

Play 5 – American War of Independence 1775-1783

Speakers:

George Washington (Commander of Patriot forces)

General Howe (in charge of British forces)

Thomas Jefferson (Patriot – writer of Declaration of Independence)

General Cornwallis (in charge of British forces)

Thomas Paine (Patriot propagandist writer)

George III (king of England)

Jefferson: July 4th 1776. Our great Declaration of Independence is approved by Congress.

Washington: What a day to remember!

Paine: October 19th 1781. Cornwallis's surrender at Yorktown – the last major battle of the American Revolution.

Cornwallis: What a day to try and *forget!*

Howe: Indeed. Our forces were never going to recover from *that* defeat.

George III: And even *I* wasn't able to persuade my country to keep fighting!

Washington: And so to that great Treaty of Paris.

Jefferson: Our independence recognized at last!

Paine: And all British armed forces forced to leave our country! What a victory for freedom and liberty!

Jefferson: So to quote from my famous document "We hold these truths to be self evident - that all men are created equal..."

Washington: "that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights..."

Paine: "that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."

Howe: (snorting) Huh! Equal? Rights? Liberty? Tell that to the slaves and Native Americans!

Paine: OK. So it wasn't possible to right *all* wrongs in one go.

Cornwallis: I'll say!

Washington: That was to come later.

George III: Some might say "Luckily for you two – Washington and Jefferson. Both slave owners yourselves!

Paine: Something tells me these Brits...

George III: (interrupting) Of whom you were one – you traitor!

Paine: (Coughing) If I may continue... I don't think these Brits want to talk too much about their defeat at the Patriots' hands!

Howe: Not at all! *We* have *nothing* to feel ashamed of! May I remind you how close *we* got to winning?

Washington: And so you *should* have, with your great navy and army – both of which were superior to ours.

Jefferson: (Sniggering) Yes. Huge advantage – but shame about the leaders!

Howe: (Exploding) I beg your pardon! Are you suggesting *I*, the British Commander in Chief, wasn't up to the job?

Paine: Well, now you come to mention it...

Cornwallis: How *dare* you criticize this man!

Paine: Oh, so *you're* accepting responsibility...

Cornwallis: No. But Howe did *his* job as best he could, before being replaced by General Clinton. And *I* did *mine* as well as *I* could – but up against overwhelming odds.

Washington: As a gentleman, I would not wish to add to your humiliation...

Paine: (Sarcastically) But *maybe, just maybe*, they should re-read the history books to remind themselves of *their* part in the British defeat!

George III: All easy enough to say with hindsight! *We* may have had a better navy and army, but *you* lot were fighting on home soil!

Howe: Exactly! Whereas *our* boys had to come 3,000 miles across an ocean!

Cornwallis: *And* we had difficulty in getting men to come and fight.

George III: Yes, regrettably there was a lot of British home sympathy for the American cause!

Paine: Quite right! And Benjamin Franklin was quick to work on that sympathy – both in Britain, with me. *And* in France. *Where* would we have been without *their* soldiers and money?

George III: Bah! That Louis XVI! What a pushover for the likes of Benjamin Franklin! Swallowed *his* line of persuasion hook, line and sinker!

Paine: But it was just good 'Common Sense'!

Howe: Huh! Like your famous pamphlet?

Paine: The very same!

Jefferson: And then your essays. What a morale booster they were for our troops! Well done, sir. Good to meet a fellow scholar!

Cornwallis: Huh! Sure didn't make our job any easier! Just when we thought we could break those colonist troops, back they came for more punishment! It seemed there was *no* end to what they were prepared to put up with!

Jefferson: Amazing how the thought of liberty will spur men on!

Washington: But equally amazing how much such men were prepared to endure. I remember that winter of 1777-78 – we lost 2,500 men to disease and starvation.

Cornwallis: To say nothing of the thousand that *deserted!*

Paine: Coming from the man who *surrendered!* That's rich!

Cornwallis: And I wonder what *you* would have done, surrounded by 20,000 men!

George III: I didn't realize they had *that* number of men!

Cornwallis: They *didn't!* Not, that is, 'til you add in the 9,000 French, under Rochambeau and Lafayette.

Howe: Ah! Those wretched Frenchies again!

Washington: But it was a gamble all the same! If Howe's successor, Clinton had moved a bit faster...

Cornwallis: Yes, he had 15,000 men in New York. I sure could have done with a few of those!

Washington: Bad leadership, I'd say!

Howe: Well, *you* would!

Paine: And why not? *He* was the greatest leader of the whole war. He ran circles round the lot of *you!*

Washington: Well, I *was* rather lucky at times.

Jefferson: Are you sure that was '*luck*'? Or was it not a certain person's misjudgments?

Paine: Or shall we say, *blunders?*

Howe: Oh go on. Rub it in, why don't you? *You* weren't at that Battle of Bunker Hill when I saw my men killed on such a horrible scale.

Jefferson: Did you say *Bunker* Hill? I think you mean *Breeds* Hill, don't you? No wonder he made those 'iffy' decisions if he didn't even know *where* he was!

Howe: Well, wherever it took place, it made me think very carefully before sending my men rushing in, in the future!

Washington: So you chose to sit back? Mmm. *Not* a move guaranteed to get you results!

Howe: As it turned out, no. I should have pushed forward. Then perhaps this war would have had a different outcome.

Paine: I'll say! There were at least *two* opportunities that you wasted.

Cornwallis: Oh these men of the pen! Just listen to their gloating!

Jefferson: And with just cause! Fancy not pushing home your advantage, as our forces retreated in front of you, at New York!

Howe: Aren't you forgetting we occupied New York for 7 years!

Washington: A hollow victory when, if you'd stepped up the action just a little, you could have won the war out right!

Cornwallis: Easy enough for you to say, you wily old fox!

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