

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL HISTORY OF BRITAIN:II
MODULE I-AGE OF TRANSITIONS



TOPIC: THE WAR OF INDEPENDENCE
IV SEMESTER BA ENGLISH COMPLEMENTARY PAPER
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The War of Independence



- Though the Declaration of Independence was accepted by the Continental Congress in 1776, the war had been continued up to 1783.
- To the colonists it was a war for their existence.
- Leaders like George Washington, Abigail Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Patrick Henry, Alexander Hamilton and Thomas Jefferson distinguished themselves by their courage, patriotism, wisdom and talent.



- The American war of Independence was fought for about seven years.
- Though inexperienced and lacking in supplies, the colonial soldiers fought with courage and determination under their leaders.
- The whole colonial area from north to south was practically covered by war actions.
- Though the British fought by employing more than 30,000 soldiers they ultimately lost the war.



- The defeat of the British General Burgoyne at Saratoga in October 1777 proved decisive.
- This American victory made France officially recognize the United states and join the war on its side.
- Soon Spain and Holland also joined
- Now Britain had to fight a war not only in America, but also in other parts of Europe and even India.
- Thus left with no alliance, England stopped its fighting in America with surrender of English General Cornwallis at Yorktown in Virginia in October 1781.
- Formal peace came only in 1783 with Treaty of Paris by which England recognized the independence of 13 colonies.



- While war was going on the Second Continental Congress had approved in 1777 a constitution of central government for united colonies.
- This constitution known as the Articles of Confederation was then ratified by the states and came into effect in March 1781, before the war of independence came into end.
- The central govt visualised by the Articles of Confederation was a very weak.
- Historians described this period as “ the critical period in American History”.



- Leaders like Madison, Washington etc took efforts to convene Constitutional Convention which finally adopted a constitution for USA in 1787.
- It had its sessions at Philadelphia from May to September 1787.
- As the required number of states (9) ratified the new constitution , the new government of U.S.A. started functioning in April 1789.
- George Washington took charge as the first President of the new Republic in April 30, 1789.



- Impact

- First anti- colonial revolution- brought into existence a nation and govt which represented the will of people rather than wishes of king.
- Idea of representative govt influenced other european countries especially France and England.
- American revolution inspired French to rise up against the ancient regime.
- Blow to Britain – change in colonial policy – Pits India Act – to control east india companys