Historical Background

Prior to the Seven Years War (also known as the French and Indian War), colonists had an easy relationship with the British government. Following the end of the war, that relationship quickly began to change.

Great Britain had amassed a large debt from the war effort. Feeling that the colonists should shoulder much of the cost of their defense, Parliament passed a series of laws to increase revenue that would be used to pay for the war debt. These acts included the Sugar Act (1764), Stamp Act (1765), Mutiny Act (1765), and Townshend Duties (1767). These acts taxed the sale of items such as molasses, paper, paint, glass, and tea. The Mutiny Act required that the colonial assemblies furnish British troops with housing and supplies. The British also increased efforts to stop smuggling and enforce these new taxes.

Colonists organized boycotts of taxed goods and staged protests to voice their complaints. They complained that they were being taxed without having representation in the British Parliament. The constant presence of British troops in the colonies only escalated the tensions, leading to events such as the Boston Massacre in 1770. Just a few years later, the colonists would begin their fight for independence.

Suggestions for Teachers

The Library of Congress has a wide variety of sources available to explore this critical time period prior to the American Revolution. When working with textual sources, students may struggle with vocabulary. To help your students, incorporate vocabulary lessons into their primary source analysis either by pre-selecting words they might have trouble with, or allowing students to select words they do not understand.

Also, keep in mind that some students may struggle with the symbolism in visual sources. For example, when looking at the image above, how are the ladies portrayed? Is this a positive or negative portrayal? Why are the ladies depicted in such a way (who created the image)? Discussing the sources together will help your students better understand their historical significance.

Additional Links:

- TPS-MTSU: Colonial Links Guide
- National Park Service: The American Revolution
- Mission US: For Crown or Colony?
- Colonial Williamsburg: Teachers Page
- The Freedom Trail: Teacher Resources
- PBS: Liberty! The American Revolution
- National Archives—DocsTeach: Revolution and the New Nation (1754-1820s)

A society of patriotic ladies, at Edenton North Carolina [1775 March 25]
Cantonment of the forces in North America 11th, Octr., 1765. [1765]

This is the place to affix the stamp. [1765 October 24]

[The repeal or the funeral of Miss Amc=Stamp] [1766 March 18 or later]

No stamped paper to be had. [Philadelphia : Printed by Hall & Franklin, 1765]

The Pennsylvania journal and weekly advertiser - expiring: in hopes of a resurrection to life again / William Bradford. [1765 October 31.]
1767-70

The colonies reduced - its companion [1767]

A view of Charles Town the capital of South Carolina in North America . . . engraved by C. Canot from an original painting of T. Mellish, in the collection of Mr. John Bowles, [1768]

The town of Boston in New England and British ships of war landing their troops! 1768 [1770]

Four coffins of men killed in the Boston Massacre] [1770 March 12]

[The coffin of Patrick Carr] [1770 March 19]
Advertisement. The members of the Association of the Sons of Liberty, are requested to meet at the City-Hall... [1773]

The association of the sons of liberty, of New-York, It is essential to the freedom and security of a free people, that no taxes be imposed upon them but by their own consent, or their representatives... [Dated] New-York, November 29, 1773. [1773]

To the agents of their high mightinesses the Dutch East-India company, at St. Eustatia, Beloved partners in iniquity... [1773]

New-York, November 5, 1773. To the friends of liberty, and commerce, Gentlemen... [1773]
Boston, December 1, 1773. Gentlemen, The Committee of Correspondence for this Town had just prepared their Letter covering the Proceedings of the Town at their two late Meetings of the 3rd and 12th Ulterior, when a Ship arrived from London with Part of the East-India Company’s Tea. This induced us toRegions sending the Letter until we could procure force for their Intelligence. On Monday last this and the neighboring Towns at one Body assembled at Faneuil Hall, till the Affinity were so numerous as excelled: an Adjournment to the Old South Meeting-House, where it was computed there was upwards of 3000 Persons, and then came into a Number of Votes and Resolves unanimously: a Copy of which being handed to us by a Committee of that Body, we now forward to you, and are with great Esteem your Friends and humble Servants.

By Order of the Committee of Boston.

William Vose

Boston, December 20, 1773. Whereas it has been reported that a Permit will be given by the Custom-House for landing the Tea now on Board a Vessel lying in this Harbor, commanding by Capt. Hesk. this is to be informed to our People. This is a matter of publick Justice. The Tea is wholly sent to the publick. This is it to be destroyed. And as the selling or making any improper or granting any such Permit for landing the Tea or any other publick or commercial ship, or to allow any Permit when stopped by the Master or Commanders of the said Ship, or any other ship in the same Situation, will be an infinite loss to the Body of the People of this and the neighboring Towns assembled at the Old South Meeting-House on Tuesday the 20th Day of December, that the said Tea ever should be landed in this Province, and thereby an enormous Tax on the said Tea, and will also be a great burden to the Committee of Correspondence, and the whole body of People.

The People.

N. B. This Statement is made here with the most humble Duty.

Boston, December 2, 1773. Whereas it has been reported that a permit will be given by the custom-House . . . [1773]

1. GENERAL VIEW, LOOKING SOUTH ON WASHINGTON STREET - Old South Meetinghouse, Washington & Milk Streets, Boston, Suffolk County, MA [1968]

Tea destroyed by Indians. [1773]
Advertisement. The enemies of the liberty of America... [1774]

A political lesson / J. Dixon invent et fecit. [1774 Sepr. 7.]

Virtual representation, 1775 [1775 April 1]

America in flames [1775 Jan. 1]

The alternative of Williamsburg [1775 Feb. 16.]
Teachers: Providing these primary source replicas without source clues may enhance the inquiry experience for students. This list of citations is supplied for reference purposes to you and your students. We have followed the Chicago Manual of Style format, one of the formats recommended by the Library of Congress, for each entry below, minus the access date. The access date for each of these entries is April 9, 2012.


Cantonment of the forces in North America 11th. Octr. 1765. Map. [1765]. From Library of Congress, The American Revolution and Its Era: Maps and Charts of North America and the West Indies, 1750-1789. [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/gmd:@filreq(@field(NUMBER+@band(p3301r+r011400))+@field(COLLID+armap)).](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/gmd:@filreq(@field(NUMBER+@band(p3301r+r011400))+@field(COLLID+armap)).


[The repeal or the funeral of Miss Ame=Stamp.] Cartoon. [March 18, 1766 or later]. From Library of Congress, Cartoon Prints, British. [http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/93504548/](http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/93504548/).


Advertisement. The members of the Association of the Sons of Liberty, are requested to meet at the City-Hall, at one o’clock, tomorrow (being Friday) on business of the utmost importance;--and every other friend to the liberties, and trade of A. Broadside. New York: 1773. From Library of Congress, An American Time Capsule: Three Centuries of Broadsides and Other Printed Ephemera. [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/rbpebib:@field(NUMBER+@band(rbpe+10501400)).](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/rbpebib:@field(NUMBER+@band(rbpe+10501400)).

To the agents of their high mightinesses the Dutch East-India company, at St. Eustatia, Beloved partners in iniquity. We, the deputies of their high mightinesses, for the city of New York, dispatch the Cowbay frigate, Captain Thistle, to acquain. Broadside. New York: 1773. From Library of Congress, An American Time Capsule: Three Centuries of Broadsides and Other Printed Ephemera. [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/rbpebib:@field(NUMBER+@band(rbpe+10500800)).](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/rbpebib:@field(NUMBER+@band(rbpe+10500800)).
The association of the sons of liberty, of New-York. It is essential to the freedom and security of a free people, that no taxes be imposed upon them but by their own consent, or their representatives... [Dated] New-York, November 29, 1773. Broadside.

Cassius [pseud.]. New-York, November 5, 1773. To the friends of liberty, and commerce, Gentlemen. It must be strongly marked on your minds, that the end of the last non-importation agreement, was to obtain a repeal of the tyrannical act of Parliament, that impose. Broadside. New-York: 1773. From Library of Congress, An American Time Capsule: Three Centuries of Broadsides and Other Printed Ephemera. http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/rbpebib:@field(NUMBER+@band(rbpe+1050090e)).


Boston, December 2, 1773. Whereas it has been reported that a permit will be given by the custom-house for landing the tea now on board a vessel laying in this harbour, commanded by Capt. Hall: this is to remind the publick, that it was solemnly. Broadside. Boston: 1773. From Library of Congress, An American Time Capsule: Three Centuries of Broadsides and Other Printed Ephemera. http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/rbpebib:@field(NUMBER+@band(rbpe+0370240a)).


Boston, December 20, on Tuesday last the body of the people of this and all the adjacent towns, an others from the distance of twenty miles, assembled at the old south meeting house to inquire the reason of the delay in sending the ship Dartmouth. Photo-stat. Boston: 1773. From Library of Congress, An American Time Capsule: Three Centuries of Broadside and Other Printed Ephemera. http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/rbpebib:@field(NUMBER+@band(rbpe+0370250a)).


Advertisement. The enemies of the liberty of America, being unwearied in misrepresenting the attachment of the inhabitants of this City, to the common cause of this country, to the neighbouring colonies, a number of the citizens think it highly. Broadside. New-York: 1774. From Library of Congress, An American Time Capsule: Three Centuries of Broadsides and Other Printed Ephemera. http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/rbpebib:@field(NUMBER+@band(rbpe+0370200a)).


