

Role Cards of Historical Figures

Joseph Brant: Loyalist

You are Joseph Brant, born in Ohio in 1742. A Mohawk Indian and a leader of the Iroquois nations, you went to school in Connecticut, where you learned English. You are loyal to Great Britain partly because you joined the Church of England in 1763. You fought with the British in the French and Indian War. Your brother-in-law is Sir William Johnson, a Loyalist and a wealthy landowner.

In 1775, you went to England, where you were treated like a celebrity. You met the king and told him that the Mohawks are a free people and that you believe they must remain so. The king agreed. He assured you that the Mohawks, as long as they fought against the colonists, would be given land in Canada when the conflict with the colonists was over.

Swearing loyalty to Great Britain, you pledged to support that nation with 1,500 warriors. During the war, you will lead four of the six Iroquois nations against the colonists.

Thomas Hutchinson: Loyalist

You are Governor Thomas Hutchinson of Massachusetts, a Loyalist. Although you do not totally agree with Parliament's decisions to tax the colonies, you believe that Parliament has the right to rule the colonies and to pass laws affecting them. You believe that without British rule, there would be a total breakdown of government in America. Therefore, you loyally enforce Parliament's laws in Massachusetts.

You were born to wealthy landowners in Boston. You are a lawyer, historian, and author. At the time of the Stamp Act, you were the chief justice (judge) of Massachusetts. Although you opposed the Stamp Act, you ruled against the colonists in several court cases because you believe in British law and British rule.

You are a leading Loyalist in America. You try to limit the influence of the Patriots. You want to restrict town meetings. When Samuel Adams published articles in the *Boston Gazette* attacking the Stamp Act, you tried to bring charges of sedition against him. (Seditious acts encourage people to disobey lawful authority.) You also tried to enforce the Tea Act, which led to the Boston Tea Party.

Peter Van Schaack: Loyalist

You are Peter Van Schaack, a wealthy landowner from New York. You believe that the colonies are part of the British Empire and that all laws passed by Parliament apply to the colonies.

At first, you supported the colonists' complaints. However, you later changed your mind. You believe that the colonies need Great Britain to survive. You argue that having the protection of Great Britain's military, as well as Great Britain's economic strength, serves the general good of the colonies.

You believe that the colonies cannot function without British rule. You also believe that Parliament has the right to tax all British subjects, including the colonists. If the colonies gain independence, you argue, they will only fight among themselves to determine their new form of government and who will rule.

Rebecca Franks: Loyalist

You are Rebecca Franks of Philadelphia. You believe that it is in Americans' best interest to remain under British rule. You do not share all of the Patriots' political beliefs, and you think some of their concerns are exaggerated. However, you do believe that the colonies should be given some say in how they are governed.

Your father, David Franks, is a businessman. He provided supplies to the British army in the years before the war. Your life is filled with parties and social events. You are admired by all—Loyalists and Patriots alike—because of your wit, beauty, and charm.

John Adams: Patriot

You are John Adams of Massachusetts. You are best known as a leader of the Patriots. You have won great respect among other Patriots since joining the rebellion. Many colonists, however, are put off by your boastful attitude.

You did not always believe in rebellion. After you graduated from Harvard College and became a lawyer, your cousin Samuel Adams convinced you to join the resistance against Great Britain as a legal adviser. You opposed Parliament's taxing the colonies without colonial representation. However, you also supported English law and were not interested in independence.

After the Boston Massacre in 1770, you changed your mind. You became convinced that the colonies must fight for independence. Still, you defended the British soldiers charged with murder after the Boston Massacre because you believe in justice under the law.

After being elected to the Massachusetts House of Representatives, you became more and more critical of Britain's efforts to tax the colonists. When Bostonians were forced to house British troops after the Boston Tea Party, you called a meeting of Patriots to tell them not to pay for the tea that had been dumped into the harbor.

During the First and Second Continental Congresses, you will call on the delegates 23 times to discuss independence. You will recommend establishing a continental government to represent all the colonies.

Patrick Henry: Patriot

You are Patrick Henry of Virginia, a lawyer and one of the first colonists to call for independence from Great Britain. You were an elected member of Virginia's lawmaking body, the House of Burgesses. You resigned so that you could devote your time to fighting Great Britain's attempts to tax the colonies. You believe that these taxes are unfair because the colonists have no representatives in Parliament.

You are constantly telling Americans that they will never be free unless the colonies become independent. As long as the colonies are part of the British Empire, you argue, colonists will be second-class citizens with no political rights. You also are responsible for forming the Virginia militia.

You are most famous for a speech in which you addressed fellow Virginians who were opposed to rebellion. "I know not what course others may take," you declared. "But as for me, give me liberty or give me death!"

Benjamin Franklin: Patriot

You are Benjamin Franklin of Philadelphia, one of America's best-known and most beloved statesmen. You are an inventor, a scholar, and a civic leader. In 1748, at the age of 42, you retired to devote yourself to civic projects. You were responsible for organizing Philadelphia's first police force, the University of Pennsylvania, and the city's first hospital.

In 1757, you were sent to Great Britain to represent Pennsylvania's interests in England. Eventually, you became the representative for New Jersey, Georgia, and Massachusetts as well. In 1765, you wrote to the angry colonists and told them to have patience toward the Stamp Act. Then you tried to persuade Parliament to repeal (cancel) the act. You believe that Parliament's ability to conduct business with the colonies depends on the colonists' respect for the British government. You warned Parliament that if the Stamp Act were not withdrawn, the colonists would lose all respect for Great Britain.

You were alarmed when the Stamp Act was replaced by the Townshend Acts. You urged the colonists to boycott (refuse to buy) British goods until these taxes were withdrawn. When the British tried to bribe you to persuade the colonists to end their opposition, you told them that your patriotism has no price tag. In 1775, you returned to Philadelphia and were elected to the Pennsylvania Assembly. You now believe the colonies should declare independence, and you openly work for the cause of rebellion.

Thomas Jefferson: Patriot

You are Thomas Jefferson of Virginia. You are a lawyer and a brilliant thinker and writer. After hearing Patrick Henry declare "Give me liberty or give me death!" you became committed to rebellion against Great Britain. You firmly believe in democracy and do not want to be governed by Parliament without someone representing your interests. You convinced the Virginia lawmaking body, the House of Burgesses, to pass a resolution that criticized taxation without representation.

You are generally respected and well liked by all colonists—Patriots and Loyalists alike—because you are charming, intelligent, and a humanitarian. You support religious freedom and public education.

You strongly support the radicals in New England and oppose the British occupation of Boston. You tell your fellow Virginians that the occupation is not just an attack on Boston. "An attack on any one colony should be considered an attack on the whole," you say. When the British closed the port of Boston, you called on all Virginians to support their fellow colonists by praying and fasting (going without food) until the port was reopened.

Mercy Otis Warren: Patriot

You are Mercy Otis Warren of Boston, a well-known historian and author. You believe that the colonies should resist the “strong hand of foreign domination.” You are convinced that the time has come for the colonies to break their ties to Britain.

You write articles for the *Boston Gazette* that criticize Loyalists, calling them traitors. Your writings also attack Great Britain for sending troops to Boston. History, you say, teaches that a standing army is the tool of tyrants (leaders who abuse power).

You also write articles criticizing Massachusetts governor Thomas Hutchinson. You say that Hutchinson has opened the way to rebellion by enforcing Great Britain’s unjust laws.

The Earl of Effingham: Neutralist

You are the Earl of Effingham, a member of Parliament. You are a Neutralist. You believe that the coming conflict will have a negative impact on both Great Britain and the colonies.

You tell Parliament that you are devoted to Great Britain and to the king. You say that you will sacrifice your life and your wealth for the cause of defending England against foreign attack. At the same time, you do not believe it is right for Parliament to tax British citizens in America when they have no representation in Parliament.

James Allen: Neutralist

You are James Allen, a landowner from Philadelphia. You are a Neutralist. You believe that the rebellion will keep you from collecting rent from your tenants. You fear you will become poor because of the war.

You are angry because the colonial and British armies are both demanding that you provide them with supplies. The Continental army pays you with Continental dollars, which are almost worthless. The British do not pay you at all. In addition, you are upset because basic products such as meat, butter, and cheese have tripled in price.

You believe that the conflict has caused a total breakdown in government and law. You want some type of government to protect the rights of British citizens in the colonies.

Richard Henderson: Neutralist

You are Richard Henderson, a land merchant from Kentucky. You are a Neutralist. You believe that the Patriots are mostly wealthy gentlemen who have access to the courts, participate in elections, and read newspapers. These few people, you fear, will impose their will on Americans if they win the war.

However, you also believe that the British have not dealt fairly with the colonists. You say that they allowed the first settlers to leave England and establish themselves in North America without having to obey British law. The British government, you argue, allowed colonists to trade without taxing them. You also believe that the British government is not being fair in taxing the colonies to pay for debts from the French and Indian War.

Felix Holbrook: Neutralist

You are Felix Holbrook, a slave living in Boston. You are a Neutralist. You have placed an ad in a Boston newspaper asking for permission to buy your freedom. Your ad praises colonists for taking a stand against those trying to enslave them. You say you understand their feelings and their desire to fight for political and religious freedom. You ask for the privilege of earning money to buy your own freedom and return to your homeland in Africa.

“Give us that ample relief which, as men, we have a natural right to,” you write. You stress that you wish to gain your freedom by peaceful and lawful means.