

A Chronology of Events
Preceding American Independence.

THE GATHERING STORM IN AMERICA - TEACHER'S GUIDE

*A Play Featuring the Chronology of Events Leading to American Independence
with Background Information, Writing Prompts, and Creative Activities*

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FORWARD

Imagine waking up one day in the midst of a troubled world during a time of crisis not knowing who we are, how we got here, and from whence we came. An improbable scenario? Perhaps not. The Nation's Report Card, reporting on a level of basic knowledge of American history for Grades K-12, reported in 2010 that 80% of 4th Grade students, 83% of 8th Grade students, and 88% of high school students could not meet a proficiency rating in American history (Ricketts, 2015). In *Losing America's History* (Neal & Martin, 2000) report that 81% of seniors from the top 55 U.S. colleges and universities failed a high school level history exam and that none of the institutions required a course in American History. In fact, three-quarters of these institutions required no courses in history at all!

The study of history is essential for good citizenship. History is rich in stories that allow us to connect with the people and events of past generations, to experience their feelings, feel their emotions, and walk with them as they made difficult and often life-threatening decisions that affected not only their lives but the lives of future generations as well. By walking in their footsteps, we can understand how what happened in the past has affected the present. We can see how people worked through moral dilemmas with lessons in courage, fortitude, and purpose. And we can trace our identity, our beliefs, and our values to their sources of origin. As Pulitzer Prize winning author, David McCullough, says, "We have to know who we were if we're to know who we are and where we're headed" (McCullough, 2017).

We invite you to step into the shoes of our forefathers and foremothers and walk with them through the events that occurred in Pre-Revolutionary America. Connect the causes and events that happened during this important period in history not only with the actions that took place then, but how they reflect upon our lives today. As night follows day, what we believe and what we do through our actions today will beget the world of tomorrow.

INTRODUCTION

Welcome! You are about to embark upon a journey into a not too-distant past as we enter a period in time 400 years ago; a flash in the pan considering historic timelines of far more ancient civilizations. This was a time when the “New World” of America was seen as an immense and dangerous wilderness inhabited by savages, yet one that could be cultivated and made profitable with enterprise over time. What started as makeshift English villages and plantations struggling for survival grew to become 13 well established British colonies along the Atlantic seaboard 3,000 miles across the ocean from their homeland in England.

Why did they venture forth and endure the perils and hardships of an uncultivated land?

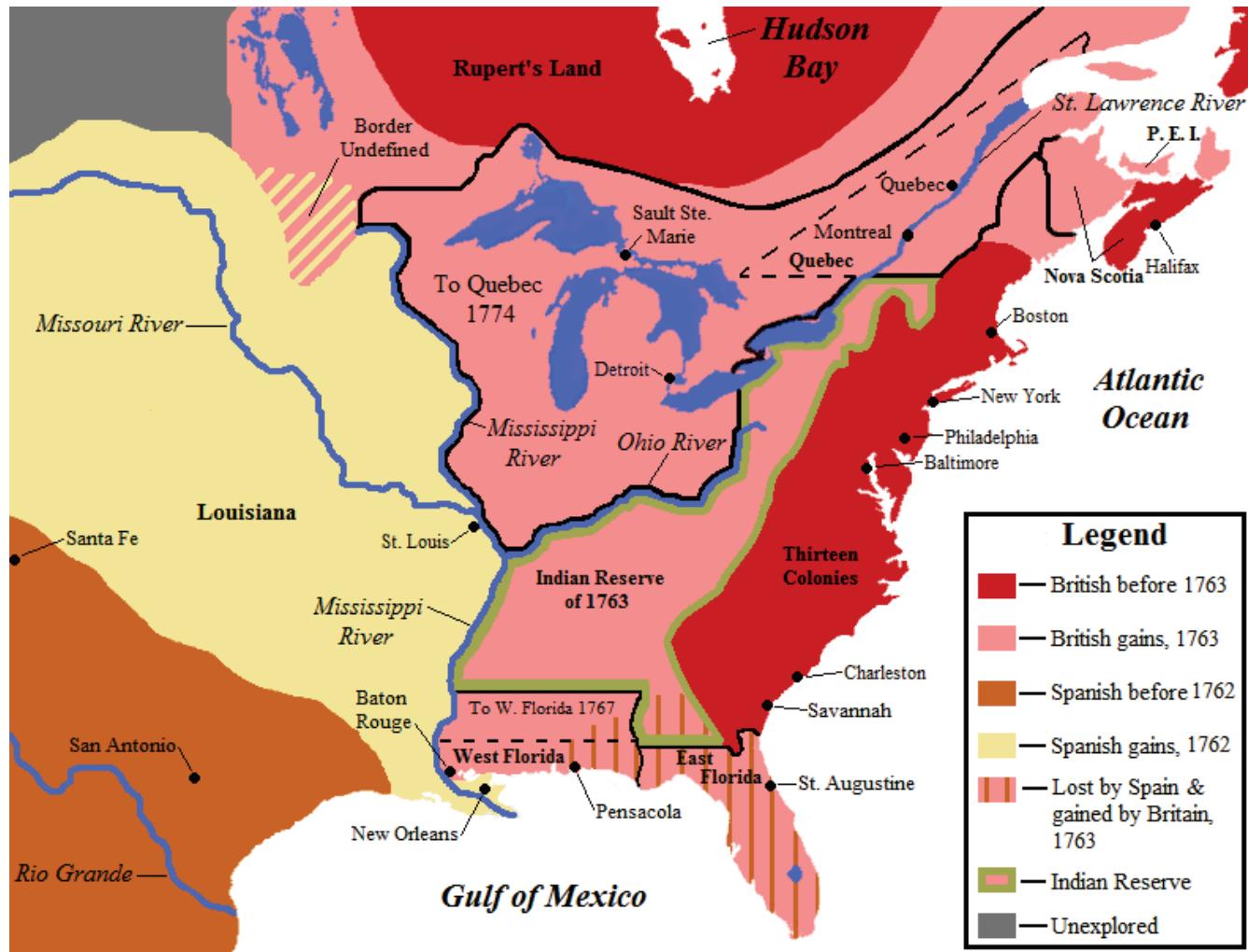
Among the first to arrive and form a colony in the northern regions of America in 1620 were the Pilgrims. These were people who were discriminated against in England and “harried out of the land” by King James I for their religious beliefs. They were called the Separatists, because they wanted to separate from the prescribed Protestant Church of England initiated by King Henry VIII. In 1630, Puritans who wanted to “purify” the Church of England from its Catholic influences were politically persecuted and even tortured under King Charles I. With mounting issues of religious discontent in England, John Winthrop, under a royal charter to establish the Massachusetts Bay Colony, gathered together 700 fellow Puritans, and set sail with 11 ships to found “a city upon a hill” where a perfect model of a Christian commonwealth could be developed. This was his vision and his dream.

Religious persecution in England was the great generating force leading to settlement of the New England colonies by the Puritans. Winthrop and other governors in the colonies pledged to follow the laws of England in setting up colonial governments. In 1628, in order to protect the rights and properties of private citizens, Sir Edward Coke (pronounced Cook) drafted with Parliament a Petition of Right, which was meant to remind the king of the ancient rights and liberties of his subjects. It was declared that no tax should be laid or levied by the king or his heirs without the good will and assent of the archbishops, bishops, earls, barons, knights, burgesses and other freemen. Also, by the Great Charter of the Liberties of England (the Magna Carta), it was declared that no freeman may be taken or imprisoned or be dispossessed of his liberties, but by the lawful judgment of his peers, or by the law of the land.

What followed the Puritan migrations to America was a bloody civil war fought by Puritans in England against the king and his royalists. The Puritans won, King Charles I was beheaded, and Oliver Cromwell ruled England from 1649 – 1658 during the English Commonwealth. It was at this time that royalists, many of them aristocrats, set sail for America to develop plantations in the South. Persecuted Quakers and Catholics settled the middle colonies. British America had become a diverse

land of plenty where settlers valued freedom and liberty as British subjects under English law which was considered to be the very best in the world. This was because other European countries at this time were ruled by monarchs with absolute power supported by a belief in "the divine right of kings."

The Gathering Storm in America begins towards the end of the French and Indian War in America.



North America 1762-83

The year was 1763. The American colonists had joined the British in a war over land that was claimed in the Ohio Valley by both England and France. The English were victorious, and the Treaty of Paris awarded Great Britain all of the land in the Great Lakes region and the Ohio Valley, formally claimed by France. This doubled the land in America now held by the British. Our story opens with Mercy Otis Warren, a descendant of the Puritan founders of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, as our narrator. Mercy was a poet, a playwright, and the first woman to publish an eye-witness account of the American Revolution.