

Key Groups during the Revolutionary War

Freckle Level: 9A

While the colonial militiamen and British soldiers, known as “redcoats”, are commonly considered the only notable figures in the America's war for independence, there are several other groups that had significant impacts on the progress and outcome of the Revolutionary War. Each served a unique role and influenced the colonies' progress toward becoming an independent nation.

The Patriots and the Loyalists

At the heart of the Revolutionary War were the colonists, but not all of them thought of Britain in the same way. Some colonists were Patriots, individuals who wanted America to gain its independence from Britain so that it could become the United States of America. They wanted to separate from Britain due to its imposition of several taxes on the colonies without adequate representation in the British Parliament and punitive measures when the colonies would not comply with these taxes. Several of the Patriot leaders during the Revolutionary War would end up serving key roles in the American government once the nation was independent. They included Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, and Benjamin Franklin, three of the authors of the Declaration of Independence, as well as George Washington, the first President of the United States.

Not all colonists were Patriots, however. Some were considered Loyalists, believing that the colonies should remain part of Britain and allow their inhabitants to continue being British citizens. The Loyalists believed that being connected to a world superpower like Britain had many benefits and doubted the ability of the inexperienced colonies to self-govern. In addition, they feared the consequences of becoming involved in widespread military conflict with the skilled British army. Loyalists included the governor of Massachusetts Thomas Hutchinson, the leader of a group of Loyalist troops John Butler, a Pennsylvania delegate to the Continental Congress Joseph Galloway, and the mayor of New York David Matthews.

Writing

Skills: Argument, Writing Conventions, Drawing Evidence

- Aside from the colonists and the British, who were the winners and losers of the war? Justify your answer with evidence from the text.

Vocab

- militiamen
- considered
- notable
- colonists
- punitive
- declaration
- pension
- acquisition
- established
- foragers
- diverse
- navigate

Reading

Skills:

- RI.1: Explicit Information
- RI.8: Claims & Evidence

RI.1: Explicit Information

What can you infer from the text about why Loyalist women were particularly well-suited for being spies? Select all that apply.



A Loyalist fighting on the side of the British

As the Revolutionary War waged on and the Continental Congress became more vocal about its desire to separate from Britain, many Loyalists left the colonies and returned to their home country. Others stayed in the colonies and helped the British army fight against the Continental Army. These individuals formed their own regiments in support of the British effort.

Colonial Women

Women living in the American colonies played important roles during the Revolutionary War, just as they had prior to the war as colonists protested British taxes.

Many Loyalist women served as spies, as men would have conversations about military maneuvers in their presence without realizing the women were listening. The women would then pass on the information to military leaders. One such spy was Ann Bates, a schoolteacher from Philadelphia. Though she was a Loyalist, Bates pretended to be a Patriot helping to supply the Continental Army with goods. When she visited the colonial soldiers, she would count them and make note of their available supplies. She then shared the information with the British army to help them in battle.



Abigail Adams

Patriot women took on a variety of roles. Some women, like Abigail Adams and Hannah Blair, provided nursing care for injured soldiers. Others, like Margaret Corbin and Mary Ludwig Hays McCauley served directly in combat. Corbin was the first American woman ever given a military pension, and McCauley took over operation of a cannon when her husband became injured in battle. Some, like Martha Washington, supported the troops directly by providing them with care and supplies.

✓ Men did not think it was important to hide information from women.

Women were better at keeping secrets.

Most Loyalists were women.

✓ People were less likely to suspect women of being spies.

RI.1: Explicit Information

What can you infer from the fact that many Patriots became leaders of the new nation after the war, but very few Loyalists became leaders?

The Loyalists wanted no part in the new nation.

Britain did not want Loyalists to become leaders in America.

The Patriots banned Loyalists from becoming leaders.

✓ Since the Loyalists lost the war, they did not have as much power.

RI.1: Explicit Information

Which of the following statements can you infer to be true based on the text? Select all that apply.

✓ Freedom was an important motivator for African Americans.

Women were just as likely to be soldiers in the colonial army as the men.

Native Americans in the Revolutionary War

Relations between the colonists and the Native American population were very much a part of the conflict between the British and the American colonists seeking independence. The Native Americans were caught in the middle of the conflict due to Britain's acquisition of French land during the French and Indian War. Native Americans were living on these lands, and Britain barred colonists from moving there. This angered the colonists, as they wanted to move west and claim more land for themselves. Skirmishes broke out between the colonists and the Native Americans over this land. Britain then chose to extend the protected area for Native Americans into Quebec through the Quebec Act in 1774, making colonists even more angry.

Despite Britain's existing relationship with the Native American tribes, neither it nor the colonists actively sought an alliance with them when the Revolutionary War broke out in 1775. Commander George Washington only recruited a handful of native soldiers for the Continental Army.

Later in the year, though, the colonists realized that they needed to prevent the Native Americans from becoming Britain's allies. Thus, the Continental Congress created a plan to convince the tribes that they did not need to get involved, as the war was a conflict between Britain and the colonists. Despite the colonists' efforts, Britain succeeded in gaining the support of four of the six Iroquois nations that year. Again in 1776, the Continental Congress tried to appeal to the Native Americans to remain neutral by meeting with the Cherokee tribes.

However, they too joined with Britain. Thus, Britain gained the military support of several of the Native American tribes during the Revolutionary War.

The Native Americans were left empty handed at the end of the war. Britain did not push for the boundaries they set up in the West to be maintained following the war. When tribal representatives appealed to the newly formed American government to allow them to keep the territories set aside by the British, they were informed that America would not honor the previous boundaries. This was because the Native Americans chose to side with the British army.

African Americans in the War

Through the slave trade established in the colonies by the British, many Africans and their descendants were living in America by the Revolutionary War. Some had obtained freedom while others remained in slavery.

Freed African-Americans generally supported the Patriots, as they had prior to the war. Some were the part of militias before the war, so when the Revolutionary War began, they joined the

✓ Many Loyalists left the colonies due to fear of being targeted after the British lost the war.

Britain thought that getting Native American support was crucial.

RI.8: Claims & Evidence

With which of the following arguments would the author most likely agree?

✓ Loyalists included people who were leaders in the colonies before the war.

Native Americans thought the colonists would win the war.

The colonists had to convince all Loyalists to become Patriots to win the war.

All slave owners wanted their slaves to fight in the war.

RI.8: Claims & Evidence

How does the author support her argument that many people in the same group were on opposite sides in the war? Select all that apply.

She explains how some British soldiers were sympathetic to the colonists.

✓ She talks about how some colonists were Patriots and others were Loyalists.

She explains the different ways Patriot women helped during the war.

Continental Army. Those still in slavery were often placed into military service by their masters.



An African American in the Boston Massacre

Other African American slaves fought on the side of the British. Virginia's royal governor, Lord Dunmore, recruited runaway slaves with the promise of freedom. Most of the recruited slaves were given non-fighting roles such as spies, foragers, and skilled workers, as people were afraid that armed slaves would form an uprising.

When the war ended, and Loyalists began fleeing to Britain or to the nearby West Indies, many free and slave African Americans went with them. More than 2,500 African Americans relocated during this period. Some of those who were promised freedom for their military service were granted it, while others were returned to their masters.

Many diverse groups played a part in the Revolutionary War. The outcome of the War impacted each group differently, and each had to navigate their role in the newly formed United States of America.

✓ She talks about the different reasons for why African Americans fought in the war.

RI.8: Claims & Evidence

Which of the following claims does the author make in the text? Select all that apply.

✓ The Native Americans wanted to keep their lands.

The Loyalists that stayed in the colonies were attacked by the Patriots.

✓ Patriot women helped the colonists in many different ways.

✓ Some slaves were told they would be freed after the war, but that promise was not always kept.