

## What You Will Learn...

## Main Ideas

1. The First Continental Congress demanded certain rights from Great Britain.
2. Armed conflict between British soldiers and colonists broke out with the "shot heard 'round the world."
3. The Second Continental Congress created the Continental Army to fight the British.
4. In two early battles, the army lost control of Boston but then regained it.

## The Big Idea

The tensions between the colonies and Great Britain led to armed conflict in 1775.

## Key Terms and People

First Continental Congress, p. 112

Patriots, p. 113

minutemen, p. 114

Redcoats, p. 114

Second Continental Congress, p. 114

Continental Army, p. 114

George Washington, p. 114

Battle of Bunker Hill, p. 115



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TAKING NOTES

Use the graphic organizer online to take notes on the events that occurred in the early days of the American Revolution.

# The Revolution Begins

## If YOU were there...

You are a member of the British Parliament in the 1770s. Some members say that the Americans are defying the king. Others point out that the colonists are British citizens who have certain rights. Now the king must decide to punish the rebellious colonists or listen to their complaints.

## What advice would you give the king?

**BUILDING BACKGROUND** Taxes and harsh new laws led some colonists to protest against the British. In some places, the protests turned violent. The British government refused to listen, ignoring the colonists' demands for more rights. That set the stage for war.

## First Continental Congress

To many colonists the closing of Boston Harbor was the final insult in a long list of abuses. In response to the mounting crisis, all the colonies except Georgia sent representatives to a meeting in October 1774. This meeting, known as the **First Continental Congress**, was a gathering of colonial leaders who were deeply troubled about the relationship between Great Britain and its colonies in America. At Carpenters' Hall in Philadelphia, the leaders remained locked in weeks of intense debate. Patrick Henry and others believed that violence was unavoidable. On the other hand, delegates from Pennsylvania and New York had strict orders to seek peace.

Wisely, the delegates compromised. They encouraged colonists to continue boycotting British goods but told colonial militias to prepare for war. Meanwhile, they drafted the Declaration of Rights, a list of 10 resolutions to be presented to King George III. Included was the colonists' right to "life, liberty, and property."

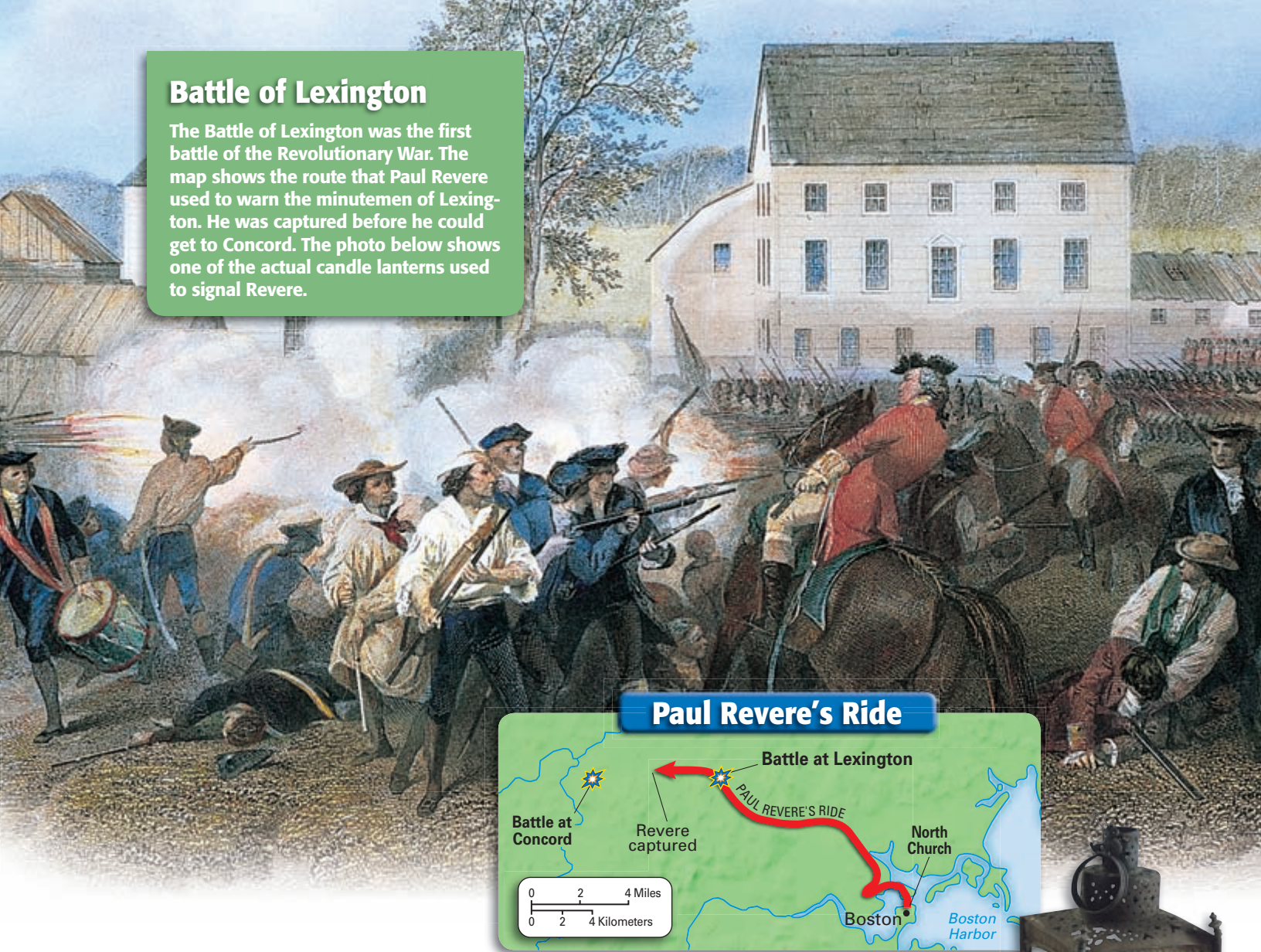
The First Continental Congress did not seek a separation from Britain. Its goal was to state the colonists' concerns and ask the king to correct the problems. But before they left Philadelphia, the delegates agreed to meet in 1775 if the king refused their petition.

Patrick Henry returned from the Congress and reported to his fellow Virginians. To encourage them to support the Patriot cause,



## Battle of Lexington

The Battle of Lexington was the first battle of the Revolutionary War. The map shows the route that Paul Revere used to warn the minutemen of Lexington. He was captured before he could get to Concord. The photo below shows one of the actual candle lanterns used to signal Revere.



Henry voiced these famous words:

“They tell us, Sir, that we are weak; unable to cope with so formidable an adversary. But when will we be stronger? Gentlemen may cry, Peace, Peace—but there is no peace. I know not what course others may take; but as for me, give me liberty or give me death.”

—Patrick Henry, quoted in *Eyewitnesses and Others*

In time many colonists came to agree with Henry. They became known as **Patriots**—colonists who chose to fight for independence from Great Britain.

### READING CHECK Identifying Cause and Effect

Why did the delegates attend the First Continental Congress? What were the results?

## “Shot Heard ‘round the World”

The Continental Congress planned to meet again in 1775. Before it could, the situation in the colonies had changed—for the worse.

### The Ride of Paul Revere

British military leaders in the colonies grew uneasy when local militias seemed to be preparing for action. The governor of Massachusetts, Thomas Gage, learned that a stockpile of weapons was stored in Concord, about 20 miles from Boston. In April 1775 he decided to seize the supplies.

Gage thought he had kept his plan a secret. However, Boston was full of spies for the Patriot cause. They noticed the British were preparing for action and quickly informed the Patriots. Unsure of how the British would strike, Sons of Liberty member Paul Revere enlisted the aid of Robert Newman. Newman was to climb into the steeple of the Old North Church and watch for British soldiers. If they advanced across land, Newman would display one lantern from the steeple. If they rowed across the Charles River, Newman would display two lanterns.

When Revere and fellow Patriot William Dawes saw two lights shine, they set off on horseback. Using two different routes out of Boston, they sounded the alert. As the riders advanced, drums and church bells called out the **local militia, or minutemen—who got their name because they were ready to fight at a minute’s notice.**

### Battles at Lexington and Concord

At dawn on April 19, the British troops arrived at the town of Lexington, near Concord, where 70 armed minutemen waited. Patriot captain John Parker yelled to his troops, “Don’t fire unless fired upon.” Suddenly a shot rang out. To this day, no one knows who fired this “shot heard ‘round the world.”

The battle at Lexington ended in minutes with only a few volleys fired. When the smoke cleared, 8 of the badly outnumbered minutemen lay dead, and 10 were wounded. The British, with only one soldier wounded, marched on to Concord.

Although Revere had been arrested, the citizens of Concord were warned by another rider, Samuel Prescott. Most of the weapons in Concord had already been hidden, but the few that were left were now concealed. Some of the British troops, frustrated because the stockpile had disappeared, set fire to a few buildings. In **reaction** the minutemen charged forward.

For the skilled colonial marksmen of Concord, the British soldiers made an easy target. They were wearing the British military uniform with its bright red jacket. For some time the colonists had called the British soldiers **Redcoats** because of these jackets. The British were forced to retreat to Boston, suffering many casualties along the way.

**READING CHECK Drawing Inferences** Why did the Patriots need several riders? Why did they take different routes?

## Second Continental Congress

King George III had refused to address the concerns listed in the Declaration of Rights. In May 1775, delegates from 12 colonies met again in Philadelphia for the **Second Continental Congress**. This second group of delegates from the colonies was still far from unified, but represented the first attempt at a Republican government in the colonies.

Some of the delegates called for a war, others for peace. Once again they compromised. Although the Congress did not openly revolt, delegates showed their growing dissatisfaction. They sent word to colonial authorities asking for new state constitutions. States set up conventions to write them. They also authorized the Massachusetts militia to become the **Continental Army**. This force would soon include soldiers from all colonies and would carry out the fight against Britain. Congress named a Virginian, **George Washington**, to command the army.

As Washington prepared for war, the Congress pursued peace. On July 5 the delegates signed the Olive Branch Petition as a final attempt to restore harmony. King George refused to read it. Instead, he looked for new ways to punish the colonies.

**READING CHECK Summarizing** What did the Second Continental Congress accomplish?

#### ACADEMIC VOCABULARY

reaction  
response

## Early Battles

While the Congress discussed peace, the Massachusetts militia began to fight. Boston was a key city in the early days of the war. Both Patriots and the British fought to hold it.

### Bunker Hill

Desperate for supplies, leaders in Boston sent Benedict Arnold and a force of 400 men to New York State. Their objective was to attack the British at Fort Ticonderoga. In May 1775, Arnold captured the fort and its large supply of weapons.

Meanwhile, the poorly supplied Patriots kept the British pinned down inside Boston. Although British leaders were trying to form a battle plan, they awoke on June 17 to a stunning sight. The colonial forces had quietly dug in at Breed's Hill, a point overlooking north Boston. The Redcoats would

have to cross Boston Harbor and fight their way uphill.

As the British force of 2,400 advanced, 1,600 militia members waited. Low on gunpowder, the commander ordered his troops not to fire "until you see the whites of their eyes." As they climbed the exposed hillside with their heavy packs, the British soldiers were cut down. Twice they retreated. Stepping over the dead and wounded, they returned for a third try. The colonists were now out of ammunition, and eventually they had to retreat.

This famous conflict is now known as the **Battle of Bunker Hill**, although it was actually launched from Breed's Hill. While the Patriots lost, they proved they could take on the Redcoats. For the British, the battle was a tragic victory. To win, they had sacrificed about double the number of Patriot soldiers.

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**ANIMATED HISTORY**  
Battle Tactics

### hmhsocialstudies.com INTERACTIVE MAP Battles for Boston, 1775–76



## Dorchester Heights

Shortly after the Battle of Bunker Hill, General Washington arrived in Boston to command the Continental Army. Washington knew that he would need heavier guns to drive the British out of Boston, and he knew where to get them—Fort Ticonderoga. Colonel Henry Knox was assigned to transport the captured cannons from Fort Ticonderoga to Boston. He successfully brought the heavy guns over 300 miles of rough terrain in the middle of winter. When Knox delivered the cannons, Washington was ready to regain control of Boston.

On March 4, 1776, Washington moved his army to Dorchester Heights, an area that overlooked Boston from the south. He stationed the cannons and his troops on Nook's Hill overlooking British general William Howe's position. When Howe awoke the next morn-

ing and saw the Patriots' well-positioned artillery, he knew he would have to retreat. "The Rebels have done more in one night than my whole army could do in months," Howe declared. On March 7 Howe retreated from Boston to Canada. The birthplace of the rebellion was now in Patriot hands.

**READING CHECK** **Drawing Inferences** Why was the geography of the Boston area important in forming a battle plan?

**SUMMARY AND PREVIEW** Some colonial leaders became convinced that they could not avoid war with Great Britain. In the next section you will read about another step toward war—the writing of the Declaration of Independence.

## Section 1 Assessment



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ONLINE QUIZ

### Reviewing Ideas, Terms, and People

- Identify** What was the **First Continental Congress**?
  - Make Inferences** Why did the First Continental Congress send the Declaration of Rights to the king?
  - Elaborate** Why did King George III refuse to consider the colonists' declaration?
- Identify** Who warned the colonists of the British advance toward Lexington and Concord?
  - Analyze** Why did the British army march on Lexington and Concord?
  - Elaborate** What is meant by the expression "shot heard 'round the world"?
- Describe** What was the purpose of the **Second Continental Congress**?
  - Draw Conclusions** Were the delegates to the Second Continental Congress ready to revolt against George III? Explain.
  - Evaluate** Defend George III's response to the Declaration of Rights and the Olive Branch Petition.

- Identify** What leader captured Fort Ticonderoga?
  - Draw Conclusions** How was the **Continental Army** able to drive British forces out of Boston?
  - Evaluate** How would you evaluate the performance of the Continental Army in the early battles of the war? Explain.

### Critical Thinking

- Categorizing** Review your notes on the early battles of the Revolution. Then copy the graphic organizer below and use it to categorize events in the early days of the Revolution. Some events will be attempts at peace; others will be movement toward war.

Attempts at Peace	Movement toward War

### FOCUS ON SPEAKING

- Thinking about the Beginning** You'll have about five minutes for your report and only a minute or two to talk about the beginning of the war. What are the one or two most important things you want to say?