

Name _____



The British Response

After the American colonies declared their independence through the Declaration of Independence in 1776, the British government responded with a mix of disbelief, anger, and determination. Understanding the British response is crucial to grasping the complexities of the American Revolution. Let's explore how Britain reacted to the colonies' declaration.

When news of the Declaration of Independence reached Britain, many were surprised and even dismissive. Some British officials believed that the rebellion in the colonies could be easily quelled, and they did not take the declaration seriously. However, others, like King George III and his ministers, viewed it as an act of treason and were determined to suppress the rebellion.

The British government, led by King George III, considered the American colonies to be in a state of rebellion. They authorized the use of military force to restore British authority. This marked the beginning of the American Revolutionary War, a conflict that lasted until 1783.

To bolster their forces, the British hired Hessian mercenaries from the German states of Hesse-Kassel and Hesse-Hanau. These professional soldiers were known for their discipline and combat skills. The presence of Hessian soldiers on American soil further escalated tensions.

While the British faced resistance from the American Patriots, they also received support from Loyalists, colonists who remained loyal to the British Crown. Loyalists, who made up a significant portion of the population, joined the British military and provided valuable assistance to the British forces.

Throughout the American Revolutionary War, the British adopted various strategies to regain control of the colonies. They initially focused on the northern colonies, particularly New York. Major battles, such as the Battle of Bunker Hill and the Saratoga campaign, were fought during this period.

As the war continued, British strategies evolved. They shifted their focus to the southern colonies, hoping to find more Loyalist support and weaken the Patriot cause. However, this change in strategy ultimately did not lead to a British victory.

The British response to the Declaration of Independence led to eight years of conflict, loss of life, and significant financial costs. In 1781, British forces under General Cornwallis surrendered to American and French forces at the Battle of Yorktown, effectively ending the war. The Treaty of Paris in 1783 officially recognized the independence of the United States.

The British response to the Declaration of Independence played a pivotal role in shaping the history of both the United States and Britain. While the American Revolution resulted in the birth of a new nation, it also had long-lasting effects on the British Empire, including increased scrutiny of colonial policies and reforms.

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Comprehension Questions

1. How did the British government initially react to the Declaration of Independence?

- a) They viewed it as a sign of surrender.
- b) They were surprised and dismissive.
- c) They immediately accepted American independence.
- d) They celebrated the declaration.

2. What did the British government authorize in response to the colonies' declaration of independence?

- a) They authorized the use of diplomatic negotiations.
- b) They authorized the use of military force to suppress the rebellion.
- c) They authorized the colonies to govern themselves independently.
- d) They authorized the British colonies to join the American cause.

3. Who were the Hessian soldiers, and why did the British hire them?

- a) Hessian soldiers were American Patriots who fought for independence.
- b) Hessian soldiers were British soldiers who volunteered to fight in the colonies.
- c) Hessian soldiers were mercenaries from Germany hired by the British to bolster their forces.
- d) Hessian soldiers were British generals who led the British military campaigns.

4. What role did Loyalists play in the British response to the Declaration of Independence?

- a) Loyalists supported the American Patriots.
- b) Loyalists remained neutral and did not take sides.
- c) Loyalists joined the British military and provided support to the British forces.
- d) Loyalists formed their independent nation.

5. How did the British strategy in the American Revolutionary War change over time?

- a) They initially focused on the southern colonies, hoping to find more Loyalist support.
- b) They initially focused on diplomatic negotiations with the American colonies.
- c) They initially focused on the western frontier of the United States.
- d) They initially focused on the northern colonies, particularly Massachusetts.