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US HISTORY FACT SHEETS

Histoire des États-Unis
en fiches

From the Origins to Donald Trump
Des origines à Donald Trump



The Beginnings of Colonization

(20,000 A.D.-17th century)

CHRONOLOGY

- **20,000 to 15,000:** first settlers coming from Asia via the Bering Strait
- **1492:** Christopher Columbus landing in the present-day Bahamas
- **1499-1502:** Amerigo Vespucci's voyages to the Americas
- **1565:** foundation of St Augustine in Florida by Pedro Menéndez de Avilés

I. The first settlers

The earliest settlers of North America are believed to have come about 20,000 to 15,000 years ago, during the Ice Age, migrating from Asia via the Bering Strait (1), a land bridge that connected Siberia and Alaska at a time when sea levels were much lower than today. The exact nature of their migration remains uncertain, leaving unanswered questions about whether they came continuously over a long period of time or in a single episode. These populations dispersed throughout the continent, from Alaska to Patagonia, leading to the development of various **Native American** cultures. First nomadic hunters, they underwent (2) a gradual shift (3) toward a more sedentary lifestyle.

II. The Viking incursion

Thousands of years later, it is widely accepted that the Vikings reached Newfoundland around the year 1000 A.D. The journey is chronicled in Norse sagas. Led by Norse explorer Leif Erikson, they are thought to be the first Europeans to set foot on North American soil, in what is today Newfoundland in Canada. Although they thoroughly (4) explored the region, the Vikings did not establish a permanent settlement (5) in the area.

III. The Italian, Spanish-sponsored "discoverers"

Inspired by Marco Polo's accounts of his 13th-century travels in China, the desire to reach the East and bring back riches – gold, silver, silk (6) garments, spices – became an obsession among European seafarers (7) and explorers. Driven by the ambition to reach Asia more quickly and efficiently by navigating westward instead of taking the existing eastward routes, Christopher Columbus, a citizen of the port of Genoa (8) in Italy, initially faced rejection when he proposed his plan to the King of Portugal. Undeterred (9), he managed to persuade Isabella I of Castille and her husband Ferdinand II of Aragon to finance his extremely risky expedition. That's how, in August 1492, he set sail

(10) from Spain with three caravels. Two months later, on October 12, 1492, he landed in the Bahamas, on an island that he named San Salvador. Convinced that he had found a new route to India and, beyond it, to China, Columbus referred to the indigenous people he encountered as “**Indians**”. He didn’t find any of the treasures he was looking for but he did take possession of the territories he had “discovered” on behalf of (11) the Spanish Crown. To him, this was no **New World** but merely a new route to the Old World.

In 1497, Giovanni Caboto, also known as John Cabot, led an expedition to North America, sponsored by Henry VII, the first Tudor King, who was keen to find new fishing reserves. Cabot probably landed somewhere in present-day Newfoundland. The Crown, though, was not ready to invest in a long-term settlement, but Cabot’s voyage later served the English government to support its claims over the New World.

It was another Italian, Amerigo Vespucci, a citizen of Florence, also financed by Spain, who made the claim (12) that the newly discovered territories constituted a separate continent. He published the account of the voyages he had undertaken between 1499 and 1502 under the title *Mundus Novus*. In 1507, a German cartographer, Martin Waldseemüller, designed a new map integrating the discoveries of Vespucci and named the new territory “America” in his honor. This act added a fourth continent to the so far universally admitted three-part world consisting of Europe, Asia and Africa.

IV. The Spanish conquistadores

These early voyages were followed by a period brutal conquest and ruthless (13) exploitation of the resources of the new land by the Spanish **conquistadores**. Not only did they aim at extracting as many riches as possible, slaughtering (14) whoever stood in their way (15), but they were also convinced that they had a divine mandate to spread the Catholic faith, the “true faith”, prevent the expansion of Protestantism and save the so-called Indians from **paganism**. In 1519, Hernán Cortés launched a momentous (16) expedition to Yucatán to take possession of the treasures of the Aztecs. He soon reached the capital, Tenochtitlán. The Aztec emperor, Montezuma, first greeted him with gifts as he believed that Cortés was a God of the Aztec mythology. But the Spanish commander forged alliances with enemy tribes, captured Montezuma and massacred the natives, marking the precipitous downfall (17) of a thousand-year-old civilization. A similar fate awaited the Inca nation. In 1532, after several failed expeditions, Francisco Pizarro, with the financial support of Charles V of Spain, reached the Inca Empire, in present-day Peru, captured their Emperor, had him executed in spite of a huge ransom (18) paid in gold, and moved on to ransack (19) the cities, slaughter the populations, and eventually dismantle the empire and found the colony of New Castile in its stead (20).

The *conquistadores* benefited from the introduction of diseases on a continent that had so far been isolated from any global interaction. Smallpox (21), measles (22), chicken pox (23), yellow fever, the plague (24), typhus and

malaria rapidly spread and resulted in a devastatingly high mortality rate among a population devoid of immunity.

But the Spanish *conquistadores* did not confine themselves to the southern part of the continent. In 1565, under the royal mandate of King Philip II of Spain, Pedro Menéndez de Avilés spearheaded (25) an expedition to Florida, successfully thwarted (26) the French presence and founded St Augustine, the capital of the settlement. He also played a role in the colonization of the Caribbean.

VOCABULARY

(1) a strait: *un détroit*; (2) to undergo sth: *subir qqch*; (3) a shift: *un changement*; (4) thoroughly: *complètement, à fond*; (5) a settlement: *une colonie*; (6) silk: *la soie*; (7) a seafarer: *un marin*; (8) Genoa: *Gênes*; (9) undeterred: *sans se laisser décourager/dissuader*; (10) to set sail: *prendre la mer, appareiller*; (11) on behalf of: *au nom de*; (12) to make a claim: *affirmer, prétendre*; (13) ruthless: *sans pitié, impitoyable*; (14) to slaughter sb: *massacrer qqun*; (15) to stand in sb's way: *être en travers du chemin de qqun*; (16) momentous: *très important*; (17) a downfall: *une chute, un effondrement*; (18) a ransom: *une rançon*; (19) to ransack sth: *saccager, mettre à sac qqch*; (20) in its stead: *à sa place*; (21) smallpox: *la variole*; (22) measles: *la rougeole*; (23) chickenpox: *la varicelle*; (24) the plague: *la peste*; (25) to spearhead sth: *mener, conduire qqch*; (26) to thwart sth: *contrecarrer sth*.

À RETENIR

- Les premiers habitants de l'Amérique du Nord sont arrivés il y a 20 000 à 15 000 ans, via le détroit de Béring, et se sont dispersées à travers le continent, développant diverses cultures amérindiennes et passant progressivement d'un mode de vie nomade à sédentaire.
- Vers l'an 1000, les Vikings, menés par Leif Erikson, atteignent Terre-Neuve sans y établir de colonie permanente.
- Christophe Colomb, financé par l'Espagne, débarque aux Bahamas en 1492, croyant avoir trouvé une nouvelle route vers l'Asie. Giovanni Caboto, alias John Cabot, financé par l'Angleterre, explore Terre-Neuve en 1497. Quant à Amerigo Vespucci, il affirme que les nouvelles terres forment un nouveau continent, qui sera nommé « Amérique » par Martin Waldseemüller en 1507.
- Les conquistadors espagnols soumettent brutalement les Empires aztèque et inca et exploitent leurs ressources, introduisant des maladies dévastatrices. Ils colonisent la Floride et les Caraïbes.

The Foundation of the English Colonies (1607-1733)

CHRONOLOGY

- **1607**: foundation of the Virginia Colony
- **1620**: foundation of the Plymouth Colony; Mayflower Compact
- **1630**: John Winthrop, *A Model of Christian Charity*
- **1681**: foundation of Pennsylvania
- **1692**: Salem witch trials
- **1733**: foundation of Georgia

I. The three types of legal statuses of the English colonies

There were three types of legal statuses, granting varying degrees of autonomy to the colonies.

Charter colonies were established on the basis of a charter issued by the monarch, granting a significant degree of autonomy to the settlers. Representative assemblies were elected by the colonists, giving them the possibility to pass and enforce (1) their own laws, with their own local governments, even though governors representing the Crown retained some powers. The Plymouth Colony, founded in 1620, first operated under the charter of the London Company. But since they didn't land where they were supposed to, the **Pilgrims**, who had sailed on board the Mayflower, decided to draft (2) and sign a social contract, **the Mayflower Compact**, in which they claimed to organize themselves into a "Body Politick" and pledged to pass their own laws, thus instituting a form of self-government. In 1691, the Plymouth Colony merged with (3) the Massachusetts Bay Colony.

Proprietary colonies were a type of colonial administration in which the Crown granted land and broad (4) powers to one or several individuals referred to as proprietors, who could thus design their own institutions and govern the colony as they pleased, within certain limits determined by a charter. Charles II granted land and a charter as payment of a debt to eight men who had helped him get back on the throne in 1660 – that was how Carolina was founded. Its institutions were drawn up (5) by the Earl of Shaftesbury and his secretary, John Locke. In the same way, in 1681, Charles II granted land to William Penn as a means of repaying Penn's father for the services he had rendered during the English Civil War.

Royal colonies were under the direct control of the Crown and were administered by a governor, who was appointed by the monarch and had a

veto right on the decisions made by the local assemblies. Virginia was first a charter colony operated by the Virginia Company, but financial hardship (6) prompted (7) the revocation of the charter and the Crown took back control over the colony. There is no example of a colony that started out with a royal status. All of them came into existence through a change of status. Georgia was created as a proprietary colony given to James Oglethorpe by George II in 1733 and was turned into a royal colony in 1754 due to economic difficulties and issues of governance.

II. The reasons that led to the creation of the English colonies

The motivations that led to the foundation of the English colonies were manifold (8), intertwined (9) and never exclusive, but three types of reasons stand out.

a. Economic reasons

At first, colonization was undertaken (10) by merchants and adventurers who dreamed of gold and silver and of reaping (11) the massive riches of the New World, as the Spanish had done before them. The prevalent (12) economic theory at the time was **mercantilism**, which favored colonization. Acquiring new territories was indeed a way of getting access to their abundant resources to fuel (13) the motherland's industry, while also developing a new market to export its products. In 1585 and 1587, Sir Walter Raleigh organized two expeditions, which landed on Roanoke Island. Raleigh named the settlement Virginia, after **Elizabeth, the Virgin Queen**. Unfortunately, when food supplies arrived several years later, the settlers had disappeared, and no one knows what happened. A couple of decades later, James I granted a charter to the London Company, a joint-stock company (14) created by a group of English merchants. The goal was to set up a profitable business. In 1607 three ships landed in Virginia and founded Jamestown.

b. Religious reasons

Even though economic reasons were never totally absent, religious motivations prevailed for several colonies. Many Protestants were in search of religious freedom, at a time when **non-conformists** and **dissenters** were persecuted. The **Anglican Church** resulted from Henry VIII's break up with Rome and the subsequent **Elizabethan Settlement**. But some resented the compromise and wanted the Church of England to be purified from its remnants (15) of Catholic practices and doctrines. Hence (16) the term **Puritans**. They were of various sorts, including **Presbyterians** or **Congregationalists**. Others were **separatists**, aiming to evolve outside the Church of England. Among them were **Baptists**, **Brownists** or **Quakers**.

In 1620, the Plymouth colony was founded by the so-called Pilgrims, a group of English separatists, who crossed the Atlantic on board the Mayflower. In 1691, Plymouth merged with other territories, including the Massachusetts Bay Colony, to create the Province of Massachusetts. In 1630, a group of

Puritans led by John Winthrop, the administrator of a joint-stock company that had been granted a charter by Charles I, settled in Boston and founded the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Aboard their ship, the *Arbella*, Winthrop delivered a sermon-like address entitled *A Model of Christian Charity*, in which he claimed that the Puritans were entering into a **covenant** both with one another and with God, the success of the expedition depending on their abiding by God's word. He added that they were like "**a city upon a hill**", i.e. a society based on Christian principles acting as a model for the rest of the world.

JOHN WINTHROP (1588–1649)

- Born to a family of wealthy landowners
- Trained as a lawyer
- 1630: delivered his famous address *A Model of Christian Charity*, in which he claimed the society they were about to establish was like "a city upon a hill"
- 1630: elected first Governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony; served 18 terms until 1649
- Helped establish a theocratic government
- His journal was posthumously published in 1790 under the title *The History of New England from 1630 to 1649*

In 1634, Lord Baltimore founded Maryland, named after Queen Mary, to provide refuge for Catholics fleeing persecution. But it actually attracted Protestants in much higher numbers. In 1636, Roger Williams, a Puritan minister, founded the settlement of Providence, followed by the Colony of Rhode Island. It was based on religious freedom, the separation of church and state and tolerance. His colony attracted people from various faiths – Quakers, Catholics, Jews and Baptists. In 1681, William Penn obtained a charter from Charles II to found Pennsylvania, where **Quakers**, who were persecuted in England, could take refuge. He himself was a member of the **Society of Friends**. In his view, the settlement was meant to be a "holy experiment", where people of different faiths could live together in peace and harmony.

Puritans in Massachusetts were not particularly tolerant, contrary to Quakers, who believed in religious freedom. Puritans wanted to set up a society based on strict Christian principles, were obsessed with purity and were extremely suspicious of any form of dissent (17). In 1692, intolerance and paranoia reached a climax with the **Salem witch trials** – a wave of trials based on accusations of witchcraft (18), leading innocent people to be sentenced to death and executed on the basis of dubious evidence or forced confessions.

c. Geopolitical reasons

New York stands as a unique example of a colony acquired by force from another colonial power. The territory had been under Dutch control since the early 17th century, known as New Netherland. Its capital, New Amsterdam, was founded in 1625. The Dutch colonists were dissatisfied with the authoritarian rule of the Dutch West India Company. So, in 1664, there was little resistance

when the King of England decided to take control of the colony. It was renamed New York in honor of James, Duke of York, who later ascended the throne as James II. When Georgia was founded by James Oglethorpe in 1733, it was meant to be a **buffer territory**, between Florida, a Spanish stronghold (19), and the English colonies further north. The idea was to create a defensive zone to protect the latter (21) against any Spanish attack. At the same time, Oglethorpe had a utopian project – creating a refuge for the poor.

VOCABULARY

(1) To enforce a law: *appliquer une loi*; (2) to draft sth: *rédiger qqch*; (3) to merge with sth: *fusionner avec qqch*; (4) broad: *large*; (5) to draw sth up: *rédiger, établir qqch*; (6) hardship: *des épreuves*; (7) to prompt sth: *causer qqch*; (8) manifold: *multiple*; (9) intertwined: *entremêlé*; (10) to undertake sth: *entreprendre qqch*; (11) to reap sth: *récolter qqch*; (12) prevalent: *dominant*; (13) to fuel sth: *alimenter qqch*; (14) a joint-stock company: *une société par actions*; (15) the remnants: *les restes, les vestiges*; (16) hence: *d'où*; (17) dissent: *la dissidence*; (18) witchcraft: *la sorcellerie*; (19) a stronghold: *un bastion*; (20) the latter: *ces derniers*.

À RETENIR

- Il existe trois types de statuts juridiques pour les colonies, offrant divers degrés d'autonomie. Les colonies à charte ont une grande autonomie avec des assemblées représentatives élues et leurs propres lois. Les colonies propriétaires sont gérées par des propriétaires désignés par la Couronne avec des pouvoirs étendus, tandis que les colonies royales sont sous le contrôle direct de la Couronne, représentée par un gouverneur.
- Différentes motivations président à la fondation de ces colonies. D'abord économiques, avec des marchands et aventuriers en quête de profits, à l'image de Jamestown fondée en 1607. Ensuite religieuses, lorsque des Protestants persécutés recherchent la liberté de culte, comme les Puritains établissant la Massachusetts Bay Colony en 1630. Enfin géopolitiques, les Anglais cherchant à étendre leur influence territoriale, en s'emparant de New York aux dépens des Néerlandais ou en créant la Géorgie fondée comme zone tampon face aux Espagnols.

The Development of Colonial Society (1732-1763)

CHRONOLOGY

- **1718:** Transportation Act
- **1732:** foundation of Georgia
- **1730s-1740s:** First Great Awakening

I. The colonies in 1732

In 1732, Georgia was the last colony to be founded. The thirteen colonies thus constituted are usually considered to form three groups: **New England colonies** (New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut. Maine was not a separate entity but part of Massachusetts), **Middle colonies** (Pennsylvania, New York, New Jersey and Delaware) and **Southern colonies** (Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina and South Carolina).

In addition, England also owned Newfoundland, which became a colony in 1610, and New Scotland (or Nova Scotia), which came under its control in 1713. But they evolved separately from the others. Newfoundland joined the Canadian Confederation in 1867, New Scotland in 1949.

II. Demography

In 1763, the population of the thirteen colonies is estimated to have ranged between 1.5 to 2.5 million and had more than doubled over the past three decades. The three largest colonies in terms of demography were Virginia (about 500,000 inhabitants), Pennsylvania and New York (around 300,000) and Massachusetts (about 200,000), while the less populated were Rhode Island (60,000), New Hampshire (60,000) and Georgia (20,000).

With a higher birth rate, a lower mortality rate, especially for infants, and a higher life expectancy than in Europe (due to a richer diet including more fish, more meat, mainly pork and beef, more milk, cereals and fruits, and fewer epidemics), natural growth contributed to the demographic expansion. Immigration further amplified the phenomenon, with different types of immigrants. Voluntary immigrants consisted of settlers who were attracted by the riches of the promised land and sold their goods to finance their trip. They came with wives and children or had them come over later. **Indentured (1) servants** were workers whose travel expenses were covered by an employer (such as a plantation owner). In exchange, they were committed to working for them for a period of four to seven years. They retained their rights as

English or British subjects but were not free to come and go. They were fed and accommodated (2), but were not supposed to be physically punished during their contract. Once their obligations had been fulfilled, they recovered their freedom and could settle wherever they wanted. Particularly prevalent in the 17th century, this form of labor gradually declined in the subsequent (3) decades. In addition, the first slaves arrived in Jamestown in 1619, but slavery took momentum (4) in the 1730s. In 1763, the enslaved population accounted for (5) approximately half a million individuals. Slaves came from the Gulf of Guinea (Biafra, Senegal, Ghana and Gambia), Congo and Angola. The slave population was also characterized by a particularly high natural growth. The last category was convicts, who had been sentenced to **transportation** to the colonies since the 17th century. The practice was legally formalized in 1718 with the Transportation Act. Before the American Revolution, about 50,000 had come that way.

III. Social structure

Colonial society was hierarchically organized. The gentry was composed of wealthy landowners or plantation owners, who possessed large estates (6) and numerous slaves, and merchants, who were engaged in **triangular trade**. The merchant class consisted of shopkeepers, craftsmen and professionals such as lawyers and physicians (7). Yeoman farmers (8) were smaller, self-sufficient farmers who owned their personal plot of land. The lower class consisted of indentured servants, unskilled workers and tenant farmers (9). Slaves were not considered legal subjects but property on par with (10) animals. All colonies had slaves, but in New England and the Middle colonies, slavery was not such an entrenched (11) and central institution as in the South, where it was deemed (12) necessary for labor-intensive agriculture. Slavery increasingly replaced the indentured servant system, as it was thought to be more profitable – the initial cost was higher, but slaves were perpetually owned and the owners also owned their children. Whereas indentured servants were still subjects retaining their full rights, slaves had none.

IV. Religious diversity

Various religions co-existed in the colonies, even though some were more dominant than others according to the regions.

The vast majority of the colonists were Protestants – Anglicans (mostly from England), **Congregationalists** and **Presbyterians** (mainly from England and Scotland), **Quakers**, Lutherans (German and Dutch immigrants) or Calvinists (mostly Germans). A minority were Catholics, coming from England or Ireland, mainly settling in Maryland and Pennsylvania, and Jews, who established themselves mainly in Rhode Island. One must not forget the **animist** beliefs of African slaves.

In the 1730s and 1740s, the **First Great Awakening** changed the deal. A movement of intense religious fervor, driven by charismatic itinerant preachers

such as Roger Whitefield or John Wesley, led to the surge of **Evangelicalism** and its branches such as **Baptism** and **Methodism**, new expressions of religious sensitivity that emphasized the personal and emotional dimensions of faith. The movement contributed to eroding the once-prominent positions of the main protestant denominations.

JOHN WESLEY (1703-1791)

- Born in Lincolnshire, educated at Christ Church College, Oxford
- Was ordained a deacon, then a priest in the Anglican Church
- Was sent to Georgia as a missionary
- 1738: in Aldersgate, had a spiritual experience, which made him realize that salvation results from personal faith in Christ
- Created the Methodist movement within the Church of England
- Became an itinerant preacher throughout England

V. Economic activities

Each region had its specificities. In New England: fishing and shellfish (13) gathering; timber (14); agriculture (mainly wheat (15), oat (16) and barley (17), a significant part of which served to feed animals), breeding (18) (cows, sheep, pigs); fur (19) trade; shipbuilding (20). In the middle colonies: agriculture (wheat, corn, barley, oat, rye (21), vegetables), trade and commerce. In the Southern colonies: agriculture (tobacco, rice, sugar, indigo) in large plantations.

Plantations were large agricultural estates (22) usually extending over hundreds or thousands of acres. They were established to grow crops using slave labor. They were usually located near a river and most of the time engaged in monoculture practices. They were owned by a single person or a family, living in a large master house, with several outbuildings (23). Sometimes they were owned by absentee landlords residing in distant locations and seldom (24) visiting the estate. A plantation was run on a daily basis by an overseer (25), in charge of organizing and supervising the work of the slaves, ensuring their productivity, maintaining discipline, upholding (26) security measures. **Mount Vernon**, George Washington's property along the Potomac, which he had gradually acquired and where he grew tobacco, wheat and corn and bred cattle, covered about 8,000 acres at its climax.

Slavery was at the core of an economic system known as **triangular trade**, an exchange of goods involving three continents (Europe, Africa, America). Europeans sailed to Africa, where they exchanged manufactured goods such as firearms, alcohol or textiles against slaves. Slaves were then transported to the American colonies, where they were forced to work in plantations to produce tobacco, sugar or cotton. The latter were then shipped to Europe, where they were traded for other goods such as paper, wool, or metal and glass artefacts.

VOCABULARY

(1) An indentured servant: *un domestique non payé*; to accommodate sb: *loger qqun*; (3) subsequent: *suivant*; (4) to gain momentum: *monter en puissance*; (5) to account for sth : *représenter qqch (une quantité)*; (6) an estate: *une propriété*; (7) a physician: *un médecin*; (8) a yeoman farmer: *un petit propriétaire terrien*; (9) a tenant farmer: *un métayer*; (10) to be on par with sth: *être au même niveau que qqch*; (11) entrenched: *enraciné, profondément ancré*; (12) to deem: *considérer*; (13) shellfish: *les fruits de mer, les crustacés*; (14) timber: *le bois de construction*; (15) wheat: *le blé*; (16) oat: *l'avoine*; (17) barley: *l'orge*; (18) breeding: *l'élevage*; (19) fur: *la fourrure*; (20) shipbuilding: *la construction navale*; (21) rye: *le seigle*; (22) an agricultural estate: *une propriété agricole*; (23) outbuildings: *les dépendances*; (24) seldom: *rarement*; (25) an overseer: *un surveillant*; (26) upholding: *faire respecter, maintenir*.

À RETENIR

- En 1732, les treize colonies américaines, incluant la Géorgie, sont divisées en trois groupes : Nouvelle-Angleterre, colonies du Centre, et colonies du Sud.
- En 1763, la population des colonies est estimée entre 1,5 et 2,5 millions, avec une croissance due à un taux de natalité élevé et une immigration diversifiée (immigrés volontaires, domestiques non payés et travaillant pour rembourser leur dette, esclaves et prisonniers).
- La société coloniale est hiérarchisée, allant des riches propriétaires terriens et marchands aux fermiers, domestiques non payés et esclaves.
- Les colonies abritent diverses religions, principalement protestantes : anglicans, congrégationalistes, presbytériens, quakers, luthériens, calvinistes. Les catholiques, surtout en Maryland et Pennsylvanie, et les juifs, principalement à Rhode Island, sont minoritaires. Le Grand Réveil des années 1730-1740 conduit à l'essor des mouvements évangéliques, tels que le méthodisme.

Native Americans before the American Revolution

CHRONOLOGY

- **1608:** John Smith allegedly saved by Pocahontas
- **1621:** First Thanksgiving, jointly celebrated by English settlers and Natives
- **1636-1638:** Pequot war

I. The various tribes

Native Americans originate from migrants that came from Asia around 20,000 A.D., via the Bering Strait (1), and then spread throughout the continent. They were mistakenly named **Indians** by Christopher Columbus, who thought he had discovered a western passage to India.

The generic terms “Indians” or “**Native Americans**” actually encompass (2) numerous tribes, each having their own language, culture and history. For instance, the Iroquois Confederacy, also called the Six Nations, was composed of the Cayuga, the Mohawk, the Oneida, the Onondaga, the Seneca, and later, the Tuscarora; they were established in the northeast, in present-day New York. The Algonquian people was a language group composed of several tribes speaking a common language family. They included the Algonquin Nation, who lived in the Great Lakes region, just like the Ojibwe, the Powhatan confederacy, who lived in the region of Virginia, the Wampanoag, who inhabited what is today Massachusetts and Rhode Island, the Delaware, also called the Lenape Nation, and the Mohicans, established in the Hudson River Valley. The Cherokee were located in the southeast, between North Carolina and Georgia. The Navajo Nation lived in the southwest, on a territory covering present-day Arizona, New Mexico and Utah. The Apache tribes inhabited the southwestern desert and mountainous regions of present-day New Mexico, Arizona, western Texas and northern Mexico. The Comanche tribes lived in the Southern plains, in an area stretching from present-day Texas to Kansas and New Mexico. Those are only a few examples among numerous tribes.

II. Their way of life

Even though one may try to underline a few features defining the Native American lifestyle, let us bear in mind that each tribe had their unique ways, which could considerably differ from those of other tribes in another part of the continent.

Some lived on hunting (deer (3), bison, turkey (4), bear or beaver (5)), usually with bows (6) and arrows, fishing (cod (7), salmon or sea bass (8) on the East Coast; trout (9), catfish (10) or sturgeon (11) in the Great Lakes area) and gathering fruits (different kinds of berries (12), acorns (13), walnuts (14), wild plums (15), peaches or persimmon (16)) and plants (in particular medicinal plants). On the coast, they also harvested (17) shellfish (18). Others cultivated the land and grew corn (19), beans or squash (20) (referred to as the “**three sisters**”).

Some, such as the Iroquois, the Creek or the Cherokee, who lived in proper houses and permanent villages, were **sedentary**, while others, like the Sioux, the Cheyenne or the Comanche, were **nomadic** and lived in tipis made with wooden poles and buffalo hides (21). But the distinction could be blurred (22), as some tribes could engage in a blend (23) of hunting and farming or could move from a nomadic to a sedentary lifestyle over time.

Native American tribes didn’t master iron metallurgy, but some of them did know how to produce copper (24), which they used to make tools and ornaments. It was after the arrival of European settlers that the knowledge of iron gradually spread. In terms of craftsmanship, they made baskets (25), pottery, fur (26) blankets, sandals and bags. They used animal fur and hides and knew how to weave (27) cotton and yucca.

Native Americans didn’t have horses, which were introduced by Europeans. The only domestic animal they had was the dog. Horses revolutionized their hunting methods and had a deep impact on inter-tribal relations, offering a considerable strategic advantage to those who could acquire and master them.

III. Their relations with European colonists

Native Americans could first show themselves rather helpful towards the settlers, showing them how to adapt to a hostile and dangerous world, bringing them food when they saw them starve, explaining what plants they could eat and how they could grow crops, showing them how they could exploit the forests for heating and clear them for agriculture, teaching them how to build canoes and rowing up the rivers. When the **Pilgrim Fathers** arrived at Plymouth, the Natives first helped them survive the harsh living conditions. In 1621, they celebrated together the first **Thanksgiving** feast to commemorate the successful harvest that had followed a terrible winter. In Jamestown, the colonists led by John Smith were first provided with meat and cereals by the Powhatans. In 1608, for unclear reasons, John Smith was captured, taken to the chief of the tribe, Wahunsenacawh, and sentenced to death. It was thanks to the intervention of the chief’s twelve-year-old daughter, Pocahontas, that his life was spared. Some historians, though, have doubts over the authenticity of the event and think it might have been made up by Smith himself. As for English colonists, they prided themselves on (28) being more humane and civilized than the barbaric Spanish *conquistadores*. Some even had an idealized view of the natives as “**noble savages**”, a notion coined by Jean-Jacques

Rousseau, according to which indigenous people were inherently good and lived in harmony with nature. The relations with European settlers were based on negotiation and exchange – Native Americans got manufactured products they were unable to make, such as knives, mirrors, needles, woolen blankets or different kinds of cloths, which they paid with furs, especially in the northeast. They also bought firearms. Let's not forget the attitude of **Quakers**, who believed in pacifism and the equality of all humans and showed themselves more respectful towards Native Americans than other groups.

But quickly or gradually relations deteriorated. From partners, Native Americans and European settlers gradually became competitors, vying for (29) natural resources such as timber (30) or furs and, more significantly, for land. Different views on property explain many disputes and conflicts. To Native Americans, the land is owned by the community for the benefit of all its members, whereas Europeans had a concept of private property. Native Americans thought that selling land merely meant selling hunting and fishing rights. They believed that they could retain their own rights on land even after selling it. To Europeans, land that was not inhabited with permanent structures and properly exploited didn't belong to anyone. Moreover, the English despised (31) Indians for being pagan "savages" and deemed their civilizations to be archaic, which they thought justified imposing forced labor or reducing them to slavery. Settlers were also scared of Natives and increasingly saw them as a threat. More fundamentally, they merely wanted to acquire large patches of land at a low price to expand their settlements to the detriment of the local inhabitants.

Among the numerous conflicts that erupted, one can mention the Anglo-Powhatan Wars (1609-1646) – three conflicts that eventually led to major land loss for Native tribes and submission to English authority – and the **Pequot War** (1636-1638), during which the Pequot tribe was destroyed by an alliance between English settlers and other Native tribes.

IV. The reasons for their decline

Numbers are difficult to estimate, due to absent or incomplete sources. Before the arrival of Europeans, the indigenous population is thought to have been ranging from 10 to 20 million in North America, including 2 to 6 million in present-day United States. At the beginning of the 18th century, it had dropped to a figure estimated between 500,000 to 1.5 million. These figures need to be taken with a pinch of salt (30), though, since there is no consensus among historians. Various factors explain the decline: disease (Natives fell victims to infections brought by settlers, such as smallpox (32), measles (33), chickenpox (34) or typhus, for which they had little or no immunity), conflicts (wars broke out, and Natives were technologically disadvantaged, even though some had bought weapons from colonists or had learned how to ride horses), absence of unity (the various Native tribes did not react as a whole against the invader, who sometimes played on rivalries and allied with some tribes to overpower or

destroy others) and dependency (Native tribes became increasingly dependent on European trade and European products such as alcohol, which played a pivotal role in their weakening).

VOCABULARY

(1) a strait: *un détroit*; (2) to encompass: *englober*; (3) a deer: *un cerf, un daim*; (4) a turkey: *une dinde*; (5) a beaver: *un castor*; (6) a bow: *un arc*; (7) cod: *le cabillaud*; (8) sea bass: *le bar*; (9) trout: *la truite*; (10) catfish: *le poisson-chat*; (11) sturgeon: *l'esturgeon*; (12) a berry: *une baie*; (13) an acorn: *un gland*; (14) a walnut: *une noix*; (15) a wild plum: *une prune sauvage*; (16) persimmon: *le kaki*; (17) to harvest: *récolter*; (18) shellfish: *les fruits de mer, les crustacés*; (19) corn: *le maïs*; (20) squash: *la courge*; (21) a hide: *une peau*; (22) to blur sth: *brouiller, rendre flou qqch*; (23) a blend: *un mélange*; (24) copper: *le cuivre*; (25) a basket: *un panier*; (26) fur: *la fourrure*; (27) to weave: *tisser*; (28) to pride oneself on sth: *se targuer de qqch*; (29) to vie for sth: *se disputer qqch*; (30) timber: *le bois de construction*; (31) to despise: *mépriser*; (32) smallpox: *la variole*; (33) measles: *la rougeole*; (34) chickenpox: *la varicelle*.

À RETENIR

- Les Amérindiens, descendants de migrants venus d'Asie il y a environ 20 000 ans, ont été à tort appelés « Indiens » par Christophe Colomb. Ils regroupent de nombreuses tribus, chacune ayant sa propre langue, culture et histoire, comme les Iroquois, les Cherokees, les Navajos, les Apaches et les Comanches.
- Les tribus ont des modes de subsistance variés comme la chasse, la pêche, la cueillette, l'agriculture, un mode de vie sédentaire ou nomade, une maîtrise du cuivre mais pas du fer, et un artisanat fondé notamment sur le travail des fourrures, sans oublier l'utilisation des chevaux, introduits par les Européens.
- Les Amérindiens aident d'abord les colons européens à s'adapter et à survivre en leur fournissant nourriture, conseils et outils, mais les relations se détériorent avec le temps, les Européens cherchant à s'appropriier les ressources et les terres, ce qui conduit à de violents conflits tels que les guerres Anglo-Powhatan et la guerre des Pequots.
- Avant l'arrivée des Européens, la population amérindienne en Amérique du Nord était estimée entre 10 et 20 millions, dont 2 à 6 millions aux États-Unis actuels, mais elle chute considérablement pour atteindre 500 000 à 1,5 million au début du XVIII^e siècle en raison de maladies, de conflits, de l'absence d'unité et de la dépendance croissante au commerce européen.

The Causes of the American Revolution (1763-1774)

CHRONOLOGY

- **1763:** Royal Proclamation
- **1764:** Sugar Act
- **1765:** Stamp Act; Quartering Act
- **1766:** Declaratory Act; Townsend Acts
- **1770:** Boston massacre
- **1773:** Tea Act; Boston Tea Party
- **1774:** Coercive/Intolerable Acts; Suffolk Resolves; First Continental Congress

I. The Royal Proclamation

In the aftermath (1) of the **Seven Years' War**, King George III in 1763 issued the **Royal Proclamation**, which prohibited colonial expansion beyond the Appalachian Mountains. The text aimed to regulate the relationships between colonists and Native Americans in the newly acquired territories and avoid land disputes by preventing colonists from further invading Native American territories. The Proclamation was a source of resentment (2) among many colonists, as they had taken part in the war and expected that their commitment would be rewarded by land grants. They viewed that policy of circumscribing expansion as ingratitude on the part of the King and undue interference in their affairs.

II. Taxation

Faced with an enormous cost of **the French and Indian War**, which considerably increased the national debt, and the subsequent creation and maintenance of a **standing army** in the colonies, the British government passed a series of Acts, which triggered anger among the local population.

The **Sugar Act of 1764** targeted several goods that were imported into the colonies from outside the British Empire, imposing new customs duties (3) on sugar, wine and coffee; it also reduced the existing tax on molasses (4) (a key ingredient in the production of rum) and included measures against smuggling (5). The **Stamp Act of 1765** was a direct tax imposed on the colonies, requiring that official documents be printed on purpose-made stamped (6) paper that was produced in London and had to be purchased from the authorities. The **Quartering Act of 1765** was not a direct tax, but it required the colonies to pay for the accommodation (7) of British troops and supply them with various provisions. It met with criticism and protests, and the New York Assembly refused to abide by (8) it.

In reaction to that policy, protests and boycotts were organized. To ease tensions, the government decided to repeal both Acts through the enactment of the **Declaratory Act of 1766**, which also asserted the authority of Parliament to tax the colonies and to legislate for them. But tensions persisted. In 1766, the **Townshend Acts** imposed duties on goods such as paper, glass, paint or lead (9); they also reinforced the powers of vice-admiralty courts, which had jurisdiction over (10) certain cases related to trade, and suspended the New York Assembly so long as it would refuse to enforce the Quartering Act of 1765.

GEORGE GRENVILLE (1712-1770)

- Born in Buckinghamshire, educated at Oxford
- 1741: elected MP for Buckingham (Whig)
- Held various positions such as Treasurer of the Navy, Northern Secretary or First Lord of the Admiralty
- 1763-1765: Chancellor of the Exchequer and Prime Minister (under George III)
- 1764: passed the Stamp Act, defended the theory of virtual representation

III. The representation issue

Colonists argued that the British government had no right to impose taxes on them since they were not represented in Parliament. **“No taxation without representation”** became their rallying cry and relied on a principle that could be traced back (11) to **Magna Carta** and that had been reasserted by the **Bill of Rights 1689**. The former (12) had introduced the notion of “general consent” of the kingdom, while the latter (13) stated that the monarch could not impose taxes without the consent of Parliament.

The government, in the person of Prime Minister George Grenville, replied with the notion of **virtual representation**, contending that although an MP is elected in one specific constituency, he doesn’t merely represent his constituents but the whole population of Great Britain, which includes the inhabitants of the colonies. In other words, settlers were virtually represented by the MPs elected in the homeland (14).

IV. The escalation of protests and repression

In this conflictual context, an event contributed to exacerbating tension. On March 5, 1770, in Boston, Massachusetts, a group of colonists had a row (15) with a few British soldiers. The situation escalated, the soldiers were eventually surrounded, feared for their lives and opened fire on the crowd, killing five colonists, who were immediately considered as martyrs by the local population. The incident, known as the **Boston massacre**, was used as propaganda to intensify the anti-British sentiment.

Three years later, the situation deteriorated even further when the government passed the Tea Act of 1773. The measure was meant to financially help the ailing (16) East India Company and boost its competitiveness by

reducing the taxes it paid on the tea it sold in the colonies. Locally, the move was perceived as another attack on the no-taxation-without-representation principle and as an unfair rebate (17) given to a British company at a time when the colonies were victims of heavier taxation. Protests and boycotts were organized, in particular by **the Sons of Liberty**.

The most famous protest action orchestrated by the protesters was the **Boston Tea Party**. On December 16, 1773, a group of colonists disguised as Indians climbed on board a ship of the East India Company anchored in the Boston harbor and cast the whole cargo (18) of tea overboard (19).

The British government retaliated (20) with a series of laws known as the **Coercive Acts** of 1774 (from the British point of view) or the **Intolerable Acts** (from the American point of view): the Boston Port Act shut down the port of Boston in response to the Tea Party; the Massachusetts Government Act placed the colony under the direct control of the British government through the appointment of a military governor with full powers; the Administration of Justice Act gave the possibility to transfer trials to London to make sure that rebels would be judged by juries less likely to be sympathetic to their cause; the Quartering Act widened the provisions of the first Quartering Act and allowed governors to lodge soldiers not only in public buildings but also in empty private homes.

As a result, tensions continued to escalate. In Suffolk County, Massachusetts, a committee of citizens adopted a series of resolutions known as the **Suffolk Resolves**, deciding to boycott all British products, refusing to abide by the Massachusetts Government Act and urging their fellow citizens to form **militias** in the perspective of a military conflict with Britain.

On September 5, the **First Continental Congress** met in Philadelphia. It gathered 55 delegates from all the colonies except Georgia. It was presided over by Randolph Peyton of Virginia. For about two months, they discussed how they could come up with a common response to the Intolerable Acts and find a peaceful solution to the conflict. The Continental Congress decided to adopt the Suffolk Resolves, to adopt a **Declaration and Resolves** (which asserted the right to “life, liberty and property”, the right to a free government, to be represented, to assemble and to petition the King; it defended local assemblies and denounced the keeping of a **standing army** and the Intolerable Acts). It drafted a petition to the King, asking him to repeal the Intolerable Acts. The delegates also examined a **plan of union**, presented by Joseph Galloway of Pennsylvania but eventually rejected it. The plan was meant to create a union of the colonies “not only among themselves, but with the Mother State”. It planned to create an assembly of elected representatives called the Grand Council and a President-General appointed by the Crown, with extensive executive powers, as well as legislative powers jointly held with the Grand Council.

None of these documents demanded independence. At that stage, all the colonists wanted was their grievances (20) to be heard and their rights to be acknowledged.

VOCABULARY

(1) the aftermath: *les suites, les conséquences*; (2) resentment: *le ressentiment, la rancœur*; (3) customs duties: *droits de douane*; (4) molasses: *la mélasse (sirop de sucre)*; (5) smuggling: *la contrebande*; (6) stamped: *tamponné*; (7) accommodation: *le logement*; (8) to abide by sth: *respecter qqch (une loi, un règlement)*; (9) lead: *le plomb*; (10) to have jurisdiction over sth: *être compétent pour qqch*; (11) to trace sth back to: *faire remonter qqch à*; (12) the former: *celui-là*; (13) the latter: *celui-ci*; (14) the homeland: *la métropole*; (15) to have a row with sb: *avoir une altercation avec qqun*; (16) ailing: *en difficulté*; (17) a rebate: *une réduction, une ristourne*; (18) a cargo: *une cargaison*; (19) to cast sth overboard: *jeter qqch par-dessus bord*; (20) to retaliate: *riposter, contre-attaquer*; (21) a grievance: *un sujet de plainte, une doléance*.

À RETENIR

- Face au coût élevé de la Guerre de Sept Ans, le gouvernement britannique adopte une série de lois, telles que le *Sugar Act* et le *Stamp Act*, créant de nouvelles taxes sur les colonies. Ces textes déclenchent une forte hostilité parmi les colons.
- S'appuyant sur des principes remontant à la *Magna Carta* et à la Déclaration des Droits de 1689, les colons affirment que le gouvernement britannique n'a pas le droit de les taxer sans qu'ils soient représentés au Parlement, d'où slogan « Pas de taxation sans représentation », à quoi le gouvernement répond par la notion de représentation virtuelle.
- Dans ce contexte conflictuel, les tensions montent d'un cran avec le massacre de Boston le 5 mars 1770, où des soldats britanniques tuent cinq colons après une altercation, provoquant une montée du sentiment anti-britannique. La situation se détériore encore avec le *Tea Act* de 1773, auquel les colons répondent en jetant par-dessus bord une cargaison de thé d'un navire de la East India Company lors de la *Boston Tea Party*. Les représailles britanniques, sous la forme des *Coercive Acts* de 1774, entraînent la formation, en septembre, du Premier Congrès Continental, qui réclame des réformes sans demander encore l'indépendance.

The Independence War / the American Revolutionary War (1775-1783)

CHRONOLOGY

- **April 19, 1775:** battles of Lexington and Concord
- **July 4, 1776:** adoption of the Declaration of Independence by the Second Continental Congress
- **1783:** Treaty of Paris

I. The starting point: the battles of Lexington and Concord

Since the **Boston Tea Party** and the adoption of the **Suffolk Resolves**, Massachusetts had been a hotbed (1) of opposition against the **Intolerable Acts**. Some major revolutionary leaders such as John Adams or John Hancock originated from the State. **Patriots** had set up a parallel government known as the Massachusetts Provincial Congress, which effectively governed most of the colony, except the Boston area. The latter remained under British control and had decided to mobilize its **militias** and **Minute Men**, i.e. volunteer citizens, often farmers or tradesmen, who had their own weapons and ammunition and who were particularly reactive and ready to fight in record time.

In response, Massachusetts was proclaimed to be in a state of rebellion, and the British military governor, General Thomas Gage, decided to launch a secret military intervention, led by Colonel Francis Smith, to seize and destroy the military supplies of the rebels, which were believed to be stored in Concord, a town outside Boston. But the rebels had a network of informers, and the secrecy of the operation was compromised. Several Patriots, including Paul Revere, rode from Boston to Concord to warn their fellow militiamen against the coming British troops.

The first clash took place in Lexington, a small town on the way to Concord, on April 19, 1775. The 700 soldiers then proceeded to advance towards their destination, where they faced the militias that had assembled in the meantime.

II. The Second Continental Congress and the Declaration of Independence

Colonists reacted by convening (2) the **Second Continental Congress** in Philadelphia on May 10, 1775. Delegates were sent from the thirteen colonies, even though their number varied over time. The original purpose was not to

declare independence but to coordinate the military response to the escalating conflict with the British government and to define a strategy for their claims to be heard through negotiation.

The Second Continental Congress made the following decisions:

- George Washington was appointed commander-in-chief of the **Continental Army**;
- a new petition known as the **Olive Branch Petition** was sent to King George III in July 1775, testifying to the still prevalent desire of finding a negotiated issue to the crisis, but it was again rejected;
- the Lee Resolution, put forward by Richard Henry Lee of Virginia, declaring that the “United Colonies are (...) free and independent States”, was adopted;
- as conciliation failed, a committee was appointed to draft (3) a **Declaration of Independence**, which was adopted on July 4, 1776;
- another committee, chaired by John Dickinson, drafted the **Articles of Confederation**, which were adopted in 1777, eventually ratified by all the States in 1781 and applied until the coming into force of the Constitution in 1789;
- negotiated a commercial and military alliance with France in 1778.

III. The main steps in the war

The battles of Lexington and Concord were followed by the siege of Boston, where the Continental Army led by Washington managed to force the British to evacuate the city in March 1776. British General William Howe responded by launching a campaign to control New York. After a series of defeats, including the battle of Long Island, which forced him to retreat (4) through New Jersey, Washington reversed the trend (5) by crossing the Delaware River and winning a victory at Trenton, New Jersey on December 25, 1776, which boosted the morale of American soldiers. A few months later, though, in September 1777, the British captured Philadelphia, and the Continental Congress had to flee (6) and settle in Baltimore. In New York, other American troops led by Generals Benedict Arnold and Horatio Gates defeated the army led by British General John Burgoyne at Saratoga. This marked a turning point in the conflict, as it lifted the spirits (7) of American troops and enabled the United States to garner (8) international backing (9). It persuaded France to sign an alliance with the United States and Spain to ally with France against Britain. As a result, Britain changed its strategy and undertook (10) to focus on the Southern colonies, where they expected to get more significant **Loyalist** support. After the capture of Charleston, South Carolina in May 1780, British forces, led by General Henry Clinton, were faced with strong resistance orchestrated by American militias, which used a guerilla tactic to harass (11) their enemies. American troops then won several major victories until the siege of Yorktown, Virginia in 1781, where General Cornwallis was compelled to surrender on October 19, 1781, after

being surrounded by American and French forces and a blockade (12) organized by the French Navy. With that defeat, the British realized that pursuing the war was pointless (13).

IV. The Treaty of Paris

The **Treaty of Paris**, signed in 1783, recognized the independence and sovereignty of the United States, outlined (14) the boundaries (15) of the country, from the Great Lakes in the north to the Mississippi in the west and the 31st parallel in the south. In addition, the treaty addressed contentious (16) issues, including fishing rights, the fate of prisoners of war and the restitution of confiscated property belonging to Loyalists.

VOCABULARY

(1) A hotbed: *un foyer (de résistance)*; (2) to convene sth: *convoquer, organiser qqch*; (3) to draft sth: *rédiger qqch*; (4) to retreat: *battre en retraite*; (5) to reverse the trend: *renverser la tendance*; (6) to flee: *fuir*; (7) to lift the spirits: *remonter le moral*; (8) to garner sth: *récolter, engranger qqch*; (9) backing: *le soutien*; (10) to undertake to do sth: *entreprendre de faire qqch*; (11) to harass sb: *harceler qqun*; (12) a blockade: *un blocus*; (13) pointless: *inutile, vain*; (14) to outline sth: *définir qqch*; (15) a boundary: *une frontière*; (16) contentious: *litigieux, controversé*.

À RETENIR

- En réponse aux actes de résistance des colons dans le Massachussetts, le gouverneur militaire britannique organise une intervention secrète pour saisir les munitions des rebelles. Cette opération est le déclencheur de la guerre avec les batailles de Lexington et Concord en avril 1775.
- Les colons convoquent le Deuxième Congrès Continental à Philadelphie pour coordonner la réponse militaire. Parmi les décisions prises : la nomination de George Washington comme commandant en chef, la rédaction d'une Déclaration d'indépendance (adoptée en 1776) et des Articles de la Confédération (ratifiés en 1781).
- Après une victoire de Washington à Trenton en décembre 1776, les Britanniques prennent Philadelphie. Mais la victoire américaine à Saratoga conduit à un soutien international crucial, notamment de la France, tandis que les Britanniques se concentrent sur le sud. Finalement, la défaite de Cornwallis à Yorktown en octobre 1781, convainc les Britanniques de mettre fin à la guerre.
- Le Traité de Paris, signé en 1783, reconnaît l'indépendance des États-Unis et établit ses frontières, délimitées par les Grands Lacs au nord, le Mississippi à l'ouest et le 31^e parallèle au sud.

The Declaration of Independence (1776)

CHRONOLOGY

- **January 1776:** Thomas Paine, *Common Sense*
- **April 23, 1776:** William Henry Drayton's Disquisition
- **June 12, 1776:** Virginia Declaration of Rights
- **July 4, 1776:** Declaration of Independence

I. The dream of reconciliation

The colonies dreamed of reconciliation with the homeland. At first no-one envisaged separation, even though there were diverging views on the probability of finding a mutual agreement. The colonies favored a redress (1) of their grievances (2) through negotiation. They wanted to benefit from the rights and privileges Britons enjoyed. They even claimed that independence was a specter invented by the British government. Moreover, there wasn't yet any definite sense of national identity and the colonists still considered themselves British. To them, their fight was in the line of the **Glorious Revolution** – just as the English had risen against the abuse of power committed by James II, they were combating the tyranny of King George III.

II. The publication of *Common Sense*

In January 1776, Thomas Paine published a pamphlet that helped change mindsets and promote independence in public opinion. It was written in simple language, meant to be understood by everyone, devoid of (3) references to classical authors or Enlightenment (4) philosophers or to the legal scholars (5) of the time.

THOMAS PAINE (1737-1809)

- Born in Norfolk, England, into a humble family
- 1774: emigrated to the colonies, where he started to work as a journalist
- 1776: published his pamphlet *Common Sense*
- 1791: moved to France to support the revolutionaries; published *The Rights of Man*
- 1794-1807: published *The Age of Reason* (in three parts), a pamphlet defending reason and deism and criticizing organized religion; became increasingly isolated

Paine contended that the issues colonists faced were not due to an ill-intentioned government but to a constitutional framework based on two noxious (6) principles – monarchy and heredity. The only solution was then to set up a republican regime that would do away with (7) these structural flaws (8) and enforce popular will. He also claimed that the war made a conciliatory attitude impossible.

III. Two sources of inspiration

Two documents paved the way for the Declaration:

- William Henry Drayton's Disquisition

Drayton was a prominent judge and politician of South Carolina, where he served as Chief Justice of the State Supreme Court. What is referred to as his 'disquisition' (9) is a statement he made on the opening of the court in 1776, following the adoption of a new constitution. He recalled the time when Carolina changed its status, ceasing to be a **proprietary colony** to become a **royal colony**. He listed the abuses committed by the British government and made a parallel between George III and James II. In conclusion, he declared South Carolina independent.

- the Virginia Declaration of Rights

Mainly drafted by George Mason, the Virginia Declaration of Rights was adopted on June 12, 1776 by the Virginia Convention. It proclaimed the existence of "inherent rights" and stated that "all men are by nature equally free and independent". It acknowledged the principle of the sovereignty of the people as well as the right to overthrow (10) a government found "inadequate" or contrary to the interests of the people. It asserted the principles of the separation of powers, the election of representatives, trial by jury and proportionality of punishment, freedom of the press and the right to create and maintain a militia.

IV. The drafting and adoption process

On June 11, 1776, a committee was appointed by the **Second Continental Congress** to draft a declaration of independence. It was composed of Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Roger Sherman of Connecticut and Robert Livingston of New York, but Jefferson turned out to be its main author. A draft was produced, which was then reviewed by Congress. Eventually, on July 4, 1776, Congress voted the adoption of the text. It was then signed over a period of several months by the delegates, the first one being John Hancock.

V. The content of the Declaration

The Declaration opens with a theoretical preamble inspired by 17th-century philosopher John Locke's *Second Treatise on Government*. Locke stated the existence of **natural rights**, namely life, liberty and property, while the Declaration postulates "unalienable rights", among which "life, liberty and

the pursuit of happiness". Governments, whose legitimacy derives from the "consent of the governed", are established to protect them. The Declaration endorses Locke's theory of the **right of rebellion** – when a government repeatedly abuses its power, becomes tyrannical and no longer defends these natural rights, the people are entitled to rebel and overthrow it.

The text then draws a long list of grievances against the King, which refer to the contentious legislation or measures that had been imposed by the British government since 1764, from the **Sugar Act** to the **Intolerable Acts**. Some implicitly refer to ancient rights that had been established by **Magna Carta** and confirmed by the **Bill of Rights of 1689**, such as the consent of the governed for imposing taxes, for maintaining **standing armies**, or the right to a trial by jury.

The document, however, leaves the issue of the form and nature of the created government unanswered. The title mentions a "Unanimous Declaration of the Thirteen United States of America", which betrays some hesitation between the unity of one single country and the plurality of independent states.

VOCABULARY

(1) A redress: *une réparation*; (2) a grievance: *une doléance, une plainte*; (3) to be devoid of sth: *être dépourvu de qqch*; (4) the Enlightenment: *les Lumières*; (5) a scholar: *un expert*; (6) noxious: *nocif*; (7) to do away with sth: *se débarrasser de qqch*; (8) a flaw: *un défaut, une faille*; (9) a disquisition: *une dissertation*.

À RETENIR

- Les colons rêvent de réconciliation et privilégient la négociation pour réparer les torts qui leur sont faits. Il n'y a pas encore de sentiment national.
- En 1776, Thomas Paine contribue à faire évoluer les mentalités avec la publication de *Common Sense*, pamphlet contre la monarchie et le principe héréditaire.
- Le Second Congrès Continental nomme un comité chargé de rédiger le texte, mais son auteur principal est Thomas Jefferson. Après révision, le texte est adopté le 4 juillet 1776.
- La Déclaration s'ouvre par un préambule inspiré de Locke, énonçant un droit de rébellion contre un gouvernement tyrannique. Elle énumère des griefs contre le Roi, évoquant les lois britanniques imposées depuis 1764 et faisant référence aux droits établis par la Magna Carta et la Déclaration des droits de 1689.

The Articles of Confederation (1777-1789)

CHRONOLOGY

- **1754:** Benjamin Franklin's Albany Plan of Union
- **1777:** adoption of the Articles of Confederation by the Second Continental Congress
- **1781:** Maryland was the last state to ratify the Articles
- **1786:** Shays' Rebellion

I. Why the Articles were drafted

Colonists felt the need to foster (1) cooperation and coordination between their respective states in order to define a more efficient military response against British forces as well as a more consistent (2) policy towards other nations, especially France and Spain, whose recognition and possible help they needed. On the internal level, the states were also drafting their own constitutions. In that context, it appeared increasingly necessary to endow (3) the 13 states with an institutional framework facilitating collaboration.

II. The main political divisions inside the Second Continental Congress

After independence was declared, two main factions emerged in the **Second Continental Congress** when it came to discussing institutional issues. **Conservatives**, such as George Washington, John Jay or John Dickinson, feared the common man, wanted to preserve social hierarchy and defended an elitist government that would be a safeguard against revolution and perpetuate British institutions, with a strong central, **national government**. They didn't trust common people and believed political power should remain in the hands of a wealthy, educated minority, away from the democratic ideals of their opponents. On the other hand, **radicals**, such as Patrick Henry or Samuel Adams, feared the return of an aristocratic regime with a strong central authority as in Britain and defended a democratic, decentralized government that would preserve the rights and interests of the states. They wanted to keep political power as close as possible to the people, so believed that state sovereignty should absolutely be preserved.

III. The drafting committee

A committee was appointed in June 1776 by the Second Continental Congress to draft the document, whose purpose was "to prepare and digest the form of

a confederation to be entered into between these Colonies”, according to a resolution adopted on June 11, 1776. It was composed of thirteen members, one from each state, including conservatives, radicals and moderates. The principal writer was John Dickinson, who produced the first draft.

JOHN DICKINSON (1732-1808) – “THE PENMAN OF THE REVOLUTION”

- Born to a wealthy family of tobacco plantation owners in Maryland
- 1767-68: published *Letters from a farmer in Pennsylvania* in response to the Townshend Acts
- First opposed independence
- 1775: was one of the drafters of the Olive Branch Petition
- 1777: was one of the drafters of the Articles of Confederation
- 1781-1783: President of Delaware
- 1782-1785: President of Pennsylvania
- 1787: delegate of Delaware at the **Philadelphia Convention**

IV. The adoption process

It took the committee about one month to produce its blueprint (4). The latter (5) was then discussed and amended by Congress, which gave it a much more radical turn, until the final version was completed in November 1777 and sent to the states. The ratification process started in March 1778 and extended until March 1, 1781, when Maryland was the last state to adopt it. It then officially became the first constitution of the United States.

V. The main provisions

The Articles established a loose (6) organization referred to as “a firm league of friendship” (article III) in which “each state retains its sovereignty, freedom, and independence” (article II). The circumstantial dimension of a structure meant to respond to a state of war was emphasized as the states vowed “to assist each other against all force [...] or attacks made upon them” (article III).

At the confederal level, the Articles set up a **unicameral** system, with a Congress whose powers were extremely limited – dealing with foreign affairs (entering into alliances and treaties, engaging in war or concluding peace), coining (7) money, fixing the standards of weights and measures, managing Indian affairs, establishing post offices, appointing military officers, directing military operations and resolving disputes between states (article IX).

A **standing army** was banned, but each state had the right to keep and maintain a **militia** (article VI).

The delegates sitting in Congress were designated by State legislatures and appointed for a one-year term. They could be **recalled** at any time and were submitted to the principle of **rotation** – they could not hold their office (8) for more than three years in a period of six years. Each state was entitled to (9) one vote, independently of the number of its delegates, namely between two

and seven (article V). There was no separate judiciary branch, nor a separate executive, but only a collective, temporary body, called “Committee of the States”, which sat between Congressional sessions and held limited powers. It was composed of delegates from all the colonies and could elect a president who was submitted to the principle of rotation (Article IX).

Congress, however, had no taxation power. In addition, the Articles didn’t provide any enforcement powers (10).

VI. Achievements and failures

The **Treaty of Paris** (1783) settled the outcome (11) of the war of independence, recognizing the sovereignty of the United States and the boundaries of the country.

In 1787 Congress passed an Act, known as the **Northwest Ordinance**, to organize the **Northwest Territory**. It stipulated that once the population of a territory had reached 60,000, it could apply to be admitted as a state, equal in status with the original thirteen. Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan and Wisconsin achieved statehood (12) through this process. See **Fact Sheet n° 17**.

The Confederation government, however, was plagued with (13) financial difficulties. Congress had no taxation power and was dependent on the states to finance the war and maintain its army. But the states were reluctant (14) to tax their citizens, as their farmers or merchants were often heavily indebted and as the very principle of taxation was suspicious in the eyes of many Americans, who associated it with British tyranny. That’s why Congress resorted to (15) debt – it issued bonds (16) that were not based on a gold and silver counterpart. The government was unable to pay the interest that was promised and the value of this paper money rapidly plummeted (17).

On the advice of merchant and financier Robert Morris, Congress sought (18) to introduce a tariff (19) on the imports of foreign goods, but failed to gather the necessary consent of all the states – Virginia and Rhode Island refused. Some states preferred to pass their own local tariffs.

Congress had the authority to create and maintain a navy, but once again, due to its inability to levy taxes, it struggled (20) to fund a sufficient naval force and was unable to defend American ships against the **Barbary pirates**, North African pirates along the so-called Barbary Coast, extending from Morocco to Tunisia and Tripoli. They captured American ships and asked enormous ransoms (21).

In 1786, in Massachusetts, hundreds of indebted farmers, led by Daniel Shays, a veteran of the Continental Army, rebelled against their creditors. Hit hard by the post-war depression and upset by the state government’s inaction, they first organized protests and demonstrations and eventually took the arms to attack courts to prevent them from foreclosing (22) their properties and free their companions from debtor’s prison. The uprising (23), known as **Shays’ Rebellion**, was eventually crushed by the state militia as the insurgents tried

to seize a federal arsenal, but raised concerns about the ability of both state governments and the Confederation to maintain order and preserve the rule of law (24).

VOCABULARY

(1) To foster: *encourager* ; (2) consistent: *cohérent* ; (3) to endow sth with: *doter qqch de*; (4) a blueprint: *un projet*; (5) the latter: *ce dernier*; (6) loose: *lâche, peu contraignant*; (7) to coin money: *frapper, créer de la monnaie*; (8) to hold an office: *occuper une fonction*; (9) to be entitled to sth: *avoir droit à qqch*; (10) enforcement powers: *des pouvoir d'application*; (11) to settle the outcome: *régler l'issue (de la guerre)*; (12) statehood: *le statut d'État*; (13) to be plagued with: *être miné par* ; (14) reluctant: *réticent* ; (15) to resort to sth: *avoir recours à qqch*; (16) a bond : *une obligation (titre de créance)*; (17) to plummet: *s'effondrer* ; (18) to seek, sought, sought sth: *chercher qqch*; (19) a tariff: *un droit de douane*; (20) to struggle: *avoir des difficultés*; (21) a ransom: *une rançon*; (22) to foreclose: *saisir (un bien)*; (23) an uprising: *une révolte*; (24) the rule of law: *l'État de droit*.

À RETENIR

- Les colons ressentent le besoin de favoriser la coopération entre leurs États pour définir une réponse militaire plus efficace contre les forces britanniques. Il devient nécessaire de créer un cadre institutionnel facilitant cette collaboration.
- Après la déclaration d'indépendance, deux factions principales se forment : les Conservateurs souhaitent un pouvoir central fort et un gouvernement élitiste, tandis que les Radicaux préfèrent un gouvernement décentralisé pour protéger les droits des États et maintenir le pouvoir politique près du peuple.
- Les Articles établissent une organisation peu contraignante où chaque État conserve sa souveraineté, avec un Congrès confédéral unicaméral aux pouvoirs très limités, l'interdiction d'une armée permanente, des délégués désignés par les assemblées des États pour un mandat d'un an soumis à rotation, une voix par État, et un exécutif collectif et temporaire siégeant seulement entre les sessions du Congrès.
- Malgré quelques réussites comme le Traité de Paris ou l'Ordonnance du Nord-Ouest, le gouvernement de la Confédération, dépourvu du pouvoir de taxation, est confronté à des difficultés financières. Par ailleurs, en 1786, la Rébellion de Shays révèle son incapacité à maintenir l'ordre, poussant certains à demander un État central plus fort.

The Philadelphia Convention (1787)

CHRONOLOGY

- **September 1786:** Annapolis Convention
- **May 1787-September 1787:** Philadelphia Convention

I. From amending the Articles to proposing a new constitution

The shortcomings (1) of the Articles of Confederation became evident as they proved ineffective in coordinating the actions of the thirteen states and preventing the confusion stemming from unbridled (2) competition between them. Hence the idea of amending them.

The **Annapolis Convention** met in Maryland in September 1786, originally to deal with the issue of the protectionist barriers set up by the states. Five states sent delegates – New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Delaware and Virginia. But they realized that trade could not be handled single-handedly (3) as it was related to an array (4) of institutional issues, which led them to call for the organization of a new convention, whose goal would be to revise and amend the Articles of Confederation.

The Congress of the Confederation approved the plan and the Convention opened in Philadelphia on May 25, 1787. All the states sent delegates, except Rhode Island, which was suspicious of a more centralized federal power. George Washington was elected to preside over the assembly. It was decided that each state would have one vote and that the debates would be kept secret.

At first, the purpose was to address the defects and weaknesses of the Articles and propose amendments. The delegates originally didn't have a mandate to design a thoroughly (5) new constitution. But it immediately appeared to many of them that a more comprehensive (6) change was needed and an entirely new document was to be drafted (7).

The delegates were typically men of property, lawyers, merchants and planters, even though they were not necessarily highly educated. Among the most prominent were James Madison, Edmund Randolph and George Mason of Virginia, Alexander Hamilton and Robert Yates of New York, Roger Sherman of Connecticut, Elbridge Gerry of Massachusetts, Gouverneur Morris and Benjamin Franklin (who was the oldest member of the convention) of Pennsylvania and John Dickinson of Delaware. Thomas Jefferson, John Adams

and John Jay did not participate as they respectively served as Ministers to France, Great Britain and Spain.

II. The Virginia Plan

On May 29, Governor Edmund Randolph of Virginia presented a plan designed by James Madison, which became known as **the Virginia Plan**. It aimed to establish a strong **national government**, divided into three branches. There would be a **bicameral** legislature – a lower house whose members would be elected for two years directly by the people, each state being represented proportionally to its population, and an upper house indirectly elected by the lower house. Congress would have the power to veto laws passed by state legislatures. The legislature would elect a National Executive for a non-renewable term (8) and establish a Supreme Court and other inferior courts. In addition, a Council of Revision, emanating from both the Executive and the Judiciary, would have the possibility to veto both state and federal laws.

The Virginia Plan was supported by larger states, as representation based on population favored them, whereas smaller states thought such a system would leave them at the mercy of the most populated states and defended an equal representation of all states, decorrelated from population.

JAMES MADISON (1751-1836)

- Born into a wealthy family of planters in Virginia
- 1787: at the Philadelphia Convention, his Virginia Plan served as a basis for discussion
- 1787-1788: wrote the Federalist Papers with Alexander Hamilton and John Jay
- 1792: founded the **Democratic-Republican Party** with Jefferson and opposed Hamilton's economic plan and the creation of a National Bank
- 1801-1809: Secretary of State under President Jefferson
- 1809-1817: President of the US
- Retired from politics and returned to Virginia

III. The New Jersey Plan

On June 15, William Paterson of New Jersey offered an alternative that aimed at preserving the interests of smaller states. His plan abided by (9) the original purpose of amending the Articles of Confederation. The existing powers of Congress would be kept and extended, adding taxation power and the capacity to regulate internal and foreign trade. The legislative branch would consist of a **unicameral** legislature with an equal vote for every state, regardless of its demography, with representatives elected by state governments rather than by the people. A collective executive with a non-renewable term would be elected by Congress and a Supreme Tribunal would be appointed by the Executive. The executive would not have any veto power but could use force to compel states to abide by the law. The plan also stipulated that the laws voted by Congress as

well as the treaties signed and ratified would be “the supreme law of the land”. The plan gathered the support of some of the smaller states but was criticized by others for not offering solutions to the weaknesses of the Articles.

IV. Hamilton’s plan

In June, Alexander Hamilton came with another plan, the specificity of which was the reliance (10) on life terms (11). Contrary to the commonly accepted ideas of the time, Hamilton didn’t think that long terms led to tyranny. The legislature was **bicameral**, divided between an Assembly, whose members would be directly elected by the people for three years, and a Senate, whose members would serve “during good behavior”, i.e. for life, and would be indirectly elected by electors, who would themselves be elected by the people. The executive would be vested (12) in a Governor, also indirectly elected with the same system as Senators. The Governor would serve for life and would have a veto power on all laws passed by the legislature. A “Supreme Judicial Authority” would be established, with judges also enjoying life terms. An **impeachment** (13) **procedure** would enable the **recall** of all those serving for life in case of misconduct. Eventually state Governors would be appointed by the executive and would have a veto power on state laws. Hamilton’s plan didn’t gather much support but had a significant influence on the following debates.

V. The Connecticut Compromise

Since none of the proposals managed to gather sufficient support, reaching a compromise between the more and the less populated states soon appeared as a reasonable outcome (14). A solution was offered in May 1787 by Roger Sherman of Connecticut, known as the **Connecticut Compromise**. The legislature would consist of two chambers: a lower chamber, the House of Representatives, elected directly by the people, each state having a number of members depending on its population, and an upper chamber, a Senate, whose members would be elected by state legislatures, on the basis of equal representation between all states, with two Senators per state. The system would thus combine popular representation and state representation.

But the very issue of population was controversial. Southern states insisted that slaves, who made up one third to half of their inhabitants, be included in their overall population for representation purposes, but not when it came to determine the proportion of taxes they owed. Northern states argued exactly the opposite. To settle the matter, the **Three-Fifths Compromise** provided that three-fifths of the slave population would be included in the general population for both representation and taxation.

VI. The final draft

A first complete draft of the constitution was written in July by a committee of five members. It served as a basis for discussions that took place over the

following weeks, which enabled the delegates to define the length of terms of elected officials, the powers of Congress, the creation of a Supreme Court and the way the President would be elected. A Committee of Style and Arrangement was appointed to polish the text and produce the final version. A preamble was added, mainly written by Gouverneur Morris.

On September 17, 1787, the document was signed by most of the delegates – 39 out of 42, only three refused (Edmund Randolph of Virginia, George Mason of Virginia, and Elbridge Gerry of Massachusetts). It was then sent to the states for ratification by special **ratifying conventions**.

VOCABULARY

(1) A shortcoming: *un défaut, une insuffisance*; (2) unbridled: *débridé, déchaîné*; (3) single-handedly: *tout seul, séparément*; (4) an array of: *un éventail de*; (5) thoroughly: *complètement, totalement*; (6) an encroachment: *un empiètement*; (7) to draft sth: *rédiger qqch*; (8) a non-renewable term: *un mandat non renouvelable*; (9) to abide by: *respecter qqch*; (10) the reliance on sth: *le recours à qqch*; (11) a life term: *un mandat à vie*; (12) to be vested in: *être conféré à*; (13) an impeachment procedure: *une procédure de destitution*; (14) an outcome: *une issue*.

À RETENIR

- Les insuffisances des Articles de la Confédération conduisent à la tenue en mai 1787 de la Convention de Philadelphie, qui est censée simplement les amender, mais qui finit par proposer une constitution entièrement repensée.
- Plusieurs plans sont proposés, aucun n'obtenant un soutien suffisant. Le Plan de la Virginie propose un pouvoir central fort avec un système bicaméral. Le Plan du New Jersey préserve davantage la souveraineté des États. Le Plan d'Hamilton met l'accent sur des mandats à vie.
- Aucune des propositions n'ayant réussi à obtenir un soutien suffisant, un compromis entre les États les plus et les moins peuplés s'impose comme une solution raisonnable. Le Compromis du Connecticut prévoit un Congrès bicaméral avec une Chambre des Représentants proportionnelle à la population des États et un Sénat à représentation égale pour chaque État. Par ailleurs, le compromis des trois cinquièmes, incluant trois cinquièmes des esclaves dans la population générale pour la représentation et le calcul des impôts, met fin à la controverse sur la question de la population.
- La version finale est signée le 17 septembre 1787 par 39 délégués sur 42, puis envoyée aux États pour ratification.

The US Constitution

I. Preamble

The Constitution consists of a preamble (1) and seven articles. From the outset (2), the preamble, added by Gouverneur Morris to the final draft, departs from the Articles of Confederation with its opening phrase: “We the people of the United States”. Whereas the Articles established a “perpetual Union between the states” and asserted state sovereignty, the Constitution insists on popular sovereignty and sets a direct link between Federal institutions and the American people. The preamble lists the goals of the new text, most of which allude to and contrast with the shortcomings (3) of the Articles: the aim is to “establish Justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings (4) of liberty to ourselves and our posterity”.

II. The legislative branch

Influenced by the example of the British Parliament, the legislative assemblies of the states and the republican principle of **representative government**, the **Framers** decided to give a prominent place to the legislative branch, to which Article I is devoted.

a. Composition

The legislative branch is vested in (5) a Congress, which consists of two chambers. The House of Representatives is elected for two years. Candidates need to be at least 25 years of age and to have been American citizens for at least 7 years. The number of Representatives depends on the population of each state. The assembly is presided over by a **Speaker**, chosen among its members. The Senate, whose members are elected for six years, is renewed by third every two years. Candidates need to be at least 30 years of age and to have been American citizens for 9 years. There are two Senators per state, whatever its population. The Senate is presided over by the Vice President of the US or by a **President pro tempore** to fill in for (6) the Vice President. At the time, Senators were elected by State legislatures, but in 1913 the **Seventeenth Amendment** stipulated that they would be directly elected by the voters.

b. Expressed and delegated powers

Some powers are explicitly mentioned in the Constitution – they are called **expressed, enumerated or delegated powers**. Others are not explicitly listed but are derived from an interpretation of the text. They are referred to as **implied powers**, usually based on the **Necessary and Proper Clause** (Article I, section 8, paragraph 15), giving Congress authority to do anything which it

deems “necessary and proper” to carry out its job. This clause is often called the **Elastic Clause**, because it enables Congress to stretch its power.

c. Legislative powers

Article I, Section 8 details the powers of Congress, while Article I, section 9 lists restrictions. The first and foremost power vested in Congress is the power of the purse, i.e. the ability to tax and allocate (7) funds. Congress can levy taxes (8) that serve to fund the various activities of the Federal government, aiming to “provide for the common defense and the general welfare (9)” of the country, an overarching (10) principle referred to as the **General Welfare Clause**, which leaves room (11) for interpretation and adaptation to evolving circumstances and led a few years later to a fundamental controversy between Jefferson and Hamilton. See **Fact Sheet n° 13**. The Framers remembered how Britain had imposed taxes on the colonies without their consent and had trampled upon (12) the **no-taxation-without-representation** principle that dated back to **Magna Carta**. They thus wanted to reserve this right for the representatives of the people in Congress rather than put in the hands of the executive.

Among the other powers granted to the legislative branch are the power to borrow money, to regulate foreign and domestic trade, to regulate naturalization, to coin (13) money and to fix the standards (14) of weights and measures, to set up courts of justice, to provide for an army (but can’t provide funding for more than two years) and a navy and to provide for militias.

The Constitution also provides limitations to Congressional power. Congress is not allowed to suspend **habeas corpus** (a fundamental right going back to Magna Carta, which protects individuals from arbitrary arrests), pass **bills of attainder** (a law that condemns a person without a trial) or **ex post facto laws** (a law that punishes a crime retroactively), favor one state over another and grant titles of nobility.

d. Non-legislative powers

– Impeachment

When the President, the Vice President or any other civil officer is suspected of “Treason, Bribery, or other high Crimes and Misdemeanors” (Article II, section 4), a procedure of **impeachment** (15) can be launched by the House of Representatives. An impeachment trial is then held at the Senate, where a two-thirds majority is required for conviction and removal from office. So far, three Presidents have been impeached (Andrew Johnson in 1868, Bill Clinton in 1998 and Donald Trump, the only President to have been impeached twice, in 2019 and 2020) but none has ever been convicted and removed from office. Richard Nixon resigned before the impeachment vote took place in the House.

– Election of the President and the Vice President

If no candidate manages to get a majority of **Electoral College** votes, the House of Representatives chooses the President among the two or more

candidates who had an equal number of votes (among three most voted candidates, according to the **Twelfth Amendment**). But in that case, each state has one vote. The one who receives the more votes becomes President; the one who comes second becomes Vice President, except if there is another tie among the remaining candidates, in which case the Vice President is elected by the Senate.

It happened several times. In 1800, two candidates from the same party, Thomas Jefferson and Aaron Burr, each received 73 votes in the Electoral College. Jefferson was elected on the 36th ballot (16), and Burr became his Vice President. **See Fact Sheet n° 15**. In 1824, none of the four candidates managed to get a majority in the Electoral College. The House of Representatives eventually preferred John Quincy Adams over Andrew Jackson and William H. Crawford. **See Fact Sheet n° 23**.

- Confirmation of appointments

The Senate is specifically endowed with (17) the power to confirm the appointments of all individuals nominated by the President to fill a position in the federal government, such as ambassadors, government ministers or **Justices** of the Supreme Court. The Constitution does not mention the term **confirmation** but the phrase “by and with the Advice and Consent of the Senate” underlines that the Senate needs to approve presidential appointments. The confirmation is not certain, and cases of candidates rejected for their political views or personal behavior are not uncommon. In 1833, Roger B. Taney was appointed by Andrew Jackson to serve as Secretary of the Treasury but the Senate refused to confirm his nomination. Two years later, after **National Republicans** lost the majority in the Senate to Democrats, he was appointed to succeed John Marshall as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. In 1848, Lewis Cass was appointed by President James K. Polk to be Secretary of State. However, the Senate rejected his nomination due to his pro-slavery stance. More recently, in 1989, John Tower, a former Republican Senator from Texas, was nominated by President George H.W. Bush to be Secretary of Defense. However, concerns over conflicts of interest and his personal conduct, more specifically allegations of “womanizing” (18) and excessive alcohol consumption, eventually led to the withdrawal of his appointment.

- Ratification of treaties

Treaties need to be ratified two thirds of the Senate to come into effect. A significant example of a treaty the Senate refused to ratify is the Treaty of Versailles in 1919. It had been negotiated by President Wilson based on his famous **Fourteen Points**, but the Senate had eventually discarded it over fears that it might draw the country into foreign conflicts. More recently, the Kyoto Protocol in 1997, signed under President Clinton, was never ratified.

- Declaration of war

While the President serves as the Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces, Congress has the power to declare war, which it has used five times in its history: for the **War of 1812** against the UK, for the **American-Mexican War**