

The Ancien Régime and the Age of Enlightenment



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1. The Ancien Régime

At the beginning of the 18th Century most of european countries were under the **Ancien régime**.

The **Ancien régime** (French for the **Old Order o Rule**) was the political and social system adopted by most of the European Kingdoms at the end of the Middle Ages.

Society was based in the medieval social system where people were divided into estates, social stratus based on your birth not in your wealth nor your capacities.

Agriculture and livestock breeding were the main economics activities.

Absolute Monarchy was its political system.



1.1 Aristocratic Farming System

Farming was the main economic activity.

It was a **subsistence farming**. There were little to trade with. They still used the three field system, a crop rotation system from the middle ages.

Farming depended completely on the weather and the fertility of the land. A severe drought or a specially cold year could mean the loss of most of the harvest, a series of lost harvest led to a **subsistence crisis**, a great famine, that could lead to a social and political crisis, wars, or even plagues.

The land was owned by nobility and clergy.

Most of the population were **peasants** who worked for nobles and clergy in their large states. They also had to pay high taxes and tithes



1.2 Absolute Monarchy

- ❑ The king had absolute power which came from God itself, that was called **divine right**.
- ❑ He had no powers above him, he unified the three powers of the State: executive, legislative and judiciary.
- ❑ There were not **citizens** but subjects, they had no rights. However, nobility and clergy had some privileges.
- ❑ Although the king had absolute power he was helped in his duties by **secretaries** and councils. He also had **parliaments** for relevant matters, but they were rarely called together.

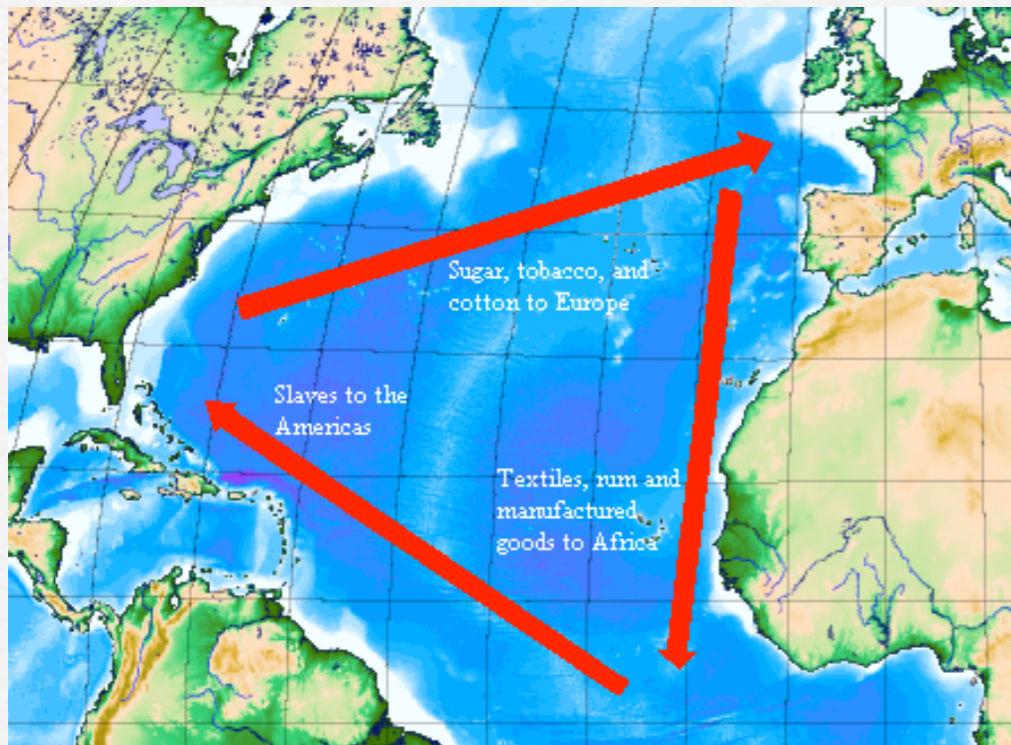


1.3. Economic Growth

- ❑ Compare to the 17th century the 18th was more peaceful. A time for international equilibrium where conflicts were rather solved with treaties than wars.
- ❑ **It was a period of economic wealth and population growth.** Thanks to the lack of plagues and the introduction of new crops, especially the potato.
- ❑ **Demographic growth led to** a higher demand which led to **an increase on prices and production.**
- ❑ Monarchies supported this economic growth by creating royal manufactures and **trading companies**. They also sponsored agricultural reforms and infrastructures, **that made the trade had an outstanding rise**



1.3.1 Colonial Trade



Ships from Great Britain, Holland, France, Spain and Portugal traded with **manufacture goods**, **raw materials** and **slaves** from one shore of the Atlantic to the other.

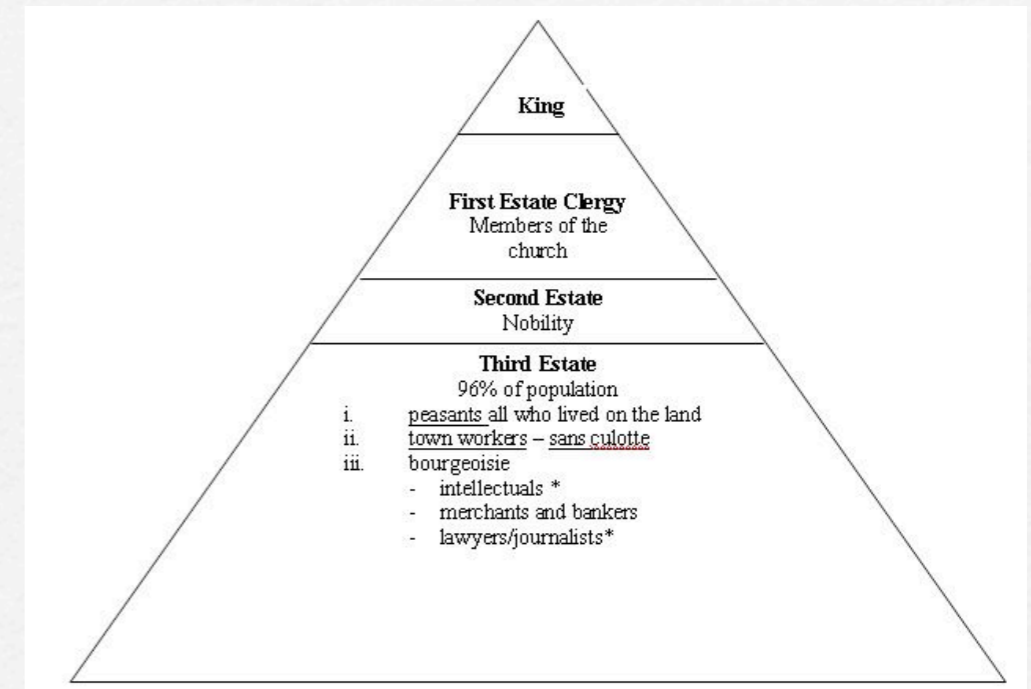
This trading circuit has been called **Triangular Trade** and involved Africa, America and Europe.

It had a key role in the creation of capitals for the following industrialization processes.

2. The Ancien Régime society. An unequal reality

2.1 Nobility

- ❑ There were two different groups: privileged people and underprivileged people
- ❑ Privileged people.
 - ❑ Nobility or aristocracy:
 - ❑ They lived on the rural income obtained from their states.
 - ❑ They accumulated riches but some of them were not rich because of their very expensive way of life, actually most of them had big debts with bankers and traders.
 - ❑ They enjoyed honors, economic favors and tax exemptions (They did not pay most or the common taxes)



2. The Ancien Régime society. An unequal reality

2.2. Clergy



- They lived on the benefits of their land, their possessions and the **tithe**.
- Because monarchy was given by divine right church and priests played a main role supporting the absolute monarchy and Ancien Régime.
- Clergy was not equal, it could be divided into to different groups:



- **High Clergy.** They came from aristocracy (They often were seconds sons and daughters of noble families) They enjoyed the same privileges than the nobility.
- **Low Clergy.** They lived a humble life without luxuries. Some of them were on the side of the third estate.



2. The Ancien Régime society. An unequal reality

2.3 The third estate

- ❑ Underprivileged people. The commoners.
- ❑ They were 95% of the population
- ❑ They were divided into economic groups:
 - ❑ **Bourgeoisie**
 - ❑ They had economic power, they were traders, bankers, manufacturers and professionals (lawyers and medical doctors for instance).
 - ❑ They paid taxes and had no political representation.
 - ❑ **Popular class.**
 - ❑ Urban workers, small traders and artisans, servants, workshop workers.
 - ❑ **Peasants.**
 - ❑ They were the main group, most of the population before the Industrial Revolution worked as peasants, farmers without land who worked for a noble or a bishop.
 - ❑ Their lives were very hard, they paid taxes, did not get paid for their work and always on the verge of starvation.

2. The Ancien Régime society. An unequal reality

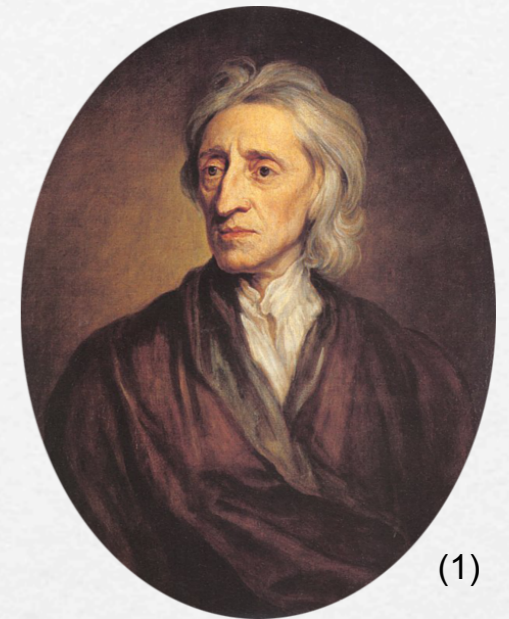
2.3 The third estate

- ❑ The system was so closed that it was almost impossible the social ascension, it does not mean that some members of the bourgeoisie became nobles by marriage or by kings favor.

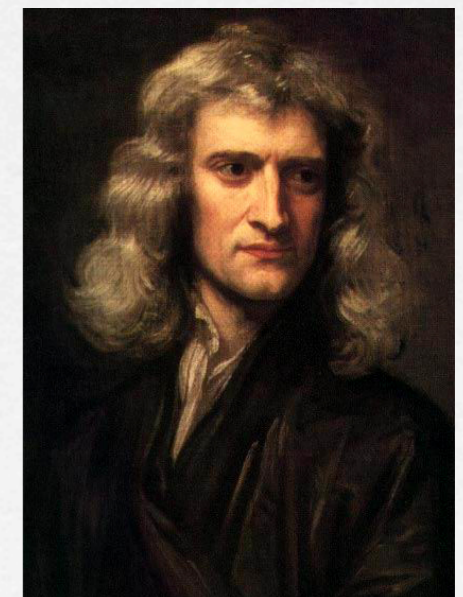


3. Enlightenment

- ❑ What was The Enlightenment? It was an 18th century intellectual and cultural movement that questioned the bases of the Ancien Régime.
- ❑ The Enlightened defended that **reason** was the only way to understand the World. Anything that could not pass by the filters of reason was refused as trickery and lie.
- ❑ They said that tolerance must be the base of every human relation and attacked religious intolerance.
- ❑ They thought that education and progress will come the improvement of life conditions. It was called The Century of Lights after ages of obscurantism the 18th philosophers thought that the Light of Reason vanish the shadows on Earth.
- ❑ Precursors of Enlightenment.
 - ❑ John Locke⁽¹⁾. He criticized absolutism and laid out the separation of powers for the first time.
 - ❑ Isaac Newton⁽²⁾. He was one of the fathers of the scientific method based on the facts and direct observation.



(1)



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3.1 Philosophers of Enlightenment

3.1.1 Economic thought

- ❑ The ideas of Enlightenment were spread by a group of french intellectuals: Montesquieu, Voltaire, Diderot and Rousseau.
 - ❑ They favoured: Freedom and equality of human kind
 - ❑ They despised: Estates society and absolute monarchy.
- ❑ **Economic thought.**
 - ❑ **Mercantilism.:**
 - ❑ They believed on the accumulation of precious metals, such as gold or silver and on the control of the importations. Colbert (1) was its greater theorist.
 - ❑ **Physiocracy.**
 - ❑ Economic theory supported, among others, by Francois Quesnay (2). Agriculture might be the base for the wealth of a nation. It allowed the population to live and trading goods.
 - ❑ They favoured private property of the land, the freedom of trade and were against any intrusion of the government. In order to reach their goals they thought that every mortmain land (lands owned by the church and nobility



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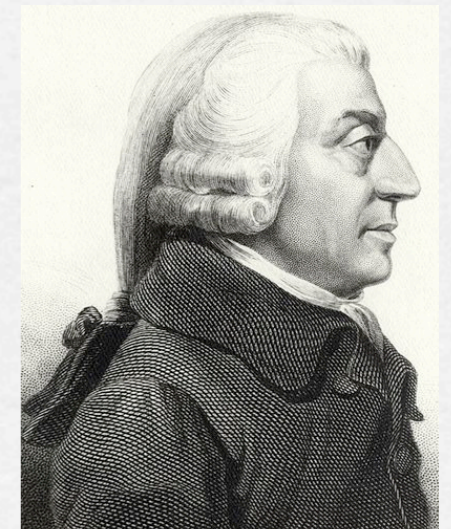


3.1 Philosophers of Enlightenment

3.1.1 Economic thought

□ Liberalism

- Adam Smith ⁽³⁾, following the physiocrat's ideas, developed free trade theory. Countries should not rise barriers for trade or intervene in economic matters such market prices, those must be set by the supply and demand rules. That was the origin or capitalism..



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3.1 Philosophers of Enlightenment

3.1.1 Political thought

❑ Montesquieu⁽¹⁾.

- ❑ He developed the idea of separation of powers (executive, legislature and judiciary) in his masterwork was "The spirit of the laws" ("De le spirit des lois")

❑ Rousseau⁽²⁾.

- ❑ He defined the notion of "Social Contract" as a deal between all citizens recorded into a Constitution. He brought up the idea of national sovereignty expressed by suffrage.

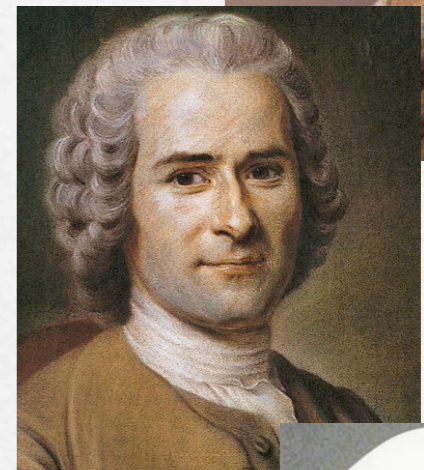
❑ Voltaire⁽³⁾.

- ❑ He defended the necessity of a parliament which controlled royal power. He also believed in an equal tax system where the third estate were not the only taxpayers.

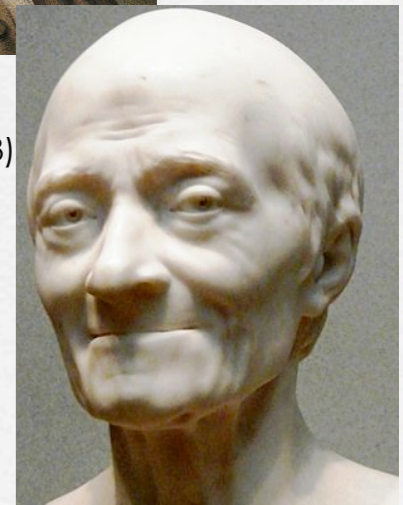
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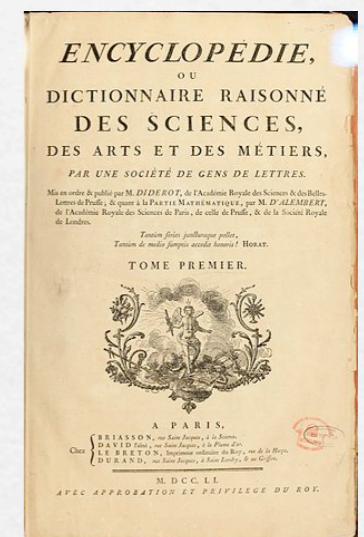


3.1 Philosophers of Enlightenment

3.1.1 Political thought

❑ The Encyclopedia (4).

- ❑ It was a large project carried out by **D'Alambert** and **Diderot**.
- ❑ They sought for a great work that collected all the ideas, knowledge, inventions and discovers of the Enlightenment.
- ❑ It was persecuted by the church and nobility due to some of its contents but it was a big success and had a great diffusion all over Europe which helped to spread ideas of Enlightenment throughout salons and academies.



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4. The collapse of Absolutism

4.1. The English Revolutions

- ❑ Great Britain started by limiting the powers of its kings. Meanwhile, in Continental Europe, some kings and queens adopted some ideas of Enlightenment, that was called reformism or Enlightened Absolutism.
- ❑ **4.1 The English Revolutions.**
 - ❑ In England the monarch power was limited by the two houses of Parliament (House of Lords and House of Commons). He need their approval to start a war or set new taxes up.
 - ❑ Nobles and high Clergy. House of Lords.
 - ❑ Middle class. House of Commons.
 - ❑ In the 17th Century a new dynasty, the Stuarts, tried to rule without the parliament like the king of France.
 - ❑ This caused a major conflict between the Parliament, specially the House of Commons, and the king Charles I that ended in a Civil War between:
 - ❑ Defenders of parliament
 - ❑ Defenders of absolutism.

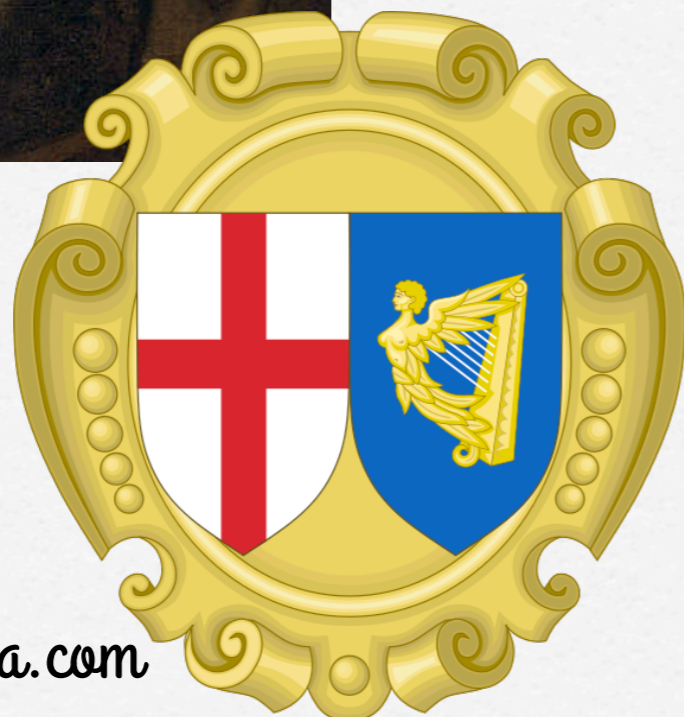


4. The collapse of Absolutism

4.1. The English Revolutions

- ❑ At the end parliament supporters won the war and Charles I was accused of treason against the people of Britain and beheaded. Great Britain became a republic ruled by a Lord Protector, Oliver Cromwell.
- ❑ Oliver Cromwell's power grew and grew till he became himself a dictator. When he died the parliament reinstated monarchy
- ❑ The new king, Charles II, son of the late Charles I, sworn the new Bill of Rights that limited the power of the king and submit his decisions to the Parliament. But the next king, James II tried to get his royal powers back and was overthrown and replaced by William III who accepted to share his powers with the parliament.
- ❑ Britain became the first parliamentary monarchy inspiring the following enlightened thinkers.





4. The collapse of Absolutism

4.2. Enlightened Absolutism

- ❑ Despite the British example most of the European monarchs kept their absolute powers however they tried to make some reforms taking advantage of some ideas of Enlightenment.
- ❑ Enlightened Despotism. Enlightened monarchs and their secretaries and ministers made reforms for the good of the people but they did not give any power to people though. This contradictory reforms opened the door to the liberal revolutions in the 19th.



Frederick II of Prussia



Charles III of Spain



Marie Therese of
Austria

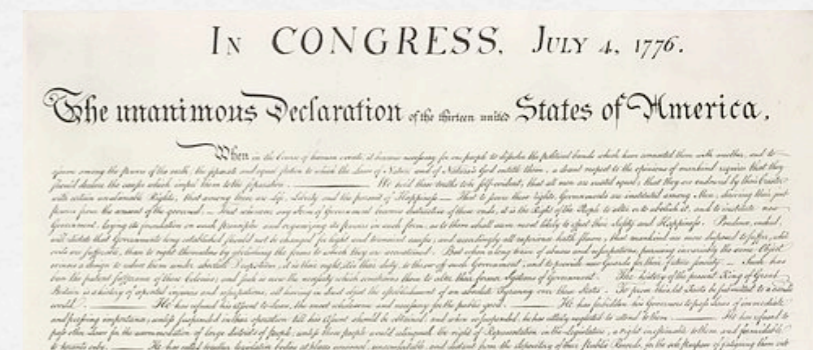
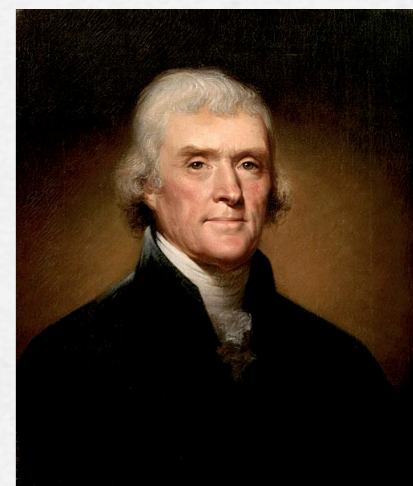
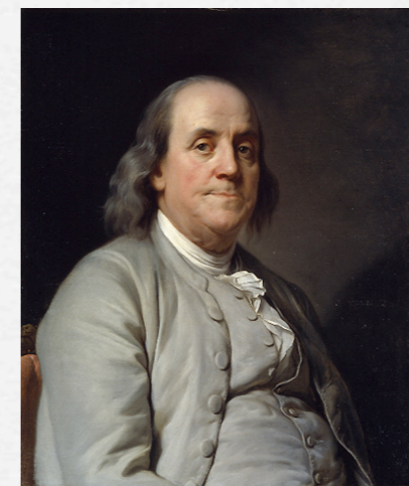
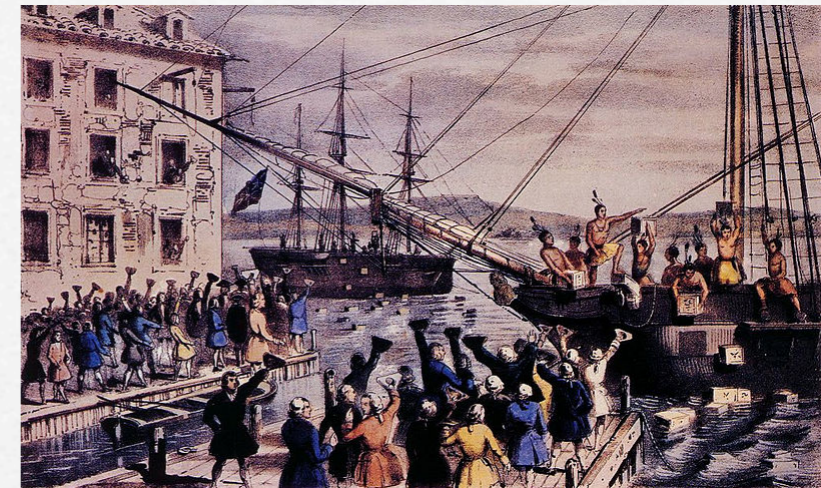


Catherine II of Russia



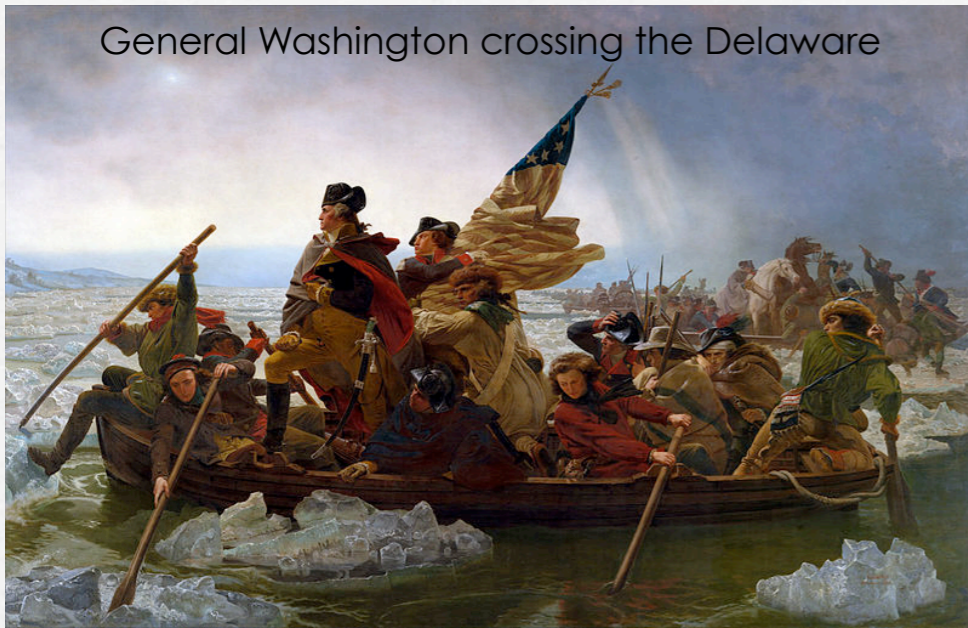
5. American Revolution

- ❑ **The United States of America.**
- ❑ The thirteen british colonies stablished on the East Coast of North America were responsible at 18th century of the first colonial insurrection against a metropolis.
- ❑ Some colonists, inspired by the ideas of enlightenment that came from Europe, even from the metropolis itself, start to think of self government or, at least, equal rights to the British.
- ❑ The main problem was excessive taxation without match, **“Taxation without representation”** was one of their main mottos.
- ❑ After some incidents (Boston Massacre, 1770 and Boston tea Party and 1773) delegates from every colony met at Philadelphia in a so called Continental Congress trying to get some rights from the British crown. The crown not only refused their reclamations but send and army to stop them.
- ❑ At **july 4th of 1776**, after a series of hard debates, the delegates of the colonies signed **The Declaration of Independence** which was written by **Thomas Jefferson**. The influence of this text would be bigger than his author thought, being one of the cornerstones of liberalism and democracy.

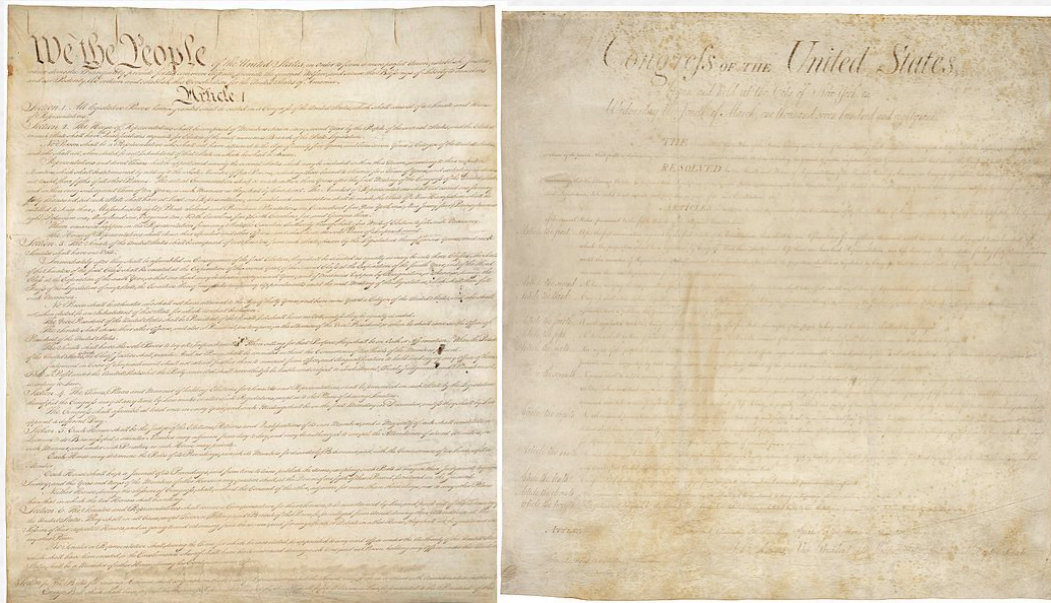


5. American Revolution

General Washington crossing the Delaware



American Constitution and Bill of Rights



- ❑ The Declaration of 1776 led to a long war won by the Americans with some help from France and Spain, enemies of Britain at that time.
- ❑ The War finished in 1783 and George Washington was declared first president of the United States while their parliament, the Congress, was writing its constitution.
- ❑ On 1787 the Constitution was finished. It was the first written constitution of the world, model for many to come.
- ❑ United States was organized as a Federation in which every state has its own government and laws. But all foreign affairs and army were in hands of the federal government and its chief executive, the President of the United States.
- ❑ The Constitution was completed by a Bill of Rights based on the Virginia Declaration of Rights. This Bill of Rights warrant basic freedoms and rights such as freedom of speech, freedom of press, religion, etc...



Unit 1 Glossary

Define in English and translate into Spanish the following terms and concepts

Ancien régime, Estates, tithes, divine right, executive, legislative, judiciary, royal manufactures, manufacture goods, Triangular Trade, privileged people, underprivileged people, bourgeoisie, Enlightenment, separation of powers, suffrage, national sovereignty, colonies, metropolis, Bill of Rights