

Patriots and Loyalists

In late May of 1775, news of the battles at Lexington and Concord reached London. When George III was told of the defeat at Concord, he called his undersecretary a liar and claimed victory. He knew this meant war. The king was quoted as saying, "I am not sorry that blows must decide."

In the American colonies, public opinions on a war with the mother country were divided. A civil war-like atmosphere ensued in some areas, splitting many families. Those who supported the war against George III and Britain were given the name Patriots.

Patriots came from a wide array of social and economic backgrounds. Lawyers such as John Adams and Alexander Hamilton, planters like Thomas Jefferson and George Mason, merchants, farmers, and ordinary citizens all helped to bolster the rebellion.



Many Patriots were active before the war in the Sons of Liberty or similar groups. The most prominent leaders of the Patriots included wealthy men such as John Hancock, well-educated individuals like Benjamin Franklin, and political activists such as Samuel Adams. Consensus among historians is that around 45 percent of the white colonists supported the Patriots' cause.

Opposing the efforts of the Patriots were Loyalists who supported the British Monarchy. They were commonly referred to as Tories, and the largest numbers of Loyalists were found in the colonies of New York and New Jersey.

Loyalists also made up a substantial portion of the population in North and South Carolina where royal governors there attempted to recruit people to their side. In the South Carolina backcountry, where many Scottish immigrants lived, larger numbers of men fought for the British than for the Patriots.

Loyalists in these areas tended to be older and wealthier, but many chose to side with the king for reasons other than loyalty or fear of losing fortunes if trade markets were threatened. Many active Church of England (Anglican) members remained Loyalists throughout the war's entirety.

By the summer of 1776, Patriots controlled most of the territory in the American colonies, and Royal officials were removed from power. Loyalists in the South were persecuted by local Patriots. Property was confiscated, and outspoken supporters of the king were threatened with public humiliation or physical attack. Some Loyalists who actively aided the British were even executed.

At the end of the war, about 20% of the Loyalists fled to areas that remained in the British Empire, especially Canada. The exit of so many royal officials, wealthy merchants, and land owners had a profound impact on many colonies.

However, the vast majority of Loyalists stayed in the colonies and became citizens of the new republic. Historians have estimated that about 20 percent of the 2.5 million whites in the colonies were Loyalists, accounting for around 500,000 people.



Multiple Choice: *Select the choice that completes the statement or answers the question.*

1. _____ Patriots were
 - a. American colonists who supported the British Empire during the Revolutionary War.
 - b. American families who were divided by the war with Britain.
 - c. American colonists who did not care about the war's outcome.
 - d. American colonists who supported the rebellion against King George III.

2. _____ Which of the following most accurately describes people defined as Patriots?
 - a. They were mostly wealthy, well-educated men.
 - b. They were mainly planters and slave owners living in the Southern colonies.
 - c. Nearly all of them were merchants opposed to British taxation.
 - d. Patriots came from a wide array of social and economic backgrounds.

3. _____ The term Tories was commonly used in reference to
 - a. Colonists who remained loyal to Great Britain during the war.
 - b. Colonists who switched sides during the war.
 - c. Non-English immigrants in the colonies who attempted to remain neutral.
 - d. Colonists who fought against King George III's army.

4. _____ Which part of the country had the most colonists who remained loyal to Great Britain?
 - a. Massachusetts and Rhode Island
 - b. New York and New Jersey
 - c. North and South Carolina
 - d. Pennsylvania and Maryland

5. _____ At the conclusion of the Revolutionary War, most Loyalists
 - a. Returned to England.
 - b. Fled to areas that remained under British control.
 - c. Were imprisoned and some were even executed.
 - d. Stayed in the United States and became citizens of the new republic.

TRUE/FALSE: *Indicate whether the statement is true or false. If the statement is false, write the correct word in the space provided to make the statement true.*

6. _____ News of the battles at Lexington and Concord reached London in June of 1775. _____.

7. _____ When the war began, King George III stated, "I am not sorry that blows must decide." _____

8. _____ Many lawyers such as John Adams and Alexander Hamilton were loyalists. _____

9. _____ Loyalists supported the British Monarchy. _____

10. _____ Many active Church of England members remained Loyalists throughout the war. _____



Guided Reading: *Fill in the blanks below to create complete sentences.*

1. When George III was told of the defeat at _____, he claimed victory.

2. In the American colonies, public opinions on a war with Britain were _____.

3. Patriots came from a wide array of social and _____ backgrounds.

4. Many Patriots were active before the war in the _____ or similar groups.

5. Historians believe that around _____ of the white colonists supported the Patriots' cause.

6. In the South Carolina backcountry, many _____ fought for the British cause.

7. By the summer of 1776, _____ controlled most of the territory in the American colonies.

8. Some _____ around the colonies were even executed.

9. At the conclusion of the war, around _____ of the Loyalists in the colonies fled to areas that remained in the British Empire.

10. Historians have estimated that around _____ people were Loyalists.

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Vocabulary Check: *Select the option that best identifies the use of the underlined word.*

1. _____ "A civil war-like atmosphere ensued in some areas, splitting many families."
In the previous sentence, the word atmosphere means
 - a. The gaseous envelope surrounding the earth; the air.
 - b. A special mood or character associated with a place.
 - c. A section or quantity within a larger thing; a part of a whole.
 - d. To provide with a share, inheritance, or dowry.

2. _____ In the third paragraph, the word array seems to mean
 - a. To dress in finery; adorn.
 - b. An orderly, often imposing arrangement.
 - c. Numerical data linearly ordered by magnitude.
 - d. An impressive variety, as of persons or objects.

3. _____ In the third paragraph, the word bolster implies
 - a. To support or prop up.
 - b. A long, narrow pillow or cushion.
 - c. To be a source of danger to; menace.
 - d. To offer or circulate fraudulently; pass off.

4. _____ In the seventh paragraph, the word tended means
 - a. To take care of an ill or aged person.
 - b. To manage the activities and transactions of.
 - c. To be an attendant or servant.
 - d. To be disposed toward an idea, emotion, way of thinking; to display a common characteristic.

5. _____ "Loyalists in the South were persecuted by local Patriots." In the previous sentence, the word persecuted implies
 - a. An act or course of stalking quarry, prey, or the like.
 - b. To avoid or escape by speed, cleverness, trickery, etc.
 - c. To escape the understanding, perception, or appreciation of.
 - d. To pursue with harassing or oppressive treatment; harass persistently.

Student Response: *Please respond to the questions raised below. A thorough response should be a paragraph of at least three to five complete sentences.*

6. Explain why the American colonists were so divided on which side to support during the Revolutionary War. Be sure to give a thorough explanation and use facts to back up your arguments.

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