

## Causes of the American Revolution

Before the American Revolutionary War the original thirteen states of the United States of America were colonies of Great Britain. Great Britain was a monarchy, that is, it was ruled by a king or queen. Great Britain was also at the head of an empire called the British Empire similar to the ancient Roman Empire. An empire is a group of nations, territories, or peoples ruled by a single authority. The thirteen American colonies were part of the British Empire and were ruled by the King of England and the British Parliament located far away across the Atlantic Ocean. The royal governor of each colony was appointed by the king and was loyal to the king. The governor did not represent the colonists.



Remember too that in the 1600s when the colonies were originally founded, some of the colonies belonged to other countries. For example, New York was first settled by the Dutch and the city of New York was called New Amsterdam. The Dutch brought in settlers from Germany, Ireland and France. Great Britain took the colony with warships in 1664 and named it New York. So, all the colonists in North America were not necessarily loyal British subjects.

Before the Revolutionary War, the French and Indian War was fought between Great Britain and France for control over lands in North America, especially lands west of the existing British colonies. This conflict lasted from 1754 until 1763. This war between two major European powers caused the Seven Years' War in Europe. During this time of wars, it was in the best interest of the British Empire to defend the colonies. After the wars ended, Britain had gained control over most of North America east of the Mississippi River.

Britain had invested heavily in defending the colonies and now wanted to show authority over them by imposing heavy taxes. As a result, the colonists formed what were called committees of correspondence. These led to the establishment of Provincial Congresses in the colonies, their first independent governments. These provincial governments of the thirteen colonies joined together in the First Continental Congress in 1774. In response, the British government sent troops, dissolved the local governments, and enacted more taxes and rules. The first skirmishes of the Revolutionary War began in 1775 and the Declaration of Independence was written in 1776.

# Questions for Causes of American Revolution

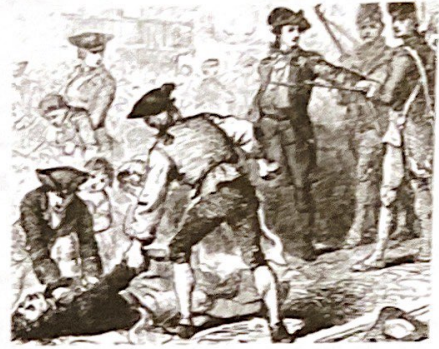
Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Multiple Choice Questions

Circle the correct answer.

1. Before the American Revolution Great Britain was
  - a. A monarchy
  - b. A democracy
  - c. An oligarchy
  - d. A republic
2. The New York colony was originally settled by the
  - a. British
  - b. Dutch
  - c. Both a. and b. above
  - d. None of the above
3. The French and Indian War was fought
  - a. Between French soldiers and Indian warriors
  - b. French soldiers and Dutch settlers
  - c. In Europe
  - d. None of the above
4. After the Seven Years' War ended
  - a. France still owned Canada
  - b. Britain controlled the lands east of the Mississippi River
  - c. Both a. and b. above
  - d. None of the above
5. A main cause of the American Revolution was
  - a. Britain took control of New Amsterdam
  - b. France gained control of lands east of the Mississippi River
  - c. Great Britain imposed heavy taxes on the colonies
  - d. The colonists lost the French and Indian War
6. The First Continental Congress
  - a. Was formed by Great Britain
  - b. Was endorsed by Great Britain
  - c. Included British royal governors
  - d. None of the above

## The Boston Massacre



It's the evening of March 5, 1770 in Boston in the British colony of Massachusetts. British soldiers are changing the guard at the Customs House where British taxes are levied and collected. A confrontation occurs between colonists and the soldiers, shots are fired, and three colonists are dead on the spot; two more die the next day. This event is called the Boston Massacre and it's easy to say that it was a cause of the American Revolution. What really happened and why?

Great Britain had spent huge sums of money waging the French and Indian War (1754-1763) in North America to gain control of more land. At the same time the British were fighting the related Seven Years' War in Europe. When the wars ended in 1763 Great Britain needed money and passed the Townsend Acts which heavily taxed everyday imported items like glass, paper and tea in the colonies. When these taxes caused unrest among the colonists, in 1768 Great Britain sent troops to Boston to maintain control and protect the tax collectors who levied customs duties on imported products. These soldiers could be assigned to live in private homes with the colonists. There was one British soldier in Boston for every four residents. Boston was an occupied city and tensions were high between soldiers and residents. There were frequent riots.

The Boston Massacre began with a nighttime confrontation between a youth and a soldier in front of the Customs House. A crowd gathered and grew larger when church bells were rung to get the attention of more men. The British soldier summoned help as well. Soon 400 men of Boston were throwing ice and snowballs at the soldiers defending the Customs House, daring them to fire their muskets into the crowd. Reports say that the officer in charge called out, "Don't fire!" In the confusion, shots were fired anyway.

The British immediately removed the troops from Boston and repealed the Townsend Acts in April 1770 except for the tax on tea. The officer in charge and nine soldiers were brought to trial about eight months later. Two soldiers were found guilty of manslaughter and all the others were acquitted. Boston remained quiet for several years. The Boston Massacre was later used as a rallying point by patriots who favored independence.

# Boston Massacre Questions

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Multiple Choice Questions

Circle the correct answer.

- In order to get money from the colonies Great Britain taxed
  - Income
  - Land
  - Imported items
  - Farm products
- When the citizens of Boston protested against the heavy taxes Great Britain
  - Raised the taxes higher
  - Sent troops to Boston
  - Both a. and b. above
  - None of the above
- One way that Bostonians protested was
  - Riots in the streets
  - Snipers
  - Guerilla attacks
  - All of the above
- Where in town did the Boston Massacre occur?
  - On the commons
  - Along the Charles River
  - At the courthouse
  - None of the above
- How many Boston citizens died as a result of the Boston Massacre?
  - 3
  - 5
  - 7
  - 9
- One result of the Boston Massacre was
  - Soldiers were withdrawn from Boston
  - Soldiers were brought to trial
  - It was later used to promote the cause of American independence
  - All of the above

## The Boston Tea Party

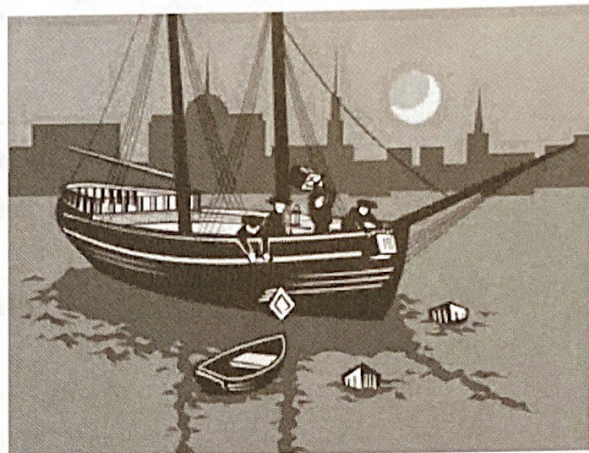
Taxes and other forms of revenue are needed for a government to operate. Money is always needed to build roads, maintain schools, and to finance all the other functions of a legitimate government. Citizens understand the need for fair taxes but they will protest if taxes are unfair, misused or too high. You

might hear your family members or newscasters talk about how complicated taxes are today. Taxes were also complicated in Great Britain and the American colonies in the 1700s, especially taxes on tea.

New taxes on the colonies, including a tax on tea, were part of the Townsend Acts passed by the British Parliament beginning in 1767. The Boston Massacre that occurred in 1770 was a result of these taxes and parts of the Townsend Acts were repealed after it. A Tea Act was passed by Parliament in 1773 changing how taxes on tea were charged. Some of the members of Parliament argued against the colonial taxes on tea, not wanting further trouble after the Boston Massacre. The tax on tea for the colonists was not increased but the Tea Act gave the East India Company support from the British government to sell tea in the colonies over merchants who lived in the colonies.

In this complicated mix of taxes and events, seven shiploads of tea owned by the East India Company were sent to the ports of Boston, New York, Philadelphia and Charleston in the fall of 1773. The ships arriving in New York and Philadelphia were returned to England without unloading their cargo. The tea arriving in Charleston was seized by customs officials. In Boston, the royal governor insisted that the British laws be followed and that the taxes on the tea be paid. Colonial protesters wanted the ships to be returned to England without paying the taxes. On the last day that the loads of tea could remain in port without paying taxes, December 16, 1773, about 5,000 Boston citizens met and passed a resolution urging the ship's captain to sail without paying the tax. When the ships remained in port, that evening a group of men boarded the vessels and dumped the cargo of tea overboard. This act was called the Boston Tea Party.

The Boston Tea Party was a protest not against the tax on tea but against how Great Britain was ruling the colonies without any colonial participation. It was one of the events leading up to the American Revolutionary War.



# Boston Tea Party Questions

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Multiple Choice Questions

Circle the correct answer.

- Collecting taxes is
  - A legitimate function of government
  - Unfair to citizens
  - Always resented by citizens
  - None of the above
- The first tax on tea in the American colonies was part of the
  - Tea Act
  - Townsend Acts
  - Both a. and b. above
  - None of the above
- After the Tea Act was passed, who did the British government support in the sales of tea in the American colonies?
  - Colonial tea merchants
  - General stores
  - Agents of the East India Company
  - All of the above
- In the fall of 1773 what happened to the tea shipments in New York and Philadelphia?
  - They were thrown into the ocean
  - They were burned
  - Both a. and b. above
  - None of the above
- On the day of the Boston Tea Party a large crowd of Bostonians passed a resolution to
  - Burn the ships containing tea
  - Throw the tea overboard
  - Negotiate with the governor
  - Ask the captain to return his tea ships to England
- On the evening of the Boston Tea Party what happened to the tea?
  - It was burned
  - It was shredded
  - It was thrown overboard
  - All of the above

## Declaration of Independence



The American colonies had been in conflict with the British government since 1767 when the Townsend Acts were passed by the British Parliament. These laws not only added new taxes to the colonies they also disbanded the New York legislature until it complied with orders to pay for food, supplies and barracks for British soldiers. This was called a Quartering Act. The Townsend Acts increased tension between the colonists and the British government. These tensions erupted into the Boston Massacre in 1770 and the Boston Tea Party in 1773. Britain passed additional laws in 1774 that were called the Intolerable Acts that were designed to punish the colonies for the Boston Tea Party.

Twelve of the colonies sent a total of 56 delegates to Philadelphia to review the situation with Great Britain in 1774. This group was called the First Continental Congress. They called for a boycott of English goods and petitioned the king to address colonial grievances. The Second Continental Congress met May 1775 again in Philadelphia. By this time the Battles of Lexington and Concord had already taken place in Massachusetts and the Revolutionary War had begun. This group of delegates organized the Continental Army in June 1775 to fight the war for independence. The Second Continental Congress was the government for the colonists during the entire Revolutionary War.

This Congress heard the first petition for independence from Britain read by Richard Henry Lee of Virginia on June 7, 1776 even though many delegates favored remaining as British colonies. The Congress recessed for three weeks. A Committee of Five was appointed to write a draft of a statement of independence from Britain during that time. The five men were: John Adams of Massachusetts, Roger Sherman of Connecticut, Benjamin Franklin of Pennsylvania, Robert R. Livingston of New York, and Thomas Jefferson of Virginia. However, Thomas Jefferson was the primary writer of the document.

The Congress met again on July 1 and adopted the Lee Resolution by a vote of 12 to 1. The Congress reviewed Jefferson's Declaration of Independence, making small changes. The Second Continental Congress adopted the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776.

# Declaration of Independence Questions

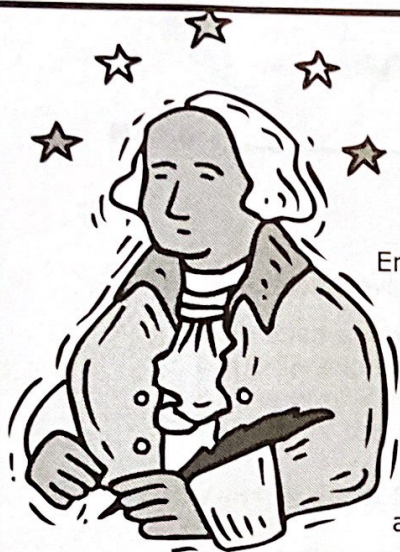
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## Multiple Choice Questions

Circle the correct answer.

- The requirement that colonists pay for the upkeep of British soldiers is called
  - Lodging Acts
  - Tax Acts
  - Quartering Acts
  - None of the above
- The Townsend Acts disbanded the legislature of which colony?
  - Massachusetts
  - Delaware
  - Pennsylvania
  - New York
- Colonists called the laws passed by Britain to punish the colonies for the Boston Tea Party the
  - Townsend Acts
  - Intolerable Acts
  - Both a. and b. above
  - None of the above
- The First and Second Continental Congress met in
  - Boston
  - Philadelphia
  - New York City
  - Charleston
- A declaration of independence from Great Britain was to be written by a Committee of
  - Three
  - Five
  - Ten
  - Twelve
- The person who wrote the Declaration of Independence was
  - Thomas Jefferson
  - Benjamin Franklin
  - John Adams
  - Richard Henry Lee





## Independence from Great Britain

At the time of the Revolutionary War the King of England, King George III, had absolute power over the vast British Empire. Like other kings and queens of the European countries, he believed that he owned the lands under his control; they were his possessions. Historians tell us that when news of the Declaration of Independence reached King George III he stated that he would never acknowledge the independence of the colonies. He would engage in war with the colonists forever if needed to punish them for their action. Yet in February 1783 King George III issued a Proclamation of Cessation of Hostilities and this formally ended the fighting. The Treaty of Paris ending the war was signed on September 3, 1783 and the American colonies were officially independent.

Why would a king who stated he would never relinquish a large portion of his empire finally allow them their independence? Remember that in the 1700s the ability to communicate was vastly different than it is today. It would take two months for a message to cross the Atlantic Ocean between England and the American colonies. It was impossible for the governmental and military leaders in England to know what was really happening in the distant colonies.

When British General Cornwallis surrendered at Yorktown in October 1781, there were over 30,000 British troops in the American colonies. Troops and their supplies, even cannons, needed to cross the Atlantic Ocean, arrive at seaports and then travel across territory that had few roads before they could engage with the American army. Since the colonies were not united at the time, the British army had to fight in each of the thirteen colonies. It was an expensive war to keep fighting. After six years the cost of the war was bankrupting England.

Great Britain and France had fought many wars for control of Europe. France saw an opportunity to send troops to help the Americans while irritating their longtime enemy, Great Britain. French troops helped the American army to defeat General Cornwallis at Yorktown. Continuing the war in the colonies could possibly mean another costly war with France. Parliament had voted sometime before then to no longer support the war. Eventually King George III realized that it was not possible for Great Britain to continue the Revolutionary War and he acknowledged the independence of the former colonies.

# Independence from Great Britain Questions

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Multiple Choice Questions

Circle the correct answer.

1. The American Revolution officially ended with the signing of the
  - a. Proclamation of Cessation of Hostilities
  - b. Declaration of Independence
  - c. Treaty of Paris
  - d. None of the above
2. The ruler of Great Britain during the American Revolution was
  - a. King George III
  - b. Queen Elizabeth
  - c. King Charles I
  - d. King Charles II
3. During the Revolutionary War how long did it take a message to travel between North America and Great Britain?
  - a. 2 days
  - b. 2 weeks
  - c. 2 months
  - d. 3 months
4. What difficulties did the British army face during the Revolutionary War?
  - a. All troops and supplies had to cross the ocean
  - b. There were thirteen separate colonies to fight in
  - c. The territory in North America was not developed
  - d. All of the above
5. What country's troops helped the American army defeat British General Cornwallis?
  - a. Canada
  - b. France
  - c. Germany
  - d. Italy
6. How did the Revolutionary War impact the economy of Great Britain?
  - a. It had no impact
  - b. It improved the economy by creating more jobs
  - c. It improved the economy by sending men out of the country
  - d. It was bankrupting the economy