Causes of the American War of Independence....

You say you want a revolution
Well you know
we all want to change the world
You tell me that it’s evolution
Well you know
We all want to change the world .......

~the Beatles
Unlike many modern revolutions, the American Revolution was not rooted in economic deprivation or in the struggle of an oppressed class against an entrenched elite.
But this does not mean that the colonists did not suffer from serious grievances.

The Revolution was the product of 40 years of perceived abuses by the British authorities that many colonists regarded as a threat to their liberty and property.
The American patriots were alarmed by what they saw as a conspiracy against their liberty. They feared that the corruption and the abuses of power by the British government would taint their own society. And, further, they were troubled by the knowledge that they had no say over a government three thousand miles away.

Examples of this reduction in autonomy were:
1733: The Molasses Act, levied a stiff tax on rum, molasses, and sugar produced in the British West Indies for sale to the colonies

Result: increased smuggling, use of alternative sweeteners like honey & maple syrup/sugar
1750: After Parliament passes the **Iron Act**, which impedes the development of iron manufacturing in the colonies, **Benjamin Franklin** publishes a treatise denouncing the absurdity of restraining the colony's economic growth.
1751: The British government vetoes colonial laws that would prohibit convicts from entering the colonies, *(such as legislation that prohibited convicts/criminals from immigrating into the colonies)*

In response, Benjamin Franklin to suggest that the colonists ship rattlesnakes to Britain.
1754: For the fourth time since the 1680s, Britain and France go to war. The conflict is known as the **Seven Years' War in Europe and the French and Indian War in North America**. When it ends in 1763, France cedes Canada and the Ohio River Valley to British rule.

*previous wars were named after the Monarch for whom they were fought: King William’s War, Queen Anne’s War & King George’s War*
1763: To prevent the colonists from rushing into territories vacated by the French and provoking conflict with the Indians, Parliament adopts the **Proclamation of 1763**, forbidding the colonists from purchasing land west of the Appalachians.

In order to enforce the Proclamation, the royal government stations 10,000 troops in the colonies—the first time a standing army has been stationed in the colonies in peacetime.

Britain also orders western settlers to vacate Indian land and restricts Indian trading to traders licensed by the British government.

For the first time, westward expansion is placed in the hands of royal officials.
1764: To maintain the army and repay war debts, Parliament decides to impose charges on colonial trade. It passed the Sugar Act, imposed duties on foreign wines, coffee, textiles, and indigo imported into the colonies, and expanded the customs service. *This tax is paid by merchants... it is not directly paid by colonists unless they purchase these items.*

Colonial response - boycott of goods; begin to use alternates such as maple syrup & honey.
1765: Parliament passes the **Stamp Act**, which requires a tax stamp on legal documents, almanacs, newspapers, pamphlets, and playing cards.

This was the **first direct tax Parliament had ever levied on the colonies and a violation of the principle that only the colonies' legislative assemblies could impose taxes**.
The Stamp Act generated a violent reaction from many colonists... hanging the tax collector in effigy or threatening to tar and feather.
1765: Parliament approves the Quartering Act, requiring colonial governments to put up British soldiers in unoccupied buildings and provide them with candles, bedding, and beverages.
1766: Parliament unanimously passes the **Declaratory Act**, asserting its right to make laws governing the colonists.

“....colonies and plantations in America have been, are, and of right ought to be, subordinate unto, and dependent upon the imperial crown and Parliament of Great Britain.... people of America, subjects of the crown of Great Britain, in all cases whatsoever”
1767: Chancellor of the Exchequer Charles Townshend *imposes new duties on imports of glass, lead, paint, paper, and tea to the colonies*. The *Townshend Acts* also expand the customs service. Revenue from the acts was to pay the salaries of colonial governors and judges—preventing colonial legislatures from exercising the power of the purse over these officials.
Crispin Attucks - among the first to die at the Boston Massacre
1770: British soldiers under Captain Thomas Preston fire on a Boston crowd, killing five and wounding six. The Boston Massacre .. In a subsequent trial, in which John Adams defended the soldiers, all but two of the soldiers are acquitted of murder.
This engraving by Paul Revere was designed to inspire Patriots by showing the cruelty of the British.
1773: Parliament passes the **Tea Act**, authorizing the East India Company to bypass American wholesalers and sell tea directly to American distributors. Cutting out the wholesalers' profit would make English tea cheaper than tea smuggled in from Holland.

*Colonists in Boston, disguised as Indians, board three vessels and dump 342 canisters of British tea into Boston harbor.*
Colonists dressed as Mohawks, throw tea overboard in protest
The British government responds harshly by issuing the **Coercive Acts (Intolerable Acts)**

- closes Boston harbor to trade
- modifies the Massachusetts colonial charter
- forbids town meetings more than once a year
- calls for the billeting of British troops in unoccupied private homes
- provides for trials outside the colonies when royal officials are accused of serious crimes
- and declares that British officials accused of and names a general to serve as Massachusetts' royal governor.
1774: The Quebec Act enlarges French Quebec to cover the area as far west as the Mississippi River and as far south as the Ohio River. French law would prevail in this area and the Catholic Church would have a privileged status there. In essence aligning the French-Canadians with Britain and to curtail any thoughts of having those in the region joining with the rebellious colonists.
1774: Virginia takes the lead by coming to Massachusetts aid, in opposing British policies. Local committees called for the support of Boston and the elimination of all trade with Britain.

Richard Henry Lee  George Washington &  Patrick Henry
Were among the Virginians at the first Continental Congress
1774: In September, the first Continental Congress meets in Philadelphia to orchestrate resistance to British policies. It declares that all trade with Britain should be suspended.
As late as 1774, most colonists did not favor declaring independence from the British Crown. For the first time however, the colonies are acting in unison.

Far from rejecting monarchy, most Americans saw the king as their protector from oppressive acts of Parliament.

Still others recognized the bloodshed would be great and close to home.
In February 1775, Parliament declared Massachusetts to be in a state of rebellion. This declaration permitted soldiers to shoot suspected rebels on site.

Samuel Adams →
In April, British General Thomas Gage received secret orders to arrest the ringleaders of colonial unrest. To avoid arrest, colonial leaders fled Boston.

Alexander Hamilton, Ben Franklin, James Madison, John Adams
1775: British General Thomas Gage is ordered to use military force to put down challenges to royal authority in the colonies. To curtail colonial military preparations, he dispatches royal troops to destroy rebel supplies at Concord, Massachusetts.

On the night of April 18, Paul Revere and William Dawes alert patriots of the approach of British forces. Revere is seized and Dawes is turned back at Lexington, Mass., but the Concord militia is able to move or destroy the supplies and prepares to defend their town.
On April 19, British redcoats arrive at **Lexington** and order 70 armed "**Minutemen**" to disperse.

A shot rings out, drawing fire from the British soldiers. Eight Americans are killed.

The British move on to **Concord**, to try to destroy the supplies they can find, then return to Boston, however, American patriots fire from behind hedges and walls. British losses are 65 dead, 173 wounded, and 26 missing. American casualties are 49 dead and 46 wounded or missing.
LINE OF THE MINUTEMEN
APRIL 19, 1775
STAND YOUR GROUND
DON'T FIRE UNLESS FIRED UPON
BUT IF THEY MEAN TO HAVE A WAR
LET IT BEGIN HERE
CAPTAIN PARKER

Lexington Green, Captain Parker's alleged statement to the minutemen
The fighting at Lexington and Concord were just skirmishes...
British Sentry on post at Concord Bridge
• Ethan Allen and the Green Mountain Boys Seize Fort Ticonderoga (May 1775)
  The Second Continental Congress begins meeting in May 1775
They name Washington named
Commander in Chief in June of 1775... 2 days later the Battle of Bunker Hill is fought (on Breed's Hill) This is considered the first battle of the War for independence.... Even though a formal declaration has not yet been voiced.
Clips from John Adams

- Proposal for Olive Branch
- Kings Response to Olive Branch
- Let me have a Country
- The Vote
- Too Late to Apologize
- Reading of the Declaration
The War of Independence
Advantages

**British**
- Large, well trained army (about 50,000)
- Largest and considered the best navy in the world
- Unified Government
- Money to spend... like on German Mercenaries, arms, supplies and spies

**Colonial**
- No single “nerve center for the Brits to focus on
- Fought a defensive war on familiar territory
- Leadership of George Washington... (with help from Marquis Lafayette and Baron von Steuben)
- Later an alliance with the French
Disadvantages

British

• Lack of unity among many British in the desire to control the destiny of the Colonies

• Distance from England to fighting ground… supplies, manpower as well as communication impacted

• The political leaders that supported the war were not exceptional leaders – some of the British Generals were “nincompoops”

• Britain was spread too thin militarily… having to hold off the French as well as put down insurrections in Ireland.. Not to mention safeguard the remainder of the empire.

• Many Brits did not take the Colonial army seriously and had no real plan to win… giving the colonist just enough hope to pull off an upset
Disadvantages

Colonial

Lack of a professional army – originally most units were of militia, many men didn’t even have proper weapons

Short enlistments made it hard to develop an unified fighting force… required constant training

Regional jealousy – soldiers from one region often resented being ordered about by an officer from another region

Lack of food, shot, powder, weapons, medical supplies

Soldiers were paid with essentially worthless “Continental currency

Unpatriotic merchants sold goods to the British… or stockpiled goods to drive the price up
“You may spread fire, sword and desolation, but that will not be government. Not people can ever be made to submit to a form of government they say they will not receive.”

Duke of Richmond

Not everyone in the British government supported this war... and after 8 years it will be divisive enough to bring the British to the peace table.
It is good to be good, better to be lucky, and best to be both.

As providence has shown the Colonists were good when they needed to be – and really lucky much of the rest of the time.
Major Battles

The first shots starting the revolution were fired at **Lexington, Massachusetts**. On April 18, 1775, British General Thomas Gage sent 700 soldiers to destroy guns and ammunition the colonists had stored in the town of **Concord**, just outside of Boston. They also planned to arrest Samuel Adams and John Hancock, two of the key leaders of the patriot movement.

The **Battle for Fort Ticonderoga** was won without a single shot being fired. In May 1775, Ethan Allen led the Green Mountain Boys of Vermont and Captain Benedict Arnold of the Connecticut militia on a raid of Fort Ticonderoga. It was a strategic win for the patriots.

The **Battle of Bunker Hill** was fought on June 17, 1775, only days after George Washington was elected Commander in Chief of the Continental Army. Despite the name, the battle was actually fought on Breed's Hill.
Battle of Long Island, fall of 1776 – Colonials driven from Long Island
White Plains – Colonials lost again
Fort Washington – Colonials lost the fort and all the arms within it and were driven into NJ and eventually across the Delaware River into Penn. Where the Continental Army settled in for the winter….

**Crossing the Delaware** – **Battle of Trenton** on the evening of December 25, 1776, Washington along with 2,500 soldiers crossed the Delaware River in a snow storm. The river was treacherous with ice. They caught the Hessians (German Mercenaries fighting for the British) sleeping, drunk or hung over after celebrating the Holiday..killing over one hundred men and taking another thousand prisoners.

Not a single American was killed. This was a major boost for the American war effort.

*Painting by Emanuel Gottlieb Leutze*
The British wanted to take control of the Hudson River Valley to cut off New England from the other colonies. General Burgoyne with 7,700 troops approached Albany, New York, from Canada.

On his way, Burgoyne defeated American forces at Fort Ticonderoga. Another group of troops, led by Lieutenant Colonel St. Leger, were to join him from Canada. General Howe also was to join him from New York. Together they were to attack the American troops. Unfortunately for Burgoyne, St. Leger's troops ran into Benedict Arnold and his American militia. St. Leger and his troops were forced to retreat back to Canada. Even worse, General Howe's forces were fighting with Washington at the Battle of Brandywine and then the Battle of Germantown. This kept him from joining Burgoyne.

General Burgoyne's forces attacked General Gates' American forces at the Battle of Oriskany, but he was driven back. He attacked again at the Battle of Bennington, and was again driven back.
As part of the British war Plan of 1777, Lieutenant Colonel Barry St. Leger led his army eastward across the Mohawk Valley toward Albany. One early order of business was to take what he believed would be lightly defended Fort Stanwix, in present day Rome, New York. Instead, St. Leger found a rebuilt and well-garrisoned installation, called Fort Schuyler by the Americans. His initial demand for surrender in early August was rebuffed by the defenders.

Meanwhile, an American relief force was dispatched from nearby Fort Dayton with 800 militia soldiers under the command of Brigadier General Nicholas Herkimer. He approached cautiously and attempted to coordinate a strike against St. Leger with soldiers in Fort Schuyler; that effort failed to materialize and Herkimer was goaded into precipitous action by his men.

http://www.u-s-history.com/pages/h1299.html
On August 6, the American relief column descended onto a narrow path in a ravine near Oriskany Creek. A 1,200-man detachment from St. Leger’s army, mostly Mohawks and Loyalists, was lying in wait. The initial volley cut down most of the American leadership, including Herkimer who sustained a serious leg wound. He had his men prop him up against a tree and continued to direct the battle. Despite his efforts, the Americans were eventually forced from the field.

Both sides suffered heavy losses at Oriskany. Herkimer was taken back to his home where his leg was amputated. He died shortly thereafter. Most of his surviving militiamen returned to their homes, which allowed the British to concentrate again on Fort Schuyler.

What appeared to be a success for St. Leger was only temporary. He continued his siege for another two weeks, but then concluded that he was no match for Benedict Arnold’s advancing forces and returned to Fort Oswego. The British army in the Mohawk Valley failed to keep its rendezvous with Burgoyne at Albany, a failure that contributed heavily to the events around Saratoga in the following weeks.
• General Burgoyne attacked for the third time at the **Battle of Saratoga.** This time Burgoyne and his forces were defeated. General Burgoyne was forced to surrender. This was a major victory for the American forces and a key **turning point** in the war.

• A legitimate win against the British forces persuaded the French to join in an alliance with the Americans thus gaining guns, money, training and a navy!
• With their victory came and alliance – even still Congress couldn’t or wouldn’t send proper equipment, food and so forth the Continental Army spent a miserable winter at Valley Forge -

• General Washington and his Continental Army spent the winter of 1777-1778 camped at Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, 25 miles northeast of Philadelphia.

• For the first months, the soldiers were living in tents which provided little help from the cold. The soldiers lacked proper clothing -- many without shoes or warm clothes. When soldiers had to go out in the cold, they would share clothing. It wasn't until February, 1778, that the men finished building huts to live in, with fireplaces to keep them warm.
The end of the fighting...

In response to Cornwallis in the south and Clinton in the North, a second southern army of Americans was formed under General Gates. In August 1780, Gates led an attack against Cornwallis at Camden, South Carolina. When the British charged, the poorly trained militia retreated leaving the regular soldiers greatly outnumbered. General Gates then retreated. The Americans suffered heavy losses as the British won another battle.

General Nathanael Greene replaced General Gates in October 1780. Rather than an all-out attack on Cornwallis, Greene used hit-and-run tactics to inflict damage on the British. This guerilla warfare managed to drive the British towards the coast and back into Yorktown.... One of the most significant battles of led by Greene was the Battle of Cowpens - immortalized in the Movie “The Patriot”
Cowpens National Battlefield
And map of the Battle of Yorktown In Virginia
Cornwallis was trapped between the American army and the French navy. By mid-October, Cornwallis was running out of food and ammunition. On October 19, 1781, General Cornwallis surrendered to Washington and the Continental forces. So demoralized could he not face Washington or the Continentals.
Although this was only one quarter of the British troops in America, the surrender has a devastating affect on the British government, who were now concerned they were losing the war. They were now motivated to negotiate the end of the war, and the Treaty of Paris.
The World Turned Upside down

If buttercups buzz'd after the bee,
If boats were on land, churches on sea,
If ponies rode men and if grass ate the cows,
And cats should be chased into holes by the mouse,
If the mamas sold their babies
To the gypsies for half a crown;
If summer were spring and the other way round,
Then all the world would be upside down.