**Period 3**

**1754-1800**

**OVERVIEW**

Period 3 traces the developments that led to the expulsion of the French as a factor in the imperial struggle for North America and the subsequent American Revolution. It then focuses on the efforts by the new United States to define its government, policies, identity, and place in the world.

Although the British were victorious over France in the Seven Years’ War ending in 1763, they faced new problems with their North American colonies and the Indian tribes. British acquisition of lands west of the Appalachians and in the Ohio Valley meant dismantling of the French-Indian trade networks and new waves of colonial settlers. The opening of lands west of the Appalachians led to rapid settlement and renewed conflicts with both Indians and the British who remained in the Ohio Valley. Colonists in the backcountry developed an independent yeoman culture, increasing tensions as they sought to defend their new homes. Indians tried to form new alliances to ward off these threats, and the British sought to limit migration of settlement into western territories.

Colonists, frustrated at attempts to stop western settlement, were also angered when the British began to tighten control over trade and taxes in an effort to clear debts left from the Seven Years’ War. Colonial resistance was fueled by the ideas of the Enlightenment as well as the determination to be treated fairly under British law. In spite of British military and financial advantages, the resulting revolution succeeded due to colonial resilience, ideological commitment, and timely foreign interventions.

The late eighteenth century was a time of international debate about religion, politics, and new forms of government, leading to new theories that challenged old imperial systems and beliefs. Americans embraced the ideals of the Enlightenment, hoping to create a model republican government that would guarantee natural rights and protect the people from both autocratic leaders and the rule of the mob. Thomas Paine’s *Common Sense* made the case for a republic. The first attempt at government of the new country was the Articles of Confederation, which concentrated power in the hands of the legislature and had no chief executive. This document proved too limited and the central government it created was too weak to be effective. The Articles were replaced by the Constitution after long deliberations about the proper role of the federal government and a series of compromises about representation. Ratification almost failed when some states felt there were not strong enough guarantees of individual rights, but the addition of the Bill of Rights calmed those fears. Continuing debates in the new government over federal power, foreign policy, and economics eventually led to the formation of political parties.

The new United States also had to deal with foreign policy issues. Early leaders felt the best course to take with Europe was that of neutrality in order to protect the new nation’s borders and secure favorable trade alliances. The French Revolution presented a special challenge because the French had aided the colonists in their own revolution. President Washington restated his belief in the importance of neutrality, though others in government continued to debate the wisdom of his approach.

Slavery remained a point of disagreement among the states in the new nation. Many felt the existence of slavery ran counter to the ideals of the American Revolution and the Declaration of Independence. To ensure passage of the Constitution, debates over slavery were postponed, though the issue continued to be at the forefront of political debate for decades.

In California, the Spanish continued to expand their mission settlements, which offered some social mobility to soldiers and settlers. The Northwest Ordinance created an orderly way for land to be sold and new states to be admitted, while also providing for public education and prohibiting slavery. Indian claims and rights remained unaddressed, however, and they continued to lose land to settlers. Increasing need for access to the Mississippi River led to new problems for the new country with both the Spanish and the British.

People in the United States still wrestled with the tension between regional identity and loyalty and their loyalties to the federal government. The South’s determination to expand slavery into new territories conflicted with states in other parts of the country that were moving to end the institution. Women also confronted the disconnect between the ideals of equality promoted by the Enlightenment and the Revolution with their second-class status in the new country. White women had to be content with the ideal of “republican motherhood,” seeing their role as that of forming good citizens as they raised their children at home rather than playing a role in public life.

**KEY TERMS**

Atlantic world Federalism

Artisans Loyalists

Assimilation Nullification

Backcountry cultures Republican motherhood

Checks and balances Tariffs

Ethnic tensions Yeoman farmers

**GUIDED QUESTIONS**

1. How did the movement of English colonists to the west affect relations with the French and Indian nations in the mid-eighteenth century?
2. What accounted for the emergence of an American identity in the years between the French and Indian War and the beginning of the American Revolution?
3. From the reading, list three reasons why the American Revolution succeeded.
4. What beliefs guided the founders as they set about establishing the American economic system in the years following the American Revolution?
5. Name two weaknesses of the Articles of Confederation.
6. What tensions emerged in the debate over the writing of the Constitution?
7. How were these tensions resolved?
8. From the reading, list three debates in the new government that led to the formation of political parties.
9. What factors determined the foreign policy of the new nation during the Washington and Adams presidencies?
10. What are republican values, and how were they manifested in American political, religious, and cultural institutions in the last half of the eighteenth century?