

“American Revolution”

*Well I rode with General Washington, when we were still Englishmen
We fought, for the British, in the French and Indian War*

*Then they changed their policies, and cracked down on smuggling, ten thousand red coats, they
stationed in our towns.*

*They taxed our paper, sugar, stamps and tea, and we fought back with boycotts, tar and
feathering. We broke the monopoly of the British East India Company, when we quit drinkin' tea,
and started drinking coffee.*

*And when the Sons of Liberty, dumped ten thousand pounds of tea,
We hung King George in effigy, throughout every colony.*

*And when the British marched on Lexington, on the road we ambushed them.
Under General Washington, we fought as Americans.*

*That summer in Philadelphia, men from every colony signed a Declaration: an act of treason to
the king.*

*But the war had just begun, and General Washington was on the run, but he slipped into New
Jersey on Christmas Eve. And at Trenton and Princeton, we cut the British down, and up north in
Saratoga, the war turned around.*

*Then the fighting shifted to the South, where the loyalists helped the British out, and Lafayette
and Washington and the French fleet pinned them in.*

*And when they surrendered their armies at Yorktown, those shots heard 'round the world turned
the world upside down, and the Treaty of Paris gave the new United States land west to the
Mississippi and up north to the Great Lakes.*

Historical Background:

Throughout the colonial period (1607-1754), the British attempted to enforce their mercantilist policies through a series of Navigational Acts, which were designed to control the colonial economies in North America. However, throughout most of this period, the British followed a policy known as “salutary neglect,” which meant they didn’t strictly enforce the Navigational Acts. They reasoned that the American colonies were already providing large amounts of revenue for England, and if England did try to enforce the acts, the colonists would find ways around them anyway—smuggling.

The British emerged victorious from the French and Indian War, which gave them total control of North America; but, the cost of war, coupled with the heavy expenses of running an international empire, left them mired in a huge debt. As a result, they ended the period of salutary neglect and began to strictly enforce the Navigational Acts. They also created new colonial taxes on tea and many other commodities. The American colonists resented and protested these “new” taxes and policies vehemently for a period of twelve years. The American Revolution finally began in 1775.

Except for a few minor victories, the war went badly for Washington’s army for the first three years. However, the Battle of Saratoga, in upstate New York, marked a major turning point for the colonists, because the French, and later the Spanish, joined forces with the colonists to help them defeat the British. After a failed southern campaign, the British were forced to surrender at Yorktown in 1781. The Treaty of Paris, which ended the Revolutionary War, gave the colonists their independence—and a vast new territory, which stretched all the way to the country’s new western border at the Mississippi River.

