8.22 Analyze the social, political and economic causes of the American Revolution and the major battles, leaders and events, including: (C, E, H, P)

- Mercantilism
- Pontiac’s Rebellion
- The Proclamation of 1763
- The Sugar Act 1764
- The Quartering Act 1765
- The Stamp Act 1765
- The Declaratory Act 1766
- The Townshend Act 1761
- The Boston Massacre 1770
- The Boston Tea Party 1773
- The Intolerable Acts 1774

**Mercantilism** - The main economic theory common in Europe during the 16th to 18th centuries. Imposing government regulations, which included limiting imports by tariffs and maximizing exports, so that a nation could increase its wealth.

When referring to colonial trade it would be a theory that a nation’s economic strength came from protecting and increasing its home economy by keeping strict control over it colonial trade; the goal would be that exports to foreign countries would be higher than imports from foreign countries.
Colonial Mercantilism Link

http://www.landandfreedom.org/ushistory/us3.htm

( Pictured Above: After Britain won the Seven Years’ War and gained land in North America, it issued the Royal Proclamation of 1763, which prohibited American colonists from settling west of Appalachia.)

The Treaty of Paris, which marked the end of the French and Indian War, granted Britain a great deal of valuable North American land. But the new land also gave rise to a plethora of problems.

The ceded territory, known as the Ohio Valley, was marked by the Appalachian Mountains in the east and the Mississippi River in the west.
Despite the acquisition of this large swath of land, the British tried to discourage American colonists from settling in it. The British already had difficulty administering the settled areas east of the Appalachians. Americans moving west would stretch British administrative resources thin.

Further, just because the French government had yielded this territory to Britain did not mean the Ohio Valley’s French inhabitants would readily give up their claims to land or trade routes. Scattered pockets of French settlers made the British fearful of another prolonged conflict. The war had dragged on long enough, and the British public was weary of footing the bill.

Even after Britain issued the Royal Proclamation of 1763, Daniel Boone continued to settle areas west of the Appalachian Mountains. This 1851 painting, Daniel Boone Leading Settlers through the Cumberland Gap, depicts the popular image of a confident Boone leading the early pioneers fearlessly into the West.

Moreover, the Native Americans, who had allied themselves with the French during the Seven Years’ War, continued to fight after the peace had been reached. Pontiac’s Rebellion continued after the imperial powers achieved a cease-fire. The last thing the British government wanted were hordes of American colonists crossing the Appalachians fueling French and Native American resentment. The solution seemed simple. The Royal Proclamation of 1763 was issued, which declared the boundaries of settlement for inhabitants of the 13 colonies to be Appalachia.
Pontiac’s War. Pontiac’s Conspiracy, or Pontiac’s Rebellion was a war that was launched in 1763 by a loose confederation of elements of Native American tribes primarily from the Great Lakes region, the Illinois Country, and Ohio Country who were dissatisfied with British postwar policies in the Great Lakes region after the British victory in the French and Indian War (1754–1763). Warriors from numerous tribes joined the uprising in an effort to drive British soldiers and settlers out of the region. The war is named after the Ottawa leader Pontiac, the most prominent of many native leaders in the conflict.

Warfare on the North American frontier was brutal, and the killing of prisoners, the targeting of civilians, and other atrocities were widespread. In what some historians consider an incident of biological warfare, British officers at Fort Pitt gave smallpox-infested blankets to the besieging Native Americans with the intent of spreading the disease, possibly contributing to the smallpox epidemic that killed much of their population.
The ruthlessness and treachery of the conflict was a reflection of a growing divide between the separate populations of the British colonists and Native Americans. Contrary to popular belief, the British government did not issue the Royal Proclamation of 1763 in reaction to Pontiac’s War, though the conflict did provide an impetus for the application of the Proclamation’s Indian clauses. This proved unpopular with British colonists, and may have been one of the early contributing factors to the American Revolution.

Pontiac’s Rebellion

http://mrnussbaum.com/pontiac/

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KVx0Is3XKu0

Pontiac’s Rebellion - Ohio History Center - http://www.ohiohistorycentral.org/w/Pontiac%27s_Rebellion?rec=539

As a review before we move on, watch the video and do the activities from the French and Indian War. Brain-Pop has been purchased by TCS for the use of TCS students and teachers.

https://www.brainpop.com/socialstudies/ushistory/frenchandindianwar/
The Royal Proclamation of October 7, 1763

Heavily in debt from the Seven Years War, King George III of Great Britain wished to avoid further fighting with the Native Americans and therefore issued a proclamation declaring that the Appalachian Mountains to be the temporary western boundary for all the Colonies. Colonial Governors were forbidden to grant land to settlers west of this boundary without the King’s permission.

The Proclamation of 1763 angered colonists, especially those who owned shares in land companies. Others saw this as an infringement of their basic rights.

History for the mind... and heart

http://www.ushistory.org/declaration/related/proc63.htm
William Pitt, the elder, was appointed by King George II to be secretary of state, in charge of military affairs and colonial policy.

**The Treaty of Paris**

The fighting was over. Now the British and the British Americans could enjoy the fruits of victory. The terms of the Treaty of Paris were harsh to losing France. All French territory on the mainland of North America was lost. The British received Quebec and the Ohio Valley. The port of New Orleans and the Louisiana Territory west of the Mississippi were ceded to Spain for their efforts as a British ally.

It should have been a time to revel in the spoils of war. Instead, the very victory that temporarily brought American colonists close to their British cousins would help tear them apart.

There is nothing like fear to make a group of people feel close to a protector. The American colonists had long felt the threat of France peering over their shoulders. They needed the might of the great British military to keep them safe from France. With France gone, this was no longer true. They could be free to chart their own destinies.

The experience of the French and Indian War did not in many ways bring the British and the Americans closer together. British troops looked down their noses at the colonials. Americans were regarded as crude, lacking culture. The pious New Englanders found the British redcoats to be profane. New Englanders did not like taking orders. There was considerable resistance to helping the British at all until Pitt promised to reimburse the colonists. Smugglers continued to trade with the French and Spanish enemies throughout the war. There was considerable tension indeed.

The American colonists did feel closer to each other. Some of the intercolonial rivalry was broken down in the face of a common enemy. The first sign of nationalism was seen when settlers from all thirteen colonies lay down their lives together in battle. Likewise, the joy of victory was an American triumph. All could share in the pride of success. In many ways, the French and Indian War was a coming of age for the English colonies. They had over a century of established history. They had a flourishing economy.
The Americans proved they could work together to defeat a common foe. Before long, they would do so again.

**The Albany Plan** In 1754, colonial representatives met in Albany and devised a plan for a "general government" of the British colonies, a benchmark in the achievement of a sense of colonial unity. **The Frontier in American History — The Ohio Valley** Here you’ll find an essay presented in 1909 to the Ohio Valley Historical Society. It describes the types of people who settled in the Ohio Valley in the 1760s. Look for the following: "The Ohio Valley was settled, for the most part (though with important exceptions, especially in Ohio), by men of the Upland South..." and read on from there. **Treaty of Paris, 1763** The complete text of the treaty which ended the French and Indian War.

**Proclaim and Inflame**

Despite the Treaty of Paris, many Native Americans continued to fight against European settlement of land west of Appalachia. Ottawa Chief Pontiac led numerous attacks against British and colonial expansion and settlement and his violent aggression is one reason Britain issued the Proclamation of 1763.

**History Brief - The Proclamation of 1763**

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pxpbjyYCBmA

**The French and Indian Changes the Fate of North America**
The Royal Proclamation of 1763 was issued October 7, 1763, by King George III following Great Britain’s acquisition of French territory in North America after the end of the French and Indian War/Seven Years’ War, in which it forbade all settlers from settling past a line drawn along the Appalachian Mountains. The Royal Proclamation continues to be of legal importance to First Nations in Canada and is significant for the variation of indigenous status in the United States. It eventually ensured that British culture and laws were applied in Upper Canada after 1791, which was done to attract British settlers to the province. Its geographic location is similar to the Eastern Continental Divide’s path running northwards from Georgia to the Pennsylvania-New York State border, and north-eastwards past the drainage divide on the “St. Lawrence Divide” from there northwards through New England.

But what seemed simple to the British was not acceptable to their colonial subjects. This remedy did not address some concerns vitally important to the colonies. Colonial blood had been shed to fight the French and Indians, not to cede land to them. What was to be said for American colonists who had already settled in the West?

In addition, the colonies themselves had already begun to set their sights on expanding their western boundaries; such planning sometimes even causing tension among the colonies. Why restrict their appetites to expand? Surely this must be a plot to keep the American colonists under the imperial thumb and east of the mountains, where they could be watched.

Consequently, this law was observed with the same reverence the colonists reserved for the mercantile laws. Scores of wagons headed westward. How could the British possibly enforce this decree? It was nearly impossible.

The Proclamation of 1763 merely became part of the long list of events in which the intent and actions of one side was misunderstood or disregarded by the other.
The Sugar Act

In 1764, George Grenville, First Lord of the Treasury, proposes to strengthen the mother country’s hold on its American investment. Addressing the King in his declaration of intent, Grenville argues that "it is just and necessary, that a revenue be raised, in your Majesty’s said dominions in America, for defraying the expenses of defending, protecting, and securing the same." Working within the framework of earlier legislation regulating trade but for the first time directly imposing a tax on the colonists, Grenville devises an act with teeth. British enforcement of trade regulations has been notoriously lax, and colonial merchants have grown rich and comfortable. The new Sugar Act, they are dismayed to find, cracks down on their smuggling, intrudes upon their lucrative West Indies trade, constrains commerce in a broad range of goods, ties up their vessels at port, creates a more elaborate and more invasive customs apparatus, and sends violators to jury-less vice admiralty courts for trial. The Sugar Act, the merchants fear, will take a bite out of their profits.

The colonies have already been mired in a post-war depression. The Sugar Act worsens their trade balance just as Grenville and Parliament throw another punch. Henceforth, provincial governments are not allowed to issue their own paper currency. Since the colonists import (buy) more goods than they export (sell), British pounds sterling, the coin of the realm, are inexorably drawn back to the motherland. Given colonists’ sinking credit, sinking fortunes bottom out. Colonial merchants complain, "Our Trade Is Most Grievously Embarrassed," entreating their English friends and partners to take notice.
In Boston, town meeting (the local government) carefully considers the Sugar Act and the impending Stamp Act. "We . . . declare our just expectations," Bostonians announce, as they assert their rights and advise their representatives to the Massachusetts legislature to stand firm for traditional prerogatives. Meanwhile, in New York, American patriots urge their countrymen to cast off British luxuries and set about producing their own raw materials and home manufactures. Such self-sufficiency, they insist, will empower colonists to dispel their dread and become the "richest People upon Earth."

After the the Sugar Act goes into effect, Boston representative Thomas Cushing angrily writes Jasper Mauduit, Massachusetts' Parliamentary agent. The Assembly’s petition to the king, Cushing complains, has been watered down by Lieutenant Governor Thomas Hutchinson and the legislature’s upper house. Cushing directs Maudit to James Otis’s Rights of the Colonies Asserted and Proved for a clear and direct statement of the "exclusive Right of the People."

The colonies are poised for the drama’s next act. The cursed stamps are, gossip has it, bound for the colonies.

The Sugar Act
http://www.ushistory.org/declaration/related/sugaract.htm

The Quartering Act, 1765 & The Stamp Act, 1765

The Stamp Act

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sCez0nHsDWo

George Grenville knows that the Sugar Act won’t generate enough revenue in the colonies, and so he instructs his secretary in the Treasury, Thomas Whately, to draft legislation for a new tax. Whately makes inquiries about conditions in America, assuring his correspondents that he wants to devise a A Tax Not Too Burdensome . When Parliament passed the Stamp Act in March 1765, things changed. It was the first direct tax on the American colonies. Every legal document had to be written on specially stamped paper, showing proof of payment. Deeds, wills, marriage licenses — contracts of any sort — were not recognized as legal in a court of law unless they were prepared on this paper from London. In addition, newspaper, dice, and playing cards also had to bear proof of tax payment. American activists sprang into action.

Whately’s informants tell him that the proposed tax will be fiercely opposed. At the same time, and into February 1765, colonial agents meet with Grenville. The colonists, they insist, are loyal subjects; they are willing to raise a revenue in proper constitutional form, through their own legislatures. But Grenville turns a deaf ear, Parliament refuses to entertain colonial petitions, and the Stamp Act easily passes in March. T
Toward the end of May, news of the act reaches the colonies. The Virginia House of Burgesses, ready to adjourn, rushes through a set of resolutions protesting the tax. As newspapers throughout the colonies "reprint" Virginia’s Resolves, the resolutions grow ever more numerous and radical. Other colonies issue their own responses. Meanwhile, the Massachusetts legislature circulates a call for a unified response to the economic and constitutional issues facing the colonies. In mid-October 1765, twenty-seven delegates from nine colonies meet in New York City at what comes to be known as the Stamp Act Congress. On 19 October, the congress adopts fourteen resolutions, which it promptly forwards to King and Parliament.

While elite legislators debate rights and craft petitions, working-class men find their own way to register their displeasure with the unwanted tax. In Boston, rival gangs conspire and turn their fury toward the appointed stamp master, Andrew Oliver. One night in mid-August 1765, Oliver watches from afar as his effigy swings and his house crumbles under the hands of an angry mob. He resigns his commission to distribute the stamps, and throughout the colonies other stamp masters—attacked, or afraid of being attacked—likewise surrender their lucrative positions.

Boston’s special art of persuasion translates readily to New York. There a mob also hangs effigies and destroys a home, actions that achieve their desired end: no stamps will be distributed; no tax will be paid. Whether refusing to render aid or fleeing in the aftermath of violence, two royal officers shirk the obligations of their posts to adopt a policy of safety first. Merchant James Murray also pursues his own interests. Believing that prosperity is the end and protectionism the means, he supports the status quo in British trade policy. Patriot lawyer John Adams, on the other hand, delights in the colonists’ principled resistance. There is, nonetheless, a cost to resistance, and Adams feels its impact.

After 1 November 1765, the date the Stamp Act is due to go into effect, and throughout the early months of 1766, public life is in disarray. The stamps required to conduct business legally are locked away, and officials debate whether ports and courts should close or remain open. Colonists groan under the burden of the Stamp Act’s restrictions and the fear of disobeying it. In England, sympathetic merchants, eager to reestablish a free flow of trade and to regain their former profits, lobby Parliament to rescind the tax on the colonies. After lengthy consideration, Parliament votes to revoke the tax, and when the glorious news reaches the colonies, church bells ring. The victory, sweet as it is, will be short lived.

( Pictured Above: When Britain repealed the Stamp Act in 1766 — only a year after it had been issued — colonists celebrated in the streets, as this satirical cartoon from 1766 depicts.)
Read the lesson about the Stamp Act and take the assessment after you read it.

http://www.ducksters.com/history/american_revolution/the_stamp_act.php

Reaction to the Stamp Act

The Lesson of the Quartering Act

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C_1zCgprfEg

Taxation in this manner and the Quartering Act (which required the American colonies to provide food and shelter for British troops) were soundly thrashed in colonial assemblies. From Patrick Henry in Virginia to James Otis in Massachusetts, Americans voiced their protest. A Stamp Act Congress was convened in the colonies to decide what to do.

The colonists put their words into action and enacted widespread boycotts of British goods. Radical groups such as the Sons and Daughters of Liberty did not hesitate to harass tax collectors or publish the names of those who did not comply with the boycotts.

Soon, the pressure on Parliament by business-starved British merchants was too great to bear. The Stamp Act was repealed the following year. The crisis was over, but the uneasy peace did not last long. Something was dreadfully
wrong in the American colonies. All of sudden after over a century and a half of permitting relative self-rule, Britain was exercising direct influence over colonial life. In addition to restricting westward movement, the parent country was actually enforcing its trade laws.

In addition to emotional appeals, the colonists began to make a political argument, as well. The tradition of receiving permission for levying taxes dated back hundreds of years in British history. But the colonists had no representation in the British Parliament. To tax them without offering representation was to deny their traditional rights as English subjects. This could not stand. The Stamp Act of 1765 was not the first attempt to tax the American colonies. Parliament had passed the Sugar Act and Currency Act the previous year. Because tax was collected at ports though, it was easily circumvented. Indirect taxes such as these were also much less visible to the consumer.

**The Townshend Acts**

( Pictured Above: *The House of Commons and the House of Lords combine to form Britain’s Parliament. Charles Townshend was a member of the House of Commons when he convinced Parliament to impose a new tax on the American colonies in 1767.*)

For a simple explanation of the Townshend Acts, read the short summary from Mr. Nussbaum

http://mrnussbaum.com/history-2-2/townshendact/

( Pictured Below: *As Britain continued to impose taxes on the colonists, reactions turned violent toward tories and British officials.*)

Sure enough, the "truce" did not last long. Back in London, Charles Townshend persuaded the House of Commons to once again tax the Americans, this time through an import tax on such items as glass, paper, lead, and tea.
The **Townshend Acts** were a series of acts passed, beginning in 1767, by the [Parliament of Great Britain](http://www.ushistory.org/declaration/related/townshend.htm) relating to the [British colonies](http://www.ushistory.org/declaration/related/townshend.htm) in North America. The acts are named after Charles Townshend, the [Chancellor of the Exchequer](http://www.ushistory.org/declaration/related/townshend.htm), who proposed the program. Historians vary slightly in which acts they include under the heading "Townshend Acts", but six laws are often mentioned: the [Revenue Act of 1767](http://www.ushistory.org/declaration/related/townshend.htm), the [Indemnity Act](http://www.ushistory.org/declaration/related/townshend.htm), the [Commissioners of Customs Act](http://www.ushistory.org/declaration/related/townshend.htm), the [Vice Admiralty Court Act](http://www.ushistory.org/declaration/related/townshend.htm), and the [New York Restraining Act](http://www.ushistory.org/declaration/related/townshend.htm). The purpose of the Townshend Acts was to raise revenue in the colonies to pay the salaries of governors and judges so that they would remain loyal to Great Britain, to create a more effective means of enforcing compliance with trade regulations, to punish the province of New York for failing to comply with the 1765 [Quartering Act](http://www.ushistory.org/declaration/related/townshend.htm), and to establish the precedent that the British Parliament had the right to tax the colonies. The Townshend Acts were met with resistance in the colonies, prompting the occupation of Boston by British troops in 1768, which eventually resulted in the [Boston Massacre](http://www.ushistory.org/declaration/related/townshend.htm) of 1770.

As a result of widespread protest in the American colonies, Parliament began to consider a motion to partially repeal the Townshend duties. Most of the new taxes were repealed, but the tax on tea was retained. The British government continued in its attempt to tax the colonists without their consent and the [Boston Tea Party](http://www.ushistory.org/declaration/related/townshend.htm) and the [American Revolution](http://www.ushistory.org/declaration/related/townshend.htm) followed.
The Ties that Bind

History Brief: The Townshend Acts
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=epZpkNDExsk

Lesson about the Townshend Acts
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ULcLkEz2Y_E

Townshend had ulterior motives, however. The revenue from these duties would now be used to pay the salaries of colonial governors. This was not an insignificant change. Traditionally, the legislatures of the colonies held the authority to pay the governors. It was not uncommon for a governor’s salary to be withheld if the legislature became dissatisfied with any particular decision. The legislature could, in effect, blackmail the governor into submission. Once this important leverage was removed, the governors could be freer to oppose the assemblies.

(Pictured Above: Charles Townshend, Chancellor of the Exchequer, sponsored the Townshend Acts. He believed that the Townshend Acts would assert British authority over the colonies as well as increase revenue.)

Townshend went further by appointing an American Board of Customs Commissioners. This body would be stationed in the colonies to enforce compliance with tax policy. Customs officials received bonuses for every convicted smuggler, so there were obvious incentives to capture Americans. Given that violators were tried in juryless admiralty courts, there was a high chance of conviction.

Townshend also pressed the Americans to the limit by suspending the New York legislature for failing to provide adequate supplies for the British troops stationed there. Another showdown appeared imminent.

Reactions in the colonies were similar to those during the Stamp Act Crisis. Once again nonimportation was implemented. Extralegal activities such as harassing tax collectors and merchants who violated the boycotts were common. The colonial assemblies sprung into action.

The Boston Massacre

(Pictured Above: Crispus Attucks is a name synonymous with the Boston Massacre. He was not only the first African American to die for the revolution, he was one of the first patriots to give his life for the cause.)
The showdown between the British and the Americans was not simply a war of words. Blood was shed over this clash of ideals. Although large-scale fighting between American minutemen and the British redcoats did not begin until 1775, the 1770 Boston Massacre gave each side a taste of what was to come.

No colony was thrilled with the Townshend duties, but nowhere was there greater resentment than in Boston. British officials in Boston feared for their lives. When attempts were made to seize two of John Hancock’s trading vessels, Boston was ready to riot. Lord Hillsborough, Parliament’s minister on American affairs, finally ordered four regiments to be moved to Boston.

**American blood was shed on American soil.**
The British Make the Americans Skittish

( Pictured Above: This print of Paul Revere’s depiction of the Boston Massacre is on display in the Diplomatic Receptions Rooms of the Maine State Department building in Washington, D.C.)

Samuel Adams and James Otis did not take this lightly. Less than three weeks prior to the arrival of British troops, Bostonians defiantly, but nervously, assembled in Faneuil Hall. But when the redcoats marched boldly through the town streets on October 1, the only resistance seen was on the facial expressions of the townspeople. The people of Boston had decided to show restraint.

The other 12 colonies watched the Boston proceedings with great interest. Perhaps their fears about British tyranny were true. Moderates found it difficult to argue that the Crown was not interested in stripping away American civil liberties by having a standing army stationed in Boston. Throughout the occupation, sentiment shifted further and further away from the London government.

The Massacre

On March 5, 1770, the inevitable happened. A mob of about 60 angry townspeople descended upon the guard at the Customs House. When reinforcements were called, the crowd became more unruly, hurling rocks and snowballs at the guard and reinforcements.

In the heat of the confusing melee, the British fired without Captain Thomas Preston’s command. Imperial bullets took the lives of five men, including Crispus Attucks, a former slave. Others were injured.

Trial and Error

( Pictured Above: Five men were killed in the incident known as the Boston Massacre. Among them was Crispus Attucks, a former slave.)

The Boston Massacre - from www.ushistory.org

http://www.ushistory.org/declaration/related/massacre.htm

Captain Preston and four of his men were cleared of all charges in the trial that followed. Two others were convicted of manslaughter, but were sentenced to a mere branding of the thumb. The lawyer who represented the British soldiers was none other than patriot John Adams.
At the same time Preston’s men drew blood in Boston, the Parliament in London decided once again to concede on the issue of taxation. All the Townshend duties were repealed except for one, the tax on tea. It proved to another error in judgment on the part of the British.

The Massachusetts legislature was reconvened. Despite calls by some to continue the tea boycott until all taxes were repealed, most American colonists resumed importation.

The events in Boston from 1768 through 1770 were not soon forgotten. Legal squabbles were one thing, but bloodshed was another. Despite the verdict of the soldiers’ trial, Americans did not forget the lesson they had learned from this experience. What was the lesson? Americans learned that the British would use force when necessary to keep the Americans obedient.

If it could happen in Boston, where would it happen next?

The Tea Act and Tea Parties

The British were in a spot — all because of tea . . .

The partial repeal of the Townshend Acts did not bring the same reaction in the American colonies as the repeal of the Stamp Act. Too much had already happened. Not only had the Crown attempted to tax the colonies on several occasions, but two taxes were still being collected — one on sugar and one on tea.

Military occupation and bloodshed, whether intentional or not, cannot be forgotten easily. Although importation had largely been resumed, the problems of customs officers continued. One ill-fated customs ship, the Gaspee, was burnt to ashes by angry Rhode Islanders when the unfortunate vessel ran aground. Tensions mounted on both sides. It would take time for wounds to heal. But Parliament would not give that time.

Playing Monopoly

The British East India Company was on the brink of financial collapse. Lord North hatched a scheme to deal simultaneously with the ailing corporation and the problem of taxing the colonies. He decided to grant the British East India Company a trading monopoly with the American colonies.

A tax on tea would be maintained, but the company would actually be able to sell its tea for a price that was lower than before. A monopoly doesn’t allow for competition. As such the British East India Company could lower its prices.
The Tea Act, 1773  Boston Tea Party

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-xSrZaze14k

http://www.ducksters.com/history/boston_tea_party.php

The Real Story of the Boston Tea Party

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KMtoddN0Wu0

The British East India Company began with a royal charter from Queen Elizabeth in 1600 and developed into an economic powerhouse. When the company faced financial ruin during the 1770s, the British government stepped in with the Tea Act to help the struggling company.

The colonists, Lord North hoped, would be happy to receive cheaper tea and willing to pay the tax. This would have the dual result of saving the tea company and securing compliance from Americans on the tax issue. It was a brilliant plan. There was, of course, one major flaw in his thinking. The colonists saw through this thinly veiled plot to encourage tax payment. Furthermore, they wondered how long the monopoly would keep prices low.

Activists were busy again, advocating boycott. Many went further. British ships carrying the controversial cargo were met with threats of violence in virtually all colonial ports. This was usually sufficient to convince the ships to turn around. In Annapolis, citizens burned a ship and the tea it carried. Boston, of course, reacted in a similarly extreme fashion.
The Boston Tea Party

Governor Thomas Hutchinson allowed three ships carrying tea to enter Boston Harbor. Before the tax could be collected, Bostonians took action. On a cold December night, radical townspeople stormed the ships and tossed 342 chests of tea into the water. Disguised as Native Americans, the offenders could not be identified.

“I dressed myself in the costume of an Indian, equipped with a small hatchet, which I and my associates denominated the tomahawk, with which, and a club, after having painted my face and hands with coal dust in the shop of a blacksmith, I repaired to Griffin’s wharf, where the ships lay that contained the tea...

We then were ordered by our commander to open the hatches and take out all the chests of tea and throw them overboard, and we immediately proceeded to execute his orders, first cutting and splitting the chests with our tomahawks, so as thoroughly to expose them to the effects of the water. In about three hours from the time we went on board, we had thus broken and thrown overboard every tea chest to be found in the ship, while those in the other ships were disposing of the tea in the same way, at the same time. We were surrounded by British armed ships, but no attempt was made to resist us.”


The damage in modern American dollars exceeded three quarters of a million dollars. Not a single British East India Company chest of tea bound for the 13 colonies reached its destination. Not a single American colonist had a cup of that tea. Only the fish in Boston Harbor had that pleasure.

The Intolerable Acts

( Pictured Above: Britain’s House of Lords, the upper house of Parliament, helped issue a series of acts in response to the Boston Tea Party and the American colonies’ continual rebellion.)
Someone was going to pay ...

Parliament was utterly fed up with colonial antics. The British could tolerate strongly worded letters or trade boycotts. They could put up with defiant legislatures and harassed customs officials to an extent. But they saw the destruction of 342 chests of tea belonging to the British East India Company as wanton destruction of property by Boston thugs who did not even have the courage to admit responsibility. Someone was going to pay.

Calami-tea

The British called their responsive measures to the Boston Tea Party the Coercive Acts. Boston Harbor was closed to trade until the owners of the tea were compensated. Only food and firewood were permitted into the port. Town meetings were banned, and the authority of the royal governor was increased.

To add insult to injury, General Gage, the British commander of North American forces, was appointed governor of Massachusetts. British troops and officials would now be tried outside Massachusetts for crimes of murder. Greater freedom was granted to British officers who wished to house their soldiers in private dwellings.

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

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

( Pictured Above: Colonists sometimes took out their anger over unfair taxes on the tax collector, as depicted in this drawing from 1774.)

**INTOLERABLE ACTS**

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Throughout the colonies, the message was clear: what could happen in Massachusetts could happen anywhere. The British had gone too far. Supplies were sent to the beleaguered colony from the other twelve. For the first time since the Stamp Act Crisis, an intercolonial conference was called. It was under these tense circumstances that the First Continental Congress convened in Philadelphia on September 5, 1774.