

COULD THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION HAVE BEEN AVOIDED?

OBJECTIVES

- To understand Britain's interest in economic and political centralization of its expanded empire after 1763.
- To contrast the rise of individualism and the development of representative government in the colonies in the seventeenth century with the class-based society in Britain.
- To appreciate missed opportunities for peaceful resolution to differences between Great Britain and her North American colonies during the period 1763–1776.
- To understand the influence of economic, political, ethnic and religious differences on the thinking of leaders in the various North American colonies regarding the relationship of the colonies and Britain.

CORRELATIONS WITH NATIONAL HISTORY STANDARDS

Era Two

Standard 2A

The student understands the roots of representative government and how political rights were defined.

- Explain the concept of the "rights of Englishmen" and the impact of the English Civil War and the Glorious Revolution on the colonies.
- Analyze how gender, property ownership, religion, and legal status affected political rights.
- Explain the social, economic and political tensions that led to violent conflicts between the colonists and their governments.
- Explain how the conflicts between legislative and executive branches contributed to the development of representative government.

Era Two

Standard 2B

The student understands religious diversity in the colonies and how ideas about religious freedom evolved.

- Explain the impact of the Great Awakening on colonial society.

Era Three

Standard 1A

The student understands the causes of the American Revolution.

- Explain the consequences of the Seven Years War and the overhaul of English imperial policy following the Treaty of Paris in 1763.

- Compare the arguments advanced by defenders and opponents of the new imperial policy in the traditional rights of English people and the legitimacy of asking the colonies to pay a share of the costs of empire.
- Reconstruct the chronology of the critical events leading to the outbreak of armed conflict between the American colonies and England.
- Analyze political, ideological, religious and economic origins of the Revolution.
- Reconstruct the arguments among patriots and loyalists about independence and draw conclusions about how the decision to declare independence was reached.

OVERVIEW

The origins of the American Revolution involved both internal and external areas of dispute. Externally the colonists differed with the British King, his ministers and the British Parliament over the extent of Parliament's authority in British North America. Internally, the various groups of colonists argued among themselves over how to respond to those acts of the British government that they saw as dangerous exertions of imperial power that seemed to threaten American interests and ideology. This case study examines the causes of the war and includes two historical role-plays. The first focuses on the divisions among the colonists at the First Continental Congress in the fall of 1774. The second focuses on the debate between the American colonies and the British Crown in 1775. The conflicting issues include economic, political, and ideological differences.

This lesson includes two activities:

- A Mock Mediation among colonists at the First Continental Congress in 1774
- A Mock Negotiation between Britain (Lord North) and the colonies (Benjamin Franklin) in 1775.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Britain's North American colonies had grown dramatically in population and commerce during the first half of the 18th century. Boston, New York and Philadelphia blossomed from small villages into thriving commercial centers. As the cities grew, the view of society as functioning for the common good collided with the growing commercial ethic—individual pursuit of profit—as well as the search for additional land by farmers and speculators. The growing American emphasis on individualism derived from intellectual and religious trends as well as political developments in the colonies. A largely secular Enlightenment ideology rejected pessimistic notions of innate human depravity in favor of an emphasis on a human rationality and progress. The Great Awakening, a series of religious revivals that swept through the colonies from the backcountry to the cities between the 1720s and 1760s, challenged the authority of established ministers and emphasized the ability of individuals to achieve salvation through their own actions. The Great Awakening split many of the congregations and ultimately helped to promote religious pluralism among the multitude of religious denominations in America, particularly the Anglican, Congregational, Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist, and Dutch Reformed churches. The growing American emphasis on individualism helped form the basis for political thinking and action in the colonies as the eighteenth century progressed.

Central authority was also facing growing challenges in the colonial governments, where locally elected legislatures bridled against royal governors and their appointed councils. By the 1730s, royal governments had replaced the proprietary governments in Virginia, Massachusetts, New York, New Jersey, South Carolina and North Carolina. Elected colonial assemblies or legislatures, originally thought of as advisory bodies, reflected the

interests of their electorates and challenged the authority of the royal governors. Whig or "republican" ideology, inherited from dissidents in England and spread by colonial newspapers, emphasized the importance of locally elected legislatures to check executive authority.

The Treaty of Paris (1763), which ended the Seven Years War between England and France (known in the colonies as the French and Indian War), gave Britain title to French Canada, and France's other mainland North American possessions east of the Mississippi River, as well as Spanish Florida. The British victory was immense: it ended France's presence in North America and established a far-flung British empire that extended from North America to the Indian subcontinent.

The colonists in British America had participated in the war as adjunct soldiers and suppliers to British troops. They took enormous pride in Britain's triumph, but the war left them debt-ridden and weakened by the loss of lives. Boston alone lost almost 700 men out of a total population of less than 16,000. The members of the colonial assemblies, which by 1763 were handling a considerable portion of the colonies' internal affairs, assumed that Britain would allow them to determine and protect their constituents' interests after the war. Now that French Canada and Spanish Florida had passed into British hands, the colonists were less dependent on British military strength for protection against those traditional Continental European, Catholic enemies. In spite of the postwar economic recession, the elimination of hostile neighbors offered the British North American colonies unprecedented opportunities for economic growth and expansion.

The Seven Years War left England staggering under an immense war debt. In the spring of 1763, when George Grenville became chief minister to Britain's 25-year-old King George III, the British national debt stood at about 130 million pounds, twice what it had been before the war. Annual interest on the debt accounted for a large part of the burden on British taxpayers. Moreover, the costs of maintaining an empire were rising. After the war, the London government decided to establish a more consistent, centralized administration over its far-flung possessions. In addition to establishing and maintaining governments in its new colonies, Britain decided to keep an army to police Canada, keep peace over America's western frontier between the land-hungry colonists and the Indians and maintain British authority over the sometimes unruly residents of its older North American colonies. To reduce the debt, Grenville proposed new taxes in England and in the colonies. Since the colonists had been major beneficiaries of the war, Grenville argued that they could at least help shoulder the costs of the peacetime army.

Many colonists, however, were suspicious of a British standing army in the colonies in peacetime. It revived fears of military despots like Caesar in Rome and Cromwell in Britain. The colonists also questioned the use of the British Army to protect Indian territories. The Royal Proclamation of 1763 defined the area "beyond the Heads or Sources of any of the Rivers which fall into the Atlantic Ocean" as lands for Indian Nations or tribes. This prohibited the colonists from settling west of the Appalachian Mountains and authorized the British Army to stay in the colonies to enforce it. (See Document 1: The Proclamation of 1763.) The colonists not only objected to the prohibition against moving west but also suspected that Britain intended to use the army to help collect taxes and customs duties and assure submission to the Mother Country.

Grenville pushed through Parliament several revenue-raising measures, including the Sugar Act. In the past, customs duties had been designed to regulate trade, and particularly to encourage colonists to trade primarily with Britain and other British colonies. The preamble to this act, however, stated that it was intended to raise revenues. The act reduced the tax on molasses imported from the non-British West Indies and increased enforcement against smuggling. The colonists argued that strict enforcement of the new tax would be costly to them and, by ending the complex exchanges based on molasses, would hurt the economic interests of both colonies and Mother Country. Many of the colonial legislatures protested the act, but only New York made a constitutional objection that, since the Sugar Act was designed to raise revenues, it was a tax that violated the rights of overseas English subjects who were not represented in the British House of Commons.



Proclamation Line of 1763

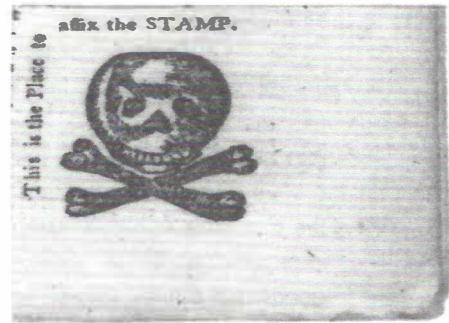
Grenville also announced his intention to extend to America stamp duties similar to those already imposed in England. He gave the colonies a year to suggest alternative ways of raising revenue. The colonies strenuously objected to the proposed stamp duties, which would be the first direct tax leveled by Parliament on the colonists. The House of Commons refused to receive the colonial petitions and, in 1765, Parliament passed the new Stamp Act, which required revenue stamps on every newspaper, pamphlet, almanac, legal document, liquor license, college diploma, pack of playing cards, and pair of dice. These new taxes fell particularly hard on the more articulate groups of colonial society—lawyers, publishers, and tavern owners (who were often at the social and political center of colonial life). Instead of trial by local jury, those accused of violating the Stamp Act would be tried in Vice-Admiralty Courts without juries.

Colonies Respond to the Stamp Act

The Virginia assembly, the House of Burgesses, was the first to react to the news of the Stamp Act in April 1765. Virginians were already distressed because of a severe decline in the price of tobacco, their main crop. Patrick Henry, a 29-year-old, fiery lawyer newly elected from a frontier county, asserted that the colonists held all of the rights and privileges of Englishmen and that Virginia's General Assembly had "the only and sole exclusive right and power to lay taxes and impositions upon the inhabitants of this Colony." In August, Bostonians found an effigy of Andrew Oliver, stamp distributor for the Massachusetts Bay Colony, hanging from a tree at the south end of town. The next day, the stamp distributor asked to be relieved of his commission. Another Boston "mob" attacked the homes of officials connected with the Admiralty Court and Customs Service, totally destroying the home of Lt. Governor Thomas Hutchinson. An uprising against the Stamp Act in Newport, Rhode Island, led to

several days of uncontrolled rioting. Soon stamp distributors in one colony after another were resigning. This essentially nullified the Stamp Act, since if no one distributed stamps, no one could buy or use them.

In October 1765, nine colonies sent representatives to a Stamp Act Congress in New York in an effort to join forces in seeking repeal of the Stamp Act. Only once before, at the Albany Congress in 1754, had the colonies sent representatives to consult with each other on common concerns. The Congress expressed its strong sense of "affection and duty" to the King and his government, but stated that the colonists had all the rights of subjects who lived within Great Britain, including the right to be taxed only with their consent, which could only be given by their provincial legislatures since the colonists could not be represented in the House of Commons. (See Document 2: Declarations of the Stamp Act Congress.)



The Colonists' View of the Stamp Act

Formally organized resistance groups, called the "Sons of Liberty," threatened to prevent the British from using the royal army to enforce the Stamp Act. The Sons of Liberty were composed mostly of the "middling" orders of colonial society, including tradesmen, artisans and some ship captains, and some poorer orders. They argued that the Stamp Act was "unconstitutional," and, therefore, did not have to be obeyed. Public pressure forced many customs officers and court officials to open the ports and courts for business and printers to publish newspapers, and the Stamp Act never went into effect.

Meanwhile in Great Britain . . .

In 1766, the British Parliament debated the American colonists' reaction to the Stamp Act. Most of the members found the colonists' views outrageous. They argued that the supremacy of Parliament, that is, the King, the House of Lords and the House of Commons acting together, was a governing principle of British politics since the Glorious Revolution of 1688, and that members of Parliament considered the interests of all British people everywhere, not just those of their constituents. Therefore, the colonists were "virtually represented" in Parliament and so could be rightfully taxed. The concept of virtual representation made little sense to the colonists who were used to a system of real or direct representation, under which representatives spoke for their local constituents and were sometimes even instructed by their constituents how to vote on certain issues.

Faced with vigorous opposition from the colonies, Parliament recognized that there was no point in trying to enforce the Stamp Act. Not only was American opposition virtually universal, but also colonial merchants had enforced non-importation agreements so successfully that American purchases of certain British goods had been substantially reduced. The North American colonies were Britain's major overseas market. The affected British manufacturers and their unemployed workers did not suffer in silence. In the spring of 1766, Parliament voted to repeal the Stamp Act, but first passed a Declaratory Act that asserted Parliament's power to enact laws that bound the colonies in "all cases whatsoever," thus maintaining the principle of Parliamentary supremacy. (See Document 3: The Declaratory Act, 1766.)

By then Grenville was out of office. In 1767, the new ministry introduced new revenue-raising import duties on paper, lead, painters' colors, and tea, known as the Townshend duties, after Charles Townshend, the King's Chancellor of the Exchequer (or Treasury). The funds raised were to be used to pay for the administration of justice, the support of civil government and for defense.

five people in what the Boston "patriots" publicized as "The Boston Massacre." Bowing to furious popular reaction recently appointed royal governor Thomas Hutchinson ordered the British troops removed to a fortress at Boston Harbor and arrested the commanding officer and the soldiers involved in the "Massacre."



Paul Revere's Engraving of the Boston Massacre, 1770
 (You may want your students to consider the accuracy or propaganda value of this image)

As a result of the colonial non-importation agreements, the Townshend duties failed miserably, bringing into the treasury less than 21,000 pounds by 1770 while costing British businesses 700,000 pounds in lost sales. After George III appointed Lord North as his chief minister (this was before the establishment of the office of Prime Minister) in 1770, the new government asked Parliament to repeal all of the Townshend duties except the one on tea, which was kept to show that Parliament had the right to tax the colonies.

From 1770 to 1772, relative quiet descended over colonial relations. But in 1772, the Crown created a new furor by announcing that it would pay the salaries of the royal governor and superior court judges in Massachusetts, removing that responsibility from the provincial legislature. Even though the measure would have saved the colony money, it was seen as a dangerous precedent because it undermined a right stated in the colony's charter and it made officials beholden to London. Boston's Town Meeting appointed a Committee of Correspondence "to state the rights of the colonists . . . and to communicate and publish the same to the several towns and to the world." By the end of 1772, eighty other Massachusetts towns had created committees of correspondence and other provincial assemblies began to appoint such committees to keep contact with each other.

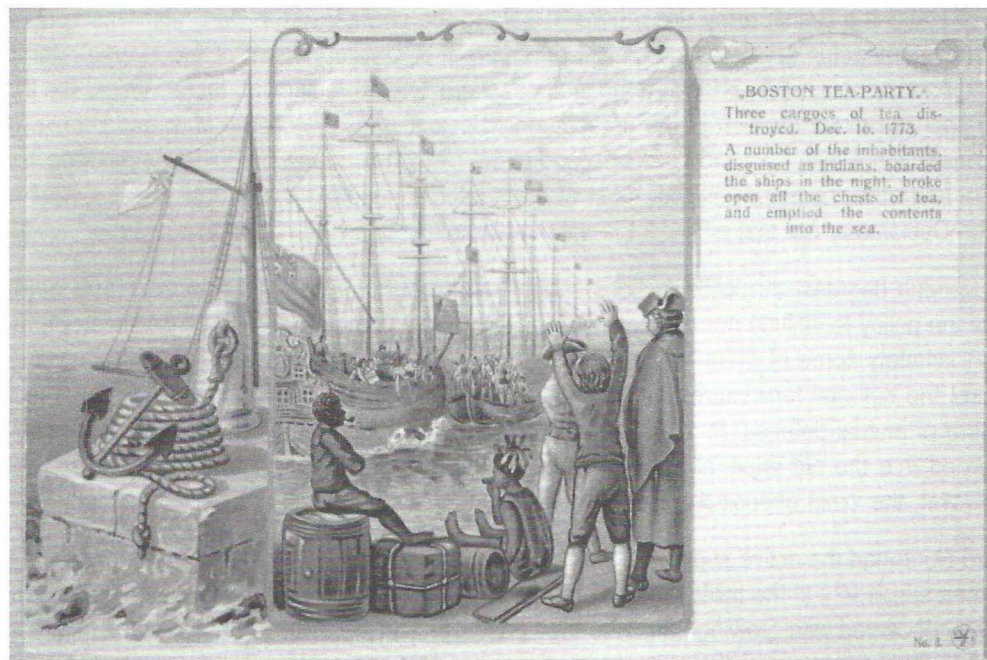
In early 1773, Parliament enacted the Tea Act, which enabled the near-bankrupt East India Company to sell its surplus tea in America and Ireland at a reduced price through its own agents rather than through private merchants. Parliament refused to remove the remaining Townshend tax on tea, which would be collected directly by East India Company agents in America. Even with that tax, Parliament reasoned, the East Indian Company's tea could undersell smuggled Dutch tea, give the Americans cheaper tea, the crown a modest revenue, and the East India Company a new lease on life. Again, Parliament misjudged the American colonists, who interpreted the act as an effort to trick them into paying the remaining Townshend duty, and to accept implicitly Parliament's right to tax them. Colonial tea merchants, many of whom had been flagrantly smuggling tea from Holland, also denounced the new act for giving the East India Company a monopoly on the American tea market. They predicted that other monopolies would follow, squeezing American merchants from profitable lines of trade.

The colonists were able to mobilize effective resistance to the landing of tea at most major ports. In New York, a committee met the incoming tea ship and persuaded the captain to go back to England without unloading the tea and so preventing payment of the import tax. But in Boston, the tea ships were inadvertently allowed to enter the harbor, which meant that, unless they had official clearances, they could not leave without risking seizure by the Royal Navy for violating British customs laws. On December 16, 1773, the day before the tea became subject to seizure, 5,000 Bostonians packed the Old South Church and dispatched a final request to the governor, Thomas Hutchinson. But Hutchinson, whose sons were agents for the East India Company, would not be swayed. At nightfall, the meeting dissolved and a group of men, some of whom were dressed as Indians, boarded the tea ships, opened the 342 chests of tea and dumped 10,000 pounds worth of East India Company tea into the Boston Harbor. The event, remembered as "The Boston Tea Party," elicited enormous delight in otherwise cautious patriots like John Adams, in part because the violence was so successfully limited.

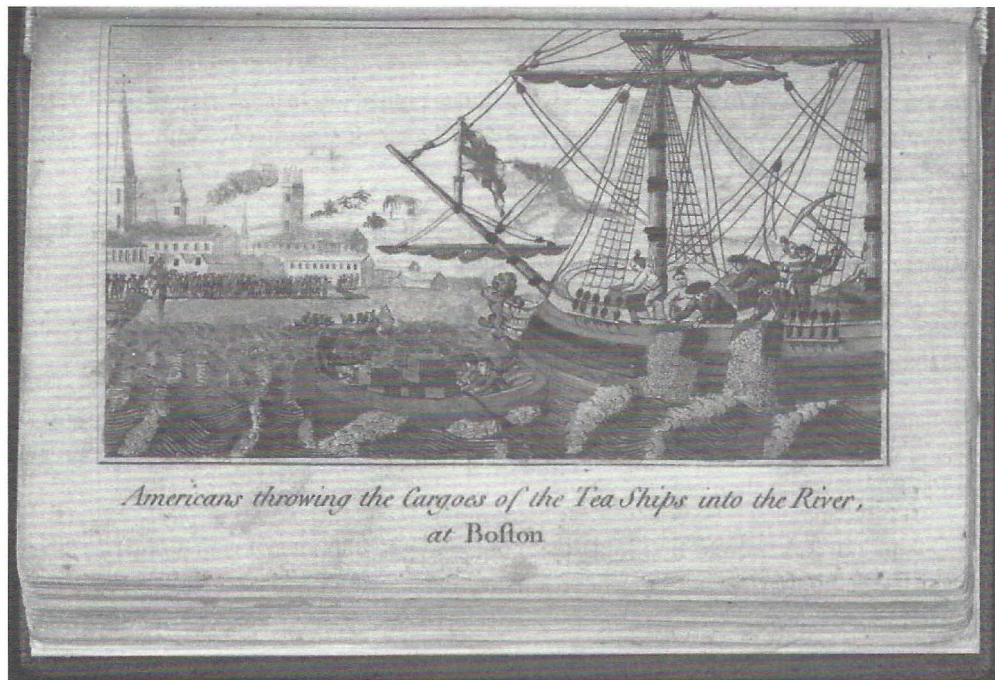
British response to the Boston Tea Party: The Coercive Acts

The Crown viewed the Boston Tea Party as a direct rebuke of British authority. Lord North called the Bostonians "fanatics" and stated that the dispute was no longer about taxes but about whether England had any authority over the colonies. "We must master them or totally leave them to themselves and treat them as aliens," King George III declared. The British Parliamentary system was in transition in the eighteenth century. The cabinet system with its prime minister was emerging. Yet the monarch still played an active role in government, choosing and dismissing government ministers as he wished, although sometimes Parliament could force action upon him. But he could dissolve Parliament, and he could and did use his considerable patronage power to secure a new Parliament more to his liking. Factionalism, differences over policies at home and abroad and relations with the crown contributed to a turnover of four different ministries between 1763 and 1770, when George III finally established under Frederick, Lord North, a ministry that could sustain itself in Parliament.

George III's outdated conception of the crown's role encouraged a movement among the factions (not yet a political party) in Parliament who called themselves Whigs to reduce the king's power and also to reform the corrupt and unrepresentative political system of election to Parliament. These Whig factions--foremost among them the earl of Rockingham, Edmund Burke, William Pitt, and the radical John Wilkes--opposed the King's



American Version of Boston Tea Party, engraved in 1784



British Version of Boston Tea Party, engraved in 1789

coercive policy toward the American colonies although they supported the idea of having the colonies pay for part of the cost of stationing British army units there to defend the empire. Pitt in particular was popular with the mercantile and manufacturing interests, political reformers and the supporters of the overseas empire in the Americas and Asia. Although they endorsed the idea of sovereignty of Parliament, these Whigs, like the colonists themselves, opposed direct taxation of the unrepresented colonists as a violation of a fundamental principle of the British constitution. While they had been opposed to the stamp tax, many had initially supported Townshend's duties on tea and other commodities, but most of them later abandoned these duties. Yet almost all of them supported the Declaratory Act that affirmed the supremacy of the British Parliament.

To varying degrees, the Whig factions sought reform at home, reduction of the king's patronage and expansion of the policy to include non-Anglicans, and they sought compromise and conciliation with the colonies in America. Ultimately some of them—with Burke and Pitt in the lead—were willing to accept the Continental Congress and the colonial legislatures as the legitimate bodies to tax the American colonists, including the colonies' share of mutual defense. In 1775, as war neared, Burke, for example, denounced the possible use of force and urged that the old imperial connection be restored on the basis of trust, consent and mutual self-interest. However, the Whig opposition, often divided among itself, remained a distinct minority in Parliament.

Lord North had the active support of the king and particularly of the conservative aristocracy and landed gentry and their supporters in the military, the professions, and the Anglican clergy, who would later form the Tory Party. Already concerned with growing threats to their privileges and authority in Britain, many members of these groups reacted vigorously to what they saw as challenges to law and order, property, and authority in America. Many who had served in military or civilian positions in America during the French and Indian War had little respect for the Americans, whom they considered greedy, rebellious, and ungrateful--seeking the benefits of belonging to the British empire without being willing to share its burdens. Thus, they supported a coercive policy against the Americans as they had against English radicals like John Wilkes. So great were the king's influence and the outrage among the propertied classes that the House of Commons adopted the Coercive Acts by overwhelming majorities.

Despite the opposition of William Pitt and Edmund Burke, both of whom were sympathetic to the Americans but were in the minority, Parliament passed the "Coercive Acts," a set of stern laws to punish the Massachusetts Bay Colony (See Document 4: The Coercive Acts, 1774):

1. The Boston Port Act, effectively closed the Port of Boston to commerce, forcing large numbers of Bostonians out of work, until the city agreed to pay for the destroyed tea.
2. The Massachusetts Government Act, annulled the colony's 1691 charter by allowing the Crown to appoint the colony's upper house, thus reducing popular participation.
3. The Administration of Justice Act, allowed Crown officers in Massachusetts who were accused of committing a capital offense in the course of putting down a riot or executing the revenue acts to be tried in British rather than colonial courts.
4. A new Quartering Act, allowed British troops to be quartered in homes, taverns or other private dwellings, first felt in Massachusetts where a heavy contingent of additional troops were brought back into Boston.

The King's ministers hoped that these measures would punish Massachusetts, divide the colonies, and send a warning to the other provinces to accept Parliament's power. Instead the "Coercive Acts" pushed the colonies together. The Americans called them the "Intolerable Acts," and included the Quebec Act, by which Parliament defined a permanent civil government for the formerly-French Canadian colony, extended Quebec's boundaries to include all territory west of the Appalachians and north of the Ohio River, and provided religious tolerance for Catholics, all to the outrage of the American colonists.

Colonial Reaction to the "Coercive/Intolerable Acts"—The First Continental Congress

When news of the Boston Port Act arrived in May 1774, Boston's town meeting dispatched a circular letter to all the colonies urging an immediate end to trade with England and the British West Indies. The proposal met resistance, particularly from merchants who had enough of non-importation agreements and thought that the Bostonians had gone too far by destroying the tea. But popular sentiment was stirred up as it had not been since the time of the Stamp Act. A call for a meeting of delegates from all of the colonies won ready and widespread support.

Fifty-five delegates from all of the colonies except Georgia came to Carpenters Hall (later Independence Hall) in Philadelphia from September 5 through October 26, 1774, to attend the (First) Continental Congress. The delegates had been elected by regular legislatures or by extra-legal assemblies, including conventions or congresses and, sometimes, county meetings. The provincial delegates were generally empowered "to consult and advise" with other delegates, as Connecticut instructed "on proper measures for advancing the best good of the colonies." (See Document 5: Instructions by the Virginia Convention to their Delegates, July 1774.)

Peyton Randolph, speaker of the Virginia House of Burgesses, was elected as the presiding officer or president. Charles Thomson, from Pennsylvania, was chosen to be secretary. Ignoring an eloquent plea by Patrick Henry of Virginia (one of the richest and most populous colonies) that votes be proportional to each colony's population and wealth, the delegates agreed that each colony would have one vote. If a delegation was evenly divided, the colony's vote would not count. The Congress voted to appoint a committee to state the rights of the colonies, the instances in which they had been violated, and the "means most proper...for obtaining a restoration to them" and another committee to examine Parliament's laws affecting colonial trade and manufacturing.

The Congress had no more than finished these preliminaries when it received a report that General Thomas Gage, British military commander and Massachusetts governor, had attempted to seize military supplies the colonists had stockpiled near Boston and, after being opposed, bombarded Boston from warships in the harbor. The story turned out to be untrue, but it affected the Congress's mood nonetheless.

A few days later, on September 16th, Paul Revere, an express rider from Massachusetts, delivered to the Congress the radical "resolves" of town representatives in Suffolk County, Massachusetts, which had met earlier that month to discuss the volatile situation with Britain. The so-called "Suffolk Resolves," drafted by Samuel Adams' lieutenant, Dr. Joseph Warren: 1) declared the Coercive Acts unconstitutional and therefore not to be obeyed; 2) urged the people to form their own government which would collect taxes and withhold taxes from the royal government until the Coercive Acts were repealed; 3) advised the people to arm and form their own militia; and 4) recommended strict economic sanctions against Britain. (see Document 6: Suffolk Resolves.) The Congress debated whether to support these resolves.

On September 28th, Joseph Galloway, a conservative delegate from Pennsylvania, suggested that the problem between Britain and the colonies arose because of defects in the current constitutional system. He proposed a new "Plan of Union" with Great Britain whereby the central administration would consist of a president-general appointed by the king, holding office at the king's pleasure, with a veto power over a Grand Council. The members of the Grand Council would be chosen for three-year terms by the assemblies of each province. The president-general and Council would constitute an "inferior and distinct" branch of the British Parliament. Measures dealing with America could originate with the Grand Council or with Parliament. Each would have a veto over the other. Galloway's Plan was an early version of the "Dominion System" which Britain would later establish with colonies such as Canada in the mid-19th century. (See Document 7: Joseph Galloway's "Plan of Union.")

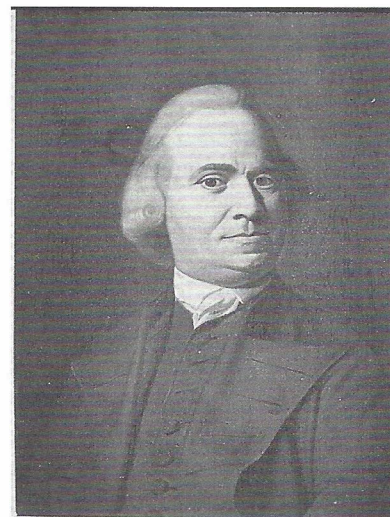
ACTIVITY ONE: MOCK MEDIATION AT A CONGRESSIONAL CAUCUS

The delegates to the First Continental Congress have been meeting for three weeks at Carpenter's Hall in Philadelphia to decide how to respond to the "Intolerable Acts." They have received the Suffolk Resolves from Massachusetts and a proposal for "A Plan of Union" with Britain from Joseph Galloway of Pennsylvania.

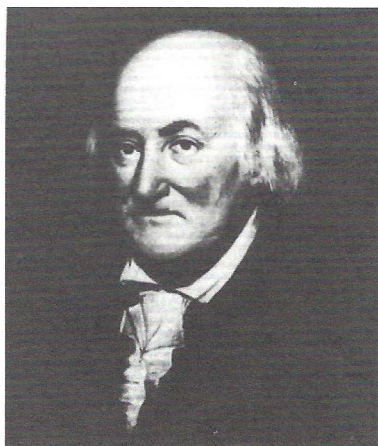
We are going to roleplay a hypothetical "caucus" or small group meeting of some of the delegates to the Congress, mediated by Peyton Randolph, president of the Continental Congress, with Charles Thomson, secretary of the Congress as the observer/recorder/reporter. It is September 28, 1774.

PARTICIPANTS

Samuel Adams (Massachusetts) was a short, stocky man, unconcerned with wealth, social rank or appearances. He was born in Boston in 1722, the son of a brewer. He graduated Harvard, and tried various business enterprises, which failed, probably because he was more interested in politics than profits. Elected to the Massachusetts House of Representatives in 1765, Adams soon became its clerk and one of its most ardent defenders of colonial rights. He supported resistance to the Stamp Act and the non-importation movement in opposition to the Townshend Acts. He bitterly opposed the use of standing armies, and served as spokesman for the town when it demanded the removal of royal troops after the Boston "Massacre." The Boston Committee of Correspondence was his creation. Although Adams helped organize Boston's resistance to the Tea Act, he was more a champion of resistance through petitions, correspondence networks, and public meetings. In the spring of 1774, Adams suggested that an American Bill of Rights might provide a basis for settling the Anglo-American conflict. Later he helped develop the strategy that led to the submission of the "Suffolk Resolves" to the Continental Congress for approval. In 1774, Adams favored the immediate institution of a boycott on British imports. Only in mid-1776 did Adams advocate for separation from Britain. He later signed the Declaration of Independence. He continued to serve his state as lieutenant-governor from 1789-93 and governor from 1794-97. Adams died in 1803.



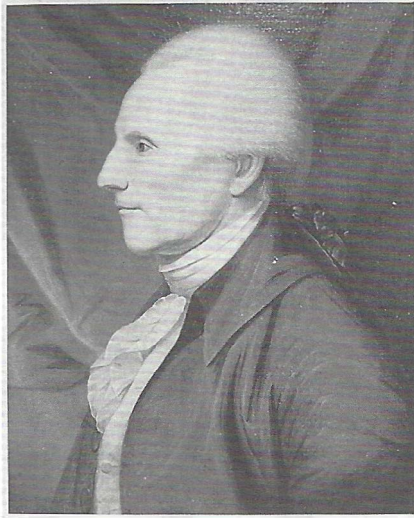
Samuel Adams



Christopher Gadsden

Christopher Gadsden (South Carolina) was born in Charleston, South Carolina in 1724. He was sent to a school in England and then to a counting-house in Philadelphia. In 1746 he returned to Charleston and became a leading merchant. In 1757, he entered the state Assembly, in which he served for nearly 30 years. At the Stamp Act Congress of 1765, Gadsden argued for colonial union and against recognition of the authority of Parliament. His political principles represented the liberal position of the South Carolina aristocracy—insistent on the rights of self-government under elite leadership. He became the acknowledged leader of "the radicals" in South Carolina. John Rutledge, another delegate from South Carolina, favored conciliation, leaving the South Carolina delegation to the First Continental Congress often split. Although a merchant himself, Gadsden was violently opposed to "allowing Parliament any Power of regulating Trade, or allowing [admitting] that they have any Thing to do with Us." He

left the Second Continental Congress to take command of newly organized South Carolina forces, becoming a brigadier-general in the Continental Army the following year. In 1782, he refused the governorship offered him by the Assembly, but remained part of the Assembly until withdrawing from public life in 1784. Gadsden voted for ratification of the Federal Constitution in 1787 as part of the state convention. He worked for the reelection of his old friend John Adams to the presidency in 1800, and grieved over his defeat. Gadsden died in 1805.

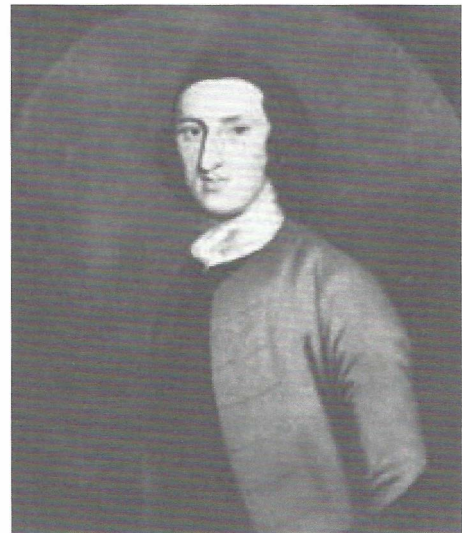


Richard Henry Lee

Richard Henry Lee (Virginia) was born in Westmoreland County, Virginia in 1732, a fourth-generation Virginian and member of one of the Old Dominion's wealthiest land- and slave-owning families. Tall and spare, with red hair and a Roman profile, Lee was an admirer of New England and a close ally of John and Samuel Adams. Educated in England, Lee returned to Virginia and entered the House of Burgesses in 1758. He supported measures designed to appeal to a broad constituency, including a bill in 1762 to lower requirements for voting. Lee was part of the radical wing of the Virginia House of Burgesses, along with Patrick Henry and Thomas Jefferson, and assumed responsibilities for mobilizing the people as the revolutionary movement grew. He saw the colonists' cause as that of "Virtue and mankind." Elected to the First Continental Congress, he favored strong measures against England. He attempted unsuccessfully to attach to the petition to the King a statement in favor of arming and equipping the colonial militias. By the spring of 1776, Lee openly advocated independence. He favored a confederation of states, but refused to attend the Federal

Convention in 1787 and led in Virginia's opposition to the new Constitution. He served in the U.S. Senate 1789-92, his chief aim being the passage of a Bill of Rights. Lee died in 1794.

William Livingston (New Jersey) was born in Albany, New York in 1723, to a wealthy, patrician family. He graduated from Yale, was admitted to the bar and became involved in New York politics as leader of a moderate liberal faction that opposed Parliamentary interference with colonial affairs. He tried to reconcile the Sons of Liberty and other radicals to his more moderate leadership. In 1769, Livingston was driven from power in the New York Assembly when the conservatives secured a majority in the Assembly. He retired to his country estate near Elizabethtown, New Jersey, and became a member of the Essex County Committee of Correspondence, quickly rising to a position of leadership. Livingston was a delegate from New Jersey to the First Continental Congress. He also served as a deputy at the Second Continental Congress. Livingston was elected governor of New Jersey under the newly-created state constitution, serving for fourteen tumultuous years. He attended the Federal Constitutional Convention in 1787 and worked for a compromise between the larger and smaller states. Largely through his influence, New Jersey quickly and unanimously ratified the federal Constitution. Livingston died in 1790.

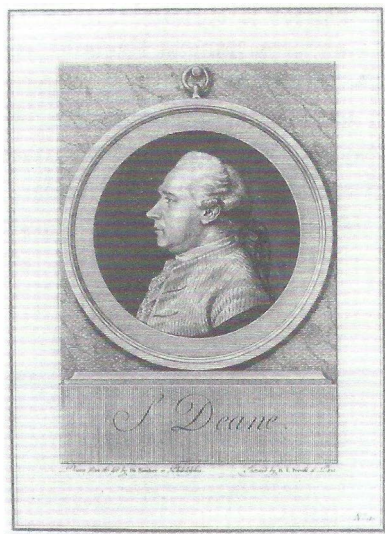


William Livingston

George Read (Delaware) was born in Cecil County, Maryland, in 1733, but shortly thereafter moved with his family to New Castle, Delaware. He studied law, was admitted to the bar and developed a thriving practice in Delaware and Maryland. As attorney general for the lower counties in Delaware, he protested that the Stamp Act made "slaves" of the colonies. As a delegate to the First and Second Continental Congresses, he was a moderate, ready to uphold colonial rights but trying to avoid extreme measures. However, he often found himself carried away with the radical tide. Read played a prominent role at the Delaware constitutional convention in 1776 and led Delaware in defending itself against British attacks in 1777-78. At the Federal Convention in 1787, Read was concerned that the larger states would take advantage of the smaller ones and accepted the compromises that led to the Federal Constitution. Largely through his efforts, Delaware was the first state to ratify the Constitution. Read served as a U.S. Senator from Delaware and as chief justice of Delaware until his death in 1798.



George Read



Silas Deane

Silas Deane (Connecticut) was born in Groton, Connecticut in 1737. Son of a blacksmith, he graduated from Yale, taught school, studied law, and became a prosperous lawyer and merchant. In 1769, he was elected chairman of a local committee to enforce non-consumption in response to the Townshend Acts. Elected to the Connecticut General Assembly in 1772, he soon became one of its leaders. Although he supported colonial opposition to British policies, in 1774 he opposed hastily inaugurating a boycott of British goods, and argued that the colonies should consult with each other before instituting a plan of opposition to the Coercive Acts. He was a delegate to the First and Second Continental Congresses, actively involved in preparations for war with Britain. In 1776, Deane was selected as commissioner of a diplomatic mission to France to secure military supplies and arrange for European military leaders to assist the American cause. However, Arthur Lee, one of his fellow commissioners, accused Deane of attempting to personally profit from his diplomatic activities. Deane was never able to completely clear his name. He lost faith in the American cause and wrote letters to friends in America advising them to end the war for independence. He lived in exile after the war; financially bankrupt and physically unwell, he died in London in 1789.

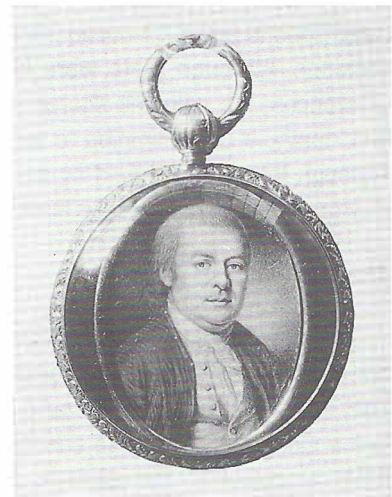
James Duane (New York) was born in New York City in 1733, son of a prosperous merchant. Without formal university training, he studied law, was admitted to the bar and developed a thriving law practice. He attempted to quell a Stamp Act mob in 1765. Despite radical opposition, he was nominated as a delegate to the First Continental Congress, where he favored conciliation. He was a member of the committee that drew up the statement of rights for the colonists and worked to keep the tone moderate. Duane spoke for most American merchants who believed that, although the British trade regulations were burdensome in some respects, they were necessary for their "wealth, strength and safety." However, he wanted to exclude "every idea of taxation internal and external for raising a revenue on the subjects of America without their consent." Duane supported Galloway's Plan of Union. He signed the October 1774 non-importation agreement against Britain, although he considered it too extreme.

Duane sat in the Continental Congress almost continuously until 1783, and assisted in writing the final draft of the Articles of Confederation. He later served as mayor of New York, state senator, and federal district judge. He favored ratification of the Federal Constitution. Duane died suddenly in 1797.

Joseph Galloway (Pennsylvania) was born in Anne Arundel County, Maryland in 1731, to a prominent trading family. As a young man, he moved to Philadelphia, where he studied law, and became a popular attorney. He served in the Pennsylvania Assembly 1756-1776 (except for 1764-65) and as Speaker of the Assembly from 1766-1775. Galloway sympathized with the British desire to raise revenue in America but disagreed with Parliament's taxing the colonies and its restrictions on American commerce. He accepted the principle of Parliamentary supremacy, but argued that the colonists had a right to representation. He proposed a "Plan of Union" and argued that the Congress should draft a temperate petition that conceded Parliament's right to regulate trade and adopting an economic boycott only if the petition failed to win redress. After the Congress dissolved, Galloway openly criticized its proceedings, questioned its commitment to reconciliation, and explained his own position in a pamphlet, *A Candid Examination of the Mutual Claims of Great Britain, and the Colonies* (New York, February 1775). He refused to be a delegate to the Second Continental Congress. Although he had hoped to remain neutral in the impending conflict, Galloway eventually aided the British and fled to Britain in 1778 after the British forces left Philadelphia. Until the very close of the revolution, he attempted to bring about an accommodation between the mother country and the colonies. Galloway died in England in 1803.

The Mediator

Peyton Randolph (Virginia) was born in Williamsburg, Virginia in 1721, the son of wealthy John Randolph. He graduated from the College of William and Mary, attended the Middle Temple law school in London and began practicing law in 1744. In 1748, Randolph was appointed King's attorney for the province of Virginia. He saw himself as a spokesman for the rights of the Colony as well as those of the Crown, and was sometimes in sharp conflict with the royal governor. Randolph also became a member of the Virginia House of Burgesses beginning in 1748, and from 1759 to 1767 served on the Virginia committee of correspondence. In 1766, he resigned as King's attorney and was elected speaker of the Virginia House of Burgesses. Conservative in temperament, Randolph was representative of the point of view of the colonial aristocracy. Although he initially deplored the radicalism in Virginia and opposed Patrick Henry's resolutions against the Stamp Act, Randolph moved steadily with the current of revolutionary sentiment in Virginia. He was moderating in his influence and cautious in his leadership. Randolph was admired by his contemporaries for his judgment and wisdom. He was elected president of the Continental Congress in 1774 and again in 1775. Randolph died in 1775.



Peyton Randolph

The Observer/Recorder/Reporter



Charles Thomson

Charles Thomson (Pennsylvania) was the secretary of the First Continental Congress. Born of a Protestant family in Ireland in 1729, he came to New Castle, Delaware, with his father and three brothers in 1740. He was sent to a academy in New London, Pennsylvania, where he advanced rapidly and became a Latin teacher. He met Benjamin Franklin and other influential Pennsylvanians, and became a Philadelphia merchant and politician, respected for his veracity by Native Americans, Quakers and others. Although Pennsylvania conservatives kept him from being elected a delegate to the Continental Congress, Thomson was unanimously chosen as its secretary in 1774, continuing in that position until the federal government came to power in 1789. Known for his fairness and integrity, the “perpetual secretary” provided the continuity and institutional memory to a Congress whose members were ever-changing. Thomson designed the Great Seal of the United States in 1782, and wrote on numerous subjects. He died in 1824.

POSITIONS AND INTERESTS

While most of the delegates to the First Continental Congress had never met before, the reputations of many preceded them from years of public debate that had been reported and reprinted in letters and newspaper articles. Everyone wanted to preserve their colonial institutions of local government. Most of the delegates were determined to present a united front to the world, no matter how sharply divided they might be in their closed-door sessions. Although there were ideological differences of opinion, and underlying regional and economic differences, the colonies shared a common heritage of language, ideas and political institutions and, most importantly, a determination to establish colonial rights firmly while remaining subjects of the British Crown. Although the positions held by many of the delegates to the First Continental Congress were often subject to change, there were basically three viewpoints: radical, moderate and conservative.

The Radicals

The “**radicals**,” such as Samuel Adams from Massachusetts, Christopher Gadsden from South Carolina, and Richard Henry Lee from Virginia, argued for outright resistance to Britain. They supported the Suffolk Resolves. They agreed with the Pennsylvania jurist James Wilson and Thomas Jefferson of Virginia (who were not delegates to the Congress), who had concluded that Parliament had no right whatsoever to tax or pass laws over the American colonists. The colonists, Jefferson argued, had consented only to be subject to the King, who served as a link holding together the various parts of his kingdom, each of which had its own elected legislature. Friends of Jefferson had his ideas published in 1774 in “A Summary View of the Rights of British America.” The radicals were focused primarily on ideology—they wanted more than anything else to preserve their fundamental rights to govern themselves. They saw the actions of the British King and Parliament as a demonstration of British determination to eliminate these rights. They noted that their petitions to the King and Parliament to redress complaints had been persistently ignored, and argued that resistance was necessary because acquiescence would establish a dangerous precedent for further violations of rights. They urged the delegates to support Massachusetts in its resistance to the Intolerable Acts because, if Massachusetts fell, the British would extend those policies to its neighbors. They feared that after destroying the assemblies’ role in defending the colonies’ economic and social interests, Britain would restrict colonial development, destroy them through taxation, and

use the colonies only to enrich the Mother Country as was done with the Irish. The radicals had a greater distrust of British intentions and were more willing than the conservatives or moderates to accept the break in the social fabric that any significant change in the status quo would inevitably create.

The Moderates

The “**moderates**,” such as William Livingston from New Jersey and George Read from Delaware, opposed Parliamentary interference with colonial affairs but urged restraint and further attempts at reconciliation. Their idea of liberty was closely tied to material prosperity, especially by the merchant class. They had supported the agreements for the non-importation and non-consumption of British goods during the Stamp Act crisis. The moderates were primarily focused on economic concerns. They did not want to push Britain to war. They urged the delegates to petition for a redress of grievances or, at most, to adopt a uniform plan for the non-importation of British goods, which they saw as a peaceable and effective method for recovering the colonists’ liberty. More concerned about commerce and prosperity than ideology, the moderates were also more interested in stability and colonial unity than the radicals. The Suffolk Resolves were more inflammatory than they would have liked; however, rejecting them would have implied approval of objectionable British policies, so they supported them.

The Conservatives

The “**conservatives**,” such as Joseph Galloway from Pennsylvania, and James Duane from New York, did not want to exacerbate the situation with Britain. They argued that colonial trade and the colonies in general needed the British markets and the protection of the royal navy; therefore, the colonies were obligated to accept Parliamentary regulation of trade. The conservatives wanted to continue as part of the British empire because they saw Britain as the freest country in the world. They suggested, however, that the political relationship between the American colonies and Britain needed to be restructured. The conservatives feared anarchy and social disorder more than they feared the intentions of the British government. They believed that the radicals were encouraging class divisions, lawlessness, disorder, and mob action. They also feared the capacity of Britain to destroy the colonies’ economies by restricting their trade, and were thus concerned about implementing non-importation agreements. The conservatives stressed the cultural and economic bonds with Britain and the belief in the protection of liberty, and especially property, by the Magna Carta and British common law. However, even the conservatives were afraid to vote against the Suffolk Resolves because they did not want to appear to support coercive British policies, and because it seemed important to express support for beleaguered Massachusetts.

TEACHER INSTRUCTIONS FOR ACTIVITY ONE: MOCK CONGRESSIONAL CAUCUS

Preparation

1. Share the historical background with the class—either as a lecture and/or a reading assignment. Encourage students to try to gain as thorough an understanding as possible of the events, characters, and historical context. Use the overhead “Timeline” on the CD.
2. Distribute student handout: “Positions and Interests” for students to read.
3. Hand out the brief biographies for students to review.
4. Choose one (or both) of the activities for the class to use.

Directions

1. Divide the class into groups of ten (or, if there are insufficient numbers of students, reduce the number of radicals, moderates and conservatives equally):

The Radicals

Samuel Adams (Delegate from Massachusetts)

Christopher Gadsden (Delegate from South Carolina)

Richard Henry Lee (Delegate from Virginia)

The Moderates

William Livingston (Delegate from New Jersey)

George Read (Delegate from Delaware)

The Conservatives

Silas Deane (Delegate from Connecticut)

James Duane (Delegate from New York)

Joseph Galloway (Delegate from Pennsylvania)

The Mediator

Peyton Randolph

The Observer/Recorder/Reporter

Charles Thomson

2. Distribute student handout: "Mock Congressional Caucus."
3. Review the setting and the directions with the students. Instruct the participants to imagine they have been attending the First Continental Congress meetings for over a month and that their group is meeting informally to try to find a solution that would satisfy the delegates and offer a basis for reconciliation with Britain. Each participant should act in a manner consistent with his/her assigned role and interests.

Debriefing

1. Once the negotiations are complete, conduct a classroom discussion about the mock Congressional caucus. Have the reporters describe how the process worked in their group. Summarize and compare the results each group obtained.
2. Either have the students read "The Facts Continued" or share the relevant portions with the class as a lecture. Compare the results and the process of the mock activities with what actually happened in history.
3. Use the "Questions for Discussion" for essay topics or in-class discussion.

THE FACTS CONTINUED



On September 17, 1774, the delegates at the First Continental Congress endorsed the Suffolk Resolves. On September 26th, Richard Henry Lee of Virginia moved that non-importation from Britain and Ireland begin on November 1st. The Massachusetts delegation demanded that non-importation, non-exportation and non-consumption should start at once. The instructions to the Virginia delegation forbade it to agree to non-importation before the 1774 tobacco crop was marketed in the spring of 1775. Gadsden proposed that Congress go ahead anyway, but the Maryland and North Carolina delegations declared that they would not agree to start non-importation without Virginia. The rest of the delegation from South Carolina opposed non-exportation because the bulk of its commerce was the sale of rice and indigo to Britain. After two days of debates, the delegates agreed to stop importation of all goods from Britain and Ireland on December 1st, and to stop the use and purchase of any goods brought in thereafter.

On September 28, Galloway, a conservative from Pennsylvania, offered his "Plan of Union," which would have enabled either the British Parliament or a colonial parliament to initiate legislation affecting the colonies but required both bodies to adopt such legislation before it could take effect, essentially giving the American parliament a veto over British legislation effecting America. Private letters indicate that several of the delegations were split. The Galloway Plan was defeated by a vote of 6-5. Because the radicals wanted it to appear that Congress was united, the Galloway Plan and the closely divided vote on it were subsequently expunged from the minutes of the Continental Congress.

The debate was interrupted by another "express" by Paul Revere on October 6th. He brought a letter from the Boston committee of correspondence that the British fortifications being built in Boston seemed to indicate "the town and country are to be treated by the soldiery as declared enemies." The committee asked the advice of Congress on whether the people of Boston should stay or abandon the town. While Lee wanted Congress to advise that Boston be evacuated and Gadsden moved that Gage be attacked, Galloway countered that Massachusetts do as it pleased. The delegates debated until October 11th when they prepared a relatively restrained letter to General Gage urging him to stop fortifying Boston and to stop irritating the people while Congress was peaceably trying to restore harmony with Britain. They also sent a message to the people of Boston, advising them to only use force defensively.

The Congress then turned to the debate over a declaration of rights. The crucial issue was the authority of Parliament to regulate trade. Christopher Gadsden denied that Parliament had any such power. James Duane replied that the right of regulating trade was grounded on "compact, acquiescence, necessity, protection, not merely on our consent." The Congress deadlocked: five colonies voted to concede the power to Parliament, five voted against it. The Rhode Island and Massachusetts delegations each split. John Adams provided a compromise that satisfied no one but was accepted to preserve unity. His resolution conceded that while Parliament should regulate trade, the Congress maintained that they had not conceded the right for Parliament to do so. Before the Congress adjourned in late October 1774, it agreed to a restrained "Declaration of Rights and Resolves"; to a plan of non-exportation, non-importation and non-consumption of British goods; and to reconvene in May 1775 if Britain had not redressed the colonists' grievances. (See Document 8: "Declaration and Resolves of the First Continental Congress," October 14, 1774.)

Beginning December 1, 1774, the colonies would stop the importation of all goods from Britain and its other colonies. Non-consumption would start March 1, 1775. Non-exportation (e.g., the tobacco crop) would begin on September 10, 1775. A Continental Association would enforce the ban on all imports and exports through the establishment of committees, elected by persons qualified to vote for members of their provincial assembly, in "every county, city and town" in America. (See Document 9: The Articles of Association, October 20, 1774.)


The Congress concluded with a petition to the king; an address to the people of Great Britain urging them to choose members of Parliament “of such wisdom, independence and public spirit, as may save the violated rights of the whole empire from the devices of wicked Ministers and evil Counsellors;” an address to the people of North America; and an address to the inhabitants of Quebec inviting them to join the “more numerous British colonies.”

Britain Receives Suffolk Resolves and the Colonists Petition

The British government received the “Suffolk Resolves” first, even while Congress was still meeting. While the delegates to the Continental Congress saw these Resolves as supporting a moderate position, the King and his ministers viewed the colonists’ claim that the Coercive Acts were unconstitutional as absurd; they viewed the call for disobedience, the formation of colonial governments to withhold taxes from the royal government, the formation of a colonial militia and an economic boycott against Britain as a declaration of independence—a treasonous action which required a harsh response. The appeals to the “affection of his majesty,” other affirmations of loyalty and more conciliatory wording in the Declaration of Rights and Resolves, were viewed as mere rhetoric. Instead of encouraging Britain to recognize the rights that the American colonists thought were their due, their list of rights and grievances and the economic boycott was seen as provocation by provinces seeking independence.

The newly elected Parliament, which opened in November 1774, continued to endorse the King’s efforts to quell resistance and disobedience in Massachusetts. From early December through the middle of March 1775, Benjamin Franklin, in London as an agent of the Continental Congress, sent messages through intermediaries to members of the British ministry. He insisted that the Tea Act and the Coercive Acts must be repealed and that Parliament renounce legislative authority over the internal affairs of the American colonies. He met with Lord Chatham (William Pitt), who proposed a commission to work out an agreement. On January 19, 1775, Chatham, who had seldom appeared in Parliament in recent years because of ill health, brought Franklin with him and introduced a motion to withdraw General Gage’s troops from Boston. Lord Camden and others sympathetic to the colonies supported the motion, but to no avail: the motion failed. Ten days later Lord Chatham, with Franklin conspicuously present, introduced a bill in the House of Lords that would have limited Parliament’s authority in America mainly to the regulation of trade. The bill was severely defeated.

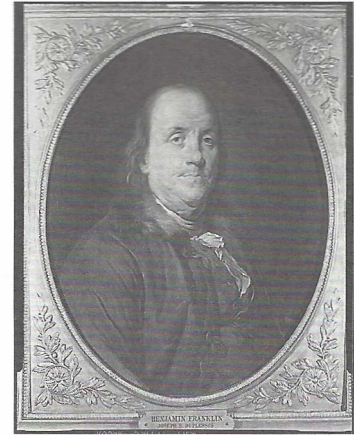
ACTIVITY TWO: MOCK NEGOTIATION BETWEEN BRITAIN AND THE COLONIES

 The British Parliament has been in session during the winter of 1774-1775, debating how to respond to the Suffolk Resolves as well as to the colonists’ Declaration of Rights and Resolves. Benjamin Franklin has been in London since December 1774 as an agent of the Continental Congress. He has met with Lord Chatham and others sympathetic to the colonists’ position. However, Lord North, the king’s chief minister, has not been willing to meet with Franklin.

Let us hypothesize that Lord North has agreed to meet with Benjamin Franklin to discuss ways to resolve the growing conflict between Britain and her North American colonies. Roleplay a mock negotiation between Lord North, representing Britain, and Benjamin Franklin, representing the colonies, in London in January 1775.

PARTICIPANTS

Benjamin Franklin, for the colonies. Franklin was born in Boston in 1706. At age 17 he left for Philadelphia, where he obtained employment as a printer, eventually setting up his own shop. His thrift and industry won him prosperity. His good sense and charm won him many influential friends. He was a member of the Pennsylvania Assembly from 1736-1751 and deputy postmaster for Philadelphia from 1737-1753. From 1748-1754 Franklin turned to philosophical studies and conducted his many electrical experiments. In 1757, he sailed to England to present to Parliament the grievances of the Pennsylvania Assembly against the proprietors. When he returned, he was sent again to obtain recall of the Pennsylvania charter, an effort that submerged in the controversy over the Stamp Act. In 1766, Franklin became "ambassador extraordinaire" for the colonies. By 1770, he had rejected the supreme authority of Parliament and came to believe that good relations with Britain could only be reestablished with the repeal of the duty on tea. After passage of the Coercive Acts in 1774, Franklin began to despair of reconciliation and his ideas on American rights became more radical. He was sent by the First Continental Congress to meet with representatives of the British Crown and Parliament to try to find a resolution to the growing conflict. He later served as a delegate to the Second Continental Congress, where he was a member of the committee to draft the Declaration of Independence. He was one of three commissioners appointed to negotiate a treaty with France in 1776. In 1781, he, John Jay and John Adams negotiated a peace treaty with Britain. He served as president of the executive council of Pennsylvania from 1785-1786. At the age of 81, Franklin took his seat at the 1787 Federal Convention. He died in 1790.



Benjamin Franklin



Frederick, Lord North

Frederick, Lord North, for the British Crown and Parliament. Born in 1732, North was educated at Eton and Trinity College, Oxford. In 1754 he was elected to Parliament for the family borough of Banbury. Following the death of Charles Townshend in 1767, North accepted the post of Chancellor of the Exchequer and, in 1768, he became Leader of the House of Commons. In 1770, North became Chief Minister on the resignation of his cousin, the Duke of Grafton. He initially sought a conciliatory approach with the American colonies and repealed four of the five Townshend duties, retaining the tax on tea. Lord North intended to make a lesson of Massachusetts by punishing the colony, with the belief that the other colonies would not support Massachusetts. North's ministry passed the Coercive Acts in 1774. By December, North realized that Britain was on the verge of war with her colonies. In January 1775, he proposed a peace commission, offering to eliminate the tea tax so long as the colonies promised to pay the salaries of civil authorities regularly. But it was too late. North offered his resignation to George III, but the King refused to accept it. Lord North also faced problems in Ireland, and was forced to relax restrictions on Irish trade in 1779. North was threatened by the mob during the riots in 1780 and finally the king allowed him to resign in 1782. In 1790 Lord North succeeded his father in the House of Lords. He died in 1792.

POSITIONS AND INTERESTS

Lord North

Positions

- If the colonies would pay for their defense and civil government, Parliament would not tax them.
- The colonies are benefiting from being part of the British Empire and should share in the costs of their governance and protection.
- Parliament maintains its right to regulate the external trade of the colonies
- Parliament has supreme authority over its colonies.

Interests

- Ease the tax burden on the British for the costs of defense and civil government in the colonies.
- Make the trade within the Empire more profitable for British financial and mercantile interests.
- Limit or eliminate popular challenges to the ruling establishment.
- Maintain the prerogatives and power of the King and Parliament.
- Maintain a great and profitable colonial empire.

Benjamin Franklin

Positions

- Parliament has exceeded its authority by directly taxing the colonists in violation of their rights as British subjects.
- The colonial legislatures should have a certain amount of autonomy over internal issues.
- Recognition of the Continental Congress as the legitimate representative of the voice of the English North American colonies.
- Loyal to the King as sovereign.

Interests

- Fear that the British will suppress the colonists' liberties.
- Fear that the British will subordinate colonists' economic interests in favor of British economic elites.
- Need to maintain colonial unity to avoid having the colonies played off against each other.
- More concerned about commerce and prosperity than ideology--Britain is their main trading partner.
- Value in having British army and navy protect them against foreign powers.

TEACHER INSTRUCTIONS FOR ACTIVITY TWO: MOCK NEGOTIATION

Preparation

1. Share the historical background with the class—either as a lecture and/or a reading assignment. Encourage students to try to gain as thorough an understanding as possible of the events, characters, and historical context.
2. Distribute student handout: "Positions and Interests" for students to read.
3. Hand out the brief biographies for students to review.

Directions

1. Count by 1, 2, 3 and divide into groups of three with one 1, one 2 and one 3 in each group. In each group,
1s are Benjamin Franklin
2s are Lord North
3s are Observers/Reporters
2. Distribute student handout: "Mock British-Colonist Negotiations."
3. Review the setting and the directions with the students.
4. Encourage students to stay within the limits of historical reality but also try to use conflict resolution skills: listen actively, brainstorm, evaluate options.

Debriefing

1. Ask the observer/recorder/reporters to explain briefly what happened in each group. Summarize and compare the results and processes in each group.
2. Distribute and discuss "The Facts Continued" and "The Historical Effects."
3. Compare the results of the mock mediation with what actually occurred.

Alternate Activity: Mock Parliamentary Debate

Lord North claimed that the British public vigorously supported the government's coercive policies, but recent research in petitions and town records indicates that outside of Parliament and the political elite, there was considerable sympathy for the Americans and their criticism of government restrictions on their liberties and livelihood. These sympathizers identified with the actions against the American colonists as similar to the political and economic discrimination, oppression, and infringements they faced at home. Sympathizers came from all levels of society, including manufacturers concerned with overseas markets, merchants in the American trade, artisans and skilled tradesman suffering under economic constraints, and emerging radical political groups in London and other cities, including the followers of radical John Wilkes, who had been denied a seat in Parliament despite his election. American sympathizers also included a sizable percentage of clergymen and laity in non-Anglican religions. These were the so-called "Dissenting" religions: Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Baptists, and Quakers, who, despite the Act of Toleration, still faced numerous economic, religious, and political constraints, including prohibition from holding political office. However, while sympathy for the American colonists appears to have been widespread among the British public, there was no mobilized movement on their behalf, and royal

patronage and other forms of influence, particularly in unrepresentative districts with comparatively few voters, helped generate the sizable majorities in Parliament that sustained the coercive policies toward the American colonies (See Document 10: Petition of London Merchants for Reconciliation with America, January 23, 1775.)

Have students role-play the British King, his Ministers and Parliament, and discuss how they would respond to the colonists' proposal. Have the students research the background of the potential British participants, such as King George III, Lord North, William Pitt (Lord Chatham), Edmund Burke and Lord Dartmouth.

THE FACTS CONTINUED

Britain's Response

*I*n February 1775, Parliament declared that Massachusetts was in a state of rebellion supported by illegal combinations in other colonies, and supported the King's intention to take "the most effectual measures to endorse the due obedience to the laws and authority of the Supreme Legislature."

The Parliament adopted the Prohibitory or New England Restraining Act, which denied New Englanders access to the North Atlantic fisheries and restricted their external trade.

During the winter and spring of 1775, no news arrived in the American colonies. Committees of correspondence and revolutionary committees began replacing the legal governing bodies in defiance of their charters and began raising active militias ("Minute Men"). General Gage brought 4,000 troops into Boston.

In a show of force to halt the emergence of new extralegal provincial governments, the British Ministry, in April 1775, ordered General Gage to arrest "the principal actors and abettors" of insurrection in Massachusetts. Gage sent 700 troops from Boston in an early morning raid on April 19, 1775 to seize colonial arms and ammunition in nearby Concord. The Americans learned of the plan and Paul Revere alerted the countryside. When troops reached Lexington, 70 American militiamen were on the village green. An exchange of fire killed eight colonists and wounded eighteen. When the British arrived at Concord, their advance was blocked by militiamen. The British marched back to Boston, harassed along the way by American militiamen. By the end of the day, 273 British and 95 Americans had been wounded or killed. War had begun.

The Second Continental Congress

On May 10, 1775, the Second Continental Congress convened in Philadelphia to news of fighting at Lexington and Concord. Massachusetts reported that it had taken steps to raise 13,600 soldiers from its people and to secure additional men from New Hampshire, Connecticut and Rhode Island because British reinforcements in Boston were "daily expected." This New England force began besieging the British troops in Boston. However, reconciliation was still the hope of the delegates. Even the Massachusetts delegates were instructed to take measures "best calculated for the recovery and establishment of American rights and Liberties, and for restoring harmony between Great-Britain and the Colonies." Although no one seemed to favor separation from Britain, the delegates differed on the likelihood of reconciliation, on how best to seek it, and on what terms would be minimally acceptable.

But events moved more rapidly than the deliberations. On May 9, the day before Congress assembled, provincial troops, led by Ethan Allen of Vermont and Benedict Arnold of Connecticut, seized the British-held Fort Ticonderoga and the nearby British post at Crown Point. The fort guarded a major waterway which had been critical in the French and Indian War. The Americans captured the cannons from Fort Ticonderoga for the New England troops to use against the British in Boston. It took a week before the news arrived in Philadelphia. The Continental Congress claimed it as an act of defense, based on "indubitable evidence" that the British were planning to invade the colonies from Quebec (this rumor turned out to be false). On May 29, the Continental

Congress renewed its invitation to Quebec to join the American Provinces in their struggle against British oppression. However, the Canadians did not trust the American colonists because of their anti-Catholic history. The British saw these actions as an effort by the Americans to conquer Canada, exacerbating doubts about the sincerity of American professions of loyalty, and making a peaceful reconciliation more unlikely.

On June 2, Congress received an official request from Massachusetts that Congress assume responsibility for the soldiers already besieging Boston. A Continental Army of 20,000 was authorized and, on June 15, George Washington, a Virginian, was chosen as commander-in-chief, making it clear that this was not a regional force but a genuinely Continental Army. Before Washington assumed command on June 17th, the colonial troops inflicted some of the heaviest losses of the entire war on the British forces who seized the earthworks at the Battle of Bunker Hill. Although the British nominally won battle, they lost 42 percent of the 2,500 men involved, a cost too heavy to dislodge the Americans from the other heights overlooking Boston that the Americans began to fortify with the artillery seized from Fort Ticonderoga.

The Continental Congress exercised legislative, executive and judicial responsibilities. It tried to raise revenue and troops to support the army, made moves to secure the neutrality of the interior Indian tribes, issued paper money, regulated trade including supervising non-importation and non-exportation, erected a postal system, and approved plans for a military hospital. It operated under a system of "labored coordination and mutual concession." Not all of the 65 delegates were ever present at any one time. Decisions often were delegated to local committees for execution.

Meanwhile in England, Lord North pushed his "Conciliatory Proposal" through the Parliament. The proposal promised that Parliament would desist from taxing any colony that granted sufficient, permanent funds for the defense and the support of civil government (See Document 11: The Conciliatory Proposal, February 21, 1775.) But by the time it was received in the colonies, battles had already been fought. Before leaving Virginia to attend the Second Continental Congress in Philadelphia, Thomas Jefferson had drafted a reply to the "Conciliatory Proposal," which the Virginia House of Burgesses adopted on June 10, 1775. Virginia's response stated that while it considered reconciliation with the Mother Country "the greatest of all human blessings" except for the possession of liberty, after careful consideration it concluded that the proposal "only changes the form of oppression, without lightening its burden." Jefferson carried Virginia's reply with him to Philadelphia and conveyed to Congress the first notice the delegates had of it.

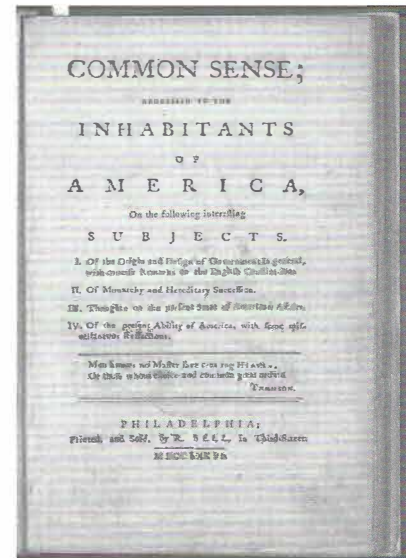
The Continental Congress made one last attempt at reconciliation with the adoption of the "Olive Branch Petition" on July 5, 1775. Written by John Dickinson of Pennsylvania, it expressed hope for a restoration of harmony, asserted Americans' loyalty to the king, and urged him to prevent further military action until reconciliation could be achieved. (See Document 12: Olive Branch Petition.) In a "Declaration of the Causes and Necessities of Taking Up Arms," written by Dickinson and Thomas Jefferson and adopted on July 6, 1775, Congress rejected independence, but refused to be "enslaved" and ominously raised the possibility of obtaining foreign aid from Britain's old enemy, France.

On July 8, 1775, the Continental Congress approved an address "to the Inhabitants of Great-Britain" stating that the Americans were acting in defense of "glorious Privileges" for which their "gallant and virtuous Ancestors" had "fought, bled, and conquered." The charges that they were "aiming at Independence" were but "the Allegations of Your Ministers," disproven by their petitions for redress and failure to seek the aid of rival powers. On July 13th, the Congress approved a "speech" for presentation to the Iroquois Confederacy in New York, asserting that the Americans wanted to retain "the covenant chain" that bound their fathers with Britain, an effort to build an alliance with the Natives and to keep them from helping the British. An address to Ireland two weeks later insisted that the British government had denigrated the American "rebels" for merely asserting the rights of all British subjects. The American colonists hoped that they could engage other areas of the British empire in their quest for what they saw as rights due all British citizens. Finally, the Congress sent King George an "Olive Branch

Petition" requesting that he remove obstacles to reconciliation. As late as August 1775, Jefferson wrote in a private letter that he sincerely wished for reunion and "would rather be in dependence on Great Britain, properly limited, than on any nation on earth, or than on no nation."

By the end of 1775 news arrived that the king had rejected the Olive Branch Petition, had proclaimed the colonies in "open and avowed rebellion," and had dispatched an additional 20,000 troops to quell the American Insurrection.

In January 1776, Thomas Paine's pamphlet, *Common Sense*, was widely distributed throughout the colonies and credited with converting many, particularly in the South, to independence and rejecting loyalty to the Crown. Paine, a largely self-educated Englishman who had only arrived in the colonies in 1774, emphasized immediate political, economic and military expediency. Although he presented no argument that had not been made repeatedly before, the pamphlet was written in a manner and form that was accessible to the general public. It helped many colonists to conclude, after their decade-long fruitless search for redress within the empire and ultimate disillusionment with the British king and Parliament, that independence was necessary. It also helped moved the debate in the Second Continental Congress during the spring of 1776 from prospects for reconciliation to how an independent America should be governed and how it might seek financial assistance from France and the Netherlands.

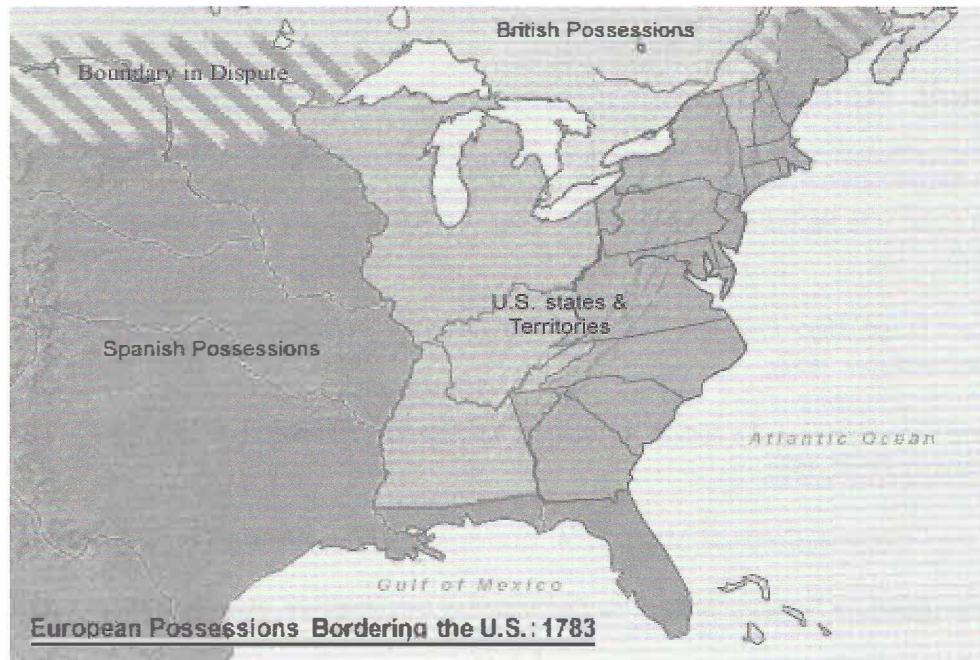


Common Sense, 1776

In June, a resolution was introduced by Richard Henry Lee of Virginia stating that the colonies ought to be free and independent of England. While this resolution was being considered, the Congress appointed a committee of five (Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, plus Roger Sherman of Connecticut and Robert Livingston of New York) to prepare a justification or statement of principles, a declaration of independence. On June 29th, Washington reported the arrival of some 50 British ships filled with troops at Sandy Hook near the entrance to New York harbor. Their number doubled within a few days as Washington prepared for the impending British attack on New York City. By July 1st, Congress also learned that another 53 British ships were outside of Charleston, South Carolina, and that an American army had been forced to retreat after an unsuccessful incursion into Canada. On July 2nd, 1776, twelve colonies voted in favor of independence, joined by New York a week later. The following day, the British landed on Staten Island and threatened New York City and the Jersey coast. While the British brought "the greatest fleet and the largest army ever assembled in North America into action against the Americans," the Continental Congress revised and finally adopted the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776.

The colonists were not well-prepared for war; however, they were fighting on their own land. After the Franco-American Alliance in 1778, British Peace Commissioners arrived in Philadelphia. The commissioners were willing to offer everything except independence, but by then the Americans believed they could win the war and would accept nothing less than independence. After British General Cornwallis surrendered to the American colonists at Yorktown on October 20, 1781, the war essentially came to an end, although minor battles between the British and the colonists continued for another two years. After several months of hard bargaining in 1782 by Benjamin Franklin, John Adams and John Jay, the British government of Lord Shelburne accepted American independence and a generous western boundary along the Mississippi River. A formal peace treaty was signed in Paris on September 3, 1783. The Peace Treaty was ratified by the Confederation of the United States of America on January 14, 1784. In addition to giving formal recognition to the United States, the treaty established the liberal boundaries for the United States, specified certain fishing rights, mandated creditors of each country

to be paid, attempted to restore the rights and property of those colonists who had remained loyal to Britain, opened the Mississippi River to navigation by citizens of both nations and provided for the evacuation of all British forces. The new country began with an extensive expanse of land from the Atlantic Ocean to the Mississippi River.



Boundaries of the United States as defined by the Treaty of Paris, 1783

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What could the delegates at the First Continental Congress in 1774 have done to maintain a relationship with Britain?
2. Could a respected, influential voice of moderation, such as John Dickinson, have found a way to modify the support of the delegates at the First Continental Congress for the radical Suffolk resolves?
3. What role did timing play in limiting the effectiveness of concessions by the American colonists? By the British King and Parliament?
4. What could Parliament or King George have done to resolve the conflict with the colonies?
5. The taxes that Britain proposed to levy on the American colonies in the 1760s and 1770s were much lower than the taxes levied on the people in England. Why did Americans react so strongly against these taxes?
6. Do you think that the dispute between Britain and her American colonies was primarily economic or political? Support your opinion.
7. How important do you think the limitations established by the Proclamation Line were in worsening the relations between the American colonies and Britain? Compare the maps of the Proclamation Line of 1763 and the Treaty of Paris in 1783.

8. Identify the BATNAs (best alternative to a negotiated agreement) for the British and the Americans. Who had more to lose if they lost the war?
9. Why do you think that the British King and Parliament were insistent on maintaining British authority over the American colonies?

DOCUMENTS

- Document 1: The Proclamation of 1763
- Document 2: The Declaration of the Stamp Act Congress, 1765
- Document 3: The Declaratory Act, 1766
- Document 4: The Coercive Acts, 1774
- Document 5: Instructions by the Virginia Convention to Their Delegates in Congress, July, 1774
- Document 6: 4 The Suffolk Resolves
- Document 7: Joseph Galloway's Plan of Union
- Document 8: Declaration and Resolves of the First Continental Congress, October 14, 1774
- Document 9: The Articles of Association, October 20, 1774
- Document 10: Petition of London Merchants for Reconciliation with America, January 23, 1775
- Document 11: Conciliatory Proposal, February 21, 1775
- Document 12: Olive Branch Petition, July 5, 1775

STUDENT HANDOUTS

1. Map of the Proclamation Line of 1763
2. Timeline, 1763-1783
3. Steps in Mediation
- 4-13. Short biographies of Samuel Adams, Christopher Gadsen, Richard Henry Lee, William Livingston, George Reed, Silas Deane, James Duane, Joseph Galloway, Peyton Randolph and Charles Thomson
14. Positions and Interests
15. Directions for the mock congressional caucus
16. What experiences led to the conflict?
17. Positions and interests of colonies and Britain
18. Directions for Negotiating, 1775
19. Short biography of Ben Franklin

- 20. Short biography of Lord North
- 21. What really happened?
- 22. The costs of the Revolutionary War
- 23. Map of the boundaries of the United States as defined by the Treaty of Paris in 1783

SOURCES AND CREDITS FOR ILLUSTRATIONS

- p. 107: Map of the 1763 Proclamation Line, *The National Atlas of the United States*
- p. 109: Colonists' View of the Stamp Act, *Library of Congress (LC) LC-USZ62242*
- p. 110: Political Cartoon depicting a tarred and feathered tax collector, *LC-USZ62-43856*
- p. 111: Paul Revere's Engraving of The Boston Massacre, 1770, *The American Treasures of the Library of Congress*
- p. 113: American Version of the Boston Tea Party, Reproduction based on engraving by D. Berger, 1784, *LC-USZC4-1582*
- p. 113: British Version of the Boston Tea Party, Engraving by W.D. Cooper, London, 1789, *Library of Congress Rare Book Division*
- p. 116: Samuel Adams, *NWDNS-148-CD-4-20*
- p. 116: Christopher Gadsden, *The National Park Service*
- p. 117: Richard Henry Lee, *NWDNS-148-CP-199*
- p. 117: William Livingston, *The National Park Service*
- p. 118: George Read, *Biographical Dictionary of the United States Congress*
- p. 118: Silas Deane, *LC-USZ62-26779*
- p. 119: Peyton Randolph, *NWDNS-148-GW-73 1b*
- p. 120: Charles Thomson, *LC-USZ62-44786*
- p. 125: Benjamin Franklin, *NWDNS-148-CD-14-20*
- p. 125: Frederick, Lord North, *LC-USZ62-45299*
- p. 130: Common Sense, *The American Treasures of the Library of Congress*
- p. 131: Map of the 1783 Treaty of Paris, *University of Oregon*

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