The Coercive Acts

- Great Britain saw the Boston Tea Party as an act of treason
- The British felt it represented an escalation; determined to respond
- Britain passed the Coercive Acts in response to Tea Party
- The colonists called them the Intolerable Acts
- Coercive Acts target only Massachusetts; seen as the instigators of revolution
- Idea was to isolate Massachusetts; let them serve as a warning
- The plan ultimately backfired
- Four parts to Coercive Acts
  1.) Close port of Boston
  2.) Reduce Power of Self-Government
  3.) Deny them the right to try British Officials
  4.) Quarter Soldiers in barns and empty houses
- Passed in 1774
The Continental Congress

- Colonies supported Mass.
- 1774: Call First Continental Congress in Philadelphia (see right)
- Delegates from all colonies (except Georgia) attend
- Make 5 decisions
  1.) Reject Any Plan to Form Union under Britain
  2.) Statement of Grievances to Parliament
  3.) Make Military Preparations
  4.) Stop Trade with Great Britain
  5.) Agree to meet again
- Parliament responded favorably; issued Conciliatory Acts
Lexington and Concord

- In the Conciliatory Acts, Britain agreed to many colonial demands
- War might have been averted
- Before agreement reached colonies, Battle of Lexington and Concord (right) broke out
- First battle of American Revolution
- Occurred on April 18, 1775
- British attempt to seize colonial arsenal and arrest Sam Adams and John Hancock
- Minute Men waiting for them
- Both sides blamed each other for the conflict
The Second Continental Congress

- The Second Continental Congress met three weeks after Lexington and Concord
- Deeply divided meeting: Independence vs. Reconciliation
- Produced two documents
  1.) Olive Branch Petition: Offer of Peace to Great Britain
  2.) Declaration of the Causes and Necessity of Taking Arms: Justification for Lexington and Concord
- At this time most colonists not in favor of independence; believed that they were fighting to redress grievances
- However, Great Britain rejected Olive Branch petition
- Britain wanted to punish colonists for rebellion
- Forced colonists to reassess goals
The Declaration of Independence

- Colonists steadily moving towards Independence
- Four factors push them permanently towards independence
  - 1.) Britain rejected Olive Branch petition
  - 2.) High Cost of War
  - 3.) British recruited slaves, Indians, and foreigners
  - 4.) Common Sense by Thomas Paine (right)
- Common Sense enormously popular
- Sold 100,000 copies in 1776
On July 4, 1776, the members of the Continental Congress signed the Declaration of Independence. The Declaration was written by Thomas Jefferson. Jefferson crafted the work based upon Enlightenment principles. The signing officially commenced the Revolutionary War.