

1 The Stirrings of Rebellion

LEARN ABOUT the growing conflict between Great Britain and the American colonies
TO UNDERSTAND the American Revolution and how it began.

- TERMS & NAMES**
- Stamp Act
 - Samuel Adams
 - Townshend Acts
 - Boston Massacre
 - committee of correspondence
 - Boston Tea Party
 - King George III
 - Intolerable Acts
 - martial law

ONE AMERICAN'S STORY

Crispus Attucks, a sailor of African and Native American ancestry, was leading an angry group of laborers from Dock Square in Boston to the customhouse the night of March 5, 1770. British soldiers, stationed in the tension-filled city to keep the peace, had clashed with colonists that afternoon. By evening another enraged crowd gathered and marched to the customhouse on snowy King Street. At first, the crowd heckled the British sentry on guard, calling him a “lobster-back” to mock his red uniform. Then more soldiers arrived, and the mob began hurling stones and snowballs at them. At that moment, Crispus Attucks and his followers arrived.

A PERSONAL VOICE

This Attucks . . . appears to have undertaken to be the hero of the night; and to lead this army with banners . . . up to King street with their clubs . . . this man with his party cried, do not be afraid of them. . . . He had hardiness enough to fall in upon them, and with one hand took hold of a bayonet, and with the other knocked the man down.

JOHN ADAMS, quoted in *The Black Presence in the Era of the American Revolution*

Attucks's action ignited the troops. Ignoring orders not to shoot civilians, one soldier and then several others fired on the crowd. Five people were killed; three were wounded. Crispus Attucks was, according to a newspaper account, the first to die.

Relations between Britain and the colonists had been strained for years. But now the tensions had boiled over. No one knew it that clear, cold night, but Crispus Attucks would become one of the first colonists to die in an all-out war for freedom.



Crispus Attucks

The Colonies Organize to Resist Britain

In order to finance debts from the French and Indian War, as well as from European wars, Parliament had turned hungry eyes on the colonies' resources. British leaders saw nothing tyrannical in their plans for new colonial rules and taxes. Their actions, however, set the stage for conflict.

THE STAMP ACT The seeds of increased tension were sown in March 1765 when Parliament, persuaded by Prime Minister George Grenville, passed the **Stamp Act**. It was the first tax that affected colonists directly because it was levied on goods and services. Previous taxes, such as those levied by the Sugar Act, had been indirect, involving duties on imports.

The Stamp Act required colonists to purchase special stamped paper for every legal document, license, newspaper, pamphlet, and almanac, and imposed special “stamp duties” on packages of playing cards and dice. The tax reached into every colonial pocket—rich and poor. Colonists who disobeyed the law were to be tried in the vice-admiralty courts, where no juries were present and convictions were probable.

With the passage of the Stamp Act, the colonists lost respect for the king's officeholders in America. They also realized that British interests were not identical to their own. The growing unrest and resentment of laborers in the cities created a situation that was ripe for protest. As the grievances of the colonists exploded, colonial political leaders would mobilize the working class to action.

STAMP ACT PROTESTS When word of the Stamp Act reached the colonies in May of 1765, the colonists united in their defiance. Boston shopkeepers, artisans, and laborers organized a secret resistance group called the Sons of Liberty. One of its founders was Harvard-educated **Samuel Adams**, who, although unsuccessful in business and deeply in debt, proved himself to be a powerful and influential political activist.

By the end of the summer, the Sons of Liberty members were demonstrating and protesting throughout the colonies. They harassed customs workers, stamp agents, and sometimes royal governors. Facing mob threats and demonstrations, stamp agents all over the colonies resigned. The Stamp Act was to become effective on November 1, 1765, but colonial protest prevented any stamps from being sold.

During 1765 and early 1766, the individual colonial assemblies confronted the Stamp Act measure. Virginia's lower house adopted several resolutions put forth by a 29-year-old lawyer named Patrick Henry. These resolutions stated that Virginians could be taxed only by the Virginia assembly—that is, only by their own representatives. Other assemblies passed similar resolutions.

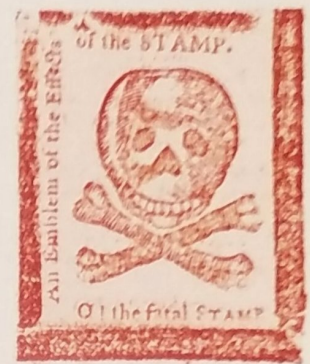
The colonial assemblies also made a strong collective protest. In October 1765, delegates from nine colonies met in New York City. This Stamp Act Congress issued a Declaration of Rights and Grievances, which stated that Parliament lacked the power to impose taxes on the colonies because the colonists were not represented in Parliament. More than 10 years earlier, the colonies had rejected Benjamin Franklin's Albany Plan of Union, which called for a joint colonial council to address defense issues. Now, for the first time, the separate colonies began to act as one.

Colonial merchants added their weight to the resistance. In October 1765, about 200 New York traders agreed to a nonimportation policy—a boycott of British goods—until the Stamp Act was repealed. Merchants in Boston and Philadelphia soon followed suit. This boycott was a serious action because under Britain's policy of mercantilism, the home country was economically dependent on purchases of its goods by the colonies. The colonists reasoned that since the American colonies bought a substantial portion (about 40 percent) of Britain's manufactured goods, British merchants would force Parliament to repeal the Stamp Act.

The widespread boycott worked. In March 1766, Parliament repealed the Stamp Act; but on the same day, to make its power clear, Parliament issued the Declaratory Act. This act asserted Parliament's full right to make laws “to bind the colonies and people of America . . . in all cases whatsoever.”

THE TOWNSHEND ACTS Within a year after Parliament repealed the Stamp Act, a young, newly appointed minister named Charles Townshend impetuously decided on a new method of gaining revenue from the American colonies. His proposed revenue laws, passed by Parliament in 1767, became known as the **Townshend Acts**. Unlike the Stamp Act, which was a direct tax, these were indirect taxes, or duties levied on imports—glass, lead, paint, and paper—as they came into the colonies from Britain. The acts also imposed a three-penny tax on tea, the most popular drink in the colonies.

The colonists reacted with rage and well-organized resistance. Educated Americans spoke out against the Townshend Acts, protesting “taxation without representation.” Boston's Samuel Adams called for another boycott of British goods, and American women of every rank in society became involved in the protest. Writer Mercy Otis Warren of Massachusetts urged women to lay their British “female ornaments aside,” foregoing “feathers, furs, rich sattins and . . . capes.” Wealthy women stopped buying British luxuries and joined other women in spinning bees—public displays of spinning and weaving of colonial-



The colonists' view of the stamp tax is clear in the skull and crossbones emblem that warns of the effects of the Stamp Act.

NOW & THEN

TAXES

Anger among taxpayers is not a thing of the past. On June 4, 1996, Wisconsin voters threw Republican state senator George Petak out of office. The reason: Petak had promised voters he wouldn't vote to raise sales taxes to fund a new stadium for the Milwaukee Brewers baseball team, but at the last minute he changed his mind and voted for the tax. Voters were so angry they forced a recall election and voted Petak out of office.

THINK THROUGH HISTORY
A. Summarizing
How did the colonists respond to the Stamp Act?

made cloth designed to show colonists' determination to boycott British-made cloth. Housewives also boycotted British tea and exchanged recipes for tea made from birch bark and sage.

Conflict intensified in June 1768. British agents in Boston seized the *Liberty*, a ship belonging to local merchant John Hancock. The customs inspector claimed that Hancock had smuggled in a shipment of wine from Madeira and had failed to pay the customs taxes. The seizure triggered riots against customs agents. In response, the British stationed 4,000 troops in Boston to curb the violence—one soldier for every four citizens. This show of force led the colonists one step closer to revolution.

THINK THROUGH HISTORY
B. Forming Opinions Do you think the colonists' reaction to the seizing of the *Liberty* was justified?

Tension Mounts in Massachusetts

The presence of British soldiers in Boston's streets charged the air with hostility. The city soon erupted in bloody clashes between British soldiers and colonists and later in a daring tea protest, all of which pushed the colonists and Britain closer to war.

THE BOSTON MASSACRE One sore point was the competition for jobs between colonists and poorly paid soldiers who looked for extra work in local shipyards during off-duty hours. On the cold afternoon of March 5, 1770, a fistfight broke out over jobs. That evening a mob gathered in front of the customhouse and taunted the guards. When Crispus Attucks and other dockhands appeared on the scene, an armed clash erupted, leaving Attucks and four others dead in the snow. Instantly, Samuel Adams and other agitators labeled this confrontation the **Boston Massacre**, thus presenting it as a British attack on defenseless citizens. Propaganda about the "massacre," including an engraving of the incident by colonist Paul Revere (shown below), inflamed Massachusetts colonists as nothing had before.

Despite strong feelings on both sides, the political atmosphere relaxed somewhat during the next three years. Lord Frederick North, the new minister, realized that the Townshend Acts were costing more to enforce than they would ever bring in: in their first year, the taxes raised only 295 pounds, while the cost of sending British troops to Boston was 170,000 pounds. North convinced Parliament to repeal the Townshend Acts, except for the tax on tea.

Tensions rose again in 1772 after a group of Rhode Island colonists attacked a British customs schooner that patrolled the coast for smugglers. The colonists boarded the vessel, which had accidentally run aground near Providence, and burned it to the waterline. In response, King George named a special commission to seek out the suspects and bring them to England for trial.

The plan to haul Americans to England for trial ignited widespread alarm. The assemblies of

Paul Revere's engraving of the Boston Massacre appeared in the *Boston Gazette* and was sold as a poster.



British Actions and Colonial Reactions, 1765–1775

1765 STAMP ACT

British Action

Britain passes the Stamp Act, a tax law requiring colonists to purchase special stamped paper for printed items.

Colonial Reaction

Colonists harass stamp distributors, boycott British goods, and prepare a Declaration of Rights and Grievances.

1767 TOWNSHEND ACTS

British Action

Britain taxes certain colonial imports and stations troops at major colonial ports to protect customs officers.

Colonial Reaction

Colonists protest "taxation without representation" and organize new boycott of imported goods.

1770 BOSTON MASSACRE

British Action

British troops stationed in Boston are taunted by an angry mob. The troops fire into the crowd, killing five men.

Colonial Reaction

Colonial agitators label the conflict a "massacre" and publish a dramatic engraving depicting the violence.

Massachusetts and Virginia set up **committees of correspondence** to communicate with other colonies about this and other threats to American liberties. By 1774, such committees formed a buzzing communication network linking leaders in nearly all the colonies.

THE BOSTON TEA PARTY Early in 1773, Lord North faced a new problem. The British East India Company, which held an official monopoly on tea imports, had been hit hard by the colonial boycotts. With its warehouses bulging with 17 million pounds of tea, the company was nearing bankruptcy. To save it, North devised the Tea Act, which granted the company the right to sell tea to the colonies free of the taxes that colonial tea sellers had to pay. This action cut colonial merchants out of the tea trade, because the East India Company could sell its tea directly to consumers for less. North hoped the American colonists would simply buy the cheaper tea; instead, they protested violently.

On the moonlit evening of December 16, 1773, a large group of Boston rebels disguised themselves as Native Americans and proceeded to take action against three British tea ships anchored in the harbor. John Andrews, an onlooker, wrote a letter on December 18, 1773, describing what happened.

A PERSONAL VOICE

They muster'd . . . to the number of about two hundred, and proceeded . . . to Griffin's wharf, where [the three ships] lay, each with 114 chests of the ill fated article . . . and before nine o'clock in the evening, every chest from on board the three vessels was knock'd to pieces and flung over the sides.

They say the actors were Indians from Narragansett. Whether they were or not, . . . they appear'd as such, being cloath'd in Blankets with the heads muffled, and copper color'd countenances, being each arm'd with a hatchet or axe. . . .

JOHN ANDREWS, quoted in 1776: *Journals of American Independence*

In this incident, later known as the **Boston Tea Party**, the "Indians" dumped 15,000 pounds of the East India Company's tea into the waters of Boston Harbor.

THE INTOLERABLE ACTS King George III was infuriated by this organized destruction of British property, and he pressed Parliament to act. In 1774, Parliament responded by passing a series of measures that colonists called the **Intolerable Acts**. One law shut down Boston Harbor because the colonists had refused to pay for the damaged tea. Another, the Quartering Act, authorized British commanders to house soldiers in vacant private homes and other buildings. In addition to these measures, General Thomas Gage, commander in chief of British forces in North America, was appointed the new governor of Massachusetts. To keep the peace, he placed Boston under **martial law**, or rule imposed by military forces.

King George hoped to isolate Massachusetts by singling it out for special punishment, but his actions only strengthened the colonies' unity. The committees of correspondence quickly moved into

This bottle contains tea that colonists threw into Boston Harbor during the Boston Tea Party.



A View of the Town of Concord, painted by an unknown artist, shows British troops drilling on the village green.



1773 TEA ACT

British Action

Britain gives the East India Company special concessions in the colonial tea business and shuts out colonial tea merchants.

Colonial Reaction

Colonists in Boston rebel, dumping 15,000 pounds of East India Company tea into Boston Harbor.

1774 INTOLERABLE ACTS

British Action

King George tightens control over Massachusetts by closing Boston Harbor and quartering troops.

Colonial Reaction

Colonial leaders form the First Continental Congress and draw up a declaration of colonial rights.

1775 LEXINGTON AND CONCORD

British Action

General Gage orders troops to march to Concord, Massachusetts, and seize colonial weapons.

Colonial Reaction

Minutemen intercept the British and engage in battle—first at Lexington, and then at Concord.

action and assembled the First Continental Congress. In September 1774, 56 delegates met in Philadelphia and drew up a declaration of colonial rights. They defended the colonies' right to run their own affairs. They supported the protests in Massachusetts and stated that if the British used force against the colonies, the colonies should fight back. They also agreed to reconvene in May 1775 if their demands weren't met.

THINK THROUGH HISTORY
C. Analyzing Motives What did King George set out to achieve when he disciplined Massachusetts?

Fighting Erupts at Lexington and Concord

After the First Continental Congress, colonists in many eastern New England towns stepped up military preparations. Minutemen, or civilian soldiers, quietly stockpiled firearms and gunpowder. General Gage soon learned about these activities. In the spring of 1775, he ordered troops to march from Boston to nearby Concord, Massachusetts, and seize illegal weapons.

Colonists in Boston were watching, and on the night of April 18, 1775, Paul Revere, William Dawes, and Samuel Prescott rode out to spread word that 700 British troops were headed for Concord. The darkened countryside rang with church bells and gunshots—prearranged signals, sent from town to town, that the British were coming.

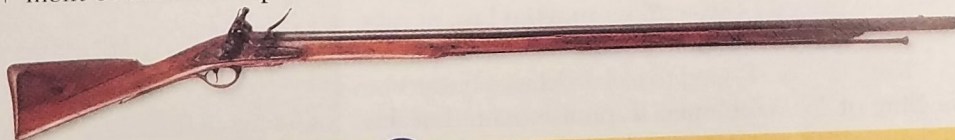
The king's troops reached Lexington, Massachusetts, five miles short of Concord, on the cold, windy dawn of April 19. As they neared the town, they saw 70 minutemen drawn up in lines on the village green. The British commander ordered the minutemen to leave, and the colonists began to move out without laying down their muskets. Then someone fired, and the British soldiers sent a volley of shots into the departing militia. Eight minutemen were killed and nine more were wounded, but only one British soldier was injured. The Battle of Lexington lasted only 15 minutes.

The British marched on to Concord, where they found an empty arsenal. After a brief skirmish with minutemen, the British soldiers lined up to march back to Boston, but the march quickly became a slaughter. Between 3,000 and 4,000 minutemen had assembled by now, and they fired on the marching troops from behind stone walls and trees. British soldiers fell by the dozen. Only the arrival of reinforcements from Boston saved them from complete disaster.

Bloodied and humiliated, the remaining British soldiers made their way back to Boston that night. By the next evening the surrounding hills were dotted with campfires over which salt pork and johnnycakes were cooking. Colonists had become enemies of Britain and now held Boston and its encampment of British troops under siege.

THINK THROUGH HISTORY
D. Forming Opinions Do you think the British underestimated the colonists in 1770–1775?

The “brown Bess” musket was a popular gun during the early days of the war. Although it was highly inaccurate from a distance, it could be reloaded quickly and was deadly at close range.



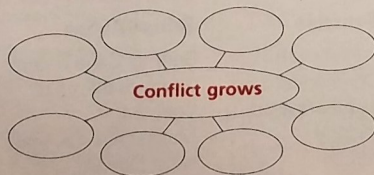
Section 1 Assessment

1. TERMS & NAMES

Identify:

- Stamp Act
- Samuel Adams
- Townshend Acts
- Boston Massacre
- committee of correspondence
- Boston Tea Party
- King George III
- Intolerable Acts
- martial law

2. SYNTHESIZING Create a cluster diagram like the one shown and fill it in with events that demonstrate the conflict between Great Britain and the American colonies.



Choose one event to further explain in a paragraph.

3. HYPOTHESIZING What opinion might a British soldier have had about the Boston Massacre? Explain and support your response.

THINK ABOUT

- the start of the conflict on March 5, 1770
- the behavior of Crispus Attucks and other colonists
- the use of the event as propaganda

4. FORMING AN OPINION

Explain whether you think the British government acted wisely in its dealings with the colonies between 1765 and 1775. Support your explanation with examples from the text.

THINK ABOUT

- the reasons for British actions
- the reactions of colonists
- the results of British actions