

**History Revolutions: America**  
**Teach Yourself Series**  
Topic 1: Chronology of Key Events

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# Chronology of Key Events

The American War of Independence did not just occur, there were a quite a number of major events that occurred to create tensions amongst the British and American supporters. Area of Study 1 has students study the time frame 1763 – 1776, however to gauge a real understanding of the tensions that evolved into the War of Independence, we will start looking a bit earlier.

## America Pre - 1754

### As it appears in Unit 3 & 4

America was not colonised by one nation, the English, in fact there were Spanish and French colonies up and down much of the west coast. With this as the case, England was by no means the most powerful or influential nation that had colonised America.

Hearing of the Spanish Conquistadors and their findings of gold, English settlers first arrived looking for their fortunes. British settlers, led by Sir Walter Raleigh, attempted to establish settlements on the East Coast in what is now Virginia and North Carolina. These attempts never succeeded, they were either abandoned or disappeared completely, with some speculation that the inhabitants of one settlement, Roanoke Island, assimilated with the local tribes, which is better than thinking of the alternatives.

Britain's first 'successful' attempt at a colony in the Americas' was in 1607 in Jamestown. The Virginia Company sent 3 ships to establish a colony, and they landed at the mouth of a river that came to be known as the James River in Virginia. Rather than establishing a colony in a position that had access to fresh water and areas for developing agriculture, they focussed on a defensive position. In doing this they placed their colony on a thin strip of boggy land between the James River and the Coastline. With the fresh water source brackish, the surrounding swamps a breeding ground for mosquitoes and the weather hot and humid, malaria and other diseases were prevalent in the colony. An obvious clue to the area's unsuitability is the fact that no native tribes lived in the immediate vicinity.

As mentioned, in establishing a colony on the premise of defence rather than liveability, the settlers had an exceptional amount of trouble growing any form of agriculture. The soil was unsuitable, and the settlers had neither the tools nor the skills to farm. Although their position was in close proximity to native woodlands, with abundant sources of wildlife for hunting and edible native plants, the colonists again lacked the skills to hunt and knowledge and preparedness to try native vegetation.

Relations with the native inhabitants around the area were initially good, however the settlers were concerned for their safety and would ignore their offers of help. Times were especially hard and many settlers would die from famine and disease. At one point in 1609 there would be barely more than 60 survivors. Interestingly, it was from this area and accounts of Jamestown settlers and soldiers that the Disney movie 'Pocahontas' was developed.

## Review Questions

1. America was colonized by a number of European empires. Which ones, and what (if any) pre-existing tensions did they bring with them?

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2. Who funded the first successful British settlement in England? Where was it and why was it such a failure?

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3. How were the initial relations between the British and Native American after settlement?

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## Colonial Expansion

### As it appears in Unit 3 & 4

In 1754, representatives from seven of the 13 colonies attended 'The Albany Congress' in New York. Its main intention was to discuss and implement defence measures, with the ever present threat of invasion and attack from the French. It was at this conference that Benjamin Franklin proposed a united colonial government that would be overseen by a King's representative, to become known as the Albany Plan, which was later rescinded by all colonies. However, Franklin continued to push for American unity.



One of Franklin's key arguments was defense, arguing that the Colonies needed to be unified for defensive reasons. Out of this argument, some of America's earliest political propaganda started. Benjamin Franklin's picture, 'Join or Die', which represents the colonies of different segments of the one snake, who must be put back together as one to ensure survival. Common myth at the time suggested that if a dismembered snake was rejoined before sunset, it would come back to life.

## Solutions to Review Questions

1.
  - France
  - Netherlands
  - Spain
  - England
  - All countries brought over with them pre-existing tensions
  - Although many colonisers were hoping to leave these tensions and rivalries behind
  - However the British and the French government, royals and colonisers continued hostilities and distrust
2.
  - The first company to fund a British settlement in America was the Virginia company
  - They settled at the mouth of the James River
  - Settlement called Jamestown
  - Failed dismally
  - Settled in an uninhabitable area
  - Unsuitable for farming, developing and creating township
  - Location was also prone to outbreak of disease
  - No expertise in agriculture and farming
  - No close fresh water access
3.
  - Initial relationships between the Native Americans and the colonisers were strained
  - Mutual mistrust
  - Good with trade
  - Indians offered to teach skills, but English mistrusted them to such an extent they refused
  - British arrogance
4.
  - First published in the mid 1700's
  - Looking at the myth of the time of by putting a snake back together before sunset, it will comeback to life
  - Franklin uses this analogy of the pieces of the snake as the colonies (represented through their initials)
  - With the words 'Join or Die': insisting that the colonies must work together to survive
  - Especially in terms of politics and defence

5.
  - Although this may be a long bow to draw there are some points
  - Unification of states would make them more powerful
  - Unified military would be more stronger, unified and cohesive
  - Colonial Assemblies working together when previously they had remained relatively isolated
  
6.
  - The French and Indian War was more guerilla style skirmishes than an actual all out war.
  - Fighting first started in 1754
  - War not declared until 1756
  - Treaty of Paris signed 1763
  - Also known as the 7 Year War
  
7.
  - George Washington was Colonel of the Virginian militia
  - Raided Fort Necessity in Pennsylvania at request of Colonial Assembly
  - Unsuccessful, resulted in his capture and surrender
  - Continued fighting throughout the remainder of the war
  - Gave him essential military experience
  - Gave him an insight into how the British military operated
  - Able to study and analyse British military tactics
  
8.
  - The 1763 Treaty of Paris was the official surrender of the French to the British for the French and Indina War
  - Gave Britain vast tracts of former French colonies west of the Apalacian mountains
  - Opened up enourmous amount of land for settlement
  
9. George Washington
  - Benjamin Franklin
  - British Government imposing on colonial liberties and rights
  - Tyrannical move from the British empire.