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The Revolution

by [Joe Escobar](#) - Saturday, November 17, 2018, 11:07 AM

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The Revolution Was Much More Than Conservative Politics

by [Ian Epperson](#) - Monday, November 19, 2018, 11:31 PM

In the debate article involving both authors Carl Degler and Gordon S. Wood, they are in debate on whether to align on the side of a political conservative point of view, or a social progressive stance to determine how our country was formed. As much as points from Degler seemed to make political distinctions, I had to align myself with Woods "neo-progressive" social stance. On a fundamental level I believe he was right in describing how early tensions in colonial life in the needs for independence from patronage society, like

when he quoted Adams for saying, "There are but two sorts of men in the world, freemen and slaves" pg. 11. There were also further examples like the doing away with primogeniture, and the equal (admittedly excluding African slaves) pursuit of happiness allowing common blood access to education and upward movement, and the passing of legislature to allow the masses a right to vote (not solely based on predetermined status) that would show an important societal restructuring happening around the 18th century. Sure we did not have as bloody of an internal conflict like the revolution in France, but I believe that it was no less of a revolution, and should not be analyzed within a narrow political perspective.

Sum of ratings: 2 (1)

2

[Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)**Radical or conservative?**by [Tehya Curley](#) - Tuesday, November 20, 2018, 1:45 PM

The American revolution was the major war that formed us today, well at least one of the most known. The war was basically the tantrum after the buildup of tensions between the American colonists and Great Britain. However, the main question is was the American revolution conservative? To me there are aspects of the revolution that can be considered conservative, but there are more aspects of the revolution that were not conservative. Mainly because the revolution changed so much of our past to certain things currently. For example, treaties with the French were changed forever "treaties signed in 1778 allied the United States with France" (Liberty, Equality, Power pg 245) However, when France went to war during the Revolution the treaties were changed "as Britain and France went to war in 1793, George Washington declared American neutrality, thereby abrogating the 1778 treaties with the French" (Liberty, Equality, Power pg 246). Changes like this are far from conservative due to making us who we are today when it comes to treaties. Furthermore, the information not only in our textbook helps back up my opinion, but the information from the paper by Gordon S. Wood does also.

Gordon S. Wood believes that the revolution was not conservative at all instead it was radical "it was as radical and as revolutionary as any in history" (Gordon S. Wood Pg 9). His beliefs on the Revolution was something I could get on board with. I see the revolution as different from any other revolutions that had occurred by that time or after "of course, the American Revolution was very different from other revolutions. But it was no less radical and no less social for being different" (Gordon S. Wood Pg 9). The revolution as he stated was different, but basically formed on the same aspects of other revolutions being radical or social. Although that being stated I do view the revolution as one of the revolutions that made

America "In fact, it was one of the greatest revolutions the world has known, a momentous upheaval that not only fundamentally altered the character of American society but decisively affected the course of subsequent history" (Gordon S. Wood Pg 9). The course of history was forever changed due to the revolution whether it can be considered conservative or not.

Was the revolution as conservative as Carl N. Degler thought or as radical as Gordon S. Wood thought? What do you think?

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

2



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NO- Gordon S. Wood

by [Hannah Cartwright](#) - Tuesday, November 20, 2018, 5:44 PM

As I read both of the arguments by Carl N. Degler and Gordon S. Wood, I could not deny that both sides help very valid arguments. However, I felt more convinced and influenced by Gordon S. Woods argument, which was the the American was not as much a conservative movement as it was a "radical event" that had shaped America into a democratic society. While Degler did bring up a lot of political facts and changes from the American Revolution, Wood brought up a good point that the American society too was changed by the Revolution, not just the politics, and it is hard for people to notice that because the society was changed in a "very eighteenth-century sense". With this, he is stating that obviously the concerns and language were political, but that is only because most people in that century had yet to see a society away from government. Gordon also compared America's society in 1760 to its society only 15 years later. In 1760, as described by Brooks, America was just a "collection of disparate colonies huddled along a narrow strip of the Atlantic coast- economically underdeveloped outposts existing on the very edges of the civilized world". Then, 15 years later, America has nearly 10 million busy citizens, who quickly changed American society and its social relationships by turning America into the most liberal, democratic, commercially minded, modern people in the world. With all of the valid points brought up by Gordon S. Wood, it is hard for me to feel that the American Revolution was not a Revolution that changed America into a democratic society.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

2



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Re: NO- Gordon S. Wood

by [Ian Epperson](#) - Tuesday, November 20, 2018, 9:31 PM

You make a good point about the importance politics in the discussion about the revolution not eclipsing the social impact behind these decisions to change the course of history. This could be exemplified by Woods statement, "there was a great deal of jealousy and touchiness everywhere, for what could be made could be undone". It is true that congress was made to regulate and channel the frustrations of the people

around taxes; however the growing sentiment towards freedom, classism, and the desire to do away with foreign forceful influence could definitively be defined as a social issue, and to discount it would make our revolution dry and without a lasting impact.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

1

[Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)**The Revolution was Radical**by [Evan Brewer](#) - Wednesday, November 21, 2018, 12:40 PM

After reading the "conservative or not" pdf, I have to side with Gordon S. Wood. He believes that the Revolution was a radical movement and I couldn't agree more. I believe that the American Revolution was radical because America got rid of the old virtues of England like hierarchy and the poor acting as servants. I believe that when America won the war, the splitting with Britain caused Americans to believe in self-worth and began to work and earn wealth for themselves. In a time where slavery was being abolished and all men were free, economic opportunity was more readily available. In the issue summary in "Was the American Revolution a Conservative movement", Gordon Wood believed that "ordinary people could make money, pursue happiness, and be self-governing"(120). I believe this statement as true because these new Americans changed how societies saw economic mobility and these values are still implemented in society today. I also found another fact that supports a radical view of the American Revolution in "The Radicalism of the American Revolution", written by Gordon S. Wood. Wood states, "Luxury and conspicuous consumption by very ordinary people were increasing"(11). With the influx of more luxuries being consumed by public, this comes to show that ordinary people were making money and becoming more successful. These luxuries also added to happiness and the addition of social events caused society to be rich in personal experiences. In the end, the American Revolution was a radical event which caused economic mobility for many and this new society was first of its kind.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

3

[Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)**Re: The Revolution was Radical**by [Hannah Cartwright](#) - Saturday, November 24, 2018, 2:57 PM

I completely agree with you! Gordon S. Wood made very valid points. The increase in economic opportunity for all men, in comparison to the time of slavery, is amazing. Relating to you bringing up Wood's belief that "ordinary people could make money, pursue happiness, and be self-governing" it reminds me of Document #4: Gordon S. Wood, The American Revolution (2002) where he states that "men of more humble and more rural origins and less educated than those who had sat in the colonial assemblies now became representatives." That in itself is such a big social change, and of course, a change for the better.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

1

[Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)**Re: The Revolution was Radical**



by [Michelle White](#) - Saturday, November 24, 2018, 4:28 PM

I agree with you, you mad a good point. The Americans splitting with Britain caused them to believe in self-worth and began to work and earn wealth for themselves. "Independence transformed America, there was a great deal of jealousy and touchiness everywhere, for what could be made could be unmade;the people were actually nervous about their property and the liberty that seemed to make it possible."("Was the American Revolution a Conservative Movement",Wood,pg.11) The Americans struggled with their freedom.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

1



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My opinion on the Revolution

by [Sarah Mackenzie](#) - Wednesday, November 21, 2018, 6:28 PM

After careful review of both articles and doing some research of my own I must say that I agree most with the views of Gordon Wood. While we like to think of it as being a conservative movement, the American revolution was a radical change to the world. While both historians have very interesting points, both seem to agree with the fact that this revolution was unlike any other the world had seen before. Both men agree that the American Revolution lacked certain components that led to the vast changes of the French Revolution. There were no social wrongs, class conflict, or impoverishment, that one would normally associate with the onset of a revolution. In fact, Wood states on page 8 that, "there should no longer be any doubt about it: the white American colonists were not an oppressed people; they had no crushing imperial chains to throw off. in fact, the colonists knew they were freer, more equal, more prosperous, and less burdened with cumbersome feudal and monarchical restraints than any other part of mankind in the eighteenth century".

I agree that it was as much of a radical and social revolution as any other in history. The fact that in a pre-Marxian 18th century the American's still couldn't quite conceive of a society that could exist free of government. They were used to everything flowing down from the government. Contacts, jobs, economic opportunities, they all came from the government. Now all men are equal, they were given land and meaning. They were also free to worship who they wanted. The fact is radical changes were made and the history of the world was forever affected by how we chose to unite. Fixing corruption, purifying the constitution, and throwing off the power of Britain, decidedly changed the American government. Social relationships were completely broken or reformed and the aristocracy that had stood for 2 millennia was shattered. While the founding fathers may not seem like the blood thirsty revolutionaries usually attributed to a chaotic revolt, it's clear they were even more successful than they could ever have imagined with achieving their independence.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

2



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Re: My opinion on the Revolution

by [Emily Barber](#) - Sunday, November 25, 2018, 4:49 PM

Sarah, I completely agree with you on your post about Gordon Wood. Especially your second paragraph. The revolution defiantly had a massive impact and radical changes. I didn't mention in my post about all men being equal and being able to worship who they please and I wish I would have. Having all men be equal and being able to worship whoever is something that still effects us to this day. Without the revolution I don't believe these opportunities would be available or at least would come much later in history. I also agree with your last sentence in the last paragraph with our founding fathers. They weren't terrible people looking for revenge. They were strategic and very successful winning the independence, I believe they did it in the best way they could.

Sum of ratings: 1 (1)

1

[Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)**A Conservative Revolution, then, and now.**by [Ruth Hyde](#) - Wednesday, November 21, 2018, 8:02 PM

I tend to side with Carl Degler, in that the American Revolution was indeed a conservative revolution. Although Gordon Wood makes some solid arguments, framing the revolution in modern perspective, I think his stance is more radical than his description of the revolution itself. Wood makes an argument that revolutions are driven by oppressed peoples, and states that white colonists were not so. I can't grasp the basis of his reasoning, and wouldn't confidently say these white American settlers didn't feel oppressed in their own way. Perhaps by modern standards they had their needs met, and didn't see dramatic changes in their life outcomes, however the separation from England, and establishment of a new country and government took dramatic determination, suffering, and resilience - linking the essence of revolution to the outcomes of this period of history.

A revolution is a significant, and marked shift in culture and norms, brought upon by concerted efforts, organization, conflict, oppression, new ideas, and/or clashes in culture. For a change to be revolutionary it has to permanently and fundamentally shift the way a community or group operates. Many features of the break from Brittan, and the founding of a new county, guide me to believe this period was conservatively revolutionary.

The drafting, and ratification of The Constitution is a major factor in the revolution of the new county. Although, not democratically contrived, the endorsed document contains fundamentally new, and sophisticated governing ideals. Statements of "We the people", "in order to form a more perfect union", exemplify the idealistic, yet virtuous nature of the Founding Fathers, who, through their efforts, designed what remains the longest established, and functional constitution in the world. (video - week 6) Additionally, "America was the first nation to hold democratic values, allowing ordinary people to make money, pursue happiness, and rule themselves" (Forum 3 Introduction, Issue 6, Was the American Revolution a Conservative Movement?) As a new

The ideas of public virtue developed in America government. Unlike the English, the new Americans could establish a government in the style of their choosing. "Brittan had put the nobility in one house, and commoners in another, but in America, everyone was a commoner. America had no social order. A free government did not embody distinctly social orders to be stable. It could uphold republican values through virtue and by being

properly balanced within itself.” (Murrin, pg. 225) The design of the government, and the development of legislative, judicial and executive branches, illustrates the proper balance the designers were seeking. More balance is achieved through the Articles of Confederation which include language that secured state rights in the instance that federal law doesn't have jurisdiction. (Murrin, pg. 229) This is a pivotal difference between the US and England, both then, and now.

When considering the societal and economical change, “the biggest winners were free householders, who gained enormous benefit from the democratization of politics and the chance to colonize the West. Besides loyalists, the biggest losers were Indians, determined to resist settler expansion”. (Murrin, pg. 219) Although the revolutionary history of America didn't emancipate all occupants of the country, and was substantially supported by chance, and unplanned events, I believe it was truly a conservative revolution. The world is a different place because of the actions of the Founding Fathers, patriots, first American Presidents, and the other historical participants.

Sum of ratings: 2 (1)

2



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Re: A Conservative Revolution, then, and now.

by [Tehya Curley](#) - Thursday, November 22, 2018, 7:42 PM

I can see your perspective on this topic, although, I would have to disagree. White colonists were not oppressed people, but that does not withdraw them from starting or participating in a revolution. Yes, a person or group that is or was oppressed have more reasoning to make a change “The white American colonists were not an oppressed people; they had no crushing imperial chains to throw off. In fact, the colonists knew they were freer, more equal, more prosperous, and less burdened with cumbersome feudal and monarchical restraints than any other part of mankind in the eighteenth century. Such a situation, however, does not mean that colonial society was not susceptible to revolution” (Gordon S. Wood Pg 8). However, that did not stop them from doing so. The American revolution to sum up all started when the colonists wanted to separate themselves from the British colonies. The way they went about this was anything but conservative instead I believe it was more out there than anything.

The events in the American revolution was most likely the talk of the town. While they may have not realized how big of an effect the events back then have on us today. We realize today how big of a role those events in that short period of time affects us currently. This can be seen in how America's society was transformed to create what are country it today “By the time the revolution had its course in the early nineteenth century, American society had been radically and thoroughly transformed. One class did not overthrow another; the poor did not supplant the rich. But social relationships- the way people were connected to one another- were changed, and decisively so. By the early years of the nineteenth century the Revolution had created a society fundamentally different from the colonial society of the eighteenth century. It was in fact a new society unlike any that had ever existed anywhere in the world” (Gordon S. Wood Pg 10). Just from the events in the American Revolution it changed America as a society tremendously in a very drastic way.

The American revolution was of course conservative in some ways but in more ways than not it just wasn't. Too me if something was able to transform a country in one way or another in a short period of time it's not conservative at all. Based on the fact that a change in a short period of time has to be drastic.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

2



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The Revolution NO

by [Michelle White](#) - Wednesday, November 21, 2018, 8:39 PM

I agree with the historian Gordon S Wood, that the American Revolution was a far-reaching, radical event that produced a unique democratic society in which ordinary people could make money, pursue happiness, and be self governing.

Revolution is a radical change that occurs when fighting for something you strongly believe in. The colonists wanted independence from Great Britain and chose to fight for it at all costs. They won their independence and the change was revolutionary because it was a turning point do to an important cause.

"Independence transformed America. American society changed as a result. Slaves won freedom, and women struggled for greater dignity. Both succeeded only when their goals proved compatible with the ambitions of white householders." ("Liberty, Equality, Power" pg.219) Wood stated "There was a great deal of jealousy and touchiness everywhere, for what could be made could be unmade; the people were acutely nervous about their property and the liberty that seemed to make it possible." ("Was the American Revolution a Conservative Movement " Wood, pg.11)

"In 1776, the prospect of Independence touched off intense debate among Americans about how best to reconstitute authority. They agreed that every state needed a written constitution to limit the powers of government in terms more explicit than the precedents, statutes, and customs that made up Britains unwritten constitution.("Liberty, Equality, Power" pg. 225)

After the Revolutionary War, American economy entered a deep depression marked by a large trade deficit and rampant debt("Liberty, Equality, Power" pg. 229)

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

2



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Re: The Revolution NO

by [Emily Barber](#) - Sunday, November 25, 2018, 5:31 PM

Michelle, I agree with your post. There was an incredible amount of debit created after the revolution that ruined the economy for sometime and many people lost their lives but the colonists knew what they wanted and were will to do anything to get there freedom. The colonists knew that their independence would change a lot of things, men were all created equal, land was available, people were able to worship and women started fighting for what they wanted. All of these factors helped create what we have today which is why I believe the revolution was so important.

Sum of ratings:0 (1)

0

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You made a good point. Good did come with the Revolution, however things did change and it was radical change, some good and some not so good. Yes, the colonists did know that their independence would change a lot of things, that is why they risked their lives to fight for what they believed in. That is what makes these changes revolutionary. Yes, all of the factors you mentioned did help create what we have today.

Sum of ratings:0 (1)

0

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I just wanted to let you know that I agree with your post as well. It was also interesting how for the first time ever people were free to pursue which ever religion they wanted to practice. That played a huge role in the radical revolution. Even though we copied Great Britain's government in a lot of ways I agree with your point that it was a radical revolution that changed the entire world. For the first time American's as you stated were able to "make money, pursue happiness, and be self governing." No one else in the world has many freedoms as the merging American's.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

1

[Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)**New Society**by [Emily Barber](#) - Wednesday, November 21, 2018, 11:28 PM

After reading both argumentative articles and reading chapter 8, I've come to the decision of who's essay I agree with the most. I agree with Gordon S. Wood article. When I was reading our text book, "Liberty, Equality, Power" in chapter 8, to me it seemed like it talked a lot about all the positive upbringings that came after the revolution. People seemed at peace, there were water ways for shipping good all over the U.S, there was the railroads also for shipping goods. People were able to work to provide for their families and afford the nicer home items that used to not be available to them, such as, fine china, oil lamps, more separation in homes because homes were getting more spacious, they were buying butter and other staple goods because it was sometimes easier that way. I enjoyed how Gordon wrote his essay. I like how he breaks down what we perceive of the revolutionaries, they aren't as intimidating and unnerving as we think, and I think he does a good job

at describing that to us in the first paragraph in his essay. Overall, I agree with Gordon and the textbook because I can see the good that came after the Revolution.

Sum of ratings:1 (1) 1

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I support the No side of the issue because i do believe that American revolution was not a conservative movement.

by [Nargis Safi](#) - Wednesday, November 21, 2018, 11:53 PM

Historian Gordon. S Wood claims that American revolution was a radical event because America was the first nation to hold democratic values , allowing ordinary people to make money , pursue their happiness , and rule themselves (page 121). I say American revolution was Liberal, because it brought a lot of changes rather than conservative, in which everything remains traditional. A good example of the change would be when the 13 British colonies who wanted independence from British rule they broke the traditional customs and fought for it.

Sum of ratings:1 (1) 1

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A Democratic Society Formed on New Radical Ideas

by [Geoffrey Cannon](#) - Thursday, November 22, 2018, 12:25 AM

Both Degler and Wood make compelling arguments pertaining to what they believe happened with the American Revolution. Degler has a focus on the fact that it was not a "normal" revolution and that little had changed after the fires of war had settled. Wood embraces it as a unique revolution and that it "was the most radical and most far-reaching event in American History." (page 11, Debate, Wood) I personally agree with wood on the idea that it was an event that characterized the United States and that it is a revolution. It may have not shifted the social order as "poor vs. rich" like in other revolutions (page 12. Debate, Wood); it did cause a political change in North America, from Monarchist Colony to Republic.

Wood goes on to state the varying differences between a typical revolution in Europe and the one that occurred in the American Colonies. Wood makes it clear that "there was little evidence of those social conditions we often associate with revolution"(Page 11, Debate, Wood) and this really stuck with me. France faced many more hardships than the American Colonies to cause their revolution, yet the American Revolution started with average citizens and great prosperity. The British of course had policies and governmental leadership that the colonists may not have agreed with (Chapter 5, Pages 159-187, Murrin); however it was not as oppressive as other regimes that faced violent revolutions.

On page 4 of the debate, Degler makes a point of stating "The men who engineered the revolt were largely members of the colonial ruling class."(Page 4 Degler) Though I do agree that the higher-class had their role, I feel that the mindsets and willingness of the colonists

played a more important role in the matter. A war with support from Politicians and Merchants can't be fought without three primary things, a population for manpower, production of supplies and a high morale among those who are enlisted.

Though I agree with points from both sides, I tend to lean slightly more to Wood's side of the debate. The American Revolution was critical in creating a Democratic Republic and with the basis of the Constitution, created a new society in North America.

Sum of ratings: 2 (1)

2



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Wood

by [Sarah Mackenzie](#) - Sunday, November 25, 2018, 7:41 PM

I also thought that both authors made very good points but I agreed with Wood as well. where the American revolution did not have the contributing factors a typical revolution has such as poverty, gross misappropriation of land or miss treatment what came as a result of the revolution was unlike anything seen before. While the government may have looked similar, freedom of religion, and the equality of all men was something unheard of as well as the patriotism that was raised by giving every man fifty acres of his own.

Sum of ratings: 1 (1)

1



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The Revolution was Radical... Mostly

by [Daniel Urias](#) - Friday, November 23, 2018, 7:28 PM

This was a strange question to me, mostly because I find myself torn between the two schools of thought. It seems neither historian is arguing that "changes accompanied the [American] Revolution" (Degler p.6), they are however arguing how much change occurred and if it merits being called a conservative revolution or not. Carl N. Degler claims that the revolution was conservative, in that not too much changed in society or the daily lives of the colonists. Wood claims that the revolution was radical and inspired drastic changes that shaped the country as it is today.

As stated, change did happen, no arguments there, but was it enough to say that the revolution changed society or was it conservative? I am currently leaning to the opinion of no, the American Revolution was closer to radical than conservative. However, Degler makes excellent points about land distribution and the occupation of political offices after the revolution by the same officials who occupied political offices before the revolution. He states, "Of those who held an office under the state governments after the Revolution, 75 percent had occupied office before 1774" (p.5). Those numbers rise if one excludes those who held office after the Revolution that were too young to hold it before. We also should take to account that land taken from loyalists and the Crown. This land was not distributed among the citizens of this new nation, it was sold, mostly to men who already owned property. It seems that in a radical revolution there would be social efforts made to more evenly spread out the distribution of land.

On the other hand, it seems that the revolution changed so much that both authors, despite having a difference in opinion, mention changes that took place in their arguments. Degler describes the separation of church and state as “the ultimate triumph of the American doctrine” (p.1) including the removal of a previously mandatory religious test required for public office holders. He also states that “merchants and entrepreneurs [had] wide opportunities for gaining new markets and new sources of profit.” And this is the guy arguing that the Revolution was conservative. Gordon S. Wood advocates that the Revolution was radical instead of conservative claiming it was, “a momentous upheaval that... fundamentally altered the character of American society” (p.9) including “[making] possible the anti-slavery and women’s rights movements” (p.11). One of the biggest changes was a change in attitude towards the aristocracy, the idea being challenged by many including Thomas Paine who claimed, “Virtue is not hereditary.” (p.14) Many engages in the argument until Adams chimed in claiming, “There are but two sorts of men... freemen and slaves.” (p.14) creating, “radical and momentous implications for Americans.” (Wood p.14) Among these implications is the idea of ending slavery entirely. A true freedom that many of us enjoy today.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

3

[Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)**Re: The Revolution was Radical... Mostly**by [Sarah Mackenzie](#) - Sunday, November 25, 2018, 8:09 PM

I agree that it seems that the authors are reflecting more on how much the country changed as opposed to if or what the changes were. To me, just the founder fathers instituting equality for all men led directly to the fact that slavery could not be continued in goodwill with the countries new standings and beliefs and brought radical change to the colonists.

Sum of ratings:0 (1)

0

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