

Pre-Visit Activity

Timeline: Causes of the Revolution

1763: End of the French and Indian War/ Seven Years War

Britain won this war against France and Spain, and became the major power in North America. The cost of fighting this war left the British treasury almost empty. Britain began taxing the colonies in America to pay for the cost of this war. The Colonists felt that that this was not fair; that they should not pay greater taxes than other Englishmen.

Phrases like "no taxation without representation" began to be popular in the Colonies.

1765: The Stamp Act

Parliament's first direct tax on the American colonies, this act, like those passed in 1764, was enacted to raise money for Britain. It taxed newspapers, almanacs, pamphlets, broadsides, legal documents, dice and playing cards. Issued by Britain, the stamps were affixed to documents or packages to show that the tax had been paid.

In response to this act and other taxes placed on the Colonists by Britain, threats of violence were made against tax collectors by groups of Colonists calling themselves the "Sons of Liberty".

Britain felt surprised and upset that its Colonists were unwilling to buy stamps, which was a common practice in Britain. Later in response to the threats from the Sons of Liberty, Britain repealed this tax in the Colonies in order to maintain peace and good relations.

1766-1767: The Townsend Acts

Despite the repeal of the Stamp Act the British government (King and Parliament) still had the right to tax its American colonies. Britain issued taxes on paper, lead, paint, imported glass and tea. The Colonists disagreed with being taxed by Britain and they banded together and agreed to an embargo on British goods. This embargo hurt people on both sides and cries were heard in both England and America to repeal the tax. After three years all of these taxes were repealed except for the tax on tea.

1767: The Quartering Act

This act stated that the Colonists must allow British soldiers to live in their homes.

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When soldiers began to arrive in 1768, the Colonists threw eggs, sticks, rocks, and snowballs at the soldiers; creating a tense situation between the citizens and soldiers.

1770: The Boston Massacre

A mob of Colonists began to taunt a British soldier on guard duty on a cold winter night. The taunting (name calling and shouting) became physical when the Colonists began to throw rocks and snowballs.

The lone soldier called for help, and when the other soldiers arrived one of them was hit in the face by a snowball. That soldier reacted by firing his musket into the crowd, in the confusion the other soldiers also began to fire into the crowd.

Ten Colonists were hit by the gunfire; five of them would die of their wounds. The nine soldiers were put on trial, but seven of them were found innocent because the court ruled that the mob had started the fight.

This was the first bloodshed between Britain and the Colonies.

1773: The Boston Tea Party

Although the earlier Townsend Acts had repealed the tax on most items there was still a tax on tea. The Colonists still did not want to pay any British imposed taxes but they did like to drink tea, so they purchased tea from Holland and boycotted English tea.

Purchasing tea from Holland was against the law and it was damaging to British tea merchants. The tea merchants complained to the King and Parliament about their losses. To help the merchants Parliament gave the East India Company the right to sell tea in the Colonies for less than the Dutch tea the Colonists were buying.

This angered the Colonial merchants who were selling the more expensive Dutch tea. They decided to protest and to prevent any English tea from being unloaded from ships into the Colonies. Some ships tried to unload the cheaper British tea and they were sent back to England with their tea still on board. In Boston, three ships loaded with tea refused to sail back to England before they unloaded their tea. They sat in Boston Harbor for a number of weeks. On a cold night in December, the colonists decided to do something about the tea. Men, disguised as Mohawk Indians climbed on board the ships and threw 342 chests of English tea into the harbor.

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1774: The Port Act or the Intolerable Act

King George III of England was unhappy with the Colonists for refusing to pay tax on English tea and throwing the tea into Boston's Harbor. He retaliated by closing Boston Harbor. The British Navy blockaded the harbor and ships were not allowed to enter or leave. Boston's citizens relied on the ships traveling in and out of the harbor and many lost their jobs when the port was closed.

The King's blockade of Boston's harbor had an unexpected effect. All of the colonies decided that the King was wrong to close Boston's port and starve its citizens. They began to send supplies to Boston; rice, sheep, money and clothing were all sent to the city by land so that Boston's people could eat and stay warm. This was the first time that the Colonies had worked so closely together, they became a team.

1774: The Maryland Tea Party

This action was similar to the tea party in Boston the previous year.

In October, the Peggy Stewart, a ship loaded with more than a ton of British tea was sitting in the Annapolis Harbor. A group of men approached the owner of the ship, Mr. Stewart, and told him to sign a statement that it had been wrong to bring British tea into the colony and that he would destroy his tea. Mr. Stewart afraid of the men, burned his whole ship instead of just the tea.

1775: The Battles of Lexington and Concord

Two of the men that were the most outspoken for Colonial independence were Samuel Adams and John Hancock from Massachusetts. The British wanted to capture them and put them on trial for treason against the King. The British were also concerned that in many small towns Colonists were hiding guns and ammunition in case of a war with England. The British decided to send soldiers to take these guns and munitions.

In April, a British military force of 700 men marched out of Boston toward the town of Concord, ten miles away. Between Boston and Concord lay a town called Lexington. This was the town in which John Hancock and Samuel Adams were staying. A man named Paul Revere rode to Lexington to warn them and to have the colonial militia, known as Minutemen prepared for the British soldiers.

When the British arrived at Lexington they were confronted with almost 80 colonial Minutemen standing before them. A gunshot from an unknown gun was fired and the British shot two volleys into the Minutemen. Eight Minutemen were

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killed and ten were wounded without a single British soldier hurt. The British then continued toward Concord.

When the British arrived they did not find any weapons or munitions hidden but they did find hundreds of colonial farmers with weapons. More gunfire broke out and more farmers fell but this time the farmers fired back. Some British soldiers fell, both dead and wounded. The British began to retreat but the farmers followed them and kept up steady gunfire. Many British were killed and wounded in this retreat. Almost 80 British soldiers died along with 50 colonials.

This was the start of the American Revolution.

Vocabulary:

England/ Britain/Great Britain: are all different names for the same nation

British/English: are different names for the same group of people (citizens of England/Britain/Great Britain)

repeal: to rescinded or take away the authority to do something

embargo: government order prohibiting the movement of merchant ships into or out of its ports

harbor: port

blockade: to block movement into or out of an area

munitions: war material, especially weapons and ammunition

retaliate: make a counterattack; return like for like

Minutemen: an armed man pledged to be ready to fight on a minute's notice

boycott: a group's refusal to do business with some organization in protest against its policies

Loyalists/Tories: Colonists who, during the period of the American Revolution, favored the British side

Patriots: Colonists who, during the period of the American Revolution, opposed the British