CAUSES OF THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR

Events of the 1760s and 1770s

In 1763, the French and Indian War came to an end. Great Britain (England), with the help of the American colonists and the Iroquois Indians, defeated France and took control of French territory stretching to the Mississippi River.

During the war, the British sent soldiers to America to defend the Thirteen Colonies. They spent large sums of money on weapons, ammunition, and other supplies. When the French and Indian War ended, the British government was deep in debt. Its citizens were beginning to complain about high taxes.

To make matters worse, colonists who had moved into the Ohio Valley came under attack by western tribes led by the great warrior Chief Pontiac. The Indians wanted to drive the white men out of the land which they had considered their own. British soldiers were sent to the frontier and defeated the Indians in Pontiac’s War. Afterwards, the British government decided that an army would have to be kept in America to protect the colonists against further trouble. But maintaining an army would be costly, and the British thought the colonies should help pay the expense.

The Prime Minister of Great Britain at this time was George Grenville. He drew up a four-part plan aimed at solving his country’s problems with its American colonies:

1. The Proclamation of 1763 said that no colonists could settle in the Ohio region. Grenville hoped this would ease tensions between the pioneers and Indians. He proposed sending 10,000 soldiers to guard the frontier.

2. The Navigation Acts would be strictly enforced to end smuggling and raise profits for English traders and manufacturers. More taxes would also be collected.

3. The Sugar Act was passed by Parliament to raise tax monies for the military defense of the colonies. The act placed taxes on sugar and molasses being imported by colonial merchants from the West Indies. Additional taxes were placed on imported wine, coffee, silk, and linens. Iron, hides, and potash were added to a growing list of products which could be exported only to Great Britain.

4. Prime Minister Grenville also urged Parliament to pass the Stamp Act in 1765. It required the colonists to buy stamps from the British government and place them on such articles as business and legal papers, licenses, newspapers, pamphlets, calendars, almanacs, dice, and playing cards.

The colonists were unhappy about each part of Grenville’s program. Families that wanted to settle in the Ohio region went there in spite of the Proclamation of 1763. Colonial merchants and shippers were angered by the strict enforcement of the Navigation Acts because smuggling had brought them huge profits. The passage of the Sugar Act and Stamp Act prompted cries of “no taxation without representation.” There were no colonial representatives in the British Parliament, which had enacted these tax laws. If the colonists had to be taxed, they wanted it to be done by their own legislatures. This was the message sent to Great Britain by delegates who attended the Stamp Act Congress in New York City.

To protect their rights, many men joined the Sons of Liberty. Angry mobs rampaged through New York, Boston, and other cities, destroying property, burning stamps, and threatening the tax agents. A boycott was organized, whereby the colonists refused to buy British goods. English merchants and manufacturers soon lost so much money that Parliament repealed the Stamp Act. Celebrations broke out everywhere in the colonies.

But the British still felt they needed to raise money to govern and protect the Thirteen Colonies. So the Townshend Acts were passed in 1767 to provide money to pay the salaries of such royal officials as
governors and judges. The Townshend Acts levied duties on lead, painters' colors, glass, paper, and tea. British customs officials were given the right to use writs of assistance to search warehouses and private homes and seize smuggled goods. The number of courts was increased to handle the cases of those colonists accused of smuggling. Defendants appeared before British-appointed judges, and were denied the right to a trial by jury.

Once again, angry protests were heard in the colonies. Another boycott was organized, and Britain's colonial trade dropped by almost 40%. Occasional incidents of mob violence occurred, including the Boston Massacre in 1770. On the night of the "massacre," a group of boys began throwing snowballs at a British soldier standing guard outside the Boston Customs House. When more people gathered around, a squad of soldiers arrived on the scene. The unruly crowd called the soldiers "lobsterbacks," yelled other insults, and began throwing stones. The redcoats opened fire, killing five in the crowd and wounding others.

News of the Boston Massacre spread quickly through the Thirteen Colonies, provoking a new wave of anti-British feelings. Tensions eased somewhat a month later with the announcement that the Townshend Acts had been repealed. Parliament took this action not because of the Boston Massacre, but because of the effectiveness of the colonial boycott. While Parliament ended the taxes on lead, paint, glass, and paper, the tax on tea was continued. The British kept the tea tax as a symbol of their right to tax the colonists.

Relations between Great Britain and the Thirteen Colonies were generally good from 1770 to 1773. Then, Parliament passed the Tea Act. This law permitted ships of the British East India Company to carry tea directly to the colonies, without first stopping in Great Britain to pay the usual heavy taxes. This meant the British East India Company could now sell tea in the colonies at very low prices. The colonists resented this. First, the cheap tea cost less than tea sold by colonial merchants who were smuggling it into the colonies, thereby threatening their business. Second, the cheap British tea still included the hated tea tax imposed by the Townshend Acts. For these reasons, 60 members of the Sons of Liberty, dressed as Mohawk Indians, boarded three ships in Boston Harbor and dumped 342 chests of tea overboard. An enthusiastic crowd watching from shore was delighted by what came to be known as the Boston Tea Party.

When word of the Tea Party reached Great Britain, King George III and Parliament realized that a critical point had been reached in British-colonial relations. Great Britain either had to punish the colonies, especially Massachusetts, for the Boston Tea Party, or risk losing control of the colonies. King George and Parliament decided to punish and humiliate the colonists. The harsh Intolerable Acts were passed. These laws stated that:

1. Boston Harbor would remain closed until the colonists agreed to pay for the ruined tea.
2. Citizens of Massachusetts could not hold town meetings without written approval of the governor. The newly appointed governor was General Thomas Gage, commander of British troops in Boston.
3. British soldiers in all the colonies could be housed in private homes, inns, public buildings, and warehouses without permission of their owners.
4. British officials accused of committing crimes in America could have their trials moved to England, where they had a better chance of being cleared of the charges.

Instead of accepting these punishments, the colonists united as never before in defense of their liberties. Committees of Correspondence, first organized in Boston by Samuel Adams, sprung up throughout the Thirteen Colonies. The Committees of Correspondence were local groups which directed opposition to Great Britain. They kept in touch by writing letters to each other which told what was happening in their colony and what should be done to guard their rights. At the request of the Committees of Correspondence, delegates from twelve of the colonies met in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, at the First Continental Congress. The delegates wanted to discuss British-imposed taxes, the Intolerable Acts, and the restoring of colonial rights.
**British-Colonial Relations**

You have read about the deteriorating relationship between Great Britain and the Thirteen Colonies in the years following the French and Indian War. Each action by the British prompted a determined reaction from the colonists. Events during the 1760s and early 1770s brought the two sides closer to the eventual outbreak of the Revolutionary War in 1775.

*For each British action in column one below, fill in the space in column two with the correct colonial reaction. Choose from the colonial reactions in the following list:*

- Sons of Liberty staged the Boston Tea Party.
- Committees of Correspondence were organized; First Continental Congress met to discuss a plan of action.
- Colonial merchants smuggled goods into the Thirteen Colonies.
- Relations improved between the British and colonists from 1770 to 1773.
- Violent demonstrations in the colonies; first cries of “no taxation without representation;” Stamp Act Congress sent protest message to Great Britain; boycott of British goods.
- Pioneers continued settling west of the Allegheny Mountains.
- Boycott of British goods; more incidents of mob violence, including one that ended in the Boston Massacre.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>British Action</th>
<th>Colonial Reaction</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. Proclamation of 1763 banned settlement in the Ohio region.</td>
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<td>2. The Navigation Acts were strictly enforced.</td>
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<td>4. The Stamp Act was repealed, but the Townshend Acts were passed within a year.</td>
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<td>5. Parliament repealed the Townshend Acts’ taxes on lead, paint, glass, and paper, but kept the tax on tea.</td>
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6. Tea Act allowed the British East India Company to sell inexpensive tea to the colonies. The low price of tea included a tax.

7. King George III and Parliament decided to punish the colonists with the Intolerable Acts.

**Negotiating a Settlement of British-Colonial Differences**

When the First Continental Congress met in Philadelphia in 1774, the delegates discussed British tax policies, the Intolerable Acts, and the restoring of colonial rights. Members of the Congress wanted to find a way to improve relations between Great Britain and the Thirteen Colonies. There was almost no talk at this time about independence. The First Continental Congress drew up several petitions to the king, then adjourned the meeting to await a British response.

King George and Parliament decided to hold firm on their positions. Either the colonists would have to accept British policies or be prepared for armed combat. Within a short time, the battles of Lexington and Concord were fought, and the Revolutionary War was underway. The American Revolution would eventually lead to the creation of the United States of America.

Pretend the time is November, 1774, and that the Revolutionary War has not yet begun. King George has suggested the British and colonists meet to discuss their differences. In this way, the Revolutionary War, with its inevitable loss of life and destruction of property, might be avoided.

The class will be divided into small groups of preferably four students. Two group members will represent the British, and two will represent the colonists. The two sides will discuss their opposing viewpoints — summarized on the following pages — and will attempt to negotiate a solution to their differences. Both sides will have to give in on some of their demands. Neither can expect to get everything it wants. Such an agreement, in which each side gives in on some of its demands, is called a compromise.

Negotiations begin after group members put their desks together in an assigned area of the room. The British representatives will sit facing the colonial representatives. Start with number 1 on the next page. Read the British viewpoint and the colonists’ viewpoint. Then, discuss a possible solution to these different views. For example, group members might reach the following compromise:

"The colonists will buy certain manufactured goods only from Great Britain. But the colonists have the right to buy certain other manufactured goods from other countries or other colonists."

Note that the above compromise gives something to both sides. The British benefit because the colonists must buy specific manufactured goods only from them. The colonists benefit because they no longer have to buy most of their manufactured goods from Great Britain.

After group members have reached a compromise for number 1, they will write their agreement in the spaces provided. Continue in the same way with 2-6.