

# The Stamp Act

**Background:** After winning the **French Indian War** in 1763, the British were in a lot of debt. They tried to raise money by taxing the American colonists. In March 1765, the British passed the **Stamp Act**. It went into effect on November 1, 1765. It placed a tax on all newspapers and other printed materials. **The Stamp Act** would have an effect on anyone who bought a printed item like a newspaper. Today, we're going to read primary documents and try to answer the focus questions:

## Why were colonists upset about the Stamp Act? Was the Stamp Act fair?

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### Document A: The Stamp Act written by British Parliament in 1765

A law for applying certain taxes on stamps, and other taxes, in the British colonies and plantations in America, towards further paying off the expenses of defending and protecting the British colonies and plantations in America. It is necessary that laws be made for raising further revenue inside of the King's colonies and put towards lessening the expenses of the crown. From and after the first day of November, one thousand seven hundred and sixty five, there will be raised, levied, collected and paid taxes to his Majesty, his children and successors, throughout the colonies and plantations in America which now are, and into the future, are under the dominion [ownership] of his Majesty, his children and successors.

*In your notebook answer the following questions **in complete sentences**.*

1. From what perspective was this document written, British or Colonists?

*This document was written...*

2. Why do the British believe that they should "raise revenue within the colonies"?

*The British believe that they should raise revenue within the colonies because...*

3. Do the British believe that the colonies belong to them? Which sentence tells you this?

**Document B: The Maryland Gazette written by Anonymous on Thursday, October 10, 1765**

EXPIRING: In Uncertain Hopes of a Resurrection to Life Again.

We are sorry, very sorry, to explain to the public in general, and our good customers in particular, that this GAZETTE will not any longer be published for reasons already given. It is true; the Gazette will live three more weeks, before the Dooms-Day [“the end of the world”], the dreadful First of November [the date that the Stamp Act went into effect]. As this paper completes the year with all of our old customers, as well as finishes the seven-year partnership between the printers, and Dooms-Day being near at Hand, it all ends now.

*In your notebook answer the following questions **in complete sentences**.*

4. What is the date on the document?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. What does the document say is happening to the newspaper? Why?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. What is significant about the November 1<sup>st</sup> date? What’s going to happen then?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
7. What is the author’s opinion of the Stamp Act? What evidence from the document supports your answer?

**Document C: George Grenville's Speech in the House of Commons, January 14, 1766 (*Grenville was the Prime Minister of Britain when the Stamp Act was passed in 1765*)**

**Parliament's Right to Tax the Colonies**

... That this kingdom has the sovereign [greatest authority], the supreme legislative [legal] power over America is granted. It cannot be denied; and taxation is a part of that sovereign power. It is one branch of legislation. It is, it has been exercised, over those who are not, who were never represented.

Protection and obedience are reciprocal. Great Britain protects America, America is bound to obey Great Britain. If not, tell me when the Americans were free? When they want the protection of this kingdom, they are always very ready to ask it. That protection has always been given to them. The nation has run itself into a lot of debt to give them this protection; and now they are called upon to give a small share towards the public good...

*In your notebook, answer the following questions in **complete sentences**.*

8. Who gave this speech? What was his position?
  
9. Who is the audience for Grenville's speech? How do you know?
  
10. What does Grenville say about Britain's power over America?
  
11. What is Grenville's opinion of the Stamp Act? What evidence from the speech supports your answer?

## Document D: Do Not Tax the Colonies

*In 1766, the British government asked Benjamin Franklin to explain the colonists' views on the Stamp Act to a committee.*

Q: What was the attitude of America toward Great Britain before the year 1763?

A: The best in the world. They submitted to the government of the crown, and paid, in their courts, obedience to the acts of Parliament

Q: In what light did the people of America use to consider the Parliament of Great Britain?

A: The causes such as the restraints laid on the ability of the colonies to trade. The prohibition of making paper money among themselves, and then demanding a new and heavy tax by stamps, taking away, at the same time, trials by juries and refusing to receive and hear petitions from colonists.

Q: What is now the pride of the colonists?

A: To wear their old clothes over again, till they can make new ones.

*In your notebook, answer the following questions in complete sentences.*

12. Who is asking the questions in this document? Who is answering them?
  
13. According to this document, how did the colonist feel about Britain before 1763? What evidence from the text supports your answer?
  
14. What made the colonists change their attitude towards Britain?
  
15. What is the author's opinion of the Stamp Act? What evidence from the document supports your answer?

### Concluding Questions

- A. Why were the colonists upset about the Stamp Act? Was the Stamp Act fair?
  
- B. Why would the Stamp Act create tension between the American colonists and the British?