Objectives

1. Explain how Britain’s colonial policies contributed to the growth of self-government in the colonies.
2. Identify the major steps that led to growing feelings of colonial unity.
3. Compare the First and the Second Continental Congresses.
4. Analyze the ideas in the Declaration of Independence.
5. Summarize the common features of the first State constitutions.
• **confederation**: a joining of several different groups for a common purpose

• **Albany Plan of Union**: Benjamin Franklin’s proposal that the 13 colonies form a congress to raise armed forces, regulate trade, and deal jointly with Native Americans

• **delegate**: a representative

• **popular sovereignty**: the principle that government exists only with the consent of the governed
• What events and ideas led to American independence?
  
  – Unpopular British colonial policies, such as taxation without representation.
  
  – Growing political unity among the colonies.
  
  – Colonial protests against British policies.
  
  – British efforts to punish some colonies for showing independence.
  
  – Fighting between colonists and British soldiers.
• The colonies became used to a large degree of self-rule for many years.
  
  – Distance made it hard for Parliament to manage colonial affairs or enforce trade laws.

  – Colonial legislatures took on broader powers, withholding pay from governors who disagreed with legislative proposals.

  – Britain provided colonial defense, managed foreign affairs, and provided a common currency and market.

  – Taxation was low and interference with colonial affairs was minimal.
Checkpoint Answer: Britain demanded a greater say in colonial affairs, increasing trade regulations and adding new taxes on colonists. This happened after King George III took the throne in 1760.
• Early efforts to unite the colonies failed.
  – Benjamin Franklin’s proposed Albany Plan of Union in 1754 would have created a colonial congress, but was rejected by the colonies.

• In 1765, Britain passed the **Stamp Act**.
  – This law required a stamp to be bought for all legal documents and newspapers.
The Stamp Act Congress

- Nine colonies responded by forming the Stamp Act Congress in New York.
  - They sent a Declaration of Rights and Grievances to the king. This was the first unified colonial protest.
  - Parliament repealed the Stamp Act.
Feature Question answer: The colonial cartoon shows the British as incompetent and foolish, while the British cartoon shows the colonists as brutal, disrespectful and dangerous. The difference shows how far apart the two sides are in the disputes over the acts of Parliament.
First Continental Congress

- Met in Philadelphia in 1774 in response to the Intolerable Acts
- Included delegates from every colony but Georgia. Among them were John Adams, George Washington, and John Jay.
  - Sent a Declaration of Rights to King George that protested Britain’s colonial policies.
  - Urged colonists to boycott trade with England until hated laws were repealed.
  - Gained the support of all 13 colonial legislatures and called for a second Congress to meet the following May.
• Met in Philadelphia in 1775

• Every colony sent delegates. John Hancock was chosen president of the Congress.

• The Battles of Lexington and Concord had already been fought and the Revolutionary War begun.

• A continental army was created and George Washington was made commander-in-chief.
• This Congress became America’s first national government, from 1776-1781.
  – It had legislative and executive powers.
  – During the war, it raised a military, printed and borrowed money, and made foreign treaties.
  – Benjamin Franklin (right) was a leading member.
• Congress resolved to break away from Britain in 1776.

  – Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, Roger Sherman, Robert Livingston, and Thomas Jefferson were named to write a proclamation of independence.

  – The delegates declared independence on July 2, 1776 and adopted the Declaration on July 4.
Checkpoint Answer: To proclaim to the world that the colonies were severing their ties with Great Britain and creating an independent nation based on the principles of limited, representative government.
Feature Question Answer: The details of student answers will vary, but in general they should note that various acts of Parliament galvanized colonial opposition to unjust rule. In addition, the precedent set by early colonial charters and constitutions, as well as efforts such as the Albany plan of union, helped convince colonial leaders to form a unified front and see themselves as a single nation opposed to British interests.
Feature Question Answer: *The details of student answers will vary, but in general they should note that various acts of Parliament galvanized colonial opposition to unjust rule. In addition, the precedent set by early colonial charters and constitutions, as well as efforts such as the Albany plan of union, helped convince colonial leaders to form a unified front and see themselves as a single nation opposed to British interests.*
State Constitutions

• The Congress urged colonies to write their own constitutions.
  
  – A constitution sets out the principles, structures, and processes of government.
  
  – Most states adopted constitutions in 1776 and 1777.
    • The Massachusetts constitution of 1780 is the oldest of the current state constitutions.
• **Popular sovereignty** - government must have the consent of the governed
• **Limited government** - government has only the powers granted by the people in the constitution
• **Civil rights and liberties** - seven state constitutions included a bill of rights defining basic freedoms
• **Separation of powers** - power divided among legislative, executive, and judicial branches
• **Checks and balances** - each branch could limit the power of the other branches
• State constitutions gave most of the power to the legislature, set short terms of office, and limited the right to vote.
• Now that you have learned what events and ideas led to American independence, go back and answer the Chapter Essential Question.
  – How does the Constitution reflect the times in which it was written?