

Unit 2 Setting the Stage

The Thirteen Colonies, 1775



Revolution in the Colonies

In this unit, you will learn why some colonists wanted to replace British rule with an independent government. You will also learn about the long, difficult struggle to gain that independence.

In the 1760s, Great Britain began passing new trade and tax laws for the colonies and enforcing old laws passed years before. Picture a southern rice farmer who is required by law to sell his crop only to England, even if he might get a higher price elsewhere. Or think of a northern merchant having to pay a new tax on paper—a tax imposed by a distant government in which he had no representation. How do you think they felt about such laws and taxes?

Colonists who supported Great Britain's policies and British rule were known as Loyalists. Those who resisted called themselves Patriots. When the colonies declared independence, Patriots were opposed by many Loyalists as well as British troops.

The map on the opposite page shows the physical geography of the 13 colonies. Knowing the land was one advantage Patriot forces had over British troops in the American Revolution.

The maps below show (left) where colonists lived in 1775 and (right) where Loyalist support was strong. These settlement patterns, along with the colonies' physical geography and regions of Loyalist strength, helped to shape the military strategies of the revolution.

