

### *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. One of the King's quotes, "I am not sorry that blows must decide."

In the American colonies, public opinions on a war with the mother country were divided. In some areas, a civil war-like atmosphere ensued in which families were often divided. 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 cause than they did 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 around the colonies 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 around 20 percent of the 2.5 million whites in the colonies were Loyalists, accounting for around 500,000 people.

## Questions

- 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 and his 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 other parts of the Americas still under British control
  - c) Were imprisoned and some were even executed
  - d) Stayed in the United States and became citizens of the new republic

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Answers

- 1) D
- 2) D
- 3) A
- 4) B
- 5) D