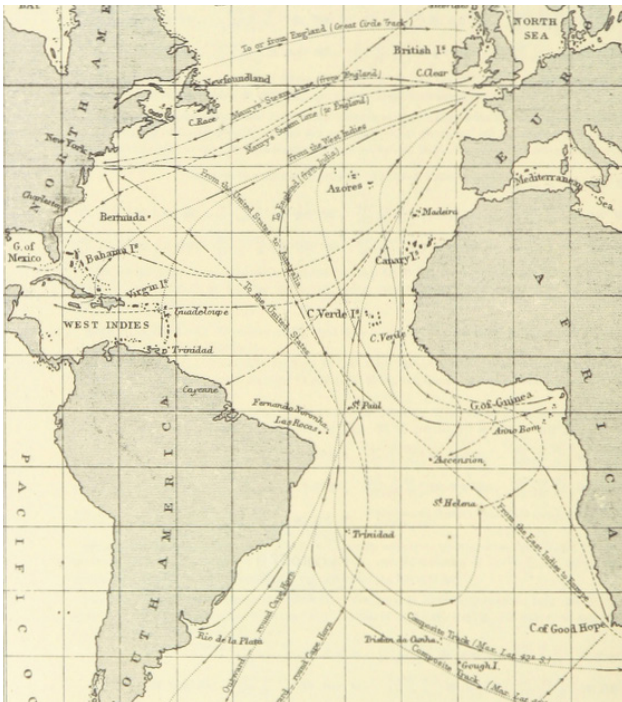


# Thinking about Monuments and Revolutions

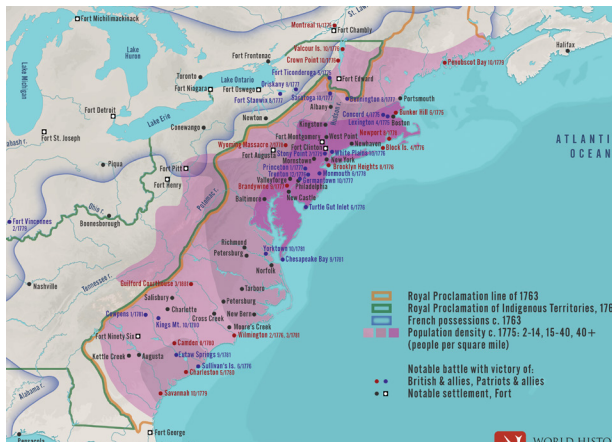


## Thinking about Monuments and Revolutions

Introduction: Three Atlantic revolutions

### Introduction: Three Atlantic revolutions

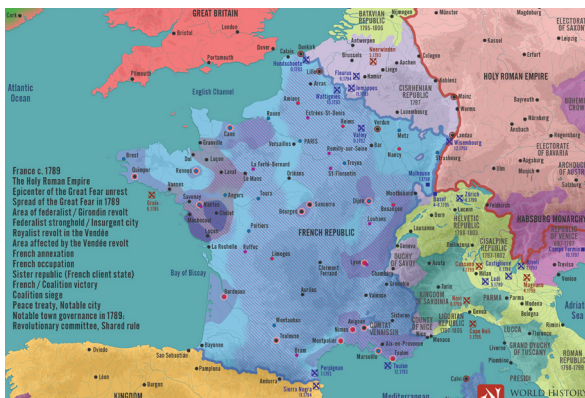
Between 1776 and 1804, three powerful, interconnected revolutions changed the political trajectory of the world. People in a series of Britain's North American colonies, in France, and in Haiti rose up against their monarchs and masters, overthrowing centuries of political tradition to create new constitutions based on principles of freedom, equal rights, and self-government. Though each revolution failed to fully live up to its ideals, each did succeed in founding or re-founding new governments that became models for modern governments around the world. Today, the United States, France, and Haiti all look back to these revolutions as the starting point of their national identity.



*Map of the American War of Independence, 1775-1783*

The American Revolution took place after Britain's North American colonies declared their independence in the summer of 1776. General George Washington and a poorly equipped army patched together from colonial militias defeated Britain in a final decisive battle at Yorktown, Virginia in the fall of 1781. The former colonies then proceeded to create a representative democracy without the leadership of a king. After the initial Articles of Confederation proved ineffectual in governing the diverse states, a new Constitution was proposed that would balance the need for a centralized government with the desire of the states for local control. The Constitution went into effect on June 21, 1788, with George Washington elected as the first President of the United States. Yet the language of universal of equality for this new government stood in stark contrast to the reality of brutal enslavement of large numbers of Black people as well as limits on access to voting rights to just propertied white men.

During the American Revolution, Marquis de Lafayette, a French aristocrat, fought alongside Washington and secured France's financial support for the American colonists. Inspired by the success of the American Revolution and Constitution, thousands of French people discontent with the monarchy began the French Revolution in the summer of 1789. Like the American colonists, the



*Map of the French Revolution, 1789-1799*

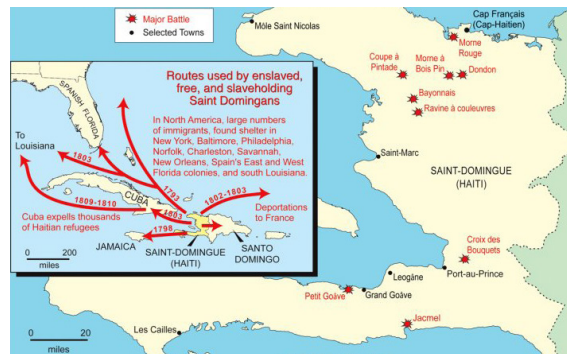
revolutionaries in France wanted to trade their antiquated monarchy for a new government based on the ideals of liberty, equality, and fraternity. But some French revolutionaries felt that the new constitutional republic championed by Lafayette and others did not go far enough. A radical phase of revolution began in 1792, creating chaos that led to a 1799 military coup by Napoleon Bonaparte, returning monarchy to France. In later decades, France vacillated between forms of monarchy and republic, but living up to the revolution's ideals remained important to large groups of people.

As the events of the French Revolution were unfolding, in 1791 slaves working French colonial plantations on the Caribbean colony of Saint-Domingue—the western part of the island of Hispaniola—rebelled against the violence and oppression of slavery. They invoked the revolutionary ideals of freedom, natural rights, and representative government under the leadership of general Toussaint Louverture, who himself had been born into slavery. The Revolutionary govern-

The American Revolution took place after Britain's North American colonies declared their independence in the summer of 1776. General George Washington and a poorly equipped army patched together from colonial militias defeated Britain in a final decisive battle at Yorktown, Virginia in the fall of 1781. The former colonies then proceeded to create a representative democracy without the

revolutionaries in France wanted to trade their antiquated monarchy for a new government based on the ideals of liberty, equality, and fraternity. But some French revolutionaries felt that the new constitutional republic championed by Lafayette and others did not go far enough. A radical phase of revolution began in 1792, creating chaos that led to a 1799 military coup by Napoleon Bonaparte, return-

ment in France abolished slavery in 1794, but Napoleon Bonaparte attempted to reinstate mass enslavement of Black people in order to raise revenues. This reversal angered many free Blacks in Saint-Domingue, leading Toussaint to declare independence from France. By 1804, the Haitian Revolution had succeeded in establishing a constitutional republic under Black leadership including the first President of Haiti, Jacques Dessalines, and the colony was renamed Haiti, which comes from the indigenous Taíno name for the entire island.



*Map of the Haitian Revolution, 1793-1809*

The American, French, and Haitian revolutions are not merely historical events in world history: They also constitute the founding stories of each of these three nations as they developed in later decades. The history of the revolutions have been told and retold over time to teach each new generation who they are as citizens and patriots, to help them understand the nature and costs of freedom, to value their own individual rights and respect those of others, and to participate in their own government as voters and public servants. To help people remember the events and principles of the revolutions, governments and private organizations have put up public monuments that capture important messages or moments associated with their founding revolution.

This module examines how the United States, France, and Haiti have represented their founding stories over time through those monuments. As you study each of the three revolutions, you will look at various monuments that were erected to commemorate the events of the revolution, its leaders, or its principles. Some of these monuments depicted historical figures, while others were meant to convey abstract concepts through symbolism. All of them tell us as much about what Haitians, Americans, and the French wanted people in later generations to think about their founding revolution as they do about the revolution itself.

In this module we will study:

- Major events and figures of the American, French, and Haitian Revolutions, comparing their similarities and differences
- Major philosophical principles of the three revolutions, including freedom, equality, and natural rights
- Monuments created to commemorate each revolution at various points in time



*Monument of George Washington, Boston Public Garden*

We will not only learn about each revolution and its monuments, we will also employ skills of historical analysis and critical assessment to ask challenging questions about the ways monuments represent and misrepresent history, who created them, why they were created, and how effective they are at interpreting the meaning of each revolution.

# Image Citations

## Page 1:

Tracks in the Atlantic Ocean, Atlantic Ocean Pilot. The Seaman's guide to the navigation of the Atlantic Ocean, with numerous illustrations, charts and plans, by IMRAY, James Frederick - and JENKINS Henry Davenport, pg. 1120, British Library, Public Domain, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:IMRAY\(1884\)\\_p1120\\_\(10\)\\_Tracks\\_in\\_the\\_Atlantic\\_Ocean.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:IMRAY(1884)_p1120_(10)_Tracks_in_the_Atlantic_Ocean.jpg)

## Page 2:

American War of Independence, 1775-1783, World History Encyclopedia, CC BY-NC-ND, Simeon Netchev, <https://www.worldhistory.org/image/17652/american-war-of-independence-1775---1783/>  
French Revolution and Wars, 1789-1799, World History Encyclopedia, CC BY-NC-ND, Simeon Netchev, <https://www.worldhistory.org/image/16578/french-revolution-and-wars-1789-99/>

## Page 3:

Haitian Revolution, 1793-1809, In Motion: The African-American Migration Experience: Maps by Michael Siegel, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Jean Blackwell Hutson Research and Reference Division, New York Public Library, <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/845fcdcd-3061-9b33-e040-e00a18065280>  
George Washington Monument, Boston Public Garden, 2005, CC BY-SA 2.0, James, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:General\\_Washington.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:General_Washington.jpg)