**Abdelhafid Boussouf Mila University**

**Level: Third Year**

**Module: Etude de Textes de Civilisation**

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**Lecture Two : Revolution**

The American Revolution — its war for independence from Britain — began as a small skirmish between British troops and armed colonists on April 19, 1775. The British had set out from Boston, Massachusetts, to seize weapons and ammunition that revolutionary colonists had collected in nearby villages. At Lexington, they met a group of Minutemen, who got that name because they were said to be ready to fight in a minute. The Minutemen intended only asilent protest, and their leader told them not to shoot unlessfired on first. The British ordered the Minutemen to disperse,and they complied. As they were withdrawing, someone fireda shot. The British troops attacked the Minutemen with gunsand bayonets.Fighting broke out at other places along the road as theBritish soldiers in their bright red uniforms made their way backto Boston. More than 250 “redcoats” were killed or wounded.The Americans lost 93 men.Deadly clashes continued around Boston as colonialrepresentatives hurried to Philadelphia to discuss the situation.A majority voted to go to war against Britain.

They agreed to combine colonial militias into a continental army, and theyappointed George Washington of Virginia as commander-in-chief. At the same time, however, this Second ContinentalCongress adopted a peace resolution urging King George III toprevent further hostilities. The king rejected it and on August 23declared that the American colonies were in rebellion.Calls for independence intensified in the coming months.Radical political theorist Thomas Paine helped crystallize theargument for separation. In a pamphlet called Common Sense,which sold 100,000 copies, he attacked the idea of a hereditarymonarchy. Paine presented two alternatives for America:continued submission under a tyrannical king and outwornsystem of government, or liberty and happiness as a self-sufficient, independent republic.The Second Continental Congress appointed a committee,headed by Thomas Jefferson of Virginia, to prepare a documentoutlining the colonies’ grievances against the king andexplaining their decision to break away. This Declaration ofIndependence was adopted on July 4, 1776. The 4th of July hassince been celebrated as America’s Independence Day.The Declaration of Independence not only announced thebirth of a new nation. It also set forth a philosophy of humanfreedom that would become a dynamic force throughout theworld. It drew upon French and British political ideas, especiallythose of John Locke in his Second Treatise on Government,

eaffirming the belief that political rights are basic humanrights, and are thus universal.Declaring independence did not make Americans free.British forces routed continental troops in New York, fromLong Island to New York City. They defeated the Americansat Brandywine, Pennsylvania, and occupied Philadelphia,forcing the Continental Congress to flee. American forces werevictorious at Saratoga, New York, and at Trenton and Princetonin New Jersey. Yet George Washington continually struggled toget the men and materials he desperately needed.Decisive help came in 1778, when France recognizedthe United States and signed a bilateral defense treaty.Support from the French government, however, was based ongeopolitical, not ideological, reasons. France wanted to weakenthe power of Britain, its long-time adversary.The fighting that began at Lexington, Massachusetts,continued for eight years across a large portion of thecontinent. Battles were fought from Montreal, Canada, in thenorth to Savannah, Georgia, in the south. A huge British armysurrendered at Yorktown, Virginia, in 1781, yet the war draggedon with inconclusive results for another two years. A peacetreaty was finally signed in Paris on April 15, 1783.The Revolution had a significance far beyond NorthAmerica. It attracted the attention of Europe’s political theoristsand strengthened the concept of natural rights throughout the Western world. It attracted notables such as ThaddeusKosciusko, Friedrich von Steuben, and the Marquis de Lafayette,who joined the revolution and hoped to transfer its liberal ideasto their own countries.The Treaty of Paris acknowledged the independence,freedom, and sovereignty of the 13 former American colonies,now states. The task of knitting them together into a newnation lay ahead.

Source: USA History in Brief. Learner English Series**.** [Bureau of International Information Programs](https://www.google.dz/search?hl=fr&tbo=p&tbm=bks&q=inauthor:%22Bureau+of+International+Information+Programs%22). Global Publishing, 2010.