

2. Where It All Began: 1776

- a) So now we know what makes modern American life different today from any other time. But *where does America come from in the first place?*
- b) The United States of America was born by the adoption of the “Declaration of Independence” by its first leaders (known hence as the “Founding Fathers”) on the fourth of July, 1776.
- c) In the Declaration, its author Thomas Jefferson explained that the purpose of a proper government, is to secure the “unalienable” rights of every person to “*life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.*”
- d) Until that point, America was part of the British Empire, but the Founding Fathers believed it was impossible to secure rights under the British monarchy.
- e) The Declaration of Independence is, of course, not the whole story. The birth of the United States was a process, which has a name: *the American Revolution.* For the cardinal anchor fact of 1776 will stand for this larger chapter.



American artist John Trumbull captures the moment of Thomas Jefferson’s presentation of the *Declaration of Independence* to his fellow Founding Fathers on the 4th of July, 1776.

3. The Way America Originally Was: The Monroe Doctrine 1823

- a) TWWLi has an America in it because it was created in 1776 when the country declared its independence and detached itself from the rest of world, but the world is also the way it is because that America has become the leading nation in the world, fighting the “War on Terror.” What happened to change America from what it was originally into what it is?
- b) The key lies in the acceptance of a set of ideas in early American life, and its replacement by another set of ideas by modern Americans.

- c) The original set of principles is known as the “Monroe Doctrine,” and it was enunciated by James Monroe (one of the youngest the Founding Fathers) as president in 1823.
- d) Monroe identified that America’s “political system” (based on individual rights) was essentially different from that of Europe, and that consequently America should maintain its political separation from the rest of the world.
- e) This included a warning to European empires to stay out of the Americas, and—which is especially significant today—a commitment by America to stay out of the wars of others.
- f) All the Founding Fathers followed this policy leading up to 1823. The acceptance of the Monroe Doctrine by early Americans and its abandonment by modern Americans is a fundamental reason why the world has taken the shape it has today.



Early America’s relationship to the world was governed by a set of ideas known as the “Monroe Doctrine.”