

History Revolutions: America
Teach Yourself Series
Topic 3: Trigger factors that contributed to the revolution

Contents

Taxes and Proclamations.....	3
Royal Proclamation.....	3
The American Revenue Act April 1764 / Sugar Act	3
The Currency Act.....	4
The Quartering Act	4
The Stamp Act.....	4
Colonial Responses to the Stamp Act	5
Declaratory Act:	5
Townshend Duties:	5
Review Questions:	5
Development of Unique American Society	5
American Colonisation and Settlement.....	5
Religious Freedom	5
Colonial Expansion and Governance	5
Slavery in the Colonies	5
Indigenous Population.....	5
The Colonial Women’s Experience	5
The Drive for Colonial Unity.....	5
How did this create revolutionary tensions?	5
Review Questions	5
Boston	5
Revolutionary Propaganda.....	5
Solutions to Review Questions	6

SAMPLE

Trigger factors that contributed to the Revolution

Taxes and Proclamations

Royal Proclamation

After the British victory in the French and Indian War, vast tracts of lands opened up, creating an opportunity for farmers, frontiersmen and wealthy colonial elites who laid claim to much of the land that opened up. Interestingly enough George Washington and Benjamin Franklin acquired large claims in the new territories.

In May 1763 Native American chief Pontiac launched the first in a string of attacks on the new British settlements on the frontier. Pontiac had been allied with the French during the war and was hoping that by driving the English settlers from the frontier the French would return to reacquire their lost territories. These attacks were unique in that it involved the vast majority of the western tribes of Native Americans. Rather than this being a sign of the tribes aligning and fighting together, it points more to nationwide native discontent.

At the conclusion of the French Indian War, British cabinet had started to consider how to control the westward expansion. In October 1763 British Parliament issued a Royal Proclamation, essentially banning all settlement west of the Appalachian Mountains. All previous purchases and claims were invalidated and there was a ban prohibiting all future purchases, although all hunting and fishing rights were included and formalised. Rather than seeing this as a binding law many colonists saw this as nothing more than a hindrance to their business ventures.

The American Revenue Act April 1764 / Sugar Act

The British Parliament enacted the American Revenue Act as a way of curtailing illegal trade, and gaining an income from it. Essentially what the government were trying to do was regulate who American producers and traders could work with, all the while charging taxes the most topical, being molasses, or liquid sugar which was one of the main ingredients in making rum. Although this act had been in place since 1733, it was revamped in 1764, decreased the tax paid by 50% but also imposed new duties on other commodities of non-British origin including wine, cloth, indigo and coffee amongst many other things.

The Currency Act

England found itself looking for ways to raise money, as reserves had started to fall very low. As Benjamin Franklin was in London at the time in his official position, he was questioned as to how the colonies were coping. The American Colonies were using what is known as 'scrip'. Essentially this is paper money that only has value in the one area, and each colony had its own 'scrip' with no consistency throughout the 13 colonies. This came about as there was little gold, and a continual decline in natural resources.

Rather than keeping gold in the colony of America, British economic practice meant that all gold was property of Britain and needed to be stored there. If a colony needed to repay debts to the mother country it could only be done in gold, not in money or services. This resulted in the colonies not having anything to buy and sell to make money, so they started printing their own paper money. To successfully and logically control this London could have provided its own paper money ensuring regulation and consistency across all colonies.

However England abolished any future printing of paper money. This ensured that the colonists would be incensed, with currency and money continuing to be a source of tension up until the revolution.

The Quartering Act

This act was created, as there was a continued British military presence in the colonies, for various reasons. The Mutiny Act of 1765 called for soldiers to be billeted in colonists private property such as barns, buildings or vacant houses, the colonies took offence to this and refused to acknowledge and enforce this law. In response London passed another act known as the Quartering Act, placing the colonies directly responsible for the housing, supplying (food, ammunition etc) and to feed the troops. Again the colonies took offence to this as they felt they had no need for these troops especially in peacetime causing rising tensions between both sides.

The Stamp Act

Perhaps the most controversial act of the 1760's for the American colonies was the passing of the Stamp Act, causing great consternation from the colonists in fact it brought society together through their displeasure at the Stamp Act. Stamp Duties were not uncommon, and had been around in Britain for almost 100 years, generally used to fund wars.

Official Government documents and semi – official documents such as newspapers, contracts, bills of sales, wills and land titles to name but a few would need to be stamped and have a tax paid on them. As there was such a wide range of semi-official documents that would fall under stamp duty all levels of society were affected. However, the money from these taxes was to stay in America, to fund salaries of crown officials. Although the British parliamentarians had tested the waters earlier, opposition was not considered to be enough to warrant the dismissal of the bill, however this was a gross underestimation from the men at Westminster. It was through the reaction to the Stamp Tax that the catch cry of 'no taxation without representation' was popularized.

Colonial Responses to the Stamp Act

Colonies were informed of the Stamp Act in April 1765 with the intention of it being implemented at the start of November. The following 7 months gave rise to a massive amount of unrest, debate and protest across many of the 13 colonies. There was discord ranging from Colonial assemblymen all the way to town meetings where everyone had an opportunity to voice their opinion. It was through these meetings that the general consensus was reached that if they boycotted the stamps then they couldn't be enforced, where as a minority felt that intimidation and violence towards officials would be the most effective course of action.

Declaratory Act:

After the repealing of the Stamp Act in 1766 British parliament passed what is known as the Declaratory Act. Essentially all this act was, was nothing more than a reprimand from an angry parent. It was Britain's way of reminding the colonies of their position in the relationship with Britain, they were the subordinates, Britain was and will always be in charge. Many saw it as an attempt to save face after the Stamp Act furor, however others saw it as a statement of intent to inflict more taxes and legislation in the future.

Townshend Duties:

In 1766 Charles Townshend became 'chancellor of the exchequer' (treasurer), with the Townshend Duties coming into effect in 1767. He needed to balance the budget and was of the belief that the American Colonies should to a certain extent be self – funding. His plan was to raise revenue through import duties that is any British goods imported into America (legally) would need to pay a duty, thus raising enough revenue to pay the salaries of British officials in the colonies. To help enforce this 3 admiralty courts were established, as well as authorizing Writs of Assistance a law allowing royal officials to search and seize goods from private ships and buildings. Essentially reintroducing and strengthening aspects of the Sugar Act, further infuriating an already angry and volatile population. In response the population from the colonies boycotted all British goods, sourcing them from alternatives or going without altogether.

Review Questions:

Fill out the table below:

Act / Proclamation	Year Implemented	What was it supposed to do?	Colonial Reactions
The Royal Proclamation	1763		

Solutions to Review Questions

1.

Act / Proclamation	Year Implemented	What was it supposed to do?	Colonial Reactions
The Royal Proclamation	1763	Stop unchecked westward expansion after the French and Indian War.	Anger, Disbelief, Annoyance
The American Revenue Act/Sugar Act	1764	Increase competition with the French West Indies Regulate colonial trade	Resentment / Anger
The Currency Act	1762	Banned printing of paper money Banned use of old paper money	Anger, saw it as another to further tax the colonies
Quatering Act	1765	Colonial assemblies to provide quatering, food, weapons and ammunition for British soldiers	Anger / Resentment / Believed that it was another form of Taxation
Stamp Act	1765	Placement of official government seal on all documentation deemed official including bills of sale, deeds, titles, mortgges, indentures, contracts, wills, insurance and policies	Resentment / Anger / Disbelief / Protests / Rioting
Declaratory Act	1766	Reinstated British authority in the colonies	Further resentment / Disbelief
Townshend Duties	1767	Import duties on British goods Attempt to make colonies self funding Admiralty Courts Increase in custom officers power	Tried to find local alternatives Signing of non-importation duties Boycott goods and traders that sold them Endorsed by colonial assemblies Agreed to resist changes as quick as much as possible

2.