



Teacher Note: Whenever you say “colonist”, put on your colonist hat, whenever you say “King George”, put on a crown, whenever you say “founders”, put on the wig. When “no taxation without representation” is shouted, students should join you ~ you can hold up a small sign with these words on it.

Beginning:

I’m going to tell you a story about history....think about it, his story, and if you like, her story...Yes, this is a story about your past, before you were born. It is a story about your great, great, great, great grandparents – and maybe even before that! It is a story about the beginning of our nation, and though it may be hard to visualize, it is really about you – The beginning of your government!

About 240 years ago, there was no such thing as the United States! Some of your great grandparents-great grandparents came here by ships from Great Britain, France, Germany, Holland and Sweden, and they were called **colonists**. That’s because they lived in colonies, areas ruled by another country. This was in the 1770’s, and people came because there was open space ~ people could own land, even though they weren’t rich, like the landowners in England. They did not have to tip their hats to the rich landowners, like they did in Great Britain. They could practice their own religion. British colonies spread from what is now the state of Maine in the north to Georgia in the South. There were 13 colonies and all of them were on the other side of our continent.

As you know, other people were already here, Native Americans who the settlers called Indians. African people also lived in colonies, most of these people were brought over in boats to work as slaves, without pay;

they were bought and treated as the property of landowners. Most of the slaves were in the south, but all 13 colonies had slaves.

Great Britain ruled the colonies for more than 150 years – **King George III** was the king from **1760 to 1820**. He claimed to be protecting the rights of colonies. His army was in the colonies, even though there was not war, and they could live in your home, and you had to feed them, whether you wanted to or not! **Colonists** had no “say”, but were forced to follow whatever **King George** had to say. During the 1770’s American’s started to ask if **King George** was really protecting their rights. He began to send out tax collectors, and make the Americans pay lots of money – for what he said was protection of the colonies by Great Britain. He wouldn’t approve of laws created by the **colonists** to protect the rights of the people, and he wouldn’t let them trade with other countries. People became angry and shouted, “**No taxation without representation**”, (repeat with students, holding up the sign)

This is when “**founders**”, the early leaders in America: George Washington, Patrick Henry, Benjamin Franklin and others helped to establish our country. They led the fight to free our country from British rule. They created our government. They got their ideas from the Roman Republic. Instead of a King ruling the people, the citizens ruled themselves. They practiced democracy – deciding for themselves what laws they needed and electing representatives to hear their concerns and to represent their interests. They worked for civic virtue, the common good – to help all people.

So, in 1776, the American colonies broke away from British rule – it wasn’t pretty; a war broke out and the American Revolution was underway. The Americans declared their independence and many states wrote their own Constitutions.

The states started to work together with rules they called the **Articles of Confederation**, keeping the states to work together during the war against Great Britain, winning the war of independence, making a peace treaty with Great Britain and King George, and preventing each state from conducting its own foreign affairs, like making treaties, and declaring war.

But the problem was, that after the Revolution was over, each state was acting as its own country. They did not cooperate together to solve problems...there were no courts to settle arguments among the states. It became hard for trade between states or with other nations and Americans started failing at business and found themselves in debt. Finally, after lots of hard work, the states got together as *United States*. The United States Constitution was created to explain how the government was to be run. It is a set of rules and laws. But there is a limit to the government, so that it remains a republic, and so that the leaders don't start to think that they are **King George**, and take over! They set up checks and balances: three branches of the government were to balance each other and check on one another, making sure that they did not try to take on too much power: The *Legislative, Executive, and Judicial Branch...*

Many **founders** felt that the Constitution, was *still* not enough protection for the citizens. They were very much aware of how strong **King George** was, and again, they did not want a government with too much power. So they developed a **Bill of Rights**...the first 10 amendments or changes to the Constitution.

There is much more to be learned about the development of our nation,...many more important events in our history. This story was a very short overview about the *beginning* of the United States of America:

...About the **colonists** who came to America, under the rule of **King George**, and were angry about **No taxation without Representation**, and then finally came together as *United States*, as a republic. The federal Constitution was written by the **founders**, and gives us the three branches of government, with the *rule of law* to follow. States have Constitutions too, with more laws that apply specifically to that state.

Today, we will be looking more closely at the Bill of Rights, through a readers theatre in which you will all participate. Jump *back to 1944*, about the time your great grandparents were young...we are going to pick up our story when Yuki, home from her Journey to Topaz, is back in school.

Ideas to consider:

- Make a paper crown, or buy one from Party City,
- Buy a long roll of cotton at a drugstore and roll up on ends and glue for a wig,
- A colonist's hat can be made (triangular) or purchased.

