

Summary: Life During the War

Taking Sides

On July 4, 1776, Congress declared independence. Not everyone thought this was a good idea. Many people thought Britain should rule America. When the Revolutionary War began, about half of the colonists were Patriots who supported independence. About one-fifth were Loyalists. The rest of the colonists were neutral.

Most Americans who worked for the British government were Loyalists because they wanted to keep their jobs. Many wealthy Americans were Loyalists because they thought war would hurt their businesses.

Some enslaved African Americans became Loyalists. The British offered them freedom if they helped the British in the war. A few fought in the army, and others built forts, drove carts, or worked as spies. Most American Indians stayed neutral. A few Indian nations fought for the Patriots, but more American Indians helped the British. They wanted the British to win and stop American settlers from taking their land.

Many enslaved African Americans were Patriots. Some were offered freedom if they became soldiers. Free African Americans also became soldiers. Some women Patriots worked as spies or messengers. Others helped at the soldiers' camps.

The Challenges of War

The War for Independence created many problems. People who lived near battlefields had to leave their homes. Both armies destroyed houses and robbed farms. Food, clothing, and supplies cost more. Inflation made it hard for people to buy things they needed. Some store and farm owners would not sell their goods. They wanted to wait for the prices to go higher so they could then sell their goods for more money. There were not enough supplies for soldiers and other people. Congress passed a law to stop store owners and farmers from waiting to sell their goods.

Before You Read

Find and underline each vocabulary word.

Loyalists *noun*, people still loyal to the king

neutral *noun*, not taking sides

inflation *noun*, a rise in the prices of most goods

After You Read

REVIEW Why did enslaved African Americans fight on both sides in the war? Circle the two sentences that tell the answer.

REVIEW Why was inflation a problem for Americans? Highlight the sentence that tells how inflation made it hard for people.