

# Declaring Independence

Chapter 4 Section 2

# Declaring Independence

## Main Idea

The French and Indian War established British dominance in North America but put a strain on the relationship with the colonists.

## Reading Focus

- How did France develop an empire in North America?
- Why did Spain and England clash in North America?
- What were major events in the French and Indian War?
- What were the effects of the French and Indian War on all those involved?

## The Second Continental Congress Takes Action

- Formed the Continental Army
- Appointed George Washington commander in chief
- Issued a Continental (national) currency



- Wrote *A Declaration of the Causes and Necessity of Taking Up Arms*
- Proposed reconciliation with King George III in the Olive Branch Petition



- King George III declared colonies to be in rebellion
- Parliament passed law banning colonial trade outside the British Empire.



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  - Olive Branch Petition
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## More Violence in Boston

### **The siege of Boston**

- After the battles at Lexington and Concord, British troops withdrew back into Boston.
- Several thousand British troops occupied the town.
- The Americans had a larger army of about 15,000 militia from all over New England.

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## More Violence in Boston

- First major battle of the Revolutionary War, the Battle of Bunker Hill on June 17, 1775
- British General Gage was planning to occupy the hills overlooking Boston when his reinforcements arrived.
- Colonial force quickly built a fort on Breed's Hill.



- Some 2,500 British troops stormed the hill twice.
- The colonists were short of ammunition; they waited until the enemy was a few yards away, then fired with deadly aim.
- On the third British attempt, the colonists ran out of gunpowder. They retreated to nearby Bunker Hill.
- The British won, but the defense at the Battle of Bunker Hill encouraged the colonists' resistance.



# Battle of Bunker Hill

- June 17, 1775
- 1<sup>st</sup> major battle Revolutionary War
- British General Gage planned to occupy Boston hills
- Colonial force built a fort on Breed's Hill
- 2,500 British troops stormed the hill twice
- Colonists were short of ammunition
  - waited until the enemy was close
- Third time colonists ran out of gunpowder
- Retreated to Bunker Hill
- British won colonists encouraged



# Interesting details

- Cornel William Prescott knew he had to protect his men
- He had them dig trenches
- British were amazed when they saw the work the Americans did through the night
- British carried packs weighing about 125 pounds
- On the hot June day British soldiers moved slowly up the hill into teeth of the well protected patriots
- Americans had little gunpowder and ammo famous quote “Don’t fire until you see the whites of their eyes”
- 1,000 redcoats lay dead – 400 patriots
- Who won?



## ***Attack on Bunker's Hill, with the Burning of Charlestown***

British troops crossed the Charles River from Boston to Charlestown to meet the colonists on Breed's Hill. After finally capturing the hill, the British set fire to Charlestown. ***Why did the British nevertheless feel discouraged—and the colonists encouraged—by the outcome of this battle?***



# Battles for Boston 1775-76

The colonists were forced to retreat from Breed's Hill, but the British suffered heavy losses during the battle.



**Legend**

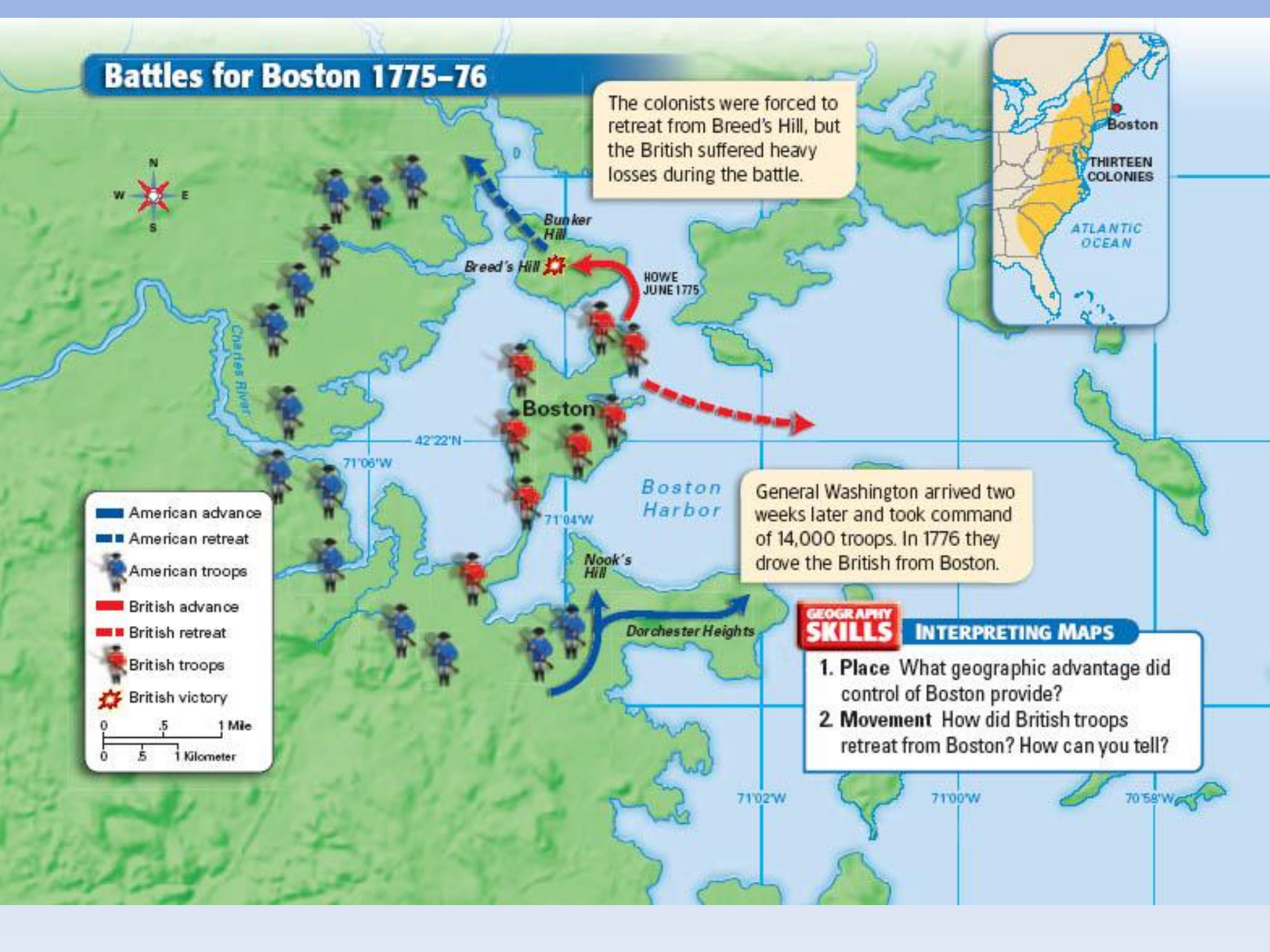
- American advance
- American retreat
- American troops
- British advance
- British retreat
- British troops
- British victory

0 0.5 1 Mile  
0 0.5 1 Kilometer

General Washington arrived two weeks later and took command of 14,000 troops. In 1776 they drove the British from Boston.

**GEOGRAPHY SKILLS** **INTERPRETING MAPS**

- Place** What geographic advantage did control of Boston provide?
- Movement** How did British troops retreat from Boston? How can you tell?



# More Violence in Boston

## George Washington

- Commanded the Continental Army in Boston after the Battle of Bunker Hill.
  - By March 1776, he was ready to recapture Boston.
  - Forced the British to evacuate the city
- British sailed for Halifax, Nova Scotia, along with about 1,100 **Loyalists**; colonists sided with the king and Britain.

## Other battles

- Winter 1775–1776, Benedict Arnold led an unsuccessful attack on the city of Quebec.
- February 1776, Scottish Loyalists attacked a colonial force at Moores Creek, North Carolina.
  - Well-armed colonists were waiting, and their victory ended British control in North Carolina.
- In June, British ships attacked a fort near Charleston, South Carolina, but the fort's commander held them off.



# The Declaration of Independence

## More colonists supporting independence

- Were angry at the king's reaction to the Olive Branch Petition
- They learned that the British were recruiting Native Americans and African Americans to fight against them.
- They heard that the king was hiring mercenary soldiers from the German state of Hesse.
- When the Continental Congress met again, it opened seaports to foreign trade except with Britain.



## Revolutionary ideology

- The colonists still thought of themselves as British.
- They believed they were entitled to all the rights that British citizens had claimed over the years.
- John Locke's idea of natural rights was part of their revolutionary ideology.



# The Declaration of Independence

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# Revolutionary ideology

- Colonists themselves were British
- Entitled to same rights as all British citizens
- John Locke's idea of natural rights part of revolutionary ideology
  - Life
  - Liberty
  - Property

# The Declaration of Independence

## **A matter of *Common Sense***

- Early in 1776 **Thomas Paine** published a pamphlet called ***Common Sense***.
- Condemned monarchy and particularly the rule of George III
- Called for an American declaration of independence, not just a protest against taxes
- The pamphlet sold more than 100,000 copies. It was one of the first American bestsellers.



# A matter of *Common Sense*

- 1776 **Thomas Paine** published *Common Sense*
- Condemned rule of George III
- Called for American declaration of independence
- Pamphlet sold 100,000 copies

# Virginia calls for independence

- May 1776 Virginia Convention of Delegates issued
  - **Virginia Declaration of Rights**
    - 1<sup>st</sup> official call for American independence
- Influenced
  - Declaration of Independence
  - Bill of Rights
- Richard Henry Lee of Virginia then presented three resolutions to the Continental Congress.
  - The colonies should be independent.
  - Americans needed to form foreign alliances for support.
  - The colonies needed to form a plan for unification.

# The Declaration of Independence

## Writing the Declaration

- The Continental Congress organized a committee to write a draft of a declaration of independence.
  - John Adams, Robert Livingston, Roger Sherman, Thomas Jefferson, and Benjamin Franklin.  
Jefferson was chosen to write the draft.
- On July 2, 1776, Congress approved final document and voted to declare independence.
- On July 4, they approved the entire document.



## Reactions to Independence

- Colonists living on the western frontier not a part of the political quarrels
- A fight for independence would expose them to Indian attack since fighting would draw men away from the defense of the frontier.
- Many frontier settlers did not support the fight for independence.

- A quarter of the colonists remained loyal to Great Britain and the king; Patriots called them Loyalists.
- Loyalists were strong in southern colonies.
- Loyalist sympathies were strong among people who had been government officials or belonged to the Anglican Church.
- Patriots harassed Loyalists.

- Loyalists fought with the British.
- Others left the country for other British lands.
- Some simply lived quietly and avoided politics.
- After the American Revolution ended, perhaps 100,000 Loyalists left the United States, mainly to settle in Canada.



# THE SECOND CONTINENTAL CONGRESS, 1775

QUICK  
FACTS

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