

Primary Source Collection

MAKING THE REVOLUTION: America, 1763-1791

americainclass.org/sources/makingrevolution/

A collection of primary resources—historical documents, literary texts, and works of art—thematically organized with notes and discussion questions



Primary Resources by Genre

In each genre, ordered by theme: CRISIS, REBELLION, WAR, INDEPENDENCE, CONSTITUTION

DECLARATIONS, PETITIONS, FORMATION DOCUMENTS[†]

- [*CRISIS 2](#) Petitions against the Sugar & Currency Acts, 1764
- [CRISIS 3](#) Parliamentary debate on the Stamp Act, 1765
- [*CRISIS 3](#) Benjamin Franklin, testimony to the House of Commons on the Stamp Act, 1766
- [*CRISIS 3](#) Resolutions & boycotts in opposition to the Stamp Act, including the Declaration of Rights & Grievances of the Stamp Act Congress, 1765
- [*CRISIS 3](#) London merchants' warning to Boston merchants on the impending repeal of the Stamp Act, 1766
- [*CRISIS 4](#) Petition of the New York assembly in opposition to the Quartering Act, with governor's reply, 1766
- [*CRISIS 4](#) Non-importation & boycott agreements in opposition to the Townshend Acts, 1767-1767; and the Massachusetts Circular Letter to colonial legislatures, 1768
- [*CRISIS 5](#) Citizen resolutions against the Tea Act, 1773
- [CRISIS 6](#) Boston Committee of Correspondence (Samuel Adams et al.), The "Boston Pamphlet," 1772
- [CRISIS 7](#) First Continental Congress, 1774: Petition to King George III, Bill of Rights, letters to the Americans and to the people of Great Britain
- [CRISIS 8](#) Second Continental Congress, 1775: Olive Branch Petition, Declaration . . . Setting Forth the Causes & Necessity of Their Taking Up Arms
- [REBELLION 4](#) Reports to the S.C. Council of Safety on the recruitment of backcountry settlers to the Patriot cause, 1775
- [REBELLION 6](#) Petition of enslaved persons to the Massachusetts assembly to abolish slavery, 1777
- [REBELLION 6](#) The anti-slavery clause of Thomas Jefferson's draft of the Declaration of Independence, 1776
- [REBELLION 8](#) The Declaration of Independence (annotated), 4 July 1776
- [INDEPENDENCE 3](#) Founding documents of societies to promote progress, learning, and national identity, 1780-1791
- [CONSTITUTION 2](#) The United States Constitution, 1787; ratified 1788
- [CONSTITUTION 5](#) The Bill of Rights, 1789; ratified 1791
- [CONSTITUTION 5](#) French National Assembly, Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, 1789

ESSAYS, BOOK SELECTIONS

- [CRISIS 2](#) Thomas Pownall, *The Administration of the Colonies*, 1764
- [*CRISIS 2](#) Essays in opposition to the Sugar Act, 1764; and to the Stamp Act, 1765-1766
- [*CRISIS 3](#) Essays opposing and supporting the Stamp Act, 1765-1766
- [*CRISIS 4](#) Benjamin Franklin, essay later known as *Causes of the American Discontents before 1768*, 1768
- [CRISIS 4](#) John Dickinson, *Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania*, Letters 1 & 2, 1767
- [CRISIS 6](#) David Ramsay, *A Sermon on Tea*, essay, 1774
- [*CRISIS 7](#) Pamphlet debate between a Loyalist and a Patriot on the colonists' right to resist British authority, 1774
- [*CRISIS 7](#) Pamphlet debate between a Loyalist and an ex-Loyalist on the colonists' right to resist British authority, 1774
- [*CRISIS 8](#) Loyalists' appeals on the eve of war, 1775
- [CRISIS 9](#) Benjamin Franklin, *Rules by Which a Great Empire May Be Reduced to a Small One*, 1773
- [REBELLION 7](#) Thomas Paine, *Common Sense*, 1776, Pt. II-IV
- [REBELLION 7](#) Rev. Charles Inglis (Loyalist), *The Deceiver Unmasked* (refuting *Common Sense*), 1776
- [REBELLION 8](#) Thomas Hutchinson (Loyalist), *Strictures upon the Declaration [of Independence]* . . . , 1776
- [WAR 2](#) Peter Oliver (Loyalist), *Address to the Soldiers of Massachusetts Bay*, essay, 1776

WAR 2	Thomas Paine, <i>The American Crisis</i> #1, 1776
WAR 7	Esther De Berdt Reed, <i>Sentiments of an American Woman</i> , 1780
INDEPENDENCE 1	Thomas Paine, <i>The American Crisis</i> , #13, 1783
INDEPENDENCE 2	Richard Price, <i>Observations on the Importance of the American Revolution</i> , 1784
INDEPENDENCE 3	Noah Webster, essays on fostering American identity, character, and education, 1783, 1787
INDEPENDENCE 4	Pamphlet debate on the postwar treatment of Loyalists in New York, 1784
INDEPENDENCE 6	Michel-Guillaume Jean de Crèvecoeur (writing as J. Hector St. John), "What Is an American?" Letter III of <i>Letters from an American Farmer</i> , written ca. 1770-1778, publ. 1782
INDEPENDENCE 7	Abbé Claude Robin, <i>New Travels through North America</i> (1781), publ. 1782, concluding letter
INDEPENDENCE 7	J.-P. Brissot de Warville, <i>New Travels in the United States</i> (1788), publ. 1791, concluding chapter
INDEPENDENCE 8	Benjamin Franklin, <i>Advice to Those Who Would Emigrate to America</i> , 1782
INDEPENDENCE 8	Benjamin Rush, <i>Information to Europeans Who Are Disposed to Migrate to the United States of America</i> , 1790
CONSTITUTION 1	James Madison, "Vices of the Political System of the United States of America," memorandum, 1787
CONSTITUTION 3	Albany [NY] Federal Committee, <i>The 35 Anti-Federal Objections Refuted</i> , pamphlet; with selections from broadsides of the Albany Anti-Federal Committee, 1788
CONSTITUTION 4	"Philadelphensis" (Benjamin Workman), Anti-Federalist essays, 1787-1788

NEWSPAPER ACCOUNTS, ARTICLES, LETTERS to the EDITOR

*CRISIS 1	Account of the celebration in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, of the British victory at Quebec, Canada, 1759
*CRISIS 2	Accounts of the Patriot attack on H.M.S. <i>St. John</i> and of the British seizure of the schooner <i>Polly</i> , 1764, 1765
*CRISIS 3	Announcement from the editor of the <i>Pennsylvania Journal</i> on its suspension due to the Stamp Act, 1765
*CRISIS 3	Accounts of public protests against the Stamp Act in Massachusetts, Rhode Island, North Carolina, 1765-1766
*CRISIS 3	Accounts of public celebrations of the repeal of the Stamp Act in Boston, New York, and Antigua, 1766
*CRISIS 4	Account of the Boston " <i>Liberty</i> riot" against the Townshend Acts, 1768
*CRISIS 4	Accounts of the arrival of British troops in Boston, 1768
*CRISIS 4	Letter from "A. F." to the <i>Boston Gazette</i> on the threatened suspension of the New York assembly, 1767
*CRISIS 5	Accounts of the violent confrontations of early 1770: the "Battle of Golden Hill," New York City; the shooting of Christopher Seider, Boston; and the Boston Massacre
*CRISIS 6	Accounts of public protests in Boston against the Tea Act, including the Boston Tea Party, 1773
*CRISIS 6	Newspaper debate on the nature of patriotic opposition to the Tea Act, 1773
*CRISIS 6	Letter from "Fabius" (Benjamin Franklin) to a London newspaper, 1774, on Parliament's deliberations on appropriate punishment for the Boston Tea Party
*CRISIS 7	Accounts of public protests against the Coercive Acts in Mass., Conn., Virginia, and North Carolina, 1774
*CRISIS 8	Newspaper debate between a Patriot (John Adams) and a Loyalist on the colonists' rebellion, 1775
*CRISIS 8	Accounts of the first military confrontations of the Revolutionary War, 1774-1775
REBELLION 7	Letters and news accounts expressing praise for Thomas Paine's <i>Common Sense</i> , 1776
REBELLION 8	Accounts of celebrations of the Declaration of Independence, 1776
CONSTITUTION 4	Letters of Anti-Federalists on the proposed Constitution, 1787-1788
CONSTITUTION 4	Letters appealing for calm during the ratification debates, 1787-1788
CONSTITUTION 7	Letters and tributes on the death of Benjamin Franklin, 1790

JOURNALS, NARRATIVES, MEMOIRS, AUTOBIOGRAPHIES

*CRISIS 3	John Adams, diary entry on the Stamp Act, 1765
*CRISIS 5	John Adams, diary entry, 1770, and autobiography comment (early 1800s) on the violence of early 1770
*CRISIS 6	John Adams, diary entry on the Boston Tea Party, 1773
CRISIS 8	Matthew Patten, New Hampshire, diary entries, 1775-1776
REBELLION 3	Nicholas Cresswell, travel journal on the treatment of Loyalists in Virginia, 1774-1775
REBELLION 3	Janet Schaw, travel letters on the treatment of Loyalists in North Carolina, 1775
REBELLION 7	John Adams, autobiography, early 1800s, selection on Thomas Paine's <i>Common Sense</i>
WAR 6	Boston King, fugitive slave in the British army, narrative selections, publ. 1798
WAR 6	Boyrereau Brinch, enslaved African American in the Continental Army, narrative selections, publ. 1810
WAR 6	Revolutionary War veterans, pension application narratives, 1830s
WAR 7	Margaret Hill Morris, Quaker widow in New Jersey, journal selections, 1776-1777
WAR 7	Mary Jemison (Dehgewanus), white Seneca adoptee in New York, narrative selections, 1779-1780
WAR 7	Anna Rawle, Loyalist's daughter in Philadelphia, journal selections, 1781

CORRESPONDENCE (civilian & diplomatic)

- [*CRISIS 1](#) | Benjamin Franklin and two clergymen, letters on British victories in the French & Indian War, 1760-1763
- [*CRISIS 3](#) | George Washington, letter to Frances Dandridge, 1765, selection on the Stamp Act
- [*CRISIS 4](#) | Benjamin Franklin, letter to Lord Kames, 1767, selection on the Quartering Act
- [CRISIS 5](#) | Benjamin Franklin & Samuel Cooper, letters on the easing of British-American tensions, 1770-1771
- [*CRISIS 7](#) | John Adams, letters to Abigail Adams before and during the First Continental Congress, 1774
- [*CRISIS 7](#) | Benjamin Franklin & George Washington, letters on the Coercive Acts, 1774
- [*CRISIS 8](#) | John Adams, Samuel Adams, George Washington, and Benjamin Franklin (delegates to the Second Continental Congress), letters to their wives or, for Franklin, to friends in London, 1775, on the outbreak of war
- [CRISIS 9](#) | John Adams, letter to Hezekiah Niles, 1818, selection on the American Revolution
- [WAR 1](#) | Benjamin Franklin, letters on the prospects for reconciliation and the beginning of war, 1775-1776
- [WAR 4](#) | Benjamin Franklin and U.S. negotiators in France, letters on Britain's response to the alliance with France, 1778
- [WAR 7](#) | Eliza Yonge Wilkinson, planter's daughter in South Carolina, letters, 1782
- [WAR 9](#) | Benjamin Franklin, letters from Paris on the peace process, 1781-1784
- [INDEPENDENCE 8](#) | Delegates to the Continental Congress, letters on the Declaration of Independence, July 1776, June 1826
- [CONSTITUTION 1](#) | Founders' correspondence on the defects of the Articles of Confederation, 1780-1787
- [CONSTITUTION 2](#) | Founders' correspondence/commentary on the Constitutional Convention, 1787
- [CONSTITUTION 5](#) | Founders' correspondence on adding a bill of rights to the Constitution, 1787-1789
- [CONSTITUTION 6](#) | Founders' and others' correspondence/commentary on the new federal government, 1788-1795

MILITARY ORDERS & CORRESPONDENCE, GOVERNORS' APPEALS, etc. (also see BroadSides)

- [WAR 3](#) | George Washington, correspondence & orders as Commander in Chief, 1775-1778
- [WAR 4](#) | George Washington, letter to the governor of Pennsylvania appealing for aid to the army, 1780
- [WAR 4](#) | George Washington, general orders announcing the treason of Benedict Arnold, 1780
- [WAR 4](#) | Congressional discussions on pacifying Indians on the frontier, 1776-1778, and recruiting enslaved blacks into the Continental army, 1776-1781
- [WAR 9](#) | Governors' appeals urging citizen rededication to the war effort, 1780-1781

COLLECTED COMMENTARY from letters, memoirs, addresses, news accounts, etc. (other than CRISIS compilations)

- [REBELLION 1](#) | Loyalists at the outbreak of the Revolution: commentary from Loyalists, Patriots, and Britons, 1775-1776
- [REBELLION 5](#) | Pacifists' appeals for tolerance: selections from addresses, letters, and records, 1775-1779
- [REBELLION 6](#) | Commentary on the incongruity of slavery and the Patriots' ideals of liberty, 1773-1783
- [WAR 8](#) | Loyalists and the defeat of Britain: selections from letters, narratives, petitions, and poetry, 1782-1786

BROADSIDES (as texts; broadsides used to illustrate historical documents not included)

- [*CRISIS 3](#) | BroadSides on the repeal of the Stamp Act, 1766
- [CRISIS 8](#) | Virginia Committee of Correspondence, announcement of the Battle of Lexington & Concord, 1775
- [REBELLION 2](#) | Anti-Loyalist broadsides and blank forms of allegiance, 1774-1775
- [WAR 3](#) | Military broadsides announcing orders, appeals, etc., 1775-1778
- [WAR 5](#) | BroadSides reporting news of the war, 1776-1783
- [WAR 5](#) | Broadside on a parade condemning the treason of Benedict Arnold, 1780
- [WAR 9](#) | Satirical epitaph for King George III, Philadelphia, 1782

SERMONS & SPEECHES

- [*CRISIS 3](#) | Sermons on the repeal of the Stamp Act, 1776
- [CRISIS 6](#) | Rev. John Allen, sermon on the Gaspée incident, 1772
- [*CRISIS 6](#) | Rev. Simeon Howard, sermon on justifiable war to defend liberty, 1773
- [*CRISIS 7](#) | Sermons supporting and rejecting the justifiability of resistance to Britain, 1774
- [CRISIS 8](#) | Sermons on the outbreak of war and the justifiability of revolution, 1775
- [WAR 1](#) | Edmund Burke (M.P.), speech to Parliament on reconciliation with America, 1775

ALLEGORIES, SHORT STORIES, PLAYS

- [CRISIS 9](#) | Francis Hopkinson, *A Pretty Story Written in the Year of Our Lord 2774*, political allegory, 1774
- [REBELLION 2](#) | Nathaniel Hawthorne, "My Kinsman, Major Molineux," depicting anti-British mob violence in pre-revolutionary Boston, short story, 1830
- [INDEPENDENCE 5](#) | Anonymous, *The Golden Age: Or, Future Glory of North America*, allegory, 1785, selections
Joel Barlow, *The Vision of Columbus*, allegorical poem, 1787, selections

- [INDEPENDENCE 6](#) | Royall Tyler, *The Contrast*, comedy of manners, 1787
[CONSTITUTION 3](#) | Francis Hopkinson, "The New Roof," Federalist allegory, 1787

POETRY & SONG

- [*CRISIS 1](#) | Paul Jackson, "Ode on Peace," 1763
[CRISIS 3](#) | "A Poetical Dream Concerning Stamped Papers," 1765
[*CRISIS 3](#) | "The Lamentation of Pennsylvania, On Account of the Stamp Act," 1765
[*CRISIS 3](#) | New Year's greeting poems distributed as broadsides by news carriers, 1766, 1767
[*CRISIS 3](#) | Paul Revere, *A View of the Obelisk Erected under Liberty-Tree in Boston on the Rejoicings for the Repeal of the — Stamp Act*, engraving with poem, 1766
[*CRISIS 3](#) | Poems celebrating the repeal of the Stamp Act, 1766
[*CRISIS 4](#) | Poems by John Dickinson and Hannah Griffitts in opposition to the Townshend Acts, 1768
[*CRISIS 5](#) | Poems by Phillis Wheatley and an unidentified author on the violence of early 1770
[*CRISIS 5](#) | Paul Revere, *The Bloody Massacre*, engraving with poem, 1770
[*CRISIS 6](#) | Poem and song in opposition to the Tea Act, 1773
[*CRISIS 7](#) | "Mary V. V.," "A Dialogue between a Southern Delegate and His Spouse," satirical poem, 1774
[*CRISIS 8](#) | Poem by Philip Freneau and song on the outbreak of war, 1775
[REBELLION 1](#) | Rev. Myles Cooper (Loyalist), *The Patriots of North America: A Sketch*, 1775
[REBELLION 7](#) | Hannah Griffitts, "Upon Reading a Book Entitled Common Sense," 1776
[WAR 6](#) | Philip Freneau, civilian captive, *The British Prison Ship*, 1781, Cantos II-IV
[WAR 7](#) | Molly Gutridge, "A New Touch of the Times," 1779
[INDEPENDENCE 1](#) | New year's greeting poems distributed as broadsides by news carriers, 1784-1790
[CONSTITUTION 3](#) | Francis Hopkinson, "The New Roof," Federalist poem, 1788

PORTRAITS, ILLUSTRATIONS, MAPS, etc. (as texts; images used to illustrate historical documents not included)

- [CRISIS 1](#) | Benjamin West, *The Death of General Wolfe* (1759), 1770
[CRISIS 4](#) | Paul Revere & Christian Remick, depictions of the arrival of British troops in Boston in 1768
[*CRISIS 3](#) | Paul Revere, *A View of the Obelisk Erected under Liberty-Tree in Boston on the Rejoicings for the Repeal of the — Stamp Act*, engraving with poem, 1766
[*CRISIS 4](#) | Paul Revere, *The Bloody Massacre*, engraving with poem, 1770
[*CRISIS 6](#) | *Liberty Triumphant, or the Downfall of Oppression*, engraving, 1774
[WAR 3](#) | Portraits of George Washington as Commander in Chief, 1779, 1780, 1785
[WAR 8](#) | British satirical rebuses on the U.S. alliance with France, 1778
[WAR 8](#) | British political cartoons on Britain's defeat in the Revolutionary War, 1782
[WAR 9](#) | Maps (zoomable) of the United States after the preliminary 1783 peace treaty, 1783, 1784
[CONSTITUTION 7](#) | Portraits of five Founders (Washington, Jefferson, Madison, Hamilton, Franklin), 1780-early 1790s

CONTEMPORARY HISTORIES

- David Ramsay (Patriot), *The History of the American Revolution*, 1789
 —On the colonists' response to:
[*CRISIS 1](#) | —British victory in the French and Indian War, 1763
[*CRISIS 2](#) | —the Sugar Act, 1764
[*CRISIS 3](#) | —the Stamp Act, 1765, and the repeal of the Stamp Act, 1766
[*CRISIS 4](#) | —the Townshend Acts, 1767
[*CRISIS 5](#) | —the Boston Massacre, 1770
[*CRISIS 6](#) | —the Tea Act and the Boston Tea Party, 1773
[*CRISIS 7](#) | —the Coercive Acts and the First Continental Congress, 1774
[*CRISIS 8](#) | —the outbreak of war, 1775
[INDEPENDENCE 2](#) | —On the "advantages and disadvantages" of the Revolution
[CONSTITUTION 6](#) | —On the inauguration of George Washington, 30 April 1789
 Peter Oliver (Loyalist), *Origin & Progress of the American Rebellion*, 1781
[*CRISIS 3](#) | —On the Boston protests against the Stamp Act, 1765
[*CRISIS 4](#) | —On the non-importation agreements opposing the Townshend Acts, 1767-1770
[*CRISIS 7](#) | —On the colonists' opposition to the Coercive Acts, 1774
[REBELLION 2](#) | —On anti-Loyalist violence, 1774-1775
[INDEPENDENCE 2](#) | Mercy Otis Warren, "A Survey of the Situation of America on the Conclusion of the War with Britain," Ch. 30 of *History of the Rise, Progress, and Termination of the American Revolution*, 1805