

**CAUSES OF THE  
AMERICAN  
REVOLUTION:  
FOCUS ON BOSTON**

PREVIEW COPY  
INCLUDING THE COMPLETE FIRST LESSON

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# CAUSES OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION: FOCUS ON BOSTON

A UNIT OF STUDY FOR GRADES 7-12

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ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN HISTORIANS  
AND THE  
NATIONAL CENTER FOR HISTORY IN THE SCHOOLS

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This publication is the result of a collaborative effort between the National Center for History in the Schools at the University of California Los Angeles and the Organization of American Historians to develop teaching units based on primary documents for United States History education at the pre-collegiate level.

Gary B. Nash and David Vigilante of the National Center for History at UCLA worked with the authors in developing this unit. Production staff at OAH included Damon Freeman and Amy M. Stark.

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**COVER ILLUSTRATION:** A 1774 cartoon showing colonial hostility to British authority. Tea is forced down a tar and feathered tax collector in front of the Liberty Tree with a noose and a copy of the Stamp Act nailed upside down. The Boston Tea Party is depicted in the background. John Grafton, *The American Revolution: A Picture Sourcebook* (New York: Dover Publications), 1975.

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## APPROACH AND RATIONALE

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The National Center for History in the Schools and the Organization of American Historians have developed the following collection of lessons for teaching with primary sources. Our units are the fruit of a collaboration between history professors and experienced teachers of United States History. They represent specific “dramatic episodes” in history from which you and your students can pause to delve into the deeper meanings of these selected landmark events and explore their wider context in the great historical narrative. By studying a crucial turning-point in history the student becomes aware that choices had to be made by real human beings, that those decisions were the result of specific factors, and that they set in motion a series of historical consequences. We have selected dramatic episodes that bring alive that decision-making process. We hope that through this approach, your students will realize that history is an ongoing, open-ended process, and that the decisions they make today create the conditions of tomorrow’s history.

Our teaching units are based on primary sources, taken from documents, artifacts, journals, diaries, newspapers and literature from the period under study. What we hope to achieve using primary source documents in these lessons is to remove the distance that students feel from historical events and to connect them more intimately with the past. In this way we hope to recreate for your students a sense of “being there,” a sense of seeing history through the eyes of the very people who were making decisions. This will help your students develop historical empathy, to realize that history is not an impersonal process divorced from real people like themselves. At the same time, by analyzing primary sources, students will actually practice the historian’s craft, discovering for themselves how to analyze evidence, establish a valid interpretation and construct a coherent narrative in which all the relevant factors play a part.

## CONTENT AND ORGANIZATION

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Within this unit, you will find: 1) Unit Objectives, 2) Correlation to the National History Standards, 3) Teacher Background Materials, 4) Lesson Plans, and 5) Student Resources. This unit, as we have said above, focuses on certain key moments in time and should be used as a supplement to your customary course materials. Although these lessons are recommended for grades 10-12, they can be adapted for other grade levels.

The teacher background section should provide you with a good overview of the entire unit and with the historical information and context necessary to link the specific dramatic episode to the larger historical narrative. You may consult

it for your own use, and you may choose to share it with students if they are of a sufficient grade level to understand the materials.

The lesson plans include a variety of ideas and approaches for the teacher which can be elaborated upon or cut as you see the need. These lesson plans contain student resources which accompany each lesson. The resources consist of primary source documents, any hand-outs or student background materials, and a bibliography.

In our series of teaching units, each collection can be taught in several ways. You can teach all of the lessons offered on any given topic, or you can select and adapt the ones that best support your particular course needs. We have not attempted to be comprehensive or prescriptive in our offerings, but rather to give you an array of enticing possibilities for in-depth study, at varying grade levels. We hope that you will find the lesson plans exciting and stimulating for your classes. We also hope that your students will never again see history as a boring sweep of inevitable facts and meaningless dates but rather as an endless treasure of real life stories, and an exercise in analysis and reconstruction.

The Boston Massacre



Engraved by Paul Revere  
(Library of Congress)

Examine the engraving as colonial propaganda. How does Revere depict the British troops? their commander? Are the Bostonians portrayed as a mob antagonizing the British soldiers? Notice that a rifle, barely seen from a window in Butcher's Hall, is being discharged at the people gathering in the square. What is the artist's message in this engraving?

## I. UNIT OVERVIEW

This unit addresses the intellectual foundations, the emotional attitudes and the specific political events that combined to create an imperial crisis between Great Britain and her North American colonies in the early 1760s and 1770s. It also provides material that can be used to promote a better understanding of economic and social relations during the same period.

During the Revolutionary era the role of women, African Americans and Native Americans was significant. From formal organizations such as the Daughters of Liberty to boycott meetings to informal social gatherings to private letters, colonial women displayed a keen interest in the events of the time. Yet the documentary evidence is scattered and conspicuous by its absence. Native American and African American sources are almost nonexistent and written or visual references to them by others are almost always symbolic and demeaning. It is important for students to be aware that the story of the American Revolution is based on a documentary record that reflected the political establishment. Women, urban poor, small freeholders, and people of color are all too often excluded from eighteenth-century documents on which historians base their study of the American Revolution. Students should not **only be aware of who** and what was recorded, but what was excluded and why.

The selections in this teaching unit address these issues but larger questions are raised. Why are the views of women almost totally absent from the political/legal discussion of rights and loyalty? Why are written accounts of events or testimony in trials almost exclusively given by white males? What does this suggest about the prevailing societal beliefs and attitudes concerning who should be included or excluded from the events of that period? What positions did women and minorities occupy in pre-Revolutionary America and did the unfolding events have an effect on their role in society?

The primary goal for this history unit is to provide teaching materials for easy use in the secondary classroom while retaining the logical argumentation, the rich flowery language and the burning emotion that is contained in the original documents. Therefore, the documents contained in this teaching unit have been edited to eliminate most words or phrases that would be confusing or meaningless to modern secondary level students and spelling, capitalization and punctuation have been adjusted to modern American usage (for example, labor instead of *labour*, mixed instead of *mixt*, or has instead of *hath*). Some extremely long complex sentences have been broken up into smaller sentences with the appropriate changes in punctuation and capitalization, and in two instances, phrases that were grammatically incorrect have been reworded for clarity. The editing was always done with a concern both for accurately conveying the thoughts and intent of the author of the document and for preserving the original flavor and context of each document.

**Lesson 1** provides seven documents that enable students to examine the issues of taxation and representation, particularly those associated with the Stamp Act Crisis (1765-66), from a variety of perspectives and to appreciate the diversity of opinion on both sides of the Atlantic. **Lesson 2** utilizes political cartoons to illustrate the contending views throughout the colonial struggle with a primary focus on the Townshend Acts in 1768. In these first two sections (3-5 class periods), students will examine the political and philosophical arguments concerning taxation and imperial control that defined British-Colonial relations between 1763 and 1770 as well as the various methods of colonial resistance. These primary sources provide multiple perspectives on the issues and events that lead from one colonial crisis to another, ultimately resulting in violence in the streets of Boston in 1770.

**Lesson 3** consists of a detailed role-playing simulation of the Boston Incident (Boston Massacre) Trial which is designed to run for one week, from the selection of witnesses to the closing statements. Students acting as prosecutors and defense attorneys must possess a clear knowledge of the long, intermediate and short term causes of the Boston Incident and interpret them from the perspective of those who they represent. Students who portray witnesses and defendants must be aware of the circumstances that shaped their attitudes and biased their testimony. The testimony provided in this section is based on eyewitness accounts compiled by the authors from several sources. In order to prepare their cases, student-lawyers will review relevant primary documents and the statements of witnesses. As attorneys and witnesses interact, the students gain unique perspectives on the historical process and its impact on the administration of justice.

**Lesson 4** provides six documents that focus on the Boston Tea Party and the events that precipitate the outbreak of hostilities. The diversity of colonial opinion is highlighted as well as the emotional range of American reaction to British policies from formal petitions and vitriolic rhetoric to physical violence. The entire teaching unit consisting of primary documents, discussion questions, learning activities and the role-playing simulation promotes the student's understanding of the principles ultimately articulated in the Declaration of Independence.

## II. UNIT CONTEXT

In the typical United States History survey course, this unit should follow class topics on the social, political and economic maturation of the American colonies in the early 1700s. Also, a discussion of Anglo-American frustrations and/or antagonisms during the colonial wars coupled with an examination of the cost to the British treasury of the removal of the French threat to the colonies would lead easily into this unit. Completion of this unit should prepare the students for a detailed consideration of the Declaration of Independence and a discussion of the early formation of state and national governments. The unit's focus on Massachusetts and particularly the simulation on the Boston Massacre could also tie in nicely with a detailed treatment of the events involved at Lexington, Concord and Bunker Hill.

This unit is designed for a two to three week time period but is structured to be easily modified for use in a variety of secondary and post-secondary classroom situations and to provide great flexibility in the use of class time. The unit can be used as a whole, independently as separate sections, or by extracting selected documents to enhance other classroom strategies. Student activities could include engaging in debates, writing mock newspaper articles about specific events, producing posters, staging demonstrations and role playing as they define their positions on the unfolding events. After having examined the cause and effect relationships of these events, students will be challenged to engage those events from a variety of British and Colonial perspectives.

### III. CORRELATION TO NATIONAL HISTORY STANDARDS

*Causes of the American Revolution: Focus on Boston* provides an excellent opportunity for students to demonstrate their knowledge of cause and effect relationships in history and their ability to engage those events from numerous perspectives. This unit provides documentary materials and teaching options relating to the *National Standards for History, Basic Edition* (National Center for History in the Schools, 1996), Era 3, Standards 1A and 1B, *Demonstrate understanding of the causes of the American Revolution* and *Understand the principles articulated in the Declaration of Independence*. This unit also addresses the five Historical Thinking Standards outlined in Part 2, Chapter 2 of the *National Standards for History*. Lessons provide primary source materials which challenge students to explain historical change and continuity; consider multiple perspectives; compare and contrast differing sets of ideas and values; draw evidence from visual sources; reconstruct the literal meaning of a historical passage; and identify the purpose, perspective, and point of view of a document. The simulation of the Boston Incident Trial, in particular, challenges arguments of historical inevitability and requires students to identify problems and solutions; analyze the interests of people involved; formulate a position or course of action on an issue; and marshal the necessary knowledge and logic to reach an acceptable conclusion.

### IV. UNIT OBJECTIVES

1. Students will identify the major elements of the Anglo-American disputes over taxation and imperial restrictions from 1763 to 1775 as well as the various methods of resistance used by the colonists.
2. Students will understand the cause and effect relationship of historical events, particularly the contribution of earlier disputes over taxation to the political atmosphere that fostered the Boston Incident and the impact of those historical events on the administration of justice in this case.
3. Students will recognize the historical implications of the trial both as a culminating episode and a precipitating event in pre-Revolutionary America.
4. Students will interpret primary documents and examine how that interpretation alters historical perspective and how inquiry methods can be applied to the historical process.

## V. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The causes of the American Revolution can be traced to the economic, political and military interactions between Great Britain and the colonies during the previous century. Official British economic policy was based on the theory of mercantilism as stated in the Trade and Navigation Acts while unofficially lax British enforcement of the regulations allowed colonists to circumvent the rules with relative impunity. Meanwhile, frequent successful clashes with royal governors prompted an arrogance and defiance in colonial legislatures that fostered a growing British frustration at colonial provincialism. Furthermore, wartime experience had promoted a mutual contempt with the colonists disparaging British military ineptitude and the British voicing their disgust with the lack of military discipline and imperial commitment on the part of the colonies. These long-standing perceptions shaped the context wherein each side judged the other during the events that led to the American Revolution.

The victorious conclusion of the colonial wars of the mid-eighteenth century initiated dramatic changes in political and economic policies that hastened the onset of the American Revolution. For the British, military success had come at a high financial price, plunging the imperial treasury into debt. This financial crisis precipitated the passage of new revenue taxes as well as a stricter enforcement of trade policies. For the American colonies, the elimination of the French threat lessened their dependence for military and diplomatic support on Britain and allowed them to be more vociferous in their objections to British policies. The causes of the American Revolution can be found in the clash of these policies and perceptions within the context of changing political and economic relationships.

The American revolutionaries prided themselves on being more British than the British. The ideals that initiated colonial resistance to British dominance stemmed from the time-honored “rights of Englishmen.” Colonial rebels maintained that they were, in essence, seeking to sustain the very rights that the mother country had fought to preserve as part of the unwritten English constitution from the Magna Carta of 1215 to the English Bill of Rights that followed the Glorious Revolution. Colonial leaders, schooled in British law, understood that English subjects enjoyed certain fundamental rights that government could not violate and made their case on this basis.

Colonists, with memories of their wartime sacrifices still fresh, resented the passage of a series of acts following the French and Indian War. Parliament’s Proclamation of 1763, the Quartering Act (1765) and the Sugar Act (1764) seemed to testify that English colonists were being deprived of rights they assumed were guaranteed by the English constitution. Many colonists refused to believe that the maintenance of frontier stability and peace with Native Americans required the prevention of settlement west of the Appalachians. This, in turn, necessitated the presence of British troops which, not coincidentally, provided the British government with numerous political patronage appointments. The colonials considered access to western lands as the just deserts of their hard won victory and were shocked when the depleted treasury prompted Parliament to enact the

Sugar Act which imposed a heavy tax on imported sugar and created several new procedures designed to revitalize the customs service and eliminate smuggling. While these three new acts were grudgingly seen as within the authority of Parliament, they were unwelcome intrusions into the daily lives of the colonists. Moreover, they were unenforceable in most colonial circumstances and served only to antagonize. Petitions and boycotts ultimately led to the repeal of the Sugar Act, but the Proclamation and Quartering Act continued to plague imperial relations.

Colonial resistance was galvanized when it was perceived that Parliament had exceeded its authority by passing the Stamp Act, an internal tax purely to raise revenue. Throughout the colonies mob action prevented its implementation through the blockage of docks, the burning of stamps, the destruction of property, and threats against persons associated with the Stamp Act. Other Americans sought political redress through petitions and formal resolutions, ultimately uniting their efforts in the Stamp Act Congress. The Virginia Resolves in particular, written by Patrick Henry and circulated throughout the colonies, energized resistance. The issue polarized Parliament splitting its members along lines of both political interest (commercial v. landed) and constitutional interpretation (virtual representation v. direct representation). Intense American reaction coupled with Parliamentary paralysis forced the repeal of the controversial Stamp Act.

Humbled by this retreat, Parliament passed the Declaratory Act, reasserting its authority over the colonies. The continuing financial crisis forced Parliament to return to the less objectionable taxing of trade. The Townshend Acts imposed an indirect tax on certain enumerated articles such as lead, glass, paint, paper and tea. This less offensive tax elicited a more restrained American reaction in the form of boycotts, petitions and “circular letters” between colonial legislatures. Political crises were initiated in some colonies when colonial governors were ordered to dissolve any legislature that considered the “circular letters.” These methods of colonial resistance eventually resulted in the repeal of most of the Townshend Acts.

As the political controversies surrounding the Sugar Act, the Stamp Act, and the Townshend Acts fluctuated in the late 1760s, the presence of large contingents of British troops in New York and Boston became a constant source of irritation. The citizens of those port cities, already angered by British trade regulations, resisted efforts to provide housing (or colonial funding for housing) for the troops. In both cities, the presence of these troops created a variety of political disputes, a series of court cases, and frequent physical confrontations in the streets. British troops became the symbols of imperial oppression as well as convenient targets for radicals to vent their frustrations.

For their part, British troops found themselves in a conundrum: if they remained passive as ordered they promoted perceptions of British weakness and ineptitude; if they responded they confirmed fears of British oppression as well as being legally culpable for their violation of orders. This incendiary situation required only a spark to burst into flames. In Boston, the home of the Sons of

Liberty, several street incidents culminated in a violent confrontation on the night of March 5, 1770, in which five colonists died. The incident became known as the Boston Massacre.

The Boston Massacre became a defining moment. It solidified the views of some concerning British oppression while jarring others to a realization of the violence inherent in imperial confrontation. After the Boston Massacre an uneasy calm settled over the colonies, interrupted by annual commemorations and occasional incidents. Three years later, still desperate to generate revenue, Parliament increased the tax on tea while exempting it from some of the trade regulations that increased shipping costs. The combined effect was an actual reduction in the retail price of tea which, it was hoped, would circumvent colonial opposition to the increased tax on tea. Recognizing this ploy, radical leaders determined to destroy the tea before its tempting low price could fracture colonial resistance against British taxation. On December 16, 1773, the Sons of Liberty delivered those of weaker resolve from temptation by dumping the tea into Boston Harbor.

This audacious act, known as the Boston Tea Party, required a Parliamentary response of equal gravity. Measures were passed such as the closing of the port of Boston, the annulment of the Massachusetts colonial charter, the re-organization of the Massachusetts government to increase the power and authority of crown appointees, the re-establishment of admiralty courts and the issuing of arrest warrants for radical leaders. As if these actions weren't enough, the Quebec Act was seen as an affront to all of the colonies by officially recognizing the Catholic religion and extending Quebec's jurisdiction into the trans-Appalachian territories, an area coveted by many of the colonies. Colonial assemblies and town meetings moved by concern for the Bostonians and fear of similar sanctions on their colony, elected delegates to the First Continental Congress to issue a united condemnation of these "Intolerable Acts."

The confrontation around Boston escalated in September, 1774 when British troops seized the military supplies of the local militia at Charlestown and Cambridge, prompting the creation of local military units known as "minutemen." A similar British operation to Lexington and Concord seven months later was resisted by these minutemen, initiating the American Revolution.

## LESSON 1: CONTROVERSY OVER TAXATION AND REPRESENTATION

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### A. LESSON OBJECTIVES

1. Students will examine and interpret primary documents in order to engage the events and political arguments that precipitated the colonial confrontation with Britain.
2. Students will engage primary documents from multiple perspectives in order to understand the complexities of historical events.
3. Students will comprehend the diversity of opinions and reactions generated by the Stamp Act.

### B. LESSON ACTIVITIES

The primary documents included in this section represent a variety of perspectives and conflicting arguments concerning the Stamp Act and colonial methods of resistance that epitomized attitudes on both sides of the Atlantic during the turbulent days preceding the American Revolution. These selections reveal the imperial tensions between Great Britain and her colonies as well as the diversity of opinion and the range of emotional response within each area. Some documents such as the Resolutions of the Stamp Act Congress, William Pitt's Speech on the Stamp Act, the Letter of the London Merchants and the Boycott by Women in Boston are reasoned and relatively civil discourses giving particular points of view on the issue of the Stamp Act. Others are quite emotional like W. Almy's vivid description of the intimidation and violence of the Boston mob or the stinging condemnation of Americans who did not strenuously oppose the Stamp Act in the *Constitutional Courant*. Soame Jenyns' stern rebuttal of critics of the Crown, *The Objections to the Taxation...Considered*, uses ridicule and sarcasm in his defense of Parliament's right to tax the colonies.

Each selection is introduced by a brief summary of its contents and followed by a list of analytical questions to prompt classroom discussion. The documents are arranged in chronological order and, where appropriate, juxtaposed in order to more dramatically emphasize divergent perspectives. This section may be taught as an independent teaching unit, used in conjunction with other sections of the teaching unit, or the documents can be used individually or in pairs to augment instruction.

Several activities are provided for the documents in this lesson. Choose from one or more of these suggested teaching activities to engage students in examining the basic arguments presented in the documents.

## The Boston Mob

*The letter below contains one observer's description of the actions that the Boston Mob took in protest against the Stamp Act. The details concerning what the protesters wrote on the effigies is very revealing even though some of the meanings may be unclear to modern readers. The absence of vitriolic rhetoric in the body of the letter somewhat obscures the political position of its author which becomes clear at the end. The Earl of Bute mentioned below (and satirized as the devil in the boot) was the leader of Parliament from 1761 to 1763 and a strong supporter of taxation of the colonies.*

To Doctor Elisha Story, Boston  
Newport Aug't. 29th 1765. Thursday

My Worthy friend, . . . I'll Just Inform you Concerning Mr. Martin Howard Junior and Doctor Moffatt, who was hung in Effigy with the Stamp Master. Mr. Howard and the Doctor you must know have made themselves very Busy with their Pen (By all accounts) In Writing Against the Colonies and in Favor of the Stamp Act etc.

In the Morning of the 27th Inst. between five and six a Mob Assembles and Erected a Gallows near the Town House and then Dispersed, and about Ten A Clock Reassembled and took the Effigys of the Above Men and the Stamp Master and Carted them up Thames Street, then up King Street to the said Gallows where they was hung up by the Neck and suspended near 15 feet in the Air, And on the Breast of the Stamp Master' was this inscription THE STAMP MAN, and holding in his Right hand the Stamp Act, And upon the Breast of the Doctor was wrote, THAT INFAMOUS, MISCREATED, LEERING JACOBITE DOCTOR MURFY in Rhode Island, And on the Same Arm was Wrote, If I had but Rec'd this letter from Earl of Butte But One Week sooner. And upon a strip of paper hanging out of his Mouth was wrote It is too late Marinius to Retract, for we are all Aground.

And upon Mr. Howard's Breast was wrote, THAT FAWNING, INSIDIOUS, INFAMOUS MISCREANT AND PARACIDE MARTINIUS SCRIBLERIUS, and upon his Right Arm was wrote, THE ONLY FINIAL PEN. Upon his left Arm was wrote, CURS'D AMBITION AND YOUR CURSED CLAN HAS RUIN'D ME and upon the Same Arm a little Below was this, WHAT THO' I BOAST OF INDEPENDANCE- POSTERITY WILL CURSE MY MEMORY.... And about five A Clock in the Afternoon they made a Fire under the Gallows which Consumed the Effigy's Gallows and all, to Ashes. I forgot to tell you that a boot hung over the Doctor's Shoulder with the Devil Peeping out of it etc. ... And after the Effigys were Burnt the Mob Dispersed and we thought it was all Over. But last Night about Dusk they all Mustered again and first they went to Martin Howard's, and Broke Every Window in his House Frames and all, likewise Chairs Tables, Pictures and every thing they could come across. They also sawed down two Trees which Stood before his door .... When they found

they had Entirely Demolished all his furniture and done what damage they Could, they left the house, and Proceeded to Doctor Moffatts where they Behaved much in the Manner. I Can't say which Came off the Worst, For all the Furniture of Both Houses were entirely Destroyed, Petitions of the houses broke down, Fences Leveled with the ground and all the Liquors which were in both Houses were Entirely Lost. Dear Doctor this Moment I've Received a peace of News which Effects me so Much that I Cant write any More, which is the Demolition of your Worthy Daddy's house and Furniture etc. But I must Just let you know the Stamp Master has Resigned, the Copy of His Resignation and Oath I now Send you. I hope, my Friend You'll send me the Particulars of your daddy's Misfortune.

Yours for Ever W. ALMY

William Almy to Dr. Elisha Story, *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, Vol. 55 (1921-1922), pp. 234-237.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is the position of the writer concerning the actions of the Boston Mob?
2. What is the purpose of this letter? How does the author portray the mob?
3. In what ways did mob actions such as these pave the way for the "Boston Massacre" and the Boston Tea Party?

### ACTIVITIES

- Write a song or a poem that condemns the rioters as traitors to the Crown or praises their actions as patriots fighting for their rights.
- Write a letter describing these actions from the perspective of a protester.
- Draw an illustration that depicts the mob in a negative light.
- Write phrases or sayings that you would have written on the effigies.

### *Constitutional Courant*

*The Constitutional Courant was published secretly and distributed to newspapers throughout the colonies. Excerpts appeared in the Boston Evening Post on October 7, 1765. The selection below is an aggressive assertion of colonial rights and a condemnation of supporters of the Stamp Act. Although its opening statements avow allegiance to the King, the body of the document is a logical, although emotionally charged argument against the legality of the Stamp Act and taxation of the colonies in general. Divide and conquer has long been a philosophy applied to vanquishing an enemy. In the Constitutional Courant, whether intentionally or inadvertently, the petitioner attempts to distinguish between friends and foes of the colonies. Examine the document and list ways in which the author uses the “divide and conquer” strategy.*

At a time when our dearest privileges are torn from us, and the foundation of all our liberty subverted, every one who has the least spark of love to his country, must feel the deepest anxiety about our approaching fate. The hearts of all who have a just value for freedom, must burn within them, when they see the chains of abject slavery just ready to be riveted about our necks. It has been undeniably demonstrated, by the various authors who have dared to assert the cause of these injured colonies, that no Englishman can be taxed . . . but by his own consent, given either by himself or his representatives, that these colonies are not in any sense at all represented in the British Parliament. . . . [T]he public faith of the nation, in which, till now, we thought we might securely confide, is violated, and we robbed of our dearest rights by the late law erecting a *stamp-office* among us.

What then is to be done? Shall we sit down quietly, while the yoke of slavery is wreathing about our necks? He that is stupid enough to plead for this, deserves to be a *slave*. Shall we not hope still that some resource is left us in the royal care and benevolence? We have the happiness to be governed by one of the best kings, who is under no temptations to sacrifice the rights of one part of his subjects to the caprice of another. . . .

It must certainly give the most sensible pleasure to every American that loves this majesty a united representation of their grievances, and pray a redress. Such a representation as this, in the name of so large and respectable a body of his subjects, must have great weight and influence in the royal councils. . . . But what are we to think of a set of mushroom patriots, who have refused to concur in so noble an attempt? In what light can we view this conduct? . . . Liberty and property are necessarily, connected together: He that deprives of the latter without our consent, deprives of the former. What is a slave, but one who depends upon the will of another for the enjoyment of his life and property? This surely is a very precarious tenure. . . .

This, my country men, is our unhappy lot: The same principles on which the vile minions of tyranny vindicate the present tax, will vindicate the most

oppressive laws conceivable. They need only boldly assert, that *we are virtually represented in the British parliament, that they are the properest judges of the sums necessary to be raised, and of our ability to pay them*, therefore such a tax is equitable, be it what it will, tho' it reduces nine-tenths of us to instant beggary. If we throw in petitions against them, they need only say, *'tis against the known rules of this house to admit petitions against money bills*, and so forever deny us the liberty of being heard. Was there ever a wider door opened for the entrance of arbitrary power, with all it's horrors? . . . Poor America! The bootless privilege of complaining, always allowed to the vilest criminals on the rack, is denied thee!

Let none censure these free thoughts as treasonable. . . . We cherish the most unfeigned loyalty to our rightful sovereign; we have a high veneration for the British parliament; we consider them as the most august assembly on earth; but the wisest of kings may be misled . . . Parliaments also are liable to mistakes, yea, sometimes fall into capital errors, and frame laws the most oppressive to the subject, yea, sometimes take such steps, which, if persisted in, would soon unhinge the whole constitution. Our histories bear innumerable attestations to the truth of this. It cannot be treason to point out such mistakes and the consequences of them, yea to set them in the most glaring light, to alarm the subject. By acting in this principle, our ancestors have transmitted to us our privileges inviolated; let us therefore prosecute the same glorious plan, Let the British parliament be treated with all possible respect, while they treat us as fellow-subjects; but if they transgress the bounds prescribed them by the constitution, if they usurp a jurisdiction, to which they have no right; if they infringe our liberties, . . . violate the public faith and destroy our confidence in the royal promises, let us boldly deny all such usurped jurisdiction; . . . to seem to acknowledge such a claim, would be to court our chains. Be assured, my countrymen, whatever spirit we manifest on this juncture, it cannot be offensive to our sovereign: *He glories in being King of freemen, and not of slaves*. To show that we are freemen, and resolve to continue so, cannot displease, but must endear us to him. It must endear us also to all the true sons of liberty in Great Britain, to see that we have carried over the Atlantic the genuine spirit of our ancestors. We cannot offend none but a set of the blackest villains, and these we must always offend, unless we will tamely suffer them to tread down our rights at pleasure. With them, liberty is always treason, and an advocate for the people's rights, a sower of sedition. Let it be our honor, let it be our boast, to be odious to these foes to human kind; let us show them that we consider them only as beasts of prey, formed to devour; that tho' full of loyalty to the best of kings, and ready to spill the last drop of our blood in his service, yet we dare bid defiance to all who are betraying the sovereign, and sacrificing his people.

While too many to the Westward are thinking of nothing but tamely yielding their necks to the yoke, it revives the courage of all who wish well to their country, to see such a noble spirit prevailing in the eastern colonies. There the gentlemen appointed to serve as tools to enslave their countrymen, have some of them gloriously disdained the dirty employment; they

have scorned to raise their own fortunes by such detestable means; they have shown that they esteem the public good, infinitely above all private emolument: in short, they have proved themselves TRUE LOVERS OF THEIR COUNTRY. Let their names be enrolled in the annals of fame; let them be embalmed to all posterity, and serve as examples to fire the breasts of patriots yet unborn. Others, we find, have been intimidated into a resignation, by those hardy sons of liberty, and have the mortification to see all their vile schemes of enriching themselves out of the plunder of their fellow-subjects, blasted in an instant. But what name shall we give those miscreants who still resolve to keep the detested office? How hard must that heart be, which is insensible of the dearest and tenderest of all obligations? which feels no sympathy for a native country, oppressed and ruined? but can please itself with the hellest prospect of increasing private wealth by her spoils? Ye blots and stains of America! Ye vipers of human kind! Your names shall be blasted with infamy, the public execration shall pursue you while living, and your memories shall rot, when death has disabled you from propagating vassalage and misery any further: Your crimes shall haunt you like *spectres*, and take vengeance for the crimes of distressed innocence. . . . Know ye vile miscreants, we love liberty, and we fear not to show it. We abhor slavery, and detest the remotest aiders and abettors of our bondage: but native Americans, who are diabolical enough to help forward our ruin, we execrate as the worst of parricides. Parricides! 'tis too soft a term: Murder your fathers, rip up the bowels of your mothers, dash the infants you have begotten against the stones, and be blameless; but enslave your country! entail vassalage, that worst of all human miseries, that sum of all wretchedness, on millions! This, this is guilt, this calls for heaven's fiercest vengeance. But rouse, rouse my countrymen, let the villain that is hardy enough to persist, do it at his peril. Show them we have resentment no less keen than our Eastern brethren; will you tamely suffer the execution of a law that reduces you to the vile condition of slaves, and is abhorred by all the genuine sons of liberty? Let the wretch that sleeps now, be branded as an enemy to his country.

PHILOLEUTHERUS.

*Tracts of the American Revolution, 1763-1776*, edited by Merrill Jensen (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1967), pp. 81-87.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is the emotional tone of this document? Cite at least five examples.
2. How does the author make a distinction between the parliament and the King?
3. Why does the author emphasize his loyalty to the King throughout the letter?
4. What political groups does the author identify in this document?
5. On what basis does this document object to the Stamp Act?
6. Who has the right to tax? Why is the right to tax dangerous?
7. Why do Americans start talking about slavery when they are faced with taxes imposed by the English parliament?
8. How does the author attempt to silence critics who might call his words treasonous?
9. How does the author describe those who are true lovers of their country?
10. What names does the author apply to colonists who support the Stamp Act?
11. How would this document contribute to the general attitude of Bostonians toward resistance to British policies?

## ACTIVITIES

- Write a letter to the editor responding to this document from one of the following perspectives:
  - A Tory merchant
  - An advisor to King George III
  - A member of the Sons of Liberty
- Analyze the document and construct a chart listing the answers to the following questions:
  - In what ways does this document have a conciliatory tone?
  - With whom does this document attempt conciliation?
  - In what ways does it have a confrontational tone?
  - What group does this document confront?

Resolutions of the Stamp Act Congress  
October 19, 1765

*The resolutions of the Stamp Act Congress enumerate the basic rights of Englishmen and colonial grievances concerning those rights as grounds for repealing the Stamp Act. The document repeatedly affirms colonial loyalty to the King and Parliament and specifically asserts that it is the duty of the colonists as loyal English subjects, to point out these violations of their rights. Taxation without representation, although at the core of the grievances, is not the only action for which the colonies seek redress.*

The members of this Congress, sincerely devoted, with the warmest sentiments of affection and duty to His Majesty's Person and Government . . . and with minds deeply impressed by a sense of the present and impending misfortunes of the British colonies on this conscience; having considered as maturely as time will permit the circumstances of the said colonies, esteem it our indispensable duty to make the following declarations of our humble opinion, respecting the most essential rights and liberties of the colonists, and of the grievances under which they labor, by reason of several late Acts of Parliament.

- I. That His Majesty's subjects in these colonies, owe the same allegiance to the Crown of Great Britain, that is owing from his subjects born within the realm, and all due subordination to that august body, the Parliament of Great Britain.
- II. That His Majesty's liege subjects in these colonies are entitled to all the inherent rights and liberties of his natural born subjects within the kingdom of Great Britain.
- III. That it is inseparably essential to the freedom of a people, and the undoubted right of Englishmen, that no taxes be imposed on them, but with their own consent, given personally, or by their representatives.
- IV. That the people of these colonies are not, and from their local circumstances cannot be, represented in the House of Commons in Great Britain.
- V. That the only representatives of the people of these colonies, are persons chosen therein by themselves, and that no taxes ever have been, or can be constitutionally imposed on them, but by their respective legislatures.
- VI. That all supplies to the Crown, being free gifts of the people, it is unreasonable and inconsistent with the principles and spirit of the British Constitution, for the people of Great Britain to grant to His Majesty the property of the colonists.
- VII. That trial by jury is the inherent and invaluable right of every British subject in these colonies.
- VIII. That the late Act of Parliament, entitled, *An Act for granting and applying certain Stamp Duties and other Duties in the British colonies and plantations in America, etc.*, by imposing taxes on the inhabitants of these colonies, and the said Act, and several other Acts, by extending the jurisdiction of the

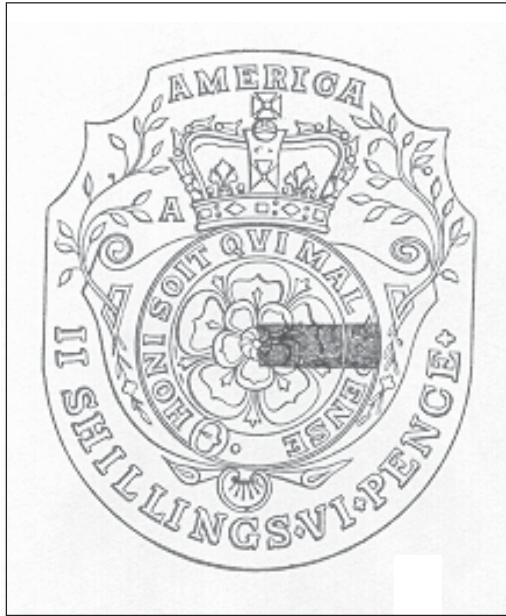
- courts of Admiralty beyond its ancient limits, have a manifest tendency to subvert the rights and liberties of the colonists.
- IX. That the duties imposed by several late Acts of Parliament, from the peculiar circumstances of these colonies, will be extremely burdensome and grievous; and from the scarcity of specie, the payment of them absolutely impracticable.
  - X. That as the profits of the trade of these colonies ultimately center in Great Britain, to pay for the manufactures which they are obliged to take from thence, they eventually contribute very largely to all supplies granted there to the Crown.
  - XI. That the restrictions imposed by several late Acts of Parliament, on the trade of these colonies, will render them unable to purchase the manufactures of Great Britain.
  - XII. That the increase, prosperity, and happiness of these colonies, depend on the full and free enjoyment of their rights and liberties, and an intercourse with Great Britain mutually affectionate and advantageous.
  - XIII. That it is the right of the British subjects in these colonies, to petition the King, or either House of Parliament.

Lastly That it is the indispensable duty of these colonies, to the best of sovereigns to the mother country, and to themselves, to endeavor by a loyal and dutiful address to his Majesty. and humble applications to both Houses of Parliament, to procure the repeal of the Act for granting and applying certain stamp duties, of all clauses of any other Acts of Parliament whereby the jurisdiction of the Admiralty is extended as aforesaid and of the other late Acts for the restriction of American commerce.

*Proceedings of the Congress at New York (1766), pp. 15-16.*

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is the tone of the resolutions first paragraph?
2. List the numerals of those resolutions that relate directly to the rights of taxation.
3. Which resolution(s) claim rights not directly connected to the right of taxation?
4. How do the resolutions of the Stamp Act Congress defend their opposition to the crown?
5. The Stamp Act not only asserted the right of Parliament to tax the colonies but extended the jurisdiction of Admiralty courts. Why would this be included in an act for taxation?
6. Why is it the “indispensable duty” of the colonies to submit these resolutions to the King and to the Parliament?
7. The Resolutions of the Stamp Act Congress formally presented the grievances of the colonies to the King and Parliament. How does the emotional tone of the resolutions differ from the objections expressed in other primary documents in this unit?



Facsimile of a revenue stamp  
(John Grafton, *The American Revolution: A Picture Sourcebook*  
New York: Dover Publications, 1975.)

## ACTIVITIES

- You are a member of the British Parliament responding to The Stamp Act Resolutions. Write a letter to the Stamp Act Congress persuading them of the necessity of this new tax.
- Compile a list of the objects/ documents that were legally required to have a stamp. Then compile a list of those individuals, identified by occupation, that would have been most affected by the Stamp Act. (The second list should reveal that the Stamp Act was targeted directly at the social and political leaders of the colonies and that the British could not have designed a tax that was more likely to generate organized and sustained resistance than the Stamp Act.)

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## Letter from London Merchants Urging Repeal of the Stamp Act

*The petition of the London merchants to the British Parliament is a clear indication that Great Britain was far from unified in its support of the Stamp Act. The merchants, fearful of economic repercussions from colonial embargoes, sent their pleas to Parliament in hopes of persuading that body to reconsider the Stamp Act.*

That the petitioners have been long concerned in carrying on the trade between this country and the British colonies on the continent of North America; and that they have annually exported very large quantities of British manufacturers, consisting of woolen goods of all kinds, cottons, linens, hardware, shoes, household furniture, and almost without exception of every other species of goods manufactured in these kingdoms, besides other articles imported from abroad, chiefly purchased with our manufacturers and with the produce of our colonies. By all which, many thousand manufacturers, seamen and laborers have been employed, to the very great and increasing benefit of this nation; and that, in return for these exports, the petitioners have received from the colonies rice, indigo, tobacco, naval stores, oil, whale fins, furs and, lately potash, with other commodities, besides remittances by bills of exchange and bullion obtained by the colonists in payment for articles of the produce not required for the British market and therefore exported to other places.

From the nature of this trade, consisting of British manufacturers exported and of the imported of raw materials from America, many of them used in our manufactures and all of them tending to lessen our dependence on neighboring states, it must be deemed of the highest importance in the commercial system of this nation; and that this commerce, so beneficial to the state and so necessary for the support of multitudes, now lies under such difficulties and discouragement that nothing less than its utter ruin is apprehended without the immediate interposition of parliament. In consequence of the trade between the colonies and the mother country as established and as permitted for many years, and of the experience which the petitioners have had of the readiness of the Americans to make their just remittances to the utmost of the real ability, they have been induced to make and venture such large exportations of British manufacturers as to leave the colonies indebted to the merchants of Great Britain in the sum of several millions sterling.

At this time the colonists, when pressed for payment, appeal to past experience in proof of their willingness; but declare it is not in their power, at present, to make good on their engagements, alleging that the taxes and restrictions laid upon them, and the extensions of the jurisdiction of Vice-Admiralty courts established by some late acts of parliament, particularly by an act passed in the fourth year of His present Majesty for granting certain

duties in the British colonies and plantations in America, and by an act passed in the fifth year of His present Majesty for granting and applying certain stamp duties and other duties in the British colonies and plantations in America, with several regulations and restraints, which, if founded in acts of Parliament for defined purposes, are represented to have been extended in such a manner as to disturb legal commerce and harass the fair trader, have so far interrupted the usual and former most fruitful branches of their commerce, restrained the sale of their produce, thrown the state of the several provinces into confusion, and brought on so great a number of actual bankruptcies that the former opportunities and means of remittances and payments are utterly lost and taken from them.

The petitioners are, by these unhappy events, reduced to the necessity of pending ruin; to prevent a multitude of manufacturers from becoming a burden to the community, or else seeking their bread in their countries, to the irretrievable loss of this kingdom; and to preserve the strength of this nation entire, its commerce flourishing, the revenues increasing, our navigation, the bulwark of the kingdom, in a state of growth and extension, and the colonies, from inclination, duty, and interest, firmly attached to the mother country; and therefore praying the consideration of the premises, and entreating such relief as to the House shall seem expedient.

*The Parliamentary History of England (London, 1813), 16:133-136.*

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. In what ways have the Stamp Act and other duties affected the London merchants involved in this petition?
2. How might this letter encourage colonial resistance?
3. How did the new taxes prevent colonists from paying debts to British merchants?

### **ACTIVITIES**

- Have students write a response from a member of Parliament who supports the Stamp Act.
- Have students write an open letter from a member of the Sons of Liberty to the London Merchants.
- Colonial viewpoints have often been oversimplified, such as: "Britain's attempts to tax the colonies were met with fierce resistance." Considering the various perspectives presented in these documents, debate the accuracy of this statement.

The Objections to the Taxation...Considered  
Soame Jenyns (1765)

*Soame Jenyns' "The Objections to the Taxation...Considered" and William Pitt's speech on the Stamp Act provide examples of the conflicting arguments that were debated on the floor of the British House of Commons concerning the Stamp Act and its effect on relations between Britain and her North American colonies. Soame Jenyns refutes various American assertions about the "Rights of Englishmen" and explains Parliament's views concerning virtual representation.*

The right of the legislature of Great Britain to impose taxes on her American Colonies, and the expediency of exerting that right in the present conjuncture, are propositions so indisputably clear, that I should never have thought it necessary to have undertaken their defense, had not many arguments been lately flung out, both in papers and conversation, which with insolence equal to their absurdity deny them both...

The great capital argument, which I find on this subject . . . is this; that no Englishman is, or can be taxed, but by his own consent . . . Now let us impartially consider, whether any one of these propositions are in fact true: if not, then this wonderful structure which has been erected upon them, falls at once to the ground, and like another Babel, perishes by a confusion of words which the builders themselves are unable to understand.

First then, that no Englishman is or can be taxed but by his own consent as an individual: this is so far from being true, that it is the very reverse of truth; for no man that I know of is taxed by his own consent; and an Englishman, I believe, is as little likely to be so taxed, as any man in the world.

Secondly, that no Englishman is or can be taxed but by the consent of those persons whom he has chose to represent him; for the truth of this I shall appeal only to the candid representatives of those unfortunate counties which produce cider, and shall willingly acquiesce under their determination.

Lastly, that no Englishman is, or can be taxed, without the consent of the majority of those, who are elected by himself, and others of his fellow-subjects, to represent them. This is certainly as false as the other two; for every Englishman is taxed, and not one in twenty represented: copyholders, leaseholders, and all men possessed of personal property only, choose no representatives; Manchester, Birmingham, and many more of our richest and most flourishing trading towns send no members to parliament, consequently cannot consent by their representatives, because they choose none to represent them; yet are they not Englishmen? or are they not taxed?

I am well aware, that I shall hear Locke, Sidney, Selden, and many other great names quoted to prove that every Englishman, whether he has a right to vote for representative, or not, is still represented in the British Parliament; in which opinion they all agree . . . Why does not this imaginary representation extend to America, as well as over the whole island of Great Britain? If it can travel three hundred miles, why not three thousand? If it can jump over rivers and mountains, why cannot it sail over the ocean? If the towns of Manchester and Birmingham sending no representatives to parliament, are notwithstanding there represented, why are not the cities of Albany and Boston equally represented in that assembly? Are they not alike British subjects? Are they not Englishmen, or are they only Englishmen when they solicit for protection, but not Englishmen when taxes are required to enable this country to protect them?

But it is urged, that the Colonies are by their charters placed under distinct Governments, each of which has a legislative power within itself, by which alone it ought to be taxed; that if this privilege is once given up, that liberty which every Englishman has a right to, is torn from them, they are all slaves, and all is lost.

The liberty of an Englishman, is a phrase of so various a signification, having within these few years been used as a synonymous term for blasphemy, bawdry, treason, libels, strong beer, and cider, that I shall not here presume to define its meaning; but I shall venture to assert what it cannot mean; that is, an exemption from taxes imposed by the authority of the Parliament of Great Britain; nor is there any charter, that ever pretended to grant such a privilege to any colony in America; and had they granted it, it could have had no force; their charters being derived from the Crown, and no charter from the Crown can possibly supersede the right of the whole legislature: their charters are undoubtedly no more than those of all corporations, which empower them to make bylaws, and raise duties for the purposes of their own police, for ever subject to the superior authority of Parliament. . . .

It has been moreover alleged, that, though Parliament may have power to impose taxes on the Colonies, they have no right to use it, because it would be an unjust tax; and no supreme or legislative power can have a right to enact any law in its nature unjust: to this, I shall only make this short reply, that if Parliament can impose no taxes but what are equitable, and the persons taxed are to be the judges of that equity, they will in effect have no power to lay any tax at all. No tax can be imposed exactly equal on all, and if it is not equal, it cannot be just: and if it is not just, no power whatever can impose it: by which short syllogism, all taxation is at an end. . . .

Speech on the Stamp Act  
William Pitt (January 14, 1766)

*On January 14, 1766, William Pitt responded to critics who accused him of “giving birth to sedition in America.” In his address to Parliament, Pitt takes on his critics and Soame Jenyns point by point and in the process outlines the responsibilities of Great Britain towards the colonies.*

Gentlemen,—Sir [to the speaker], I have been charged with giving birth to sedition in America. They have spoken their sentiments with freedom against this unhappy act, and that freedom has become their crime. Sorry I am to hear the liberty of speech in this house imputed as a crime. But the imputation shall not discourage me. It is a liberty I mean to exercise. . . . The gentleman tells America is obstinate; America is almost in open rebellion. I rejoice that America has resisted. Three million people so dead to all feelings of liberty, as voluntarily to submit to be slaves, would have been fit instruments to make slaves of the rest. . . .

. . . I am no courtier of America; I stand up for this kingdom. I maintain, that the parliament has a right to bind, to restrain America. Our legislative power over the colonies is sovereign and supreme. When it ceases to be sovereign and supreme, I would advise every gentleman to sell his lands, if he can, and embark for that country. When two countries are connected together, like England and her colonies, without being incorporated the one must necessarily govern; the greater must rule the less; but so rule it, as not to contradict the fundamental principles that are common to both. If the gentleman does not understand the difference between external and internal taxes, I cannot help it: but there is a plain distinction between taxes levied for the purpose of raising a revenue, and duties imposed for the regulation of trade, for the accommodation of the subject; although, in the consequences, some revenue might incidentally arise from the latter.

The gentleman asks, when were the colonies emancipated? But I desire to know, when were they made slaves. But I dwell not upon words. When I had the honor of serving his Majesty, I availed myself of the means of information which I derived from my office: I speak, therefore, from knowledge. My materials were good I was at pains to collect, to digest, to consider them; and I will be bold to affirm, that the profits to Great Britain from the trade of the colonies, through all its branches, is two million a year. This is the fund that carried you triumphantly through the last war. . . . You owe this to America: this is the price that America pays you for her protection. And shall a miserable financier come with a boast, that he can bring a pepper-corn into the exchequer, to the loss of millions to the nation? I dare not say, how much higher these profits may be augmented. Omitting the immense increase of people by natural population, in the northern colonies, and the emigration from

every part of Europe, I am convinced the whole commercial system of America may be altered to advantage. You have prohibited where you ought to have encouraged, encouraged where you ought to have prohibited. . . .

. . . A great deal has been said . . . of the power, of the strength of America. It is a topic that ought to be cautiously meddled with. In a good cause. on a sound bottom. the force of this country can crush America to atoms. I know the valor of your troops. I know the skill of your officers. There is not a company of foot that has served in America out of which you may not pick a man of sufficient knowledge and experience to make a governor of a colony there. But on this ground, on the Stamp Act, when so many here will think a crying injustice, I am one who will lift up my hands against it.

In such a cause, your success would be hazardous. America, if she fell, would fall like the strong man. She would embrace the pillars of the state, and pull down the constitution along with her. Is this your boasted peace? Not to sheathe the sword in its scabbard, but to sheathe it in the bowels of your countrymen? Will you quarrel with yourselves, now the whole House of Bourbon is united against you?

The Americans have not acted in all things with prudence and temper. They have been wronged. They have been driven to madness by injustice. Will you punish them for the madness you have occasioned? Rather let prudence and temper come first from this side. I will undertake for America, that she will follow the example. . . .

Upon the whole, I will beg leave to tell the House what is really my opinion. It is, that the Stamp Act be repealed absolutely, totally, and immediately; that the reason for the repeal should be assigned, because it was founded on an erroneous principle. At the same time, let the sovereign authority of this country over the colonies be asserted in as strong terms as can be devised, and be made to extend to every point of legislation whatsoever: that we may bind their trade, confine their manufactures, and exercise every power whatsoever—except that of taking money out of their pockets without their consent.

*Great Issues in American History: From Settlement to Revolution, 1584-1776*, edited by Clarence L. Ver Steeg and Richard Hofstadter (New York: Random House, 1969), pp. 407-10 and 414-18.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What arguments does Jenyns refute concerning Parliament's right to tax the colonies?
2. What argument does Jenyns make that taxes may be levied without the consent of the governed?
3. How does Jenyns repudiate the argument that America is exempt from taxes imposed by the authority of Parliament?

## ACTIVITIES

- Supply several students with Jenyns' arguments and with Pitt's response. Debate the right of the Parliament to tax the colonies in front of the class. The class may then secretly vote on the most persuasive argument.
- William Pitt defends the colonies against Soame Jenyns arguments in favor of taxation. List William Pitt's response to each of Soame Jenyns' points on the "Taxation Worksheet."

## Taxation Worksheet

SOAME JENYNS

WILLIAM PITT

No man, anywhere, is taxed by their own consent.

Englishmen can, and have historically been taxed by people who do not directly represent them.

Every Englishman is taxed and not one in twenty is represented. Lease holders, copy holders, and all manne possessed of personal property only, choose no representatives but they are taxed.

No charter ever granted to America exempted it from taxation by Parliament.

The same laws that bind Englishmen on one side of the Atlantic bind the other side as well.

### Boycott by Women in Boston (1770)

*While men played the central roles in articulating colonial political arguments, women were crucial to the success of the economic boycotts that forced British officials to take those views seriously. About 300 Bostonian women agreed to the tea boycott below in an effort to exert political pressure on Parliament and repeal the Townshend Acts.*

At the time when our invaluable Rights and Privileges are attacked in an unconstitutional and most alarming Manner, and as we find we are reproached for not being so ready as could be desired, to lend our Assistance, we think it our Duty perfectly to concur with the true Friends of Liberty, in all the measures they have taken to save this abused Country from Ruin and Slavery: And particularly, we join with the very respectable Body of Merchants and other Inhabitants of this Town, who met in Faneuil-Hall the 23rd of this Instant, in their Resolutions, *totally* to abstain from the Use of TEA: And as the greatest Part of the Revenue arising by Virtue of the late Acts, is produced from the Duty paid upon Tea, which Revenue is wholly expended to support the American Board of Commissioners: We the Subscribers do strictly engage, that we will *totally* abstain from the Use of that Article, (Sickness excepted) not only in our respective Families; but that we will absolutely refuse it, if it should be offered to us upon any Occasion whatever. This Agreement we cheerfully come into, as we believe the very distressed Situation of our Country requires it, and we do hereby oblige ourselves religiously to observe it, till the late Revenue Acts are repealed.

*Boston Evening-Post, February 12, 1770.*

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What contributions were patriot women expected to make in the resistance to British taxation?
2. What would have more affect on the British Parliament, political petitions or economic boycotts?
3. What is the difference between a boycott by merchants and a boycott by women (consumers)?
4. How would the effects be different?
5. Who would be the target of the women's boycott?

## ACTIVITIES

- What modern consumer boycotts are comparable to the Bostonian women' boycott of 1770? Have students research César Chávez and the grape boycott of the mid-1960s and compare the outcomes of that boycott with the results of the boycott against the Townshend Acts.
- Boycotts have become an accepted means of protest. What current issue would be most susceptible to the pressures of an economic boycott?

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