

Essay Topic: The winners of the Revolutionary War are generally referred to as "Patriots" or "Americans." The losers, however, were also Patriots and Americans. Discuss the population of the thirteen colonies at that time with respect to their support of that war. Using both facts and your own thoughts, Who was for it? Who was against it? And why?

A Unique Division

The Revolutionary War was a time of tension, turmoil, and treachery as two sides fought for a land now known as the United States of America. Yet, there were actually three sides in this war: the Patriots, the British, and the Loyalists. It may come as a shock, but the phrase "united as one" never seemed to directly apply to America, even under the Declaration of Independence. Not everyone in the thirteen colonies was brimming with pride for a sovereign nation, severing the connection of paternalism from the English Kingdom.

In fact, about one third of the colonists were considered loyal to the crown prior to and for the duration of the war. These Loyalists, or "Tories", were in favor of finding a more peaceful agreement between England and America, rather than opting for war. Tories believed in John Locke's natural rights and the social contract, much of what the Declaration of Independence was based on, but believed that war would allow mob mentality and possibly lead to tyranny. Many were Northern aristocratic merchants, concentrated in New York and New Jersey, or small farmers making a modest living, who would be severely impacted by war. Much of the Southern gentry composed of wealthy plantation owners were also opposed to war for fear of lost crop sales, since Britain was their most prominent consumer. If the colonists were to declare war and fight against the British, commodities would not be sold between the two nations. Thus, the mercantilism trade sequence would be broken and the merchants would be left with only their goods and no one to purchase their items.

A more interesting and lesser known group that supported the Loyalists was slaves. Slaves tended to agree with the Tories because England offered them the promise of freedom if

they won the war. Although this promise was never intended to be kept, many slaves and other African Americans fought for the British during the Revolutionary War. "Colonel" Tye of Shrewsbury, New Jersey gave a prominent name and face to the black soldiers of this era, as he fought for the British military in Monmouth County. Tye himself was a runaway slave that led hundreds of raids against the Patriots, capturing head militiamen, captains, and supplies. The Patriots even argued that with the help of Tye, they would have more quickly won the war.

On the opposite end of the spectrum, the Patriots were beyond dedicated to their cause. Patriots believed that the English King George III had violated their rights and entitlements under British law, and had imposed an abundance of unnecessary and expensive acts and laws upon the colonists. The opposition to the king began in Boston, after the enforcement of the Sugar and Quartering Act, and with the Stamp Act crisis. The Stamp Act required colonists to pay a tax on all papery items, including newspapers, pamphlets, and legal documents. This impacted almost every colonist, especially lawyers, printers, and merchants, who were viewed as the most powerful people of the Northern colonies.

The Sons and Daughters of Liberty spearheaded the movement against England after the Coercive Acts and Stamp Act. Boycotts of British goods were implemented to resist British policies. The Sons of Liberty did not always use peaceful manners of protest, but were very physical and often violent with their cause. They often raided and tormented tax collectors and their families in the colonies. In one extreme occasion, the group torched and decimated an entire British ship known as the Gaspee. With actions such as the Boston Tea Party and the burning of the Gaspee ship, there was no doubt such a group believed in their cause.

Furthermore, the Patriots believed the king had violated their natural rights as citizens. This also coincides with John Locke's principles of the rights to life, liberty, and property, much

of which the Patriots found to be grotesquely violated by King George III. The Quartering Act, which allowed British soldiers to live in colonists' homes without permission, infringed on the colonists' natural rights. The Boston Massacre, in which five colonists were shot after taunting the British soldiers, infringed their natural rights. The Coercive Act, Stamp Act, and limited representation in the English Parliament violated the colonists' natural rights. The Patriots believed that a government should endorse and allow citizens their natural rights to life, liberty, and property, with limited government interference or control. This set the basis for the Boston Resolves which were addressed to the English king after the Boston Massacre, pointing out ways in which their natural rights had been desecrated.

It should also be noted that there were African American soldiers fighting for the Patriots as well. James Armistead Lafayette, was an enslaved man who joined the Patriots and also led many soldiers in battle, under the command of the famous Marquis de Lafayette. He fought and won many battles in South Carolina and was emancipated in Virginia after the war.

In conjunction with the Sons and Daughters of Liberty, Thomas Paine put pen to paper in his pamphlets "Common Sense" and "The American Crisis" in order to demonstrate the need for independence and the logic of sovereignty, inspire patriotism, and enlist soldiers to fight. He inspired colonists to believe in liberty and the notion of independence.

After the Revolutionary War, despite the division in the colonies, a sense of patriotism was inspired throughout the newly founded United States of America. The Tories initially lived in fear, many of whom were tormented for their beliefs and decisions. Many Loyalists fled to British Canada or even went back to Britain. Years after independence was declared, many were reattributed and given compensation for any harm or damage inflicted on them after the Revolution.

The Revolutionary War was an ironic time of unity and division. The separation between Loyalists and Patriots gave a unique touch to the war in which the colonists were divided in their cause of freedom verses loyalty. However, both were passionate in their separate causes, breathing life into their own morals and beliefs through actions and opinions. The Revolutionary War used this mentality to define a basic term citizens use to describe themselves today: American.

“Revolution was effected before the war commenced. The Revolution was in the minds and hearts of the people This radical change in the principles, opinions, sentiments, and affections of the people was the real American Revolution.”

John Adams, 1818