An aerial photograph of New York City, showing a dense cluster of skyscrapers in the foreground and middle ground, with a wide river (likely the Hudson River) and a bridge visible in the background. The sky is clear and blue.

MACMILLAN CULTURAL READERS

PRE-INTERMEDIATE LEVEL

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WITH CHANTAL VENESS

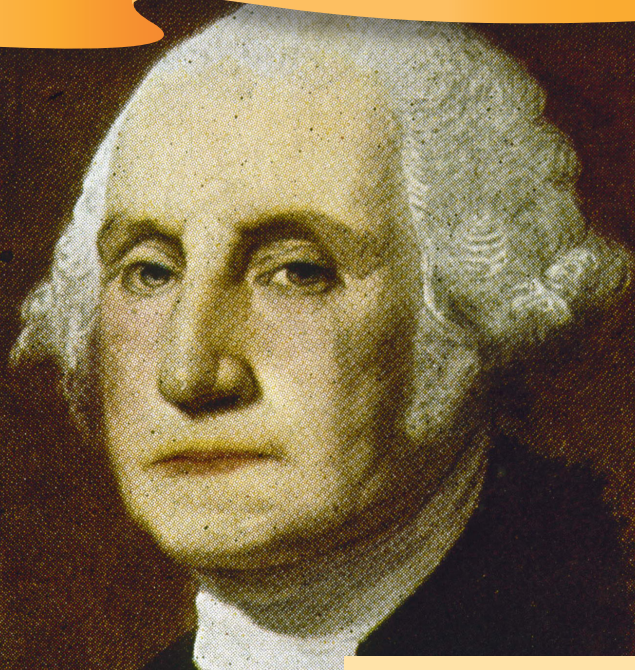
# The United States of America



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# 1 Freedom<sup>13</sup>



## George Washington

In the fifteenth century, the richest European countries wanted to find new water routes to Asia because they wanted to trade—buy or sell things—with other countries and become richer. King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain sent explorers—men looking for new lands and routes for ships—across the oceans to find a western route to Asia. One of these men was the explorer Christopher Columbus, born in Italy, but who worked for the Spanish king and queen. He arrived in the Bahamas, islands southeast of Florida, on October 12, 1492. There he met people who painted their bodies and wore animal skins. He called the native<sup>14</sup> people “Indians” because he thought he was in India, and they continued to be wrongly called Indians for more than four hundred years. Today they are called Native Americans.

## George Washington



**Born:** February 22, 1732  
Westmoreland County, Virginia

**Died:** December 14, 1799 Mount  
Vernon, Virginia

**Schools:** studied at home

**Career:** landowner, soldier, general  
and commander-in-chief of the  
colonial army, first president of the  
USA

**Owned:** Mount Vernon, one  
of Virginia’s most important  
plantations; more than 100 slaves



1565	1607	1609	1613	1619	1620
The Spanish settle Saint Augustine (Florida).	The English settle Jamestown (Virginia).	The Spanish settle Santa Fe (New Mexico).	The Dutch settle along the Hudson River (New Amsterdam, later New York).	Slaves arrive from Africa.	The English settle Plymouth (Massachusetts).

Seven years later, in 1499, another Italian explorer working for the Spanish sailed along the coast of South America. His name was Amerigo Vespucci, and this is where the name “America” comes from.

In 1609, an Englishman called Henry Hudson became the first explorer to sail up a river that is now the Hudson River in New York City. He worked for a large trading company called the Dutch East India Company, and soon after this Dutch people began to settle<sup>15</sup> on the new continent.

At the same time, Europeans also went to Africa to buy people. These people were then shipped to North and South America and sold to farmers. When the Africans arrived, they became slaves—people without freedom—who had to work for no money and do what they were told<sup>p</sup>. They had to work very hard on the coffee, tobacco<sup>16</sup>, cotton, and sugar plantations, which were very large farms. Some worked in white people’s houses, where they cooked, cleaned, and took care of children. More than ten million Africans were shipped to America over three hundred years. Families could not stay together, and so husbands lost wives and parents lost children. The slaves did not go to school, so most of them could not read or write. Their lives were very hard. Some slaves were owned by people who were kind, but many were not.

People went to North America for different reasons. One hundred and two people left England for the new continent because they wanted religious<sup>17</sup> freedom. These people were known as Pilgrims and they arrived in 1620, on a ship called *The Mayflower*.

The place where they first arrived became a very important symbol<sup>18</sup> in the history of the country’s fight for freedom. The rock that they first walked on, in Plymouth, Massachusetts, is called Plymouth Rock. Life for the Pilgrims was difficult. The weather was very cold and there were dangerous wild animals. Many people died. But the Pilgrims could own land and live better lives than they had in Europe. At the end of the first year, the local people—the Native Americans—and the English settlers celebrated with a large meal together to give thanks that they were still alive.







**Pilgrims from *The Mayflower* arriving at Plymouth Rock**

At first, the Native Americans were happy to help the settlers. They taught them how to grow native plants for food and medicine, where to find wild animals for meat, and how to use animal fur for clothes. But the relationship between the Native Americans and settlers changed when more and more settlers arrived and took more land. There were terrible wars between the Native Americans and the settlers.

In 1624, the Dutch settled New Amsterdam on the Hudson River. Later, in 1664, King Charles of England gave orders to his men to take New Amsterdam from the Dutch. The Dutch settlers were unhappy with the Dutch government<sup>19</sup>, so they did not fight very hard when King Charles's brother, the Duke of York, took the settlement from them. He then changed its name to New York.





In the eighteenth century, there were thirteen colonies on the east coast of the continent. England, at that time the richest and strongest country in the world, ruled these colonies. The thirteen colonies later became these states: Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Connecticut, New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Maryland, Delaware, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia.

By 1763, King George the Third and his British government expected the colonists to help British soldiers living in the colonies. The colonists had to give the soldiers food and a bed. This was expensive, and the colonists were very unhappy. The British government also expected the colonists to pay taxes<sup>20</sup> on tea, coffee, wine, and sugar.

On December 16, 1773, about one hundred colonists decided to show King George what they thought of his tax on tea. They went to Boston Harbor at night, where there were three British ships full of tea. The men dressed as Native Americans and threw all of the tea into the water. In American history, this important event<sup>21</sup> is known as the Boston Tea Party. King George was angry and he closed Boston Harbor. The colonists began to prepare for war against<sup>22</sup> England.

One colonist, Thomas Jefferson, wrote a very famous document, called the Declaration<sup>23</sup> of Independence<sup>24</sup>. In it, he said that the colonies were a new and independent country. On July 4, 1776, Thomas Jefferson, John Adams and some other men signed<sup>25</sup> the Declaration of Independence at Independence Hall in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. In the Declaration of Independence, Jefferson wrote, “All men are created equal<sup>26</sup>” and he wrote about man’s right<sup>27</sup> to life, liberty (freedom), and happiness. Men on horses took the document to colonial towns and read it to the people. Now King George was angrier than ever with the colonists, and he sent more soldiers with guns across the Atlantic Ocean to New York. General George Washington and his army of colonists were waiting for them. France and Spain joined Washington and the colonists in the long American War of Independence against Britain.

Many people died in the American War of Independence. But in 1783, the war ended and a new country was born: the United States of America.





“All men are created equal.”

**Thomas Jefferson,  
in the Declaration of  
Independence**

**Thomas Jefferson**



**Born:** April 13, 1743 Shadwell, Virginia

**Died:** July 4, 1826 Monticello, Virginia

**Education**<sup>28</sup>: College of William and Mary

**Career:** lawyer, historian, started the University of Virginia, third president of the USA

**Owned:** several plantations and about 200 slaves

**Benjamin Franklin**

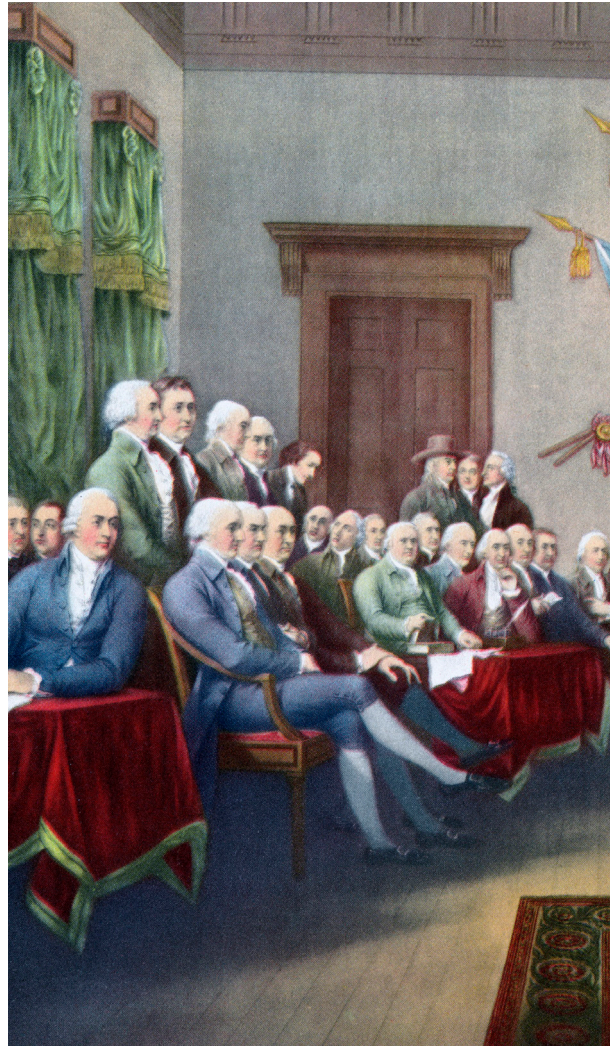


**Born:** January 17, 1706 Boston, Massachusetts

**Died:** April 17, 1790 Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

**Schools:** school for one year, taught by his older brother

**Career:** writer and printer of newspapers, inventor, wrote against slavery



The people were no longer colonists; they were Americans. Some colonists who did not want independence, and who fought with the British army against their colonial neighbors, escaped to Britain or Canada.

George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, and other important colonial leaders<sup>29</sup> wrote the Constitution of the United States of America in 1787. The Constitution is the government document that said that the new government was a democracy<sup>30</sup>, a government “of the people, by the people,





## The signing of the Declaration of Independence

and for the people.” George Washington became the first president, and John Adams was his vice-president<sup>31</sup>.

The USA grew larger by buying land from other countries and by winning land in wars. In the north, cities grew quickly, and trade and business made many people rich. In the south, there were lots of big farms, and farming made many people rich there. Between 1793 and 1861, over eight hundred





thousand slaves were sent from the northern states to the south to work on farms. Africans continued to be slaves for many more years. Slavery did not end until another war was fought—the American Civil War—a war between the states of the north and the south. After this war ended in 1865, slaves were free, and some African-American men worked in the government. But it took almost one hundred years before African-Americans had equal rights in the USA.

Life in the USA also continued to be very bad for the Native Americans. Many died trying to protect<sup>32</sup> their land and their families, but they were losing the fight. In 1831, the US government had started to move Native Americans to reservations—pieces of land for Native Americans only—so that they could take their land. The long journey to the reservations, often in very cold weather and without food, killed many men, women, and children.

### Native American tribes



The Iroquois Nation is a group of six Native American tribes (the Cayuga, Mohawk, Onondaga, Oneida, Seneca, and Tuscarora) that have lived together under one law in New York State for hundreds of years. James Fenimore Cooper wrote about these warriors in his famous book, *The Last of the Mohicans*. (A Mohican is a person in the Mohawk tribe.)

The Lakota Sioux tribe lives in the area that is now Minnesota, Wisconsin, North and South Dakota, and part of Nebraska. In the past they had lived near the Great Lakes further east, but as more European settlers arrived, they had to move west. There are seven Sioux tribes in total.



Sitting Bull

Sitting Bull, a brave<sup>33</sup> leader of the Lakota Sioux tribe<sup>34</sup>, brought many tribes together to stop the US army from taking their land in South Dakota.





When General George Custer and the US army arrived at Little Big Horn on June 25, 1876, Sitting Bull was waiting with two to three thousand tribesmen. General Custer and 267 soldiers were killed that day.

The US government sent thousands more soldiers. They wanted Sitting Bull to tell his tribes to stop fighting. Sitting Bull left and went to Canada. When he returned to the USA, he stopped fighting the US army. On December 15, 1890, Sitting Bull was killed when US police officers tried to take him to prison. Two weeks later, the US army went to Wounded Knee, South Dakota, and killed one hundred fifty Lakota men, women, and children.

1827	1861	1861–1865	1890	1924
Slavery is against the law in New York State.	Abraham Lincoln becomes the sixteenth president.	American Civil War.	US army kills over one hundred fifty Lakota Sioux Indians at Wounded Knee.	Native Americans get full citizen rights.

The USA has always been a country with a lot of immigration. After the Civil War, many Americans left their homes in the east and went to western states, where they could buy cheaper farmland. Another twelve million immigrants, many from the south and west of Europe, arrived between 1892 and 1924.

People wanted to live “the American Dream”, the idea that those who work hard could find success and get rich. In 1850, there were fewer than twenty millionaires in the USA, but by 1900, there were forty thousand! The 1920s were a time of wild spending and a lot of fun for many Americans.

But on October 24, 1929, everything changed when there were terrible financial problems and the US dollar crashed. The years that followed are known in history as the Great Depression, which left many thousands of people without money, jobs, homes, or food. By 1933, millions of people had no work and they wanted a new president. President Franklin D. Roosevelt was that man, and he promised to help Americans find jobs. Roosevelt spent government money on programs for rebuilding the country. American workers got jobs building roads, airports and schools, and by 1943, nine million Americans were better off<sup>P</sup>.

