

Colonization and the Revolutionary War

Introduction to the Revolutionary War

As the colonies took root, they grew used to mostly governing themselves. Great Britain decided it wanted more control. It began to force new taxes on the colonists. They wanted to raise money from the goods they were shipping to the colonies. In 1764, the British Parliament passed the Sugar Act to raise the tax on sugar. The next year, the British Parliament passed the Stamp Act. Colonists now had to pay taxes for newspapers, marriage licenses, and all other legal documents.

Many colonists were angered by these taxes. They hadn't agreed to them and felt they were illegal and unfair. Each new tax led to a bigger **protest**¹ by the colonists. Besides taxes, many colonists were also unhappy about some of the rules the British were forcing on them. In 1765, the British Parliament passed the Quartering Act. The act stated that colonists had to agree to give British troops food and let them stay in their homes. Colonists who were unhappy with how the British were treating them decided to fight back peacefully.

In 1765, the Stamp Act Congress met in New York. The Congress was made up of representatives from many colonies. The representatives agreed to **boycott**² British goods until the Stamp Act was **repealed**³. That same year, the Sons of Liberty, a secret organization of colonists in favor of liberty, was formed.

Tensions grew between the Colonists and the British. In 1770, tensions erupted with the Boston Massacre. British troops in Boston found themselves confronted by a crowd of angry colonists. The crowd shouted at the troops and threw snowballs and other small objects at them. The soldiers panicked. One soldier started firing his gun. Then more soldiers fired into the unarmed crowd. Five colonists were killed and six were injured.

The British government was afraid of losing control over the colonies. They removed all the taxes on imports to try to make the colonists happy. They

¹ **protest** – object strongly and publicly

² **boycott** – to join together and refuse to buy or use a product or service

³ **repealed** – taken back

allowed, however, one tax to remain in place for tea. In 1773, Parliament passed the Tea Act to help get the East India Company out of financial trouble. This act enabled the British trading company to sell tea in America at a low price. Even with a tax on tea, the British company had a price advantage over American tea companies. The colonists were furious. They feared East India's tea would put American tea companies out of business. In Boston, a leader of the resistance named Samuel Adams decided to protest. He spoke to a group of colonists on December 16, 1773 at the Old South Church in Boston. Shortly after he spoke, a large group of men boarded British ships and dumped thousands of pounds of East India's tea into the harbor. Crowds of onlookers gathered to celebrate the **rebellious**¹ act. They nicknamed the event the Boston Tea Party.

The British responded quickly and harshly. In 1774, they passed several measures known as the Intolerable Acts. They closed the Boston port and made it difficult for the major city to function. Other colonies, especially Maryland, helped Boston survive by sending food and supplies.

All of these events had two main consequences. First, they made the colonists resent Britain. Britain's government seemed far away and out of touch with the colonists' needs. Many colonists began to think about ruling themselves. Second, they helped unite the colonists. The colonists had come to the New World with very different backgrounds and lifestyles. They were **sprawled**² across the East Coast of this big continent. But Britain's acts gave them a single purpose and a common cause: justice and liberty.

In September 1774, the first meeting of the First Continental Congress took place. Representatives from 12 of the American colonies met to discuss how they would unite and defend their rights as men. Within months the Revolutionary War would begin. Less than two years later, on July 4, 1776, America would declare its independence.

¹ **rebellious** – defying authority, disobedient

² **sprawled** – spread out all over the place

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. What was the purpose of the Quartering Act?
 - a. The colonists had to pay a tax on all legal documents.
 - b. Each colony was divided into four quarters.
 - c. Colonists had to allow British soldiers to live in their homes.
 - d. One out of every four men had to serve in the British army.
2. What was a consequence of the Boston Tea Party?
 - a. King George III allowed the colonists to declare independence.
 - b. King George III closed Boston's Port.
 - c. The Stamp Act Congress was held.
 - d. The Sons of Liberty was formed.
3. Based on the passage, the main reason that colonists became upset with the British was that
 - a. the British made laws that colonists thought were unfair.
 - b. the colonists wanted to take over the British government.
 - c. the colonists were mostly upset about the price of tea.
 - d. British soldiers were using the Quartering Act too much.
4. Read the following sentences: "They closed the Boston port and made it difficult for the major city to function. Other colonies, especially Maryland, helped Boston survive by sending food and supplies."

The word **function** means

- a. to hold political rallies
 - b. to work normally
 - c. to start existing
 - d. to obey orders
5. The primary purpose of this passage is to
 - a. explain the events that led American colonists to declare independence from the British.
 - b. convince the reader that the American colonists were overreacting to British actions.
 - c. compare the American colonies to other colonies in the British Empire.
 - d. illustrate how American politics are different from British politics.

6. Describe two of the laws mentioned in the passage.

7. Explain how American colonial history would have been different if the British had not passed the Intolerable Acts.

8. The question below is an incomplete sentence. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence.

The British wanted to keep control of the American colonies, _____, their actions were out of touch with the colonists' needs.

- a. most importantly
- b. thus
- c. as a result
- d. however