



Discussion Questions for Use in Connection with Ken Burns' *The American Revolution*
A Meeting the Moment Discussion Guide

The new Ken Burns series on the American Revolution, which airs on PBS the week of November 16, 2025, provides an excellent opportunity for conversation about the reasons the colonists separated from England and why they established the government they did.

As many of democracy discussions we wish to be having in our communities concern the rule of law and how some things happening today are a departure from what our Founders intended, the American Revolution series provides a very natural way to have conversations about the intents of the Founders and why they made the choices they did – and draw a contrast with what is happening today. It is also a non-political way to have these conversations that could make independents and conservatives more comfortable having these conversations.

We have prepared some discussion questions for our volunteers that they can choose to use (or not) to have these conversations. We recommend also creating panels that have a mix of participants who could include historians, lawyers, judges, those who have worked in government, and others.

Questions You Might Want to Use to Start Conversations

*How did “no taxation without representation” evolve into a call for independence from England?
What have been the long-term impacts of this on our national identity?*

*How did ordinary people—farmers, tradespeople, women, and youth—get involved in resistance before the war?
What kinds of community actions (such as boycotts or town meetings) helped shape the push for independence?*

How does the way we often see ourselves reflect themes and issues that emanate from the American Revolution?

Why did they think the constitutional form of government they created would protect the United States from the issues that prompted them to declare independence from Britain?

We talk a lot about legal topics such as “Rule of Law” and “Due Process”, how did the lack of these drive the colonists desire for independence? Did they see them as applying to all people?

How did they evolve to apply to more people over time?

How have Americans used the experience and history of the American Revolution to argue for greater freedoms throughout our history?

How do the ideas of “liberty,” “freedom,” and “democracy” resonate in our society today?

How did embracing religious diversity in North American contribute to the success of the American Revolution?

How does a lack of state-established religion impact American life today?

What lessons from the Revolution can help us all understand civic responsibility today? What did the Founders assume about how people would behave?

What lessons from the American Revolution are most relevant today?