

## Summary: Becoming a Country

### Fighting for Freedom

Great Britain ruled its American colonies for more than 150 years. Sometimes the British treated the thirteen colonies unfairly. Some Americans were angry. In 1775, war started between the colonists and the British. George Washington led the American troops. Thomas Jefferson and other leaders met in Philadelphia to talk about independence. They wrote the Declaration of Independence. This stated why Americans should be free from British rule. It also says “all men are created equal.” At the time, the leaders did not think that women, African Americans, or American Indians were equal to white men. The colonies declared their independence on July 4, 1776. The war ended in 1783. The United States had become a new country.

### A New Constitution

The country needed new laws. In 1787, Benjamin Franklin and other American leaders went to Philadelphia to write a constitution for America. A constitution is a plan for the government. These leaders decided that America should be a democracy. In September 1787, the Constitution was finished. In 1788, Americans chose George Washington to be the first President. Today the Constitution is still the American plan for government. New parts have been added to give equal rights to women, African Americans, and American Indians. The Constitution protects the freedom of *all* Americans.



#### Before You Read

Find and underline each vocabulary word.

**independence** *noun*, freedom

**democracy** *noun*, a government in which the people govern themselves



#### After You Read

**REVIEW** Why did the colonies fight against Britain? Draw a box around the sentence that tells how the British treated the colonies.

**REVIEW** What is the purpose of the Constitution of the United States?

Underline the sentence that tells the answer.