Social Change
- In addition to revolutionizing the politics of the 13 states, the War for Independence also had an effect on American society
- Some changes occurred immediately before the war ended, while others evolved gradually as the ideas of the Revolution began to filter into the thoughts & attitudes of the common people

Abolition of Aristocratic Titles
- State constitutions and laws abolished old institutions that had originated in medieval Europe
- No legislature could grant titles of nobility, nor could any court recognize the feudal practice of primogeniture
(Primogeniture was the first born son's right to inherit his parents' property)
- Whatever aristocracy existed in colonial America was weakened by the confiscation of large estates owned by Loyalists
- Many such estates were subdivided and sold to raise money for the war

Separation of Church and States
- Most states adopted the principle of separation of church & state so they refused to give financial support to religious groups
- The Anglican Church, which formerly had been closely tied to the king's government, was disestablished in the South
- Only in three New England states (New Hampshire, Connecticut, and Massachusetts) did the Congregational Church continue to receive state support in the form of a religious tax
- This practice was finally discontinued in New England early in the 19th century

Women
- During the war, both the Patriots & Loyalists depended on the active support of women
- Some women followed their men into the armed camps and worked as cooks and nurses
- In a few instances, women actually fought in battle, either taking their husband's place, as Mary McCauley (Molly Pitcher) Did at the Battle of Monmouth, or passing as a man and serving as a soldier, as Deborah Sampson did for a year
- The most important contribution of women during the war was in maintaining the colonial economy
- While fathers, husbands, and sons were away fighting, women ran the family farms and businesses
- They provided much of the food and clothing necessary for the war effort
- Despite their contributions, women remained in a second-class status
- Unanswered went pleas such of those of Abigail Adams to her husband, John Adams when she stated, "I desire you would remember the ladies and be more generous and favorable to them than your ancestors"

Slavery
- The institution of slavery contradicted the spirit of the Revolution and the idea that "all men are created equal"
- For a time, the leaders of the Revolution recognized this fact and took some steps toward corrective action
- The Continental Congress voted to abolish the importation of slaves, and most states went along with the prohibition
- Most northern states ended slavery, while in the South some owners voluntarily freed their slaves
- However, after the War, a majority of southern slave-owners came to believe that slave labor was essential to their economy
- Southerners soon developed a rationale for slavery that gave religious & political justification for continuing to hold human beings in lifelong bondage
Historical Perspectives: The Revolution-Radical or Conservative?

Should we view the American Revolution as a radical break with the past or a conservative attempt simply to safeguard traditional British liberties? One approach to this question is to compare the American Revolution with other revolutions in world history.

In his *Anatomy of a Revolution* (1965), the historian Crane Brinton found striking similarities between the American Revolution and two later revolutions—the French Revolution (1789-1794) and the Russian Revolution (1917-1922). He observed that each revolution passed through similar stages and became increasingly radical from one year to the next.

Other historians have been more impressed with the differences between the American experience and the revolutions in Europe. They argue that the French & Russian revolutionaries reacted to conditions of feudalism and aristocratic privilege that did not exist in the American colonies. In their view, Americans did not revolt against outmoded institutions but, in their quest for independence, merely carried to maturity a liberal, democratic movement that had been gaining for years.

In comparing the three revolutions, a few historians have concentrated on the actions of revolutionary mobs, such as the American Sons of Liberty. Again there are two divergent interpretations: (1) the mobs in all three countries engaged in the same radical activities, and (2) the American mobs had a much easier time of it than the French and Russian mobs, who encountered ruthless repression by military authorities.

Another interpretation of the American Revolution likens it to the colonial rebellions that erupted in African and Asia after WWII. According to this view, the colonial experience in America caused a gradual movement away from Britain that culminated in demands for independence. Other studies of the military aspects of the Revolution have pointed out similarities between American guerrilla forces in the 1770s and the guerrilla bands that fought in such countries as Cuba in the 1950s and Vietnam in the 1960s. Recall that the British controlled the cities while the American revolutionaries controlled the countryside which was a pattern that in the 20th century was often repeated in revolutionary struggles throughout the world. Typically, as in the case of the American Revolution, insurgent forces were weak in the cities, but strong in the surrounding territory.

By going beyond the American Revolution, to view it relative to other revolutions, we gain valuable insights that enable us to understand it better.