American Colonists Fight for Independence

By the end of the French and Indian War, there were 13 British colonies in North America.  
The New England colonies were:
   Massachusetts     Rhode Island
   New Hampshire     Connecticut
These areas had colder climates, rocky soil and a short growing season. These colonists specialized in shipbuilding, lumbering, whaling and carrying goods on ships.

The Middle Atlantic colonies were:
   New York     New Jersey     Delaware
   Pennsylvania

These colonies had longer growing seasons and more fertile soil. Farmers grew wheat, barley, rye, corn and fruits. They had plentiful forests that helped with the lumbering and shipbuilding industries. This area had a greater mix of religions than the other colonies.

The Southern Colonies:
   Virginia     Maryland     North Carolina
   South Carolina     Georgia
These colonies were mainly rural settlements. They had warmer climates and a longer growing season. There were large plantations that used slave labor. They grew cotton, tobacco, rice and indigo (plant that makes blue dye) that they shipped to Europe for manufactured goods.

Differences Between Britain and Her Colonies
After the French and Indian War, the British government was in debt. The British decided to tax the colonists in order to pay off its debts. They thought this was fair as the British defended the colonists against the French, Spain, and American Indians.

Stamp Act: This was the first new tax. It required a government stamp on all newspapers, pamphlets, and legal documents. The colonists objected because they had not been consulted (asked for their opinion). The colonists said that “taxation without representation” was unjust. The colonist’s boycotted (refused to buy) British goods sent, petitions to London and even attacked some British tax collectors in protest.

Townshend Duties: In response to the protests, the British dropped the Stamp Act, but insisted that the British had a right to tax the colonists.

To gain revenue (money) the British Parliament next passed the Townshend duties. These duties taxed glass, paper, lead and other goods imported from Britain. The colonists were not consulted. The British felt the colonists were too far away to be represented in Parliament.

The colonists grew angrier. In 1770, British troops arrived to prevent further unrest. The British troops reacted to a protest by colonists by firing on a hostile crowd in Boston. This became known as the “Boston Massacre.”
Again the British government cancelled the taxes to please the colonists.
The British still need revenue so they put a tax on tea. The colonists protested. In 1773, a group of colonists dressed as Indians threw chests of tea off a ship in Boston Harbor.

Outbreak of the American Revolution

The British government was shocked by this protest. They passed a series of acts that closed Boston Harbor, shut down the colonial legislature of Massachusetts until the tea was paid for. These acts were so unbearable; they were called the “Intolerable Acts.”

Continental Congress Meets

12 of the 13 colonies sent representatives to a Continental Congress in Philadelphia to discuss relations with Britain. Some colonists began organizing for a possible conflict.

The Massachusetts governor sent British troops to arrest colonial leaders and take away their weapons. During this mission, British troops and colonists fired on one another at Lexington and Concord in 1775.

The fighting here marked the start of the American Revolution.

A second Continental Congress met shortly after the fighting began. This congress created the Continental Army. They put George Washington in charge as their commander. Washington led his forces to victory in Boston.
Summary of the Causes for the Outbreak of the American Revolution

• The great distance of the American colonies from Great Britain meant the colonies were in many independent of the King and Parliament.
• The French and Indian War ended with the British victory over the French, making the colonies less dependent on Britain for protection.
• The Proclamation of 1763 prohibited the colonists from settling past the Appalachian Mountains. This made the colonists angry.
• The British ordered the colonists to house and feed British soldiers in the colonies that angered the colonists.
• The British made the colonists pay new taxes that were passed without their consent. Most colonists thought this was against their rights.

In early 1776, Thomas Pain published a pamphlet called *Common Sense*. He said that it was common sense for American colonists to break free of British rule. He said a whole continent should not be run (governed by a tiny island thousands of miles away.

The Second Continental Congress debated about the question of independence. In June 1776, the delegates passed a resolution in favor in independence. They tried to get the help of France and Spain, but could not until they declared their independence. John Adams led the debate in favor of independence at the Continental Congress.
After the declaration in favor of independence a committee was formed to write the explanation telling the world of the decision. Thomas Jefferson was the main author of the Declaration of Independence. This document is the basis of the American Government. These 3 ideas were the basis of the theory:

- All people are born with certain unalienable (basic) rights, including, life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.
- Governments are created to protect these rights.
- Citizens have the right to change their government if it fails to protect these rights.

List of Grievances
The Declaration also listed grievances (complaints) that the colonists had against King George III. These grievances claimed that the King was a dictator who taxed the colonists without their consent, and who kept standing armies in their colonies in times of peace. Standing armies means they are ready to fight and armed.

Finally the Declaration announced that the colonists had given up their loyalty to the King. The former colonies now formed a new, independent country capable of forming its own alliances.