

Chapter 5

Americans Revolt

Were the American colonists justified in rebelling against British rule?

5.1 Introduction

In 1770, the colonists of New York City erected a large statue of King George III on horseback. The 4,000-pound statue stood in Bowling Green, a public park near the southern tip of Manhattan. It was made of lead and was gilded to shine like pure gold. Over the next few years, the statue dominated the green, symbolizing loyalty to the king.

On July 9, 1776, the newly written **Declaration of Independence** was read aloud at a public gathering in New York City. The reading of the Declaration spelled doom for the King George statue. In a burst of patriotism, angry New Yorkers swarmed Bowling Green. They flung ropes around the statue and pulled it down. They cut off the king's head and set it aside, planning to impale it on a spike later. Then they chopped the rest of the statue into pieces. In the midst of all the chaos, someone stole the head; to this day, it has never been found. Many of the remaining lumps of lead were melted down to make bullets to fire at British soldiers.

What caused the conversion of these colonists from loyal British subjects to unruly vandals? Actually, their change in attitude was gradual and cumulative. Trouble had been brewing in the colonies for years.

By 1776, most colonists belonged to one of three groups, based on their views of British rule. One group was the Loyalists, who staunchly supported the British government. A second group was the Patriots, who opposed British rule and believed the colonists should separate from Britain immediately and by any means necessary. These were the people who tore down the statue of the king. The third group was the Moderates. The Moderates were unhappy with aspects of British rule, but they were cautious about the possible effects of severing ties with Britain. They hoped that the problems could be resolved peacefully. A peaceful solution was a tall order, though, given the growing antagonism between Britain and the colonies.



George III was king of Great Britain from 1760 to 1820. He was only 22 when he came to the throne and lacked many of the qualities of a good leader. He was said to be immature, stubborn, and unsure of himself. Nevertheless, he was determined to be a strong ruler.

