

AP United States History

Unit 3- The American Revolution

Topic: Developing An American Identity

Use the documents and your knowledge of this period to answer the written item that is located at the conclusion of your assigned readings.

Document One

The next wish of this traveler will be to know where all these people? They are a mixture of English, Scotch, Irish, French, Dutch, Germans, and Swedes. From this promiscuous breed, that race now called Americans have arisen. The eastern provinces must indeed be excepted, as being the unmixed descendants of Englishmen. I have heard many wish that they had been more intermixed also: for my part, I am no wisher, and think it much better as it has happened. They exhibit a most conspicuous figure in this great and variegated picture; they too enter for a great share in the pleasing perspective displayed in these thirteen provinces. I know it is fashionable to reflect on them, but I respect them for what they have done; for the accuracy and wisdom with which they have settled their territory; for the decency of their manners; for their early love of letters; their ancient college, the first in this hemisphere; for their industry; which to me who am but a farmer, is the criterion of everything. There never was a people, situated as they are, who with such ungrateful soil have done more in such a short time. Do you think that the monarchical ingredients which are more prevalent in other governments, have purged them from all foul stains? Their histories assert the contrary.

In this great American asylum, the poor of Europe have by some means met together, and in consequence of various causes; to what purpose should they ask one another what countrymen they are? Alas, two thirds of them had no country. Can a wretch who wanders about, who works and starves, whose life is a continual scene of sore affliction or pinching penury; can that man call England or any other kingdom his country? A country that had no bread for him, whose fields procured him no harvest, who met with nothing but the frowns of the rich, the severity of the laws, with jails and punishments; who owned not a single foot of the extensive surface of this planet? No! urged by a variety of motives, here they came. Everything has tended to regenerate them; new laws, a new mode of living, a new social system; here they are become men: in Europe they were as so many useless plants, wanting vegetative mold, and refreshing showers; they withered, and were mowed down by want, hunger, and war; but now by the power of transplantation, like all other plants they have taken root and flourished! Formerly they were not numbered in any civil lists of their country, except in those of the poor; here they rank as citizens.

Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur, "What is an American?" 1782– Crèvecoeur was a French native describing America in the years following the Revolutionary War.

Document Two

My Dear Friend–

The aspect of our politics has wonderfully changed since you left us. In place of that noble love of liberty, and republican government which carried us triumphantly thro' the war, an Anglican, monarchical and aristocratic party has sprung up, whose avowed object is to draw over us the substance as they have already done the forms of the British government. The main body of our citizens however remain true to their republican principles, the whole landed interest is with them (republican), and so is a great mass of talents. Against us are the Executive, the Judiciary, two out of three branches of the legislature, all the officers of the government, all who want to be officers, all timid men who prefer the calm of despotism to the boisterous sea of liberty, British merchants and Americans trading on British capitals, speculators and holders in the banks and public funds a

contrivance invented for the purposes of corruption and for assimilating us in all things, to the rotten as well as the sound parts of the British model. It would give you a fever were I to name to you the apostates who have gone over to these heresies, men who were Samsons in the field and Solomons in the council, but who have had their heads shorn by the harlot England.^[1] In short we are likely to preserve the liberty we have obtained only by unremitting labors and perils. But we shall preserve them [sic], and our mass of weight and wealth on the good side is so great as to leave no danger that force will ever be attempted against us. We have only to awake and snap the Lilliputian cords with which they have been entangling us during the first sleep which succeeded our labors.

Your friend and servant,

Thomas Jefferson

Thomas Jefferson, Letter to Phillip Mazzei, 1796, lamenting the rise of the Federalist Party in politics during the 1790s.

Document Three



James Peale, The Artist and His Family- 1795

Document Four

April 4 [1815] It appears to me that three simple rules...would make children's tempers much more amiable than we generally see them. First, never to give them anything improper, because they strongly and passionately desire it: and even to withhold proper things, until they manifest a right spirit. Second. Always to gratify every reasonable desire, when a child is pleasant in its request; that your children may see that you love to make them happy. Third, never to become impatient and fretful yourself, but proportion your displeasure exactly to the offense. If parents become angry, and speak loud and harsh, upon every slight failure of duty, they may bid a final adieu to domestic subordination, unless the grace of God interposes to snatch the little victims of severity from destruction. I feel confident...that although more children are injured by excessive indulgence than by the opposite fault, yet the effects of extreme rigor are the most hopeless. And the reason is, associations of a disagreeable nature...are the strongest...

For my own part, I find myself falling so far short, that I am, sometimes, overwhelmed with the distressing apprehension of erring fatally. Dear children! I tremble for you, when I reflect how dangerous is the path in which you are to be treated, and how difficult the task of directing you in safety.

From Benjamin B. Wisner, ed, Memoirs of the Late Mrs. Susan Mansfield Huntington (Boston: Crocker and Brewster, 1826), 127-129.

Document Five

Transcription of Manumission Document

"Know all men by these presents that I, David Miller of York County do hereby manumit emancipate and set free a Negro man named and called Gowin Pamphlet, and I do for myself my Heirs executors and administrators hereby declare the said Negro man Gowin Pamphlet exonerated of and from all services whatsoever and do hereby declare him to be a free man, and I do renounce all Right title Interest claim and demand whatsoever to the said Slave In Witness whereof I have hereunto set my Hand and affixed my seal this twenty fifth day of September 1793"

David Miller

At a court held for York County the 16th day of December 1793 This deed of Emancipation was acknowledged by David Miller Party thereto and ordered to be recorded.

This is the manumission of freeing of Gowin Pamphlet, the first Black African American minister in the South. He was the minister of the First Baptist Church in Williamsburg, Virginia, until his death in 1808.

Assignment Question

What do the documents tell us about the development of an American identity in the years following the Revolutionary War?