

DBQ: Who Caused the American Revolution?



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Document 1

That this kingdom has the sovereign, the supreme legislative power over America, is granted. It cannot be denied; and taxation is a part of that sovereign power. It is one branch of the legislation. . . . Protection and obedience are reciprocal. Great Britain protects America, America is bound to yield [give] obedience. If not, tell me when the Americans were emancipated? When they want the protection of this kingdom, they are always ready to ask it. That protection has always been afforded them in the most full and ample manner. The nation has run itself into an immense debt to give them this protection; and now they are called upon to contribute a small share to the public expense.

—George Grenville, Member of Parliament (January 14, 1766)

- 1a) According to Grenville, why does Great Britain have a large debt? Who should help pay that debt?

- 1b) Why does Parliament have the power to impose taxes on British colonies, according to Grenville?

- 1c) Why does this cause the American Revolution?

Document 2

If I was in any doubt, as to the right which the Parliament of Great Britain had to tax us without our consent, I should most heartily coincide with you in opinion, that to petition, and petition only, is the proper method to apply for relief; because we should then be asking a favor, and not claiming a right, which, by the law of nature and our constitution, we are, in my opinion, indubitably entitled to. I should even think it criminal to go farther than this, under such an idea; but none such I have. I think the Parliament of Great Britain hath no more right to put their hands into my pockets, without my consent, than I have to put my hands into yours for money; and this being already urged to them in a firm, but decent manner, by all the colonies, what reason is there to expect anything from their justice?

—George Washington, letter to Bryan Fairfax (July 20, 1774)

- 2a) Why does Washington believe that just asking the British government to reduce taxes is the wrong course of action?

2b) According to Washington, what is necessary for Parliament to pass taxes on the colonists?

2c) How is what Washington wrote about a cause of the American Revolution?

Document 3-The Boston Massacre

On March 5, 1770, a crowd of Boston boys and men surrounded a number of British soldiers and began taunting and cursing them while they pelted them with snowballs. Order quickly broke down, and the frightened soldiers fired into the crowd. When the shooting ended, several people were dead and more were wounded. This engraving by Paul

Revere, a leader of the Boston Sons of Liberty, was sent throughout the Colonies in the following weeks to arouse anti-British feelings.



3a) How does the engraving tell a different story from the above description of the Boston Massacre?

3b) Where do you suppose the term "massacre" came from that describes this event?

3c) How would this event be a cause of the American Revolution?

Document 4-The Quartering Act

Quartering Act (1764, 1775)

His majesty hereby requires the people to house and quarter his soldiers and officers in barracks provided by the colonies; and if there shall not be sufficient room in these barracks, then in such a case the soldiers must be housed in the quartered in the homes of the people in the colony. They are also required to do the following:

- Provide food for the troops
- Provide beer and wine for troops
- Provide bedding, utensils, candles and firewood for troops

4a) According to the Quartering Act, what were the colonists required to do?

4b) How would this be a cause of the American Revolution?

Document 5-The Proclamation of 1763

At the end of the Seven Years' War in 1763, France surrendered Canada and much of the Ohio and Mississippi valleys—two-thirds of eastern North America—to England. The Proclamation of 1763 “preserved to the said Indians” the lands west of the Appalachian Mountains and ordered white settlers “there forthwith to remove themselves from such Settlements,” forbade white settlement, and restricted commerce with the American Indians to traders licensed by the British government, requiring settlers to “take out a License for carrying on such Trade from the Governor or Commander in Chief of any of Our Colonies respectively.” Power over westward expansion was in the hands of British officials, outside the colonists' control. By preventing the colonial population from moving inland the British ministry hoped to avoid costly wars, protect the western fur trade, and keep western land speculation under the control of the crown. To enforce the proclamation, Britain authorized positioning 10,000 troops along the frontier, with the costs of 250,000 pounds sterling per year to be paid by the colonists. The Americans, who looked at the new land as an opportunity for settlement without the interference of the British government, resented the terms of the proclamation.

5a) In your own words, what is the Proclamation of 1763?

5b) Why did the British feel it was necessary to pass this act?

5c) How would this be a cause of the American Revolution?

Document 6-The Stamp Act

Below is an account from Mercy Otis Warren. One of the most prominent women authors of her time, Mercy Otis Warren was well situated to write a contemporary history of the American Revolution. She was at the center of major events of the period, and her marriage to General James Warren gave her contacts important to rendering this insider's fiercely egalitarian telling of the Revolution. Jefferson was one of the original subscribers of the work and corresponded with the author as her writing progressed. In ordering subscriptions of Warren's History for himself and his cabinet, Jefferson noted his anticipation of her truthful and insightful account of the last thirty years that "will furnish a more instructive lesson to mankind than any equal period known in history."

The project of an American taxation might have been longer meditated, but the memorable era of the stamp-act, in one thousand seven hundred and sixty-four, was the first innovation that gave general alarm throughout the continent. By this extraordinary act, a certain duty was to be levied on all bonds, bills of landing, public papers and writings of every kind, for the express purpose of raising revenue to the crown. As soon as this intelligence was transmitted to America, an universal murmur succeeded; and while the judicious and penetrating thought it time to make a resolute stand against the encroachments of power, the resentment of the lower classes broke out into such excesses of riot and tumult, as prevented the operation of the favorite project.The commissioners of the stamp office were everywhere compelled to renounce their employments and to make no further attempts to act in this obnoxious business.

6a) Summarize the Stamp Act. Be sure to include why Britain passed it and what was taxed because of the Stamp Act.

6b) How did the Stamp Act contribute as a cause of the American Revolution?

Document 7-The Tea Act

Tea Act 1773

An act to allow a drawback of the duties of customs on the exportation of tea to any of his Majesty's colonies or plantations in America; to increase the deposit on bohea tea to be sold at the India Company's sales; and to empower the commissioners of the treasury to grant licenses to the East India Company to export tea duty-free...forty shillings for every tub and for every chest of tea; and in case any such person or persons shall refuse or neglect to make such deposit within the time before limited, he, she, or they, shall forfeit and lose six times the value of such deposit directed to be made as aforesaid, to be recovered by action of debt,

7a) Describe the tea act.

7b) Why would the creation of the monopoly of the British East India Company anger colonists?

7c) How is the Tea Act a cause of the American Revolution?

Document 8-The Boston Tea Party

8a) How would the British react to the Boston Tea Party?

8b) The passage talks about a commander of the colonists conducting the Boston Tea Party. Who would this commander be?

8c) Why is the Boston Tea Party a major cause of the American Revolution?

"It was now evening, and I immediately dressed myself in the costume of an Indian, equipped with a small hatchet, which I and my associates denominated the tomahawk, with which, and a club, after having painted my face and hands with coal dust in the shop of a blacksmith, I repaired to Griffin's wharf, where the ships lay that contained the tea. When I first appeared in the street after being thus disguised, I fell in with many who were dressed, equipped and painted as I was, and who fell in with me and marched in order to the place of our destination. When we arrived at the wharf,..... They divided us into three parties, for the purpose of boarding the three ships which contained the tea at the same time.....We then were ordered by our commander to open the hatches and take out all the chests of tea and throw them overboard, and we immediately proceeded to execute his orders, first cutting and splitting the chests with our tomahawks, so as thoroughly to expose them to the effects of the water."

George Hewes was a member of the band of "Indians" that boarded the tea ships that evening. His recollection of the event was published some years later.

Document 9-The Intolerable Acts

The British called their responsive measures to the Boston Tea Party, the INTOLERABLE ACTS. Boston Harbor was closed to trade until the owners of the tea were compensated. Only food and firewood were permitted into the port. Town meetings were banned, and the authority of the royal governor was increased. British troops and officials would now be tried outside Massachusetts for crimes of murder.

This Town has received the Copy of an Act of the British Parliament, wherein it appears that we have been tried and condemned, and are to be punished, by the shutting up of the harbor and other marks of revenge, until we shall disgrace ourselves by servilely yielding up, in effect, the just and righteous claims of America....The people receive this cruel edict with abhorrence and indignation. They consider themselves as suffering the stroke ministerial...I hope they will sustain the blow with a becoming fortitude, and that the cursed design of intimidating and subduing the spirits of all America, will, by the joint efforts of all, be frustrated.

– Samuel Adams, letter to James Warren (May 14, 1774)

9a) Why would the colonists call these acts intolerable?

9b) Why would the Intolerable Acts be a cause of the American Revolution?

Document 10- The Declaration of Independence

On June 7, 1776, RICHARD HENRY LEE introduced a resolution to the Congress that declared the thirteen colonies "free and independent states." Congress did not act on the resolution immediately. A subcommittee of five, including Benjamin Franklin, John Adams and THOMAS JEFFERSON, was selected to choose the careful wording. Such a document must be persuasive to a great many parties. The five agreed that Jefferson was the most talented writer. They would advise on his prose.

When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.....

For Quartering large bodies of armed troops among us:

For protecting them, by a mock Trial, from punishment for any Murders which they should commit on the Inhabitants of these States:

For cutting off our Trade with all parts of the world:

For imposing Taxes on us without our Consent:

For depriving us in many cases, of the benefits of Trial by Jury:

For transporting us beyond Seas to be tried for pretended offences

10a) Who influenced Jefferson's idea of unalienable rights? (Hint-think background essay)

10b) How would King George react to reading this document?

10c) How is the Declaration of Independence a cause of the American Revolution?