

Genre

Expository Text

tells people something. It contains facts about real people, things, or events.

Comprehension Skill

★ Classify and Categorize

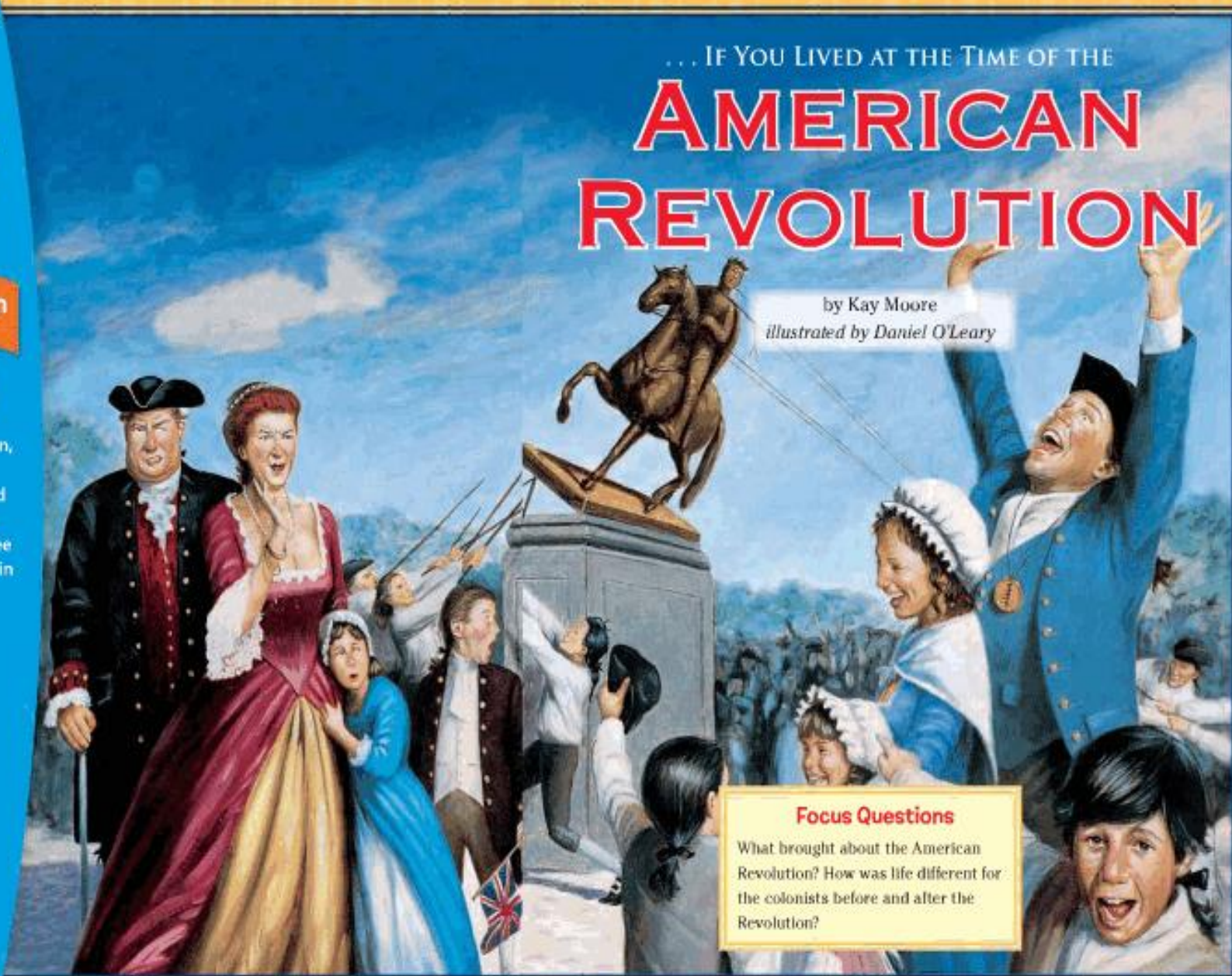
As you read the selection, group similar things together to comprehend and recall the text. This skill will also help you see the relationships found in the text.

... IF YOU LIVED AT THE TIME OF THE

AMERICAN REVOLUTION

by Kay Moore

illustrated by Daniel O'Leary



Focus Questions

What brought about the American Revolution? How was life different for the colonists before and after the Revolution?



Introduction

Have you ever wondered why the Fourth of July is a holiday? Before that date in 1776, the thirteen American colonies were part of an empire of more than thirty-two lands ruled by the King of England. The Declaration of Independence, which was signed by members of the Continental Congress on July 4, 1776, showed that the colonies wanted to be free. But it took a war for this to actually happen.

This war is called the "American Revolution." Some call it the "War of Independence" or the "Revolutionary War." It is usually viewed as a struggle between the American colonies and King George III of England, who ruled the British Empire. But it was also a "civil" war, a war that is fought between people of the same country.

There were people from many different backgrounds living in the British American colonies. Not all of them thought it was a good idea to break away from England. If you and your

family remained loyal to the king, you were called Loyalists. If you and your family wanted to be free from British rule, you were called Patriots.

What was life like before the Revolution?

All thirteen American colonies ruled by England were along the Atlantic Ocean. About two and a half million people lived in the colonies.

You could travel on the Boston Post Road from Boston to New York, then on to Philadelphia. These were the three largest cities in the colonies. Other roads went south from Pennsylvania to South Carolina. All the roads were narrow and rough. It was better to travel by water if you could.

Mail went by stagecoach between New York and Philadelphia three times a week in spring and summer, and twice a week between Boston and Philadelphia. In fall and winter, service was less often.





Each colony was interested only in its local problems. The colonies did not work well together.

The area called New England included the colonies of Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Connecticut. Shipbuilding, fishing, hunting for whales, and buying, selling, and shipping goods were important to these colonies.

The Middle Colonies of New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Delaware had soil that was good for growing many different kinds of fruits and vegetables. So much wheat was grown in Pennsylvania and New York that they were called "the bread basket of the empire."

In the South were the colonies of Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia. Here, tobacco was grown on large farms called plantations. In some areas, farmers grew rice, and indigo plants used to make blue dye.

What started the Revolution?

The first settlers in the colonies liked having British help and protection. British soldiers were there to help them fight Native American enemies and to keep other countries, such as France and Spain, from invading. It was like your mother watching over you. However, as you grow older, you will want more freedom to make your own decisions. That is how many of the colonists felt.

The colonists grew tired of following British rules. England controlled trade and told people where they could settle. They forced the colonists to provide housing and food for the British soldiers sent to protect them.

Since 1760, the colonists had also had to pay taxes for various products. Under a law called the Stamp Act (1765), the colonists had to pay extra money for newspapers, land deeds, card games, dice games, and even for graduation diplomas.

The colonists had no direct way to complain, since no one from the colonies was allowed to be a member of the British Parliament, which made the rules. James Otis, a Boston lawyer, stirred up the colonists when he said they should not pay taxes until they could send a person to speak for the colonies in Parliament. "Taxation without representation is tyranny!" he exclaimed.

After years of protest, the British took away all the taxes except the one on tea. This did not satisfy the Patriots. On December 16, 1773, angry Patriots, dressed as Mohawk Indians, dumped 342 crates of tea into Boston Harbor.

King George decided to punish Boston for the "Boston Tea Party" by closing the port. Nothing would go in or out of the city until the tea was paid for, and the city told the king it was sorry that this had happened.

Some people thought it was time for the colonies as a group to protest British taxes. In September 1774, men from the colonies met together in Carpenters' Hall in Philadelphia. Called the "Continental Congress," this group became the informal government of the colonies.

Bad feelings continued. Finally, British soldiers and Patriots fought at Lexington and Concord, Massachusetts, on April 19, 1775. This was the start of the American Revolution.

Who were the Loyalists?

About one-third of the people living in the colonies wanted to remain as citizens of England. They stayed loyal for different reasons:

1. They believed the king had the right to rule the colonies and that his laws were fair.
2. They were afraid of the British soldiers.
3. They had family in England and didn't want to put them in danger.
4. They felt that a government run by rich Patriots would be worse.

These people were known as "Loyalists," "Royalists," "friends of the government," "the King's friends," or "Tories."

Some Loyalists joined the British army and became regular British soldiers (called "Redcoats" or "Lobsterbacks" by the Patriots because of the color of their uniforms).

Others formed Loyalist units that fought with the British. Among these were the Loyal Greens, King's American Regiment, Queen's Loyal Rangers, and Royal American Regiment.

Many Native Americans, including the Iroquois and Seneca nations, joined the British side. So did thousands of African Americans. They had been slaves, brought over to the colonies from Africa against their will to work on plantations in the South, or born in the colonies as slaves. The British gave them their freedom in return for their help.

Soldiers from Germany, called "Hessians," were paid by the British to come and help their troops.

Many people who had recently come to the colonies from England, Scotland, Ireland, and Germany also remained loyal to the King of England.

There were so many Loyalists in New York City that it became known as the Tory capital of America. Delaware and the southern colonies also had a large number of Loyalists.





All types of people were Loyalists, including lawyers, merchants, ministers, government officials, farmers, and workers.

Who were the Patriots?

In the beginning, the Patriots were the people in the colonies who wanted England to remove taxes. But soon the word “liberty” was being heard. The Patriots no longer wanted to be “British Americans”—they just wanted to be “Americans.” They supported the Continental Congress as a way to rule themselves. They started thinking of themselves as the “United Colonies.”

Patriots were known by many names including “Rebels,” “Liberty Boys,” “Sons (or Daughters) of Liberty,” “Colonials,” and “Whigs.” About one-third of the people living in the thirteen colonies were Patriots.

When war broke out, the “Continental Army” was formed with men from the colonies and a few men from Canada. Most Native Americans were on the British side, but some tribes helped the Patriots.

The Patriots enlisted slaves to fight for them after England had already taken on thousands of African-American soldiers. Although more blacks joined the British army, it is thought that about five thousand fought for the Patriots. Since slaves did not have last names, many gave themselves names such as “Liberty” or “Freedom.” One unit from Connecticut included men named Sharp Liberty and Cuff Freedom.

In 1778, France joined the Patriots’ side. They sent money, troops, and a navy.

Spain and Holland entered the war in 1779, supplying money to the Patriots.

Did everyone in the colonies take sides?

No. Many people tried to stay neutral (not choose a side) during the war. Some changed sides depending on what was happening.

Many families split because of different views about the war. Benjamin Franklin was a well-known Patriot. His son, William, was the Royal Governor of New Jersey and warned the people in that colony not to act against the king. William became the head of the Board of American Loyalists.

George Washington was the leader of the Continental Army. His older half brother, Lawrence, was a Loyalist.

Some people hoped to stay out of the war entirely. The religion of the Quakers and Mennonites did not allow them to fight, although some did take sides.

Others were not free to express openly their true feelings, but were expected to go along with the view of their households. These included slaves and indentured servants—men and women who had to work for someone else for a number of years to pay off a debt.

You could not always be sure how someone felt about the war. There were no lines dividing each side. Your family might be Patriots and your next-door neighbors Loyalists.

In some families, a couple of family members would travel to Britain and the rest would stay in the colonies. In this way, the family was sure to be on the winning side, no matter which side won.



How would your life have changed after the Declaration of Independence?

The Declaration of Independence was written mainly by Thomas Jefferson and adopted by the Continental Congress in 1776. The Declaration listed twenty-seven ways the king had hurt the colonies.

Patriots agreed with the Declaration. They now viewed the colonies as thirteen states making one nation.

The Declaration divided many families, friends, and neighbors. Some Patriots were against British taxes, but didn't favor a total break with Britain. John Dickinson, a member of Congress from Philadelphia, spoke out strongly, saying, "Declaring our independence at a time like this is like burning down our house before we have another."

Some of these Patriots began siding with the British and even moved to England.

Men who wanted independence went to fight with the Continental Army or with their local militia. In Massachusetts, they were known as "minutemen" because they could get ready to fight in a minute. More soldiers came from Massachusetts and Connecticut than other areas.

With men away from home, family life changed.

Women had to run farms and manage businesses. Children helped harvest crops, and made sure animals were fed and watered. Sometimes, fathers and brothers would return home to help plant or harvest crops and then go back to their units and the fighting.

Money could be scarce for soldiers' families because soldiers often didn't get paid for over a year.

Did any women or children fight in the Continental Army?

Boys often went to war with their fathers or older brothers. At age sixteen, boys could join the army. Younger boys might have played the drum, bugle, or fife for the soldiers.

Nathan Futrell was a drummer boy in the North Carolina Continental Militia when he was seven years old.

At ten, Israel Task left his Massachusetts farm to be a cook and carry messages during battles.

Women and girls took care of the wounded, cooked food, and washed and mended uniforms.



Some women were part of the fighting, too. They carried pitchers of water to cool down the cannons and give the men drinks. These women were called "Molly Pitchers" by the soldiers. When her husband was hurt, Mary Hays stopped carrying water and took over his job loading and firing a cannon. After the war, she was awarded a pension of forty dollars a year for her service.

Families sometimes went with their men and the army. The armies didn't often fight in winter so General George Washington's wife, Martha, spent eight years in winter camp with her husband, returning to Mount Vernon, their Virginia home, each spring.

Was it hard to get money during the war?

Because of the war, gold and silver coins were hard to come by. And the war cost a lot of money! To pay for the war, the Continental Congress asked each state to print its own paper money. At first Patriots used the paper dollars in support of their cause.

However, this kind of money lost value because so much was printed and it was easy to copy. Many people called the paper money "shin plasters," because they felt it was only useful as a bandage for a sore leg. People began to say, "It's not worth a Continental" when they meant something was not worth very much.



This kind of situation is called inflation. It got so bad that in March of 1780, a paper dollar was worth just a fourth of a cent! And things kept getting worse. In May of 1781, it took 225 paper dollars to equal one gold dollar. A few weeks later, you needed 900 paper dollars to buy one gold dollar's worth of supplies.

It was said that it took a wagon-load of money to buy a wagon-load of food. Some soldiers even refused to be paid in the paper money at all; they wanted hard gold.

How did people get food and clothes?

You didn't need much money to buy food if you lived in the country. Most homes had a vegetable garden. Also, you could pick wild fruits, berries, and nuts. You could catch fish and hunt for deer and wild turkeys.

Nothing was wasted:

- Animal bones were saved and made into buttons.
- Goose feathers were used to stuff pillows.
- Reeds and twigs were woven into baskets.
- Old pieces of cloth and outgrown clothing were cut into squares and sewn into quilts. During the war years, quilt-makers invented patterns they called "Washington's Puzzle" or "Washington's Plumes."

Patriots who lived in cities often received food, clothing, and other necessities from relatives or friends who lived in the country. You could also trade with Patriot neighbors.

Sometimes you just did without.

How did you get news about the war and what was happening in the other colonies?

Getting news was important to the Patriots even before the war began. Each colony had set up a "committee of correspondence," who hired its own riders to carry messages by horseback. (This was long before the telephone, radio, television, or even the telegraph had been invented.)

Messages were delivered from one town to the next until all colonies received the news.

Sometimes, information was sent by ship instead of overland.

After the war began, the committees of correspondence formed "committees of safety." Their riders were constantly in danger of being captured by the British.

Children were sometimes used as messengers. One young messenger was nine-year-old John Quincy Adams, who later became the sixth president of the United States. He took messages from his mother, Abigail, in Braintree, Massachusetts, to his father, John, in Boston.



Another way to find out the news was from a newspaper. The *Boston Gazette* and the *South Carolina Gazette* were two papers that reported news with a Patriot view. The *Royal Gazette* (New York) was the best known of the Loyalist newspapers.

Most newspapers were printed only once a week and had four pages, with three columns on each page.

In small towns a "town crier," sometimes a schoolboy, might share news aloud. As more and more people learned to read, there was less need to have a town crier.

Pamphlets and books were also printed. Thomas Paine's *Common Sense* had sent the idea of freedom throughout the colonies when it was published in January of 1776. It was often re-read and shared during the war. On the last page in bold letters were the words, "THE FREE AND INDEPENDENT STATES OF AMERICA."



As thousands of people read the forty-seven pages, they saw themselves as the "United States."

More news could be found on posters, called broadsides, that were nailed to trees, poles, and buildings. Broadsides were used to get men to join the army and for various public announcements.

Who were the famous Patriots?

The most well known were the men who helped promote the idea of freedom.

George Washington, a planter and soldier from Virginia, was chosen to be commander of the Continental Army. Called "the Father of Our Country," Washington was a strong leader who held the army together when the soldiers faced many problems.



George Washington



Patrick Henry

Patrick Henry from Virginia was known as “the Son of Thunder” because of his patriotic speeches. He started many people thinking about freedom when he said, “Give me liberty or give me death.”

Paul Revere was a silversmith in Boston. He was a leader of the Sons of Liberty, a messenger, and a secret agent for the Patriots. On April 18, 1775, Revere made his famous midnight ride from Boston to Lexington, Massachusetts, to warn the citizens that the British army was on its way. Revere was captured, but he escaped safely. The next day, the battle of Lexington and Concord marked the beginning of the American Revolution.



Paul Revere

John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, and Thomas Jefferson were the most well known of the committee who wrote the Declaration of Independence. Jefferson did most of the actual writing.



John Adams



Benjamin Franklin



Thomas Jefferson



Marquis de Lafayette

The **Marquis de Lafayette** was a rich Frenchman who decided to help the Patriots. His full name was Marie Joseph Paul Yves Rich Gilbert de Motier. At nineteen, Lafayette brought a ship and money to the colonies from France. He asked only to serve and would not take any pay. He was an excellent soldier and helped Washington throughout the war in many ways.

A schoolmaster who joined the army at the start of the war, **Nathan Hale** volunteered to spy for the Patriots, but was caught by the British. Before he was hung, he is reported to have said, “I only regret I have but one life to lose for my country.”

Crispus Attucks was a black man killed during the “Boston Massacre” in 1770, when five people were shot by British soldiers. This event pushed many people to join the Patriots.



Nathan Hale



Crispus Attucks



Abigail Adams



Mercy Otis Warren

Women were also interested in rights and freedom.

Abigail Adams ran the family farm in Massachusetts while husband John was working in the Continental Congress in Philadelphia. She wrote letters to him, reminding him “not to forget the ladies” as Congress was writing laws for the new government.

Mercy Otis Warren was James Otis’s sister. An excellent writer, she wrote plays that made fun of the British. Printed in pamphlets, her plays were very popular. Later, she wrote three books that described the events of the American Revolution.



Phillis Wheatley

Phillis Wheatley was an African girl brought to the colonies as a slave. Bought by the Wheatley family, she learned to read and write, and wrote poetry. Phillis wrote a poem for General Washington and visited him at army headquarters. She is known as the first published black woman poet in America.



Deborah Sampson

Deborah Sampson dressed in men’s clothes and joined the Continental Army in 1782 as Robert Shurtleff. She received an honorable discharge for her work as a soldier when her identity was discovered in 1783.

What ended the war?

After over six years of fighting, the British army gave up to the American forces at 2 P.M. on October 19, 1781, at Yorktown, Virginia. General Charles Cornwallis said he was too ill to surrender personally to General Washington. And so British General Charles O’Hara surrendered to American General Benjamin Lincoln at Yorktown. The British officer presented his sword and the American tapped it as an acceptance of surrender. The British files played the song, “The World Turned Upside Down.” This was a good tune because life in America changed greatly after this day.

News of the surrender spread throughout the states by messengers, newspapers, and broadsides. It reached Philadelphia on October 22 and Boston on October 27. Towns celebrated with cannon salutes, bonfires, and fireworks. People kept the lamps in their houses lit all night. Loyalists had to keep their lights on, too.

It took until September 1783 for the final peace agreement to be written. The Treaty of Paris really ended the American Revolution. In the treaty, the new country was recognized and its boundaries decided. Fishing limits were set along the coast of Canada.

It was also agreed that Congress would recommend to the states that they restore property to any Loyalists who had not fought in the war. In most cases, the states did not do this.



Meet the Author

Kay Moore

Kay Moore is a freelance journalist who has worked as a feature writer and city editor at various newspapers. She also co-writes books with her husband, Louis Moore. She sees newspaper writing as being very different from book writing. Newspaper writing allows her to be in immediate contact with readers about issues that are important to them. Book writing involves a longer process, but she likes its "enduring nature." She says, "It stimulates me to know that a book preserves for posterity my values and interpretation of life."

Meet the Illustrator

Daniel O'Leary

O'Leary illustrates children's books, but he has done much, much more. He has been an artist for over twenty years. O'Leary creates art for television and movie ads. Sometimes he makes paintings for people who like art. Sometimes he illustrates product boxes. O'Leary is happy coming up with his own ideas, or using the ideas of others. Much of his art is very realistic, looking almost like photographs. O'Leary lives in New York City.



Making a New Nation

Theme Connections

Within the Selection

1. What was the main event that made a "new nation"?
2. List three people who contributed to the establishment of the United States and how they helped.

Beyond the Selection

3. What have you learned about your country's history from this selection?
4. How has this selection added to your understanding of the founding of our nation?

Write about It!

Write about a time when you thought something was unfair.



Remember to add your own questions about the founding of our nation to the **Concept/Question Board**.