

Patriots vs. Loyalists

The Revolutionary War split the people of the American colonies into two groups: the loyalists and the patriots.

**What was a patriot?**   
Patriots were people who wanted the American colonies to gain their independence from Britain. They wanted their own country called the United States.   
  
**Why did people become patriots?**

People in the Americas felt they weren't being treated fairly by the British. They were being taxed without any say or representation in the British government. Soon cries for "liberty" were being heard throughout the colonies. The patriots wanted freedom from British rule.   
  
**Famous Patriots**   
There were many famous patriots. Some of them became presidents such as Thomas Jefferson who wrote the Declaration of Independence and John Adams. Perhaps the most famous patriot at the time was George Washington who led the Continental Army and later became the first President of the United States. Other famous patriots included Paul Revere, Samuel Adams, Ethan Allen, Patrick Henry, and Ben Franklin. These people are often called the Founding Fathers of the United States.

**What was a loyalist?**

Not everyone who lived in the American colonies wanted to break away from the British. There were many people who wanted to stay part of Britain and remain British citizens. These people were called loyalists.   
  
**Why did some people remain loyal?**   
Many people felt that their lives would be better off if the colonies remained under British rule. Some of these people were simply afraid to go up against the might of the British army. Others had business interests in England and knew that English trade was important to the economy. Still others thought that British rule would be better than patriot rule.   
  
**Famous Loyalists**

Since the loyalists lost the war, there aren't as many famous loyalists as there are patriots. Benedict Arnold was a general in the Continental Army who went to fight for the British. Another famous loyalist was Joseph Galloway who was the Pennsylvania delegate to the Continental Congress but later worked for the British army. Other famous loyalists include Thomas Hutchinson (governor of Massachusetts colony), Andrew Allen, John Butler (leader of the loyalists troops Butler's Rangers), and David Mathews (mayor of New York City).   
  
**What happened to loyalists during the war?**   
  
Life for the loyalists became increasingly difficult during the war. Loyalists who lived in areas controlled by the patriots were in constant danger from radical patriots. Many of them lost their homes and businesses.   
  
Many loyalists left the country and went back to Britain. Others decided to help the British fight the patriots. They either joined the British army or formed their own groups of fighters such as the Loyal Greens and the Royal American Regiment.

**What happened to the loyalists after the war?**   
Many loyalists moved to England after the war ended. A lot of them lost their fortunes and land that they had built up over years in the Americas. In some cases the British government paid them for their loyalty, but it was usually not nearly as much as they had lost. The United States government wanted the loyalists to stay. They felt the new country could use their skills and education. Few stayed, however.

**Interesting Facts About Patriots and Loyalists**

* Other names for patriots included Sons of Liberty, Rebels, Whigs, and Colonials.
* Other names for loyalists included Tories, Royalists, and the King's Friends.
* Many loyalists lived in New York City. It was known as the Tory capital of America.
* Not everyone picked a side. Many people tried to remain neutral so they could avoid conflict and the war.
* Patriot towns created juries of men called "committees of safety". Patriots would swear an oath to these men in order to get a pass to travel freely through patriot controlled land.
* Members of the Sons of Liberty wore a medal with a picture of a tree on it.

<https://www.ducksters.com/history/american_revolution/patriots_and_loyalists.php>