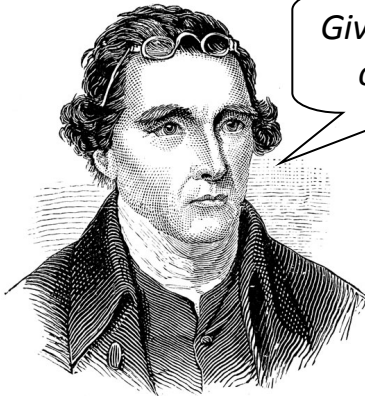


Hey, King: Get Off Our Backs!

Name: _____



Give me liberty,
or give me

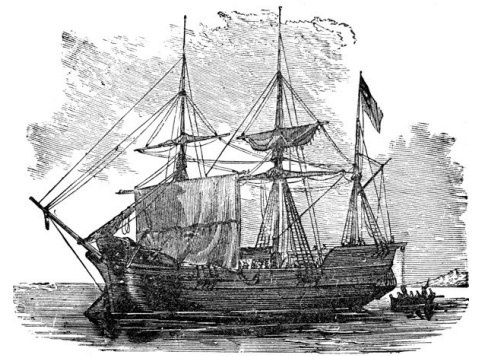
Patrick Henry

Really? Was it that bad? By 1776, the American colonists living under English rule thought so. In fact, things were so bad that they went to war to gain their independence. But why? What could have been so intolerable?

The first Englishmen came to America four hundred years ago looking for gold, silver, and a waterway to Asia. They were part of a trading company that convinced the king of England to grant them a **charter** giving them permission to set up a colony in America. But they did not find what they were looking for. Times got so hard those first settlers had to eat rats and even each other to keep from starving to death. Pretty soon, though, more people arrived and times got better. The English were here to stay.

Hail to the King

Back in England, the King probably figured he had a pretty good deal. Other people got seasick sailing across the ocean to settle an untamed land while he sat in his palace ruling England. Except that being king just wasn't what it used to be. Back in the 1200s, a king could really do what he wanted! But this was the 1600s, and now the English people had representatives in **Parliament** who made laws and stood up for peoples' rights. They even gave advice to the king. Bah!



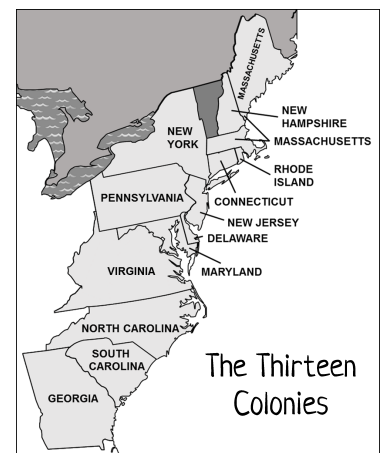
You Don't Mind If We . . . Uh . . .

Govern ourselves, do you? In America, the colonists needed some kind of government to deal with everyday problems. After all, the king was on the other side of the ocean. And because of Parliament, the colonists were used to having a say in government. In Virginia Colony, the first settlers decided each community should have two representatives and that all the representatives would meet together. Farther north, in Plymouth, the colonists signed a **compact** agreeing to form a majority-rule government where all the men would vote on whatever issues came up. (Women didn't get to vote in 1620.) Even so, the king still controlled the colonies, and the colonists had to follow England's laws.

The House of Burgesses was the group of representatives in Virginia. The Mayflower Compact was the agreement the Plymouth colonists signed while they were still on board the Mayflower, before they set foot on dry land. Even then, they knew they would need a government!

We're Doing Just Fine, Thanks

England had a lot of other colonies besides those in America and plenty of other problems to deal with. The king and Parliament didn't have much time to pay attention to the American colonists. By the mid-1700s there were 13 colonies, and each colony had its own government. These little governments grew stronger and more used to being in control. When problems came up, the colonial governments took care of things themselves. The colonists were out on their own, making their own decisions, governing things the way they wanted to without much interference.

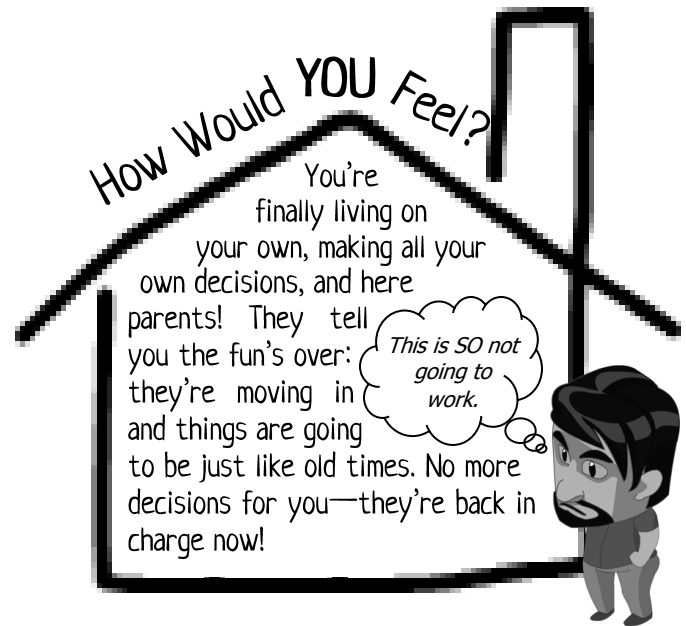


Hey, King: Get Off Our Backs!

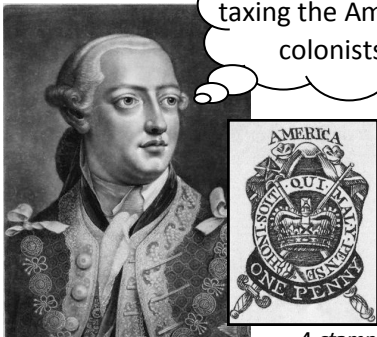
Name: _____

A Raw Deal

But then times got tough, and the British government went looking for money. Great Britain, which now included both England and Scotland, saw its colonies around the world as a source of profit. Colonies were places to cut timber, grow crops such as cotton and coffee, and mine for valuable minerals. The king forced the colonists to sell these raw materials back to England at really cheap prices. People in England would use the materials to make finished products. But did the colonists get a bargain on these items because they provided the materials? No way! The king forced the colonists to buy the finished products at extra high prices.



Hmm... What about taxing the American colonists?



King George III

A stamp

Looking for a Fast Buck?

That was only the beginning. In the mid-1700's, Britain fought two expensive wars. Britain had taken out a lot of debt to pay for the war, so it went looking for a way to make money fast. Taxing the American colonists seemed like the perfect idea. So in 1765, Britain passed the **Stamp Act**, which forced colonists to put expensive tax stamps on all legal documents, as well as newspapers, calendars, and almanacs. The colonists had an answer for that: They quit buying British goods! But this *boycott* didn't work for long. Britain repealed the Stamp Act after one year, but things did not get better.

From Bad to Worse

As soon as the Stamp Act was gone, the British passed the **Declaratory Act** saying that the colonies were dependent on the king and declaring that all laws passed in the colonies had no effect. As if that weren't bad enough, Britain also passed the **Townshend Revenue Act**, taxing things it knew the colonists couldn't make for themselves: paint, glass, paper, lead, and tea. This Act also allowed British government workers to search peoples' houses and even break down doors to seize items the homeowner hadn't paid taxes for. On top of that, the **Quartering Acts** of 1765 and 1774 forced certain colonists to let British troops live in their houses. The soldiers didn't even have to pay rent! Then, in the 1770s, a series of laws cracked down on rebellious activity in Massachusetts colony. Colonists called these the **Intolerable Acts**.



During the Boston Tea Party, colonists were so angry about a law called the Tea Act that they snuck onto a cargo ship during the night and dumped hundreds of crates of tea into the Boston harbor!

Enough is Enough!

The colonists finally decided there was only one solution: self-government! On July 4, 1776, the colonies adopted the **Declaration of Independence**, announcing that the United States was free from Great Britain. It wasn't that easy, though. There was the small matter of fighting a war against Britain to make that freedom real. When the Americans won the Revolutionary War, Britain lost all control of the colonies. The United States of America was born.



magistracy = office of the local government official

gaol = jail

comptroller = public official who manages government finances

900l. sterling = £900, or about \$162,000 (based on how much things used to cost)

repugnant = repulsive

obliged = forced

countenance = face

man of war = British naval ship

populace = people

countermand = send back

vend = sell

coach = carriage

effigy = a doll made to look like someone

abettor = supporter or helper

his excellency = the governor

The LONDON MAGAZINE: *Or, GENTLEMAN's Monthly Intelligencer.*

For OCTOBER 1765.

By letters received from Boston in New-England, there is an account of a dangerous mob, which arose in the middle of August, on account of the stamp duty, and did considerable mischief; but on the 16th of August they were more violent than before, which continued till Sunday the 1st of September, by which time the magistracy had raised and armed five-hundred men, and had committed several of the rioters to gaol,--but not till they had destroyed all the goods and papers of the comptroller, judge of the admiralty, distributor of the stamps, as well as every individual article in the house of the lieutenant governor ... even to the uncovering his house, burning all his books and papers, carrying off even his clothes, as well as those of his sister and daughter, putting them on by way of masquerade, [taking] 900l. sterling in cash, scarce leaving him any more than the shirt he had on.

For NOVEMBER 1765.

The stamp-duty is so repugnant to the ideas of the people of America, that in most of the northern colonies they have obliged the stamp-officers to resign their places. . . . When the stamped papers arrived at Philadelphia, the vessels in the harbour hoisted their colours half mast high, the bells rung, being muffled, and every countenance betrayed dejection. Finally, they obliged the stamp distributor to promise not to exercise his office, and the stamped papers were obliged to be taken on board a man of war, to secure them from the rage of the populace. The lawyers in New Jersey, &c. have resolved not to use the stamped papers.

For DECEMBER 1765.

Upon the arrival of the stamps at New-York, every sign of mourning appeared. The merchants soon after met and resolved to have no more goods shipped from Great Britain unless the stamp act be repealed; to countermand all orders already sent, and not to vend any goods sent from Great Britain after Jan. 1 next. The governor having secured the stamp paper in Fort George, a great assembly of persons, preceded by lights, went to the fort, took from the stables the governor's coach, which with his effigy they burnt, with every mark of contempt and exasperation, under the guns of the fort. After this they went to the house of major James (a supposed abettor of the stamp act) whose goods they likewise seized and consumed. The next day they forced from his excellency a declaration, that he would have nothing to do with the stamps.

Hey, King: Get Off Our Backs!

Name: _____

A. Protest! The colonists expressed their outrage in many ways. But which kinds of protest would be most effective at convincing Great Britain to repeal the Stamp Act? (It did repeal the Act in 1766.)

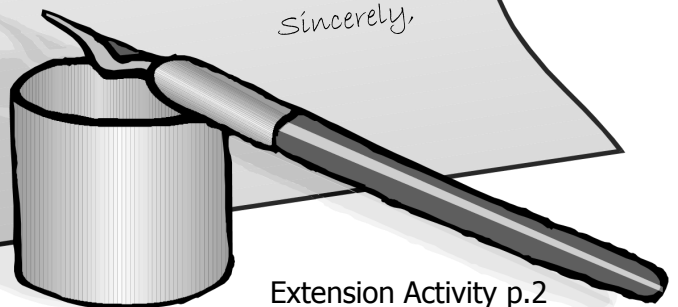
FORM OF PROTEST	EFFECTIVE?	THIS WOULD/WOULD NOT BE EFFECTIVE BECAUSE...
Don't order any more goods from Great Britain and cancel existing orders	<input type="checkbox"/> Effective <input type="checkbox"/> Not effective	
Force the stamp officer to resign	<input type="checkbox"/> Effective <input type="checkbox"/> Not effective	
Destroy the property of government officials who support the Stamp Act	<input type="checkbox"/> Effective <input type="checkbox"/> Not effective	
Force the governor to promise he won't have anything to do with the stamps	<input type="checkbox"/> Effective <input type="checkbox"/> Not effective	
Refuse to sell anything sent from Great Britain	<input type="checkbox"/> Effective <input type="checkbox"/> Not effective	
Burn the governor in effigy	<input type="checkbox"/> Effective <input type="checkbox"/> Not effective	
Refuse to use the stamps	<input type="checkbox"/> Effective <input type="checkbox"/> Not effective	
Riot in the streets	<input type="checkbox"/> Effective <input type="checkbox"/> Not effective	

B. Spread the News. It is October 1765, the morning after the attack on the lieutenant governor's house. You can't wait to tell your Aunt Martha what happened. But not only that, you can't wait to tell her exactly what you think about the attack.

Was it right? Wrong? Was it a victory? A horrible thing? Will the attack help or hurt the cause? Tell your Aunt Martha what you think and why.

Dear Aunt Martha,
 You'll never believe it! Last night, a mob went to the lieutenant governor's house. They burned his books and papers, stole his money, and even took his sister and daughter's clothes and put them on for fun! I think this is ...

Sincerely,



Hey, King: Get Off Our Backs!

Name: _____

C. Illustrate. The London Magazine stories did not include any pictures. But what if they did? For each month, make an illustration that would help the reader understand what was happening in the American colonies. Include as many details from the reading as possible.

For OCTOBER 1765.

For NOVEMBER 1765.

For DECEMBER 1765.