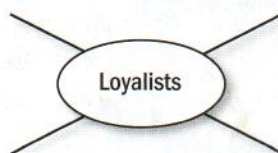
### Main Ideas

2. **Discussing** What disadvantages did British forces face in the American Revolution?
3. **Explaining** Why were African Americans at first banned from serving in the Continental Army?

4. **Analyzing** What difficulties did General Burgoyne face at the Battle of Saratoga?

### Critical Thinking

5. **Analyzing** Use a diagram like the one below to explain why the Loyalists supported Britain.



6. **Persuasive Writing** As a colonist, write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper. Point out the colonies' strengths and why you think you will win the war for independence.

7. **Answer the Essential Question**  
What challenges did the American revolutionaries face at the start of the war?