ENGLISH LEARNING FOR CURIOUS MINDS



Episode #151
The American Revolution
19th Apr, 2021

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Transcript

[00:00:00] Hello, hello hello, and welcome to English Learning for Curious Minds, by Leonardo English.

[00:00:22] The show where you can listen to fascinating stories, and learn weird and wonderful things about the world at the same time as improving your English.

[00:00:23] I'm Alastair Budge and today we are going to be talking about The American Revolutionary War, or as it's more often called, The American Revolution.

[00:00:33] This is the second part of this three part series on The Age of Revolution.

[00:00:40] In part one we talked about The Industrial Revolution, and in the next part, part three, we will talk about The French Revolution.

[00:00:49] And before that there was actually a related episode on The Enlightenment, without which perhaps none of these revolutions would have happened.

[00:00:59] So, you can of course listen to all of these episodes individually, but they are probably even more interesting as a **trio**[1], or even as a **quartet**[2].

[1] a group of three

[2] a group of four

[00:01:10] You might think it's a bit strange to have someone from Britain talking about The American Revolution, because, well, it's not something that people in Britain **tend**[3] to talk about a lot, as the British lost.

[00:01:24] But it is a fascinating story, and for better or for worse, the American Revolution, and the **subsequent**[4] creation of The United States of America, has had a global impact that is hard to match.

[00:01:38] It is a long and complicated story, so we will focus on the most interesting parts, and tell it through the formula of causes, **course**[5], and consequences.

[00:01:50] So, why did it happen, what actually happened, and what has this meant for America, for Britain, and for the world.

[00:02:01] OK then, let's get **stuck into it**[6].

[00:02:05] Before we dive right into the causes of The American Revolution, let's just remind ourselves of what was actually going on in the mid 18th century.

[00:02:16] Firstly, America.

[00:02:17] Now, America as a term, and as a concept, didn't really exist.

[3] are likely; usually do something

[4] that came afterwards

[5] the way events developed over time

[6] started on it with energy and enthusiasm

[00:02:23] The **continent**[7] we now know as North America had been **colonised**[8] by the British, French and Spanish, starting with Christopher Columbus in 1492.

[00:02:34] While the Spanish conquered most of what is now Mexico and the south of North America, the eastern and northern parts were **colonised** by French and British **settlers**[9].

[00:02:46] The French and the British got into some **territorial**[10] **disputes**[11], there was the 9 year French and Indian war, the British won, and the French handed control of everything to the east of the river Mississippi over to the British.

[00:03:04] Meanwhile, in Europe, the French and the British had been fighting something called the Seven Years War, which was a struggle for global domination, and **sucked in**[12] countries such as Spain, Prussia, Russia, Portugal and Sweden.

[00:03:21] The result was, technically at least, a British victory, but it left Britain with huge debts.

[00:03:28] Wars, as we all know, are expensive.

[7] a very large area of land made up of many countries

[8] taken control of and settled by people from another country

[9] people who move to a new area to live and farm there

[10] about who owned or controlled which land

[11] disagreements or arguments

[12] pulled in and involved, often without much choice

[00:03:32] In order to try to raise money to pay these debts, Britain looked to its **colonies**[13] in America for money.

[00:03:41] To **clarify**[14] exactly which **colonies** we are talking about here, we're talking about 13 **colonies** on the eastern coast of what we now call The United States of America, so that's: Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, Pennsylvania, Delaware, New Jersey, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia.

[00:04:08] Now, who were the people actually living in these states?

[00:04:13] Were they Americans?

[00:04:15] Well, yes and no.

[00:04:17] Yes, because they lived in America.

[00:04:20] But no, because **the vast majority**[15] of them were relatively recent immigrants from Europe, and they were still technically British citizens.

[00:04:31] 85% of the immigrant population came from Great Britain, which included Ireland at the time, but there were also lots of people from countries like the Netherlands and Germany.

[13] areas ruled by a distant country and settled by its people

[14] make clear

[15] almost all

[00:04:45] Although the 13 **colonies** were mainly made up of immigrants from Europe, there were other significant populations – about 250,000 slaves, transported **barbarically**[16] from Africa, who worked on the **cotton**[17], rice, and tobacco **plantations**[18] of the southern states.

[00:05:06] And there were the tribes of the Native Americans whose unhappy story of **gradual**[19] **submission**[20] to the **colonists**[21] is a sad story for another time.

[00:05:17] Other European nations will **feature**[22] too in our story – German **mercenaries**[23] on the British side and, as is so often the case with anything involving the British **military**[24] adventures abroad, this won't be the last time we'll hear from the French.

[00:05:34] So, that's the **context**[25], what then were some of the immediate causes that brought about the start of the American Revolutionary war?

[16] in a very cruel way

[17] a plant grown for the soft white fibre used to make cloth

[18] large farms where crops such as cotton or tobacco are grown

[19] slow, happening little by little

[20] being forced to accept someone else's power and control

[21] people living in a new land controlled by their home country

[22] appear; play a part

[23] soldiers who fight for any country that pays them

[24] connected with soldiers and armed forces

[25] the background situation that helps you understand something

[00:05:45] As ever, it is a **combination**[26] of **underlying**[27], background factors and immediate **sparks**[28] which **lit the blaze**[29] and caused the **outbreak**[30] of **hostilities**[31], caused the fighting to start.

[00:06:00] The most significant **underlying** cause was the **deteriorating**[32] relationship between Britain and its fast-growing, increasingly **prosperous**[33], increasingly rich, and independent-minded **colonies**.

[00:06:14] Let's use the image or **metaphor**[34] of a family.

[00:06:19] One could say that this is a bit like the natural development of any fast-growing, independent-minded teenager who **seeks**[35] independence from their parents.

[00:06:30] In the end they need their own space and to be able to run their own lives.

[00:06:36] However, there was nothing **inevitable**[36] about the initial rebellion.

[26] a mix of different things together

[27] deeper and not immediately obvious

[28] small events that cause something much bigger to start

[29] started the trouble, like setting a fire

[30] the sudden start of something bad, such as war

[31] fighting in a war

[32] becoming worse

[33] rich and successful

[34] a comparison that describes something as if it were something else

[35] tries to get

[36] certain to happen; impossible to avoid

[00:06:42] In 1763 Britain was **broke**[37], it had large debts, after financing the war in North America as well as the Seven Years War in Europe.

[00:06:52] The British **colonies** in North America were **prosperous**, they were doing well economically, and King George III of Britain decided to raise taxes on the 13 **colonies**, which had relied heavily on the **military** support of Britain in the French and Indian War.

[00:07:11] The raising of taxes wasn't in itself the problem, but rather the way in which it was done.

[00:07:19] There was a well established **principle**[38] in British law that you should not be taxed unless you are democratically represented in government, but these 13 British **colonies** in America had no representation in the British parliament.

[00:07:36] They simply had to do whatever was decided in Westminster, in the Houses of Parliament back in London.

[00:07:44] Starting in 1765, the British **imposed**[39] taxes on the British **colonies** in America, and these were deeply unpopular.

[37] having no money; unable to pay its debts

[38] a basic rule or belief

[39] officially introduced and forced people to accept

[00:07:55] The first large tax, called The **Stamp**[40] Act, required British **colonists** to pay taxes on **stamps**[41] on a whole range of things, from official documents through to playing cards.

[00:08:09] Before long, there was a popular movement against this tax, with the **slogan**[42] "no taxation without representation", meaning you couldn't be taxed if you weren't represented democratically.

[00:08:24] There was an increasing anti-British feeling, with people **boycotting**[43] British goods, not buying British goods, and some **small-scale**[44] protests.

[00:08:35] It wasn't for another five years though, not until 1770, that things really **came to a head**[45].

[00:08:44] The Boston **Massacre**[46] was when British soldiers shot and killed five protestors, and then three years later, in 1773, again in Boston, there was the Boston Tea Party, when **volunteer**[47] American soldiers dressed as native Americans, went onto British ships in the Boston **harbour**[48] and threw the precious tea **overboard**[49].

[40] a printed mark on paper showing that a tax had been paid

[41] official printed marks showing that a tax had been paid

[42] a short, easy-to-remember phrase used by a group

[43] refusing to buy or use something as a protest

[44] limited in size; not big

[45] reached a point where serious action could not be avoided

[46] the killing of a group of people who could not defend themselves

[47] serving by their own choice, not forced or paid

[48] an area of water by the coast where ships are kept safe

[49] over the side of a ship into the water

[00:09:10] Britain sent soldiers to Boston to control the situation, but **tensions**[50] continued to grow.

[00:09:18] The American **colonists** started to arm themselves, they started to form small armies, in anticipation of the conflict that was to come.

[00:09:28] Then, in a place called Lexington, in Massachusetts on 19 April 1775, the real fighting broke out, with the so-called “shot heard around the world”.

[00:09:42] It was a **full-blown**[51] battle between British soldiers and the Massachusetts **militia**[52], and resulted in the death of over a hundred men.

[00:09:53] Britain was now at war with its American **colonies**.

[00:09:57] Now, I said earlier that there was nothing **inevitable** about the revolution.

[00:10:03] This was because the natural **tendency**[53] of so many of the **colonists** was to have considerable loyalty towards the mother nation, which had after all protected them and, through victory in the recent war, it had won them the opportunity to expand West into lands that were previously under the control of the French.

[50] feelings of anger and distrust between groups

[51] complete; fully developed

[52] a group of ordinary people trained to fight, not a professional army

[53] a natural way of thinking or behaving

[00:10:27] A number of the **founding fathers**[54] of The United States had spent time in England as a way of completing their education.

[00:10:35] They had very strong family links with Britain.

[00:10:39] Most importantly, perhaps, the people who led the revolution, such as Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Madison and George Washington, they were **prosperous**, successful men who had many reasons to want to keep the **status quo**[55] - or things being as they were.

[00:10:59] In so many ways they were unusual revolutionaries. Through rebelling and being **traitors**[56] to their mother country they risked everything.

[00:11:10] So it is not surprising that there were powerful **ideals**[57] that united them and drove them on, not only to rebel, but also to design the system of government or **constitution**[58] of the new United States that was based on a very **distinctive**[59] set of beliefs.

[00:11:31] Here it is perhaps helpful to revisit some of the ideas of the European Enlightenment from the episode on The Enlightenment.

[54] the men who created the United States and its system of government

[55] the situation as it is now

[56] people who turn against their own country

[57] strong beliefs about how things should be

[58] a set of basic laws that say how a country is run

[59] special and different from others

[00:11:40] Key figures in the American revolution, such as Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson, were **profoundly**[60] influenced by Enlightenment thinking and also by the writings and actions of the thought leaders of the English Revolution [or the English Civil War], such as John Milton, who worked closely with the English republican leader, Oliver Cromwell and who is best known for his famous **epic**[61] poem, Paradise Lost.

[00:12:10] Of even more importance and immediate impact was a **pamphlet**[62], a short document, of a **mere**[63] 47 pages that was published in 1775 by an Englishman called Thomas Paine, who had only just recently **emigrated**[64] to Pennsylvania.

[00:12:30] This **anecdote**[65] is a fascinating insight into how a small book can have a dramatic impact on world history.

[00:12:39] Paine's **pamphlet**, which is called Common Sense, was written in the simplest of English with the desire that it should reach a very **broad**[66] audience and that it could also be listened to by everyone when it was published in Pennsylvania early in 1775.

[60] very deeply; greatly
[61] long and telling a story of heroic events
[62] a thin book with only a few pages, usually on one subject
[63] only; just (showing how small something is)
[64] left his own country to live in another
[65] a short, interesting story about a real event
[66] wide; including many different kinds of people

[00:12:59] It was a **sensation**[67].

[00:13:00] It is estimated that almost half of the 2.5 million people living in the **colonies** would have either read or listened to it. This means that it still holds the record for being read or heard by a higher proportion of the population of the United States than any other publication.

[00:13:22] In this work, Paine **demolishes**[68] the arguments in favour of trying to remain under British **sovereignty**[69] or under British control.

[00:13:32] Perhaps his greatest achievement is to paint a **vivid**[70] picture of what an independent, republican United States could be like, ruled by themselves and through **elected**[71] representatives, **elected** annually, **elected** every year.

[00:13:51] This **sensational**[72] and brave piece of work was instrumental in **galvanising**[73] – or setting in motion – a process of rebellion.

[00:14:02] Have a look, even if you just read the first few paragraphs, it really is quite inspiring, and is written in an English I'm sure you will be able to understand.

[00:14:14] It also has such a modern feel to it.

[67] something that causes great excitement and interest

[68] completely proves wrong

[69] the power to rule; control over a country

[70] very clear, bright and full of life

[71] chosen by people voting

[72] causing great excitement and interest

[73] setting in motion; making people start to act with energy

[00:14:17] For example, when the author gets particularly excited or wants to **stress**[74] something, he “shouts'' in capital letters, so, he tells us, do not mistake King George III [“the **sullen-tempered**[75] **Pharaoh**[76] of England”] as someone **noble**[77] and powerful, “ an ASS FOR A LION” (An ass for a lion is all in capital letters).

[00:14:43] You can appreciate how so many of the words used in such a **pamphlet**, which would have become a common reference point as the revolution **gathered pace**[78] would have had a powerful **sound bite**[79] quality to them.

[00:14:59] For example, it is, he argues, “very **absurd**[80]“ to think “a continent to be **perpetually**[81] governed by an island.”

[00:15:08] Even reading it now, it is easy to get **fired up**[82], and I’m from the country that lost this war.

[00:15:15] And perhaps an even more inspiring document was one that was to come a few months later, on the fourth of July of 1776, The Declaration of Independence.

[74] show that something is especially important

[75] moody, unfriendly and easily angered

[76] a king of ancient Egypt; here, a cruel and powerful ruler

[77] good, honest and deserving respect

[78] became faster and stronger

[79] a short, memorable phrase that is easy to repeat

[80] silly and unreasonable; ridiculous

[81] forever; all the time

[82] excited and full of energy

[00:15:28] This stated, amongst other more important things such as that the United States was an independent country, it stated that "all men are created equal, that they are **endowed**[83] by their Creator with certain **unalienable**[84] Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the **pursuit**[85] of Happiness."

[00:15:49] Quite inspiring, right?

[00:15:51] But it is an important and **sobering**[86] reminder of this **bold**[87] statement's limitations that the Declaration had no reference to the slave trade; in fact, the version originally drafted by Thomas Jefferson had a **clause**[88] which **condemned**[89] the slave trade; sadly this was removed in order to secure the agreement of the southern **colonies**, where the economy relied so much on this **inhuman**[90] practice.

[00:16:22] Now, moving onto what actually happened during the American Revolutionary War.

[00:16:28] So, by 1776 Britain was at war with its American **colonies**.

[83] given
[84] that cannot be taken away
[85] the effort to find or achieve something
[86] making you think seriously
[87] brave and confident; not afraid of risk
[88] a part or section of a legal document
[89] said strongly that something was wrong
[90] extremely cruel

[00:16:34] It was a slightly strange situation, because the divisions between who was fighting for Britain, and who was fighting for America weren't completely clear - there were Englishmen, like Thomas Paine, who had only been living in America for two years before becoming a fierce believer in revolution, and **backer**[91] of independence.

[00:16:56] And there were plenty of what we could consider Americans, who fought on the side of the British army.

[00:17:03] Not everyone on the American side was looking for independence from Britain, and indeed before independence was declared, the **colonies** had simply proposed to **put down their arms**[92] in exchange for the British reducing the taxes.

[00:17:19] But King George III, the King of Britain, refused.

[00:17:23] In terms of the people involved, the **standing**[93] armies of both sides were relatively small, fewer than 50,000 men.

[00:17:32] At its **peak**[94], the British had 22,000 British soldiers as well as 25,000 what's called **loyalists**[95], so Americans who were loyal to Britain and fought for the British.

[00:17:44] There were also another 30,000 or so German **mercenaries**, soldiers who were paid to fight for the British.

[91] a supporter

[92] stop fighting; give up their weapons

[93] permanent; kept ready at all times, not only in war

[94] the highest point or level

[95] people who continued to support the British king and government

[00:17:53] And let's not forget the slaves.

[00:17:55] The British, out of **self-interest**[96] I should add, offered freedom to slaves who worked on their opponents' **plantations**, meaning that somewhere between 25-50,000 black slaves served with the British army.

[00:18:11] All in all, the soldiers fighting for the British numbered almost 150,000.

[00:18:18] Meanwhile, the **colonists**' army was smaller, no more than 48,000 men at any one time.

[00:18:26] It was, at the start at least, not a professional army, they weren't professional soldiers, and for the first years of the war they suffered several heavy defeats against the better trained and better armed British army.

[00:18:41] The leader of the American army, a man called George Washington who was later to become the first president of The United States of course, he realised this, and he **enlisted**[97] the help of Prussian soldiers to train his army, to turn his **amateur**[98] soldiers into professionals.

[00:19:01] The Prussians arrived in the winter of 1777 and turned the American army from a group of untrained **amateurs**[99] into a **force to be reckoned with**[100].

[96] a desire to gain something for their own side

[97] asked for and got

[98] not professional; untrained

[99] people who do something without professional training

[100] a powerful group that others have to take seriously

[00:19:13] Now, we have skipped over a lot of the details of the battles and fighting, but it can be summarised as relatively small battles not involving **vast**[101] numbers of soldiers. The British had some early success, as did the Americans.

[00:19:30] By 1778 though, despite the improvements that the American army had made, the British looked like they **had the upper hand**[102], and that they were **on the cusp of**[103] victory, they were about to win the war.

[00:19:45] In order to prevent its **archrival**[104] Britain from this great victory, France decided to enter the war, joining forces with the Americans, providing **considerable**[105] money, **troops**[106] and a **fleet**[107] of over 100 ships.

[00:20:01] Now, one can see why the French decided to enter the war - to stop Britain.

[00:20:07] Yet when we think of what was to happen in France just 10 years later, it does seem like a slightly **foolish**[108] decision for the French king to support a movement to seek independence from a central ruler.

[101] very large
[102] had the advantage; were in a stronger position
[103] very close to; about to reach
[104] main and most serious enemy or competitor
[105] large in amount
[106] soldiers
[107] a group of ships
[108] silly; not wise

[00:20:21] No doubt Louis XVI was so convinced of his own power and **god-given**[109] right to rule that the idea that his own people might try a similar thing in France didn't even cross his mind.

[00:20:35] We should also not forget the Spanish, who joined the French in 1779, who hoped to **regain**[110] territory that they had lost in America, and to **regain** the territories of Menorca and Gibraltar back in Europe.

[00:20:50] Were it not for the entry of France, and to a lesser extent, Spain, there is little doubt Britain would have won the war.

[00:20:59] And who knows how the world might have been different if that had happened.

[00:21:04] But France and Spain did join the war, and there was no way back for the British.

[00:21:10] On September 3, 1783, the Treaty of Paris was signed, which ended the war and **acknowledged**[111] the existence of the United States of America as a free and independent country.

[109] believed to come directly from heaven

[110] get back

[111] officially accepted as true or real

[00:21:25] Although the entirety of this story, with its **idealism**[112], **bloodshed**[113], **vivid** and various characters, is **gripping**[114] – **enthralling**[115] and exciting – perhaps the most **intriguing**[116] part of the whole story lies in the consequences of the American revolution.

[00:21:45] I do not think it is an **exaggeration**[117] to say that these consequences have affected **virtually**[118] every country in the world.

[00:21:54] Firstly, and perhaps obviously, the American Revolution resulted in the foundation of the United States of America, with its **emphasis**[119] on its **ground-breaking**[120] **founding**[121] **ideals** and in particular on its **distinctive** civil liberties.

[00:22:11] Secondly, at the heart of its foundation was a written **constitution** which had at its core the revolutionary principle that the government **derives**[122] its "just powers from the **consent**[123] of the **governed**[124]".

[112] the belief that a better, more perfect world is possible
[113] killing and violence
[114] very exciting and holding your attention
[115] so interesting that you cannot stop paying attention
[116] very interesting, making you want to know more
[117] saying something is bigger or more important than it really is
[118] almost
[119] special importance or attention given to something
[120] completely new and very important
[121] present when the country was first created
[122] gets or takes
[123] agreement or permission
[124] people who are ruled

[00:22:26] This, the world's first written **constitution**, has provided the model for so many other countries' **constitutions**[125].

[00:22:34] Similarly the process of throwing off colonial rule and abandoning the old model of rule by a **monarch**[126] and a **hereditary**[127] **aristocracy**[128] - meaning people who simply were born into the ruling class - this was an inspiration to other countries.

[00:22:52] **Comparable**[129] revolutions followed in places as **diverse**[130] as Latin America, France of course, and especially in the 19th and early 20th centuries, across old Europe.

[00:23:05] Unsurprisingly, when you listen to part three of this mini-series, the one on the French Revolution, you will find many **echoes**[131] of the American one in it.

[00:23:16] Finally, there is one other consequence which is perhaps a little more **controversial**[132]. It has to do with the idea of the new America as a symbol of human **aspiration**[133] and **idealism**.

[125] sets of basic laws that say how countries are run

[126] a king or queen

[127] passed from parents to children

[128] the highest social class, whose members are born into it

[129] similar

[130] very different from each other

[131] similarities that remind you of something earlier

[132] causing a lot of disagreement

[133] a strong hope to achieve something

[00:23:30] Remember that the country was originally settled by people **fleeing**[134] religious **persecution**[135] in Europe and **seeking**[136] greater control over their own lives and freedom from **interference**[137]. This **thread**[138] in American culture has, I think, continued with the country's tradition of immigration.

[00:23:50] Tom Paine calls it "an **asylum**[139] for mankind".

[00:23:54] As is famously written in the poem on the Statue of Liberty which would've greeted many millions of immigrants arriving by ship in New York, "Give me your tired, your poor, Your **huddled masses**[140] **yearning**[141] to breathe free…"

[00:24:11] The combination of all these factors has made the United States of America a source of continued fascination and interest for the rest of the world.

[00:24:21] This has been particularly evident during the final three months of the Trump presidency when so many of those **founding ideals** and the strength of the American **constitution** have been put under such severe pressure and have generated both **scrutiny**[142] and **anxiety**[143] around the world.

[134] running away from
[135] cruel and unfair treatment because of beliefs or background
[136] trying to find or get
[137] others getting involved in your affairs when not wanted
[138] an idea or feature that runs through something
[139] a safe place for people escaping danger
[140] large numbers of poor people crowded closely together
[141] wanting very much
[142] careful and critical examination
[143] worry

[00:24:42] For many people, it can seem strange that Americans have such a fascination, and almost **cult-like**[144] obsession with the **founding fathers** of the country, with the idea that everything in the **constitution** is almost holy and must be preserved.

[00:25:01] But with a knowledge of the unlikely story of the American Revolution, it becomes much easier to understand some of the reasons why.

[00:25:12] OK then, that is it for today's episode on The American Revolution.

[00:25:18] I hope it's been an interesting one, that you've learnt something new, and that you feel like you now have a slightly better understanding of the history of a country that has an influence on every single one of us.

[00:25:31] As always, I would love to know what you thought of this episode.

[00:25:34] We actually have quite a few members who live in America, so I would be particularly interested to know what you thought of this episode.

[00:25:43] You can head right in to our community forum, which is at community.leonardoenglish.com and get chatting away to other curious minds.

[00:25:52] And as a final reminder, the next episode is going to be on the French Revolution, part three of this mini series of The Age of Revolution and I hope you'll enjoy it.

[144] like the extreme devotion a religious group shows its leader

[00:26:02] You've been listening to English Learning for Curious Minds, by Leonardo English.

[00:26:08] I'm Alastair Budge, you stay safe, and I'll catch you in the next episode.

[END OF EPISODE]

Key vocabulary

Word	Definition
Trio	a group of three
Quartet	a group of four
Tend	are likely; usually do something
Subsequent	that came afterwards
Course	the way events developed over time
Stuck into it	started on it with energy and enthusiasm
Continent	a very large area of land made up of many countries
Colonised	taken control of and settled by people from another country
Settlers	people who move to a new area to live and farm there
Territorial	about who owned or controlled which land

Disputes	disagreements or arguments
Sucked in	pulled in and involved, often without much choice
Colonies	areas ruled by a distant country and settled by its people
Clarify	make clear
The vast majority	almost all
Barbarically	in a very cruel way
Cotton	a plant grown for the soft white fibre used to make cloth
Plantations	large farms where crops such as cotton or tobacco are grown
Gradual	slow, happening little by little
Submission	being forced to accept someone else's power and control
Colonists	people living in a new land controlled by their home country
Feature	appear; play a part

Mercenaries	soldiers who fight for any country that pays them
Military	connected with soldiers and armed forces
Context	the background situation that helps you understand something
Combination	a mix of different things together
Underlying	deeper and not immediately obvious
Sparks	small events that cause something much bigger to start
Lit the blaze	started the trouble, like setting a fire
Outbreak	the sudden start of something bad, such as war
Hostilities	fighting in a war
Deteriorating	becoming worse
Prosperous	rich and successful
Metaphor	a comparison that describes something as if it were something else

Seeks	tries to get
Inevitable	certain to happen; impossible to avoid
Broke	having no money; unable to pay its debts
Principle	a basic rule or belief
Imposed	officially introduced and forced people to accept
Stamp	a printed mark on paper showing that a tax had been paid
Stamps	official printed marks showing that a tax had been paid
Slogan	a short, easy-to-remember phrase used by a group
Boycotting	refusing to buy or use something as a protest
Small-scale	limited in size; not big
Came to a head	reached a point where serious action could not be avoided
Massacre	the killing of a group of people who could not defend themselves

Volunteer	serving by their own choice, not forced or paid
Harbour	an area of water by the coast where ships are kept safe
Overboard	over the side of a ship into the water
Tensions	feelings of anger and distrust between groups
Full-blown	complete; fully developed
Militia	a group of ordinary people trained to fight, not a professional army
Tendency	a natural way of thinking or behaving
Founding fathers	the men who created the United States and its system of government
Status quo	the situation as it is now
Traitors	people who turn against their own country
Ideals	strong beliefs about how things should be
Constitution	a set of basic laws that say how a country is run

Distinctive	special and different from others
Profoundly	very deeply; greatly
Epic	long and telling a story of heroic events
Pamphlet	a thin book with only a few pages, usually on one subject
Mere	only; just (showing how small something is)
Emigrated	left his own country to live in another
Anecdote	a short, interesting story about a real event
Broad	wide; including many different kinds of people
Sensation	something that causes great excitement and interest
Demolishes	completely proves wrong
Sovereignty	the power to rule; control over a country
Vivid	very clear, bright and full of life

Elected	chosen by people voting
Sensational	causing great excitement and interest
Galvanising	setting in motion; making people start to act with energy
Stress	show that something is especially important
Sullen-tempered	moody, unfriendly and easily angered
Pharaoh	a king of ancient Egypt; here, a cruel and powerful ruler
Noble	good, honest and deserving respect
Gathered pace	became faster and stronger
Sound bite	a short, memorable phrase that is easy to repeat
Absurd	silly and unreasonable; ridiculous
Perpetually	forever; all the time
Fired up	excited and full of energy

Endowed	given
Unalienable	that cannot be taken away
Pursuit	the effort to find or achieve something
Sobering	making you think seriously
Bold	brave and confident; not afraid of risk
Clause	a part or section of a legal document
Condemned	said strongly that something was wrong
Inhuman	extremely cruel
Backer	a supporter
Put down their arms	stop fighting; give up their weapons
Standing	permanent; kept ready at all times, not only in war
Peak	the highest point or level

Loyalists	people who continued to support the British king and government
Self-interest	a desire to gain something for their own side
Enlisted	asked for and got
Amateur	not professional; untrained
Amateurs	people who do something without professional training
Force to be reckoned with	a powerful group that others have to take seriously
Vast	very large
Had the upper hand	had the advantage; were in a stronger position
On the cusp of	very close to; about to reach
Archrival	main and most serious enemy or competitor
Considerable	large in amount
Troops	soldiers

Fleet	a group of ships
Foolish	silly; not wise
God-given	believed to come directly from heaven
Regain	get back
Acknowledged	officially accepted as true or real
Idealism	the belief that a better, more perfect world is possible
Bloodshed	killing and violence
Gripping	very exciting and holding your attention
Enthralling	so interesting that you cannot stop paying attention
Intriguing	very interesting, making you want to know more
Exaggeration	saying something is bigger or more important than it really is

Virtually	almost
Emphasis	special importance or attention given to something
Ground-breaking	completely new and very important
Founding	present when the country was first created
Derives	gets or takes
Consent	agreement or permission
Governed	people who are ruled
Constitutions	sets of basic laws that say how countries are run
Monarch	a king or queen
Hereditary	passed from parents to children
Aristocracy	the highest social class, whose members are born into it
Comparable	similar

Diverse	very different from each other
Echoes	similarities that remind you of something earlier
Controversial	causing a lot of disagreement
Aspiration	a strong hope to achieve something
Fleeing	running away from
Persecution	cruel and unfair treatment because of beliefs or background
Seeking	trying to find or get
Interference	others getting involved in your affairs when not wanted
Thread	an idea or feature that runs through something
Asylum	a safe place for people escaping danger
Huddled masses	large numbers of poor people crowded closely together
Yearning	wanting very much

Scrutiny	careful and critical examination
Anxiety	worry
Cult-like	like the extreme devotion a religious group shows its leader

Language spotlight

1. Get stuck into it

- **Meaning**: To start doing something with energy and enthusiasm.
- **Synonyms**: dive into it, get down to it, throw yourself into it
- **Antonyms**: put it off, hold back from it, hesitate over it
- **Examples**:
    - We've got a lot to do today, so let's **get stuck into it**.
    - She **got stuck into** her new job from the very first day.

2. Come to a head

- **Meaning**: When a problem or disagreement comes to a head, it reaches a point where something must be done about it.
- **Synonyms**: reach a crisis, reach boiling point, come to a climax
- **Antonyms**: calm down, die down, settle down
- **Examples**:
    - The argument between the neighbours **came to a head** when one of them called the police.
    - Problems at the factory had been building for months before they finally **came to a head** last week.

3. Gather pace

- **Meaning**: To start to move, grow or develop more quickly.
- **Synonyms**: speed up, pick up speed, build momentum
- **Antonyms**: slow down, lose momentum, stall
- **Examples**:
    - The campaign **gathered pace** as more and more people joined it online.
    - After a slow start, the building project is finally **gathering pace**.

4. A force to be reckoned with

- **Meaning**: A person or group that is strong and powerful and must be taken seriously.
- **Synonyms**: a powerful opponent, a serious contender, a major player
- **Antonyms**: a pushover, a lightweight, an easy target
- **Examples**:
    - After a year of hard training, the young tennis player became **a force to be reckoned with**.
    - With its new range of products, the company is now **a force to be reckoned with** in the market.

5. On the cusp of

- **Meaning**: Very close to reaching or achieving something, or about to go through an important change.
- **Synonyms**: on the verge of, on the brink of, close to
- **Antonyms**: far from, a long way from, nowhere near
- **Examples**:
    - Scientists believe they are **on the cusp of** a major discovery.
    - She was **on the cusp of** turning thirty when she decided to change careers.

Quiz

Listening Comprehension Multiple Choice Questions

1. Why did Britain look to its American colonies for money in the 1760s?

a) To pay for a new war against Spain

b) To pay off debts from its costly wars

c) To punish them for the Boston Tea Party

d) To build new towns west of the Mississippi

2. According to the episode, what was the main problem with the way the taxes were imposed?

a) The money was sent on to the French king

b) Only the southern colonies were made to pay

c) The colonies had no say in the British parliament

d) The taxes were collected by German soldiers

3. Why does Alastair call the leaders of the revolution “unusual revolutionaries”?

a) They were rich, successful men with a lot to lose

b) They had never lived anywhere outside America

c) They had little interest in how countries were run

d) They were very poor men with nothing to lose

4. Why was Thomas Paine's pamphlet Common Sense written in very simple English?

a) Paine had only recently learnt to speak English

b) The printers in Pennsylvania insisted on it

c) It was written mainly for children in the colonies

d) Paine wanted as many people as possible to follow it

5. According to Alastair, what stopped Britain from winning the war?

a) German mercenaries changed sides to join the Americans

b) France, and to a lesser extent Spain, joined the war

c) The loyalists rose up against King George III

d) British soldiers refused to keep fighting in winter

True or False

6. The Boston Massacre happened after the Boston Tea Party. (True/False)

7. The real fighting of the war broke out in Lexington, Massachusetts, in April 1775. (True/False)

8. Thomas Jefferson's original draft of the Declaration of Independence included a clause condemning the slave trade. (True/False)

9. King George III accepted the colonies' offer to stop fighting in exchange for lower taxes. (True/False)

10. Spain joined the war partly in the hope of regaining Menorca and Gibraltar. (True/False)

Fill in the Blanks

11. It wasn't for another five years though, not until 1770, that things really came to a _____.

12. Through rebelling and being _____ to their mother country they risked everything.

13. Paine's pamphlet, which is called Common Sense, was written in the simplest of English with the desire that it should reach a very _____ audience

14. By 1778 though, despite the improvements that the American army had made, the British looked like they had the upper ____, and that they were on the cusp of victory, they were about to win the war.

15. Give me your tired, your poor, Your huddled _____ yearning to breathe free

Vocabulary Practice

16. What does "**broke**" mean when Alastair describes Britain in 1763?

a) Divided into separate parts

b) Angry and ready for war

c) Without money and in debt

d) Cut off from its colonies

17. What does "**status quo**" mean when Alastair describes the leaders of the revolution?

a) The situation as it currently is

b) A high position in society

c) A sudden change of leaders

d) A written set of basic laws

18. What does "**standing**" mean in "the **standing** armies of both sides"?

a) Made up only of foot soldiers

b) Waiting just outside the cities

c) Gathered quickly for one battle

d) Permanent and always kept ready

19. In the podcast, what does "**virtually**" mean?

a) Online

b) Almost

c) Certainly

d) Gradually

20. What does "**thread**" mean when Alastair talks about American culture?

a) A thin string used for sewing

b) A serious danger or warning

c) An idea running through something

d) A law passed by the government

Answers

1. b) To pay off debts from its costly wars
2. c) The colonies had no say in the British parliament
3. a) They were rich, successful men with a lot to lose
4. d) Paine wanted as many people as possible to follow it
5. b) France, and to a lesser extent Spain, joined the war
6. False
7. True
8. True
9. False
10. True
11. head
12. traitors
13. broad
14. hand
15. masses
16. c) Without money and in debt
17. a) The situation as it currently is
18. d) Permanent and always kept ready

19. b) Almost

20. c) An idea running through something