



Sample answer V

Explain the importance of revolutionary ideas in the development of the American Revolution between 1770 and 1776

The American Revolution was largely a result of the revolutionary ideas that arose during the period leading up to 1776. Such ideas were so vital in motivating Americans to pursue revolution that they formed the foundations for the Declaration of Independence. They were developed by philosophers and became the works of several leaders in the Revolution. Ideas included the Enlightenment movement, 'natural rights', 'justified revolution', 'representation' and 'nationalism'. James Otis, a radical revolutionary and co-founder of the Sons of Liberty, wrote 'Rights of British Colonists Asserted and Proved' (1763), which was a direct assault on Britain's restrictions and imprisonment of colonists' natural rights. This belief in the 'natural rights of men' was formed and circulated by people such as John Locke. In similar fashion, Thomas Jefferson wrote on 'natural rights' in his 'A Summary View of the Rights of British America' (1774). Enlightenment ideas of liberalism and political sovereignty had been prominent since the 1600s, and revolutionary leaders like Samuel Adams and Benjamin Franklin applied these to promote the notion of 'liberty'. Through riots, protests and even the Boston Tea Party (1773), Samuel Adams exercised the need for American independence, as he believed that British economic policy was a violation of the colonists' rights to 'freedom' and 'liberty'. At the same time, Benjamin Franklin advocated for the unification of the Thirteen Colonies at the Albany Congress during the French and Indian War. The Stamp Act 1765 and Declaratory Act 1766 brought about the ideas for 'actual representation' and the common catchphrase of 'No taxation without representation'. This thrust for representation was the main reason behind American protests against their Mother Country because it showed a lack of 'liberty'. This discontent was taken advantage of by Samuel Adams and Paul Revere through their propaganda published in the Boston Gazette, which often featured the liberty tree or the Lady Liberty. Thomas Paine wrote two of the most important documents of the Revolution, which reflected the ideas of Locke's 'natural rights'. The first, 'Common Sense', was a clearly expressed and argued explanation of 'justified revolution' where people have the right to change their government. His works were of a republican nature and rejection of monarchy as a form of government.