

## Historical Context & the Causes of the American Revolution

Much more than a revolt against British taxes and trade regulations, the American Revolution was the first modern revolution. It marked the first time in history that a people fought for their independence in the name of certain universal principles such as rule of law, constitutional rights, and popular sovereignty. In addition, you will learn why many colonists hesitated before declaring independence and how the Declaration of Independence summarized colonial grievances and provided a vision of a future independent American republic. This DBQ will discuss the composition of the British and American military forces; the Revolution's implications for the institution of slavery; and the role of the French, Spanish, Dutch, and Native Americans in the colonists' struggle for independence. Finally, you will learn why the Americans emerged victorious in the Revolution.

The roots of the American Revolution can be traced to the year 1763 when British leaders began to tighten imperial reins. Harmonious relations between Britain and the colonies became increasingly conflict-riven. Britain's land policy prohibiting settlement in the West irritated colonists as did the arrival of British troops. The most serious problem was the need for money to support the empire.

Attempts through the Sugar Act, the Stamp Act, and the Townshend Acts to raise money rather than control trade met with growing resistance in the colonies. Tensions increased further after Parliament passed the Coercive Acts and the First Continental Congress took the first steps toward independence from Britain. Before the colonies gained independence, they had to fight a long and bitter war.

### Tasks

- Answer the question or questions for each document. (25 points)
- Construct and write a thesis. (15 points)
- Develop an introduction and conclusion paragraph (7 sentences each) that includes your thesis. (20 points)
- Circle or underline the transitions in your sentences. (5 points)
- Uses 3 or less pronouns. (5 points)
- Creates 3 supporting body paragraphs that utilize the documents to support the thesis. (30 points)

You are encouraged to use your knowledge of the time period to. Some suggestions you may wish to consider include:

- What actually caused the American Revolution?
- Identify and discuss at reasons for the American colonies to revolt against Great Britain.
- Identify and discuss methods of protest the American colonies used against Great Britain.
- Describe the events that led up to the American Revolutionary War.
- Include information about: the acts passed by British Parliament, political cartoons, newspaper articles, engravings of pictures, protests, and clashes between the colonists and the British.

**You are *not* limited to these suggestions.**

**Part A: Short-Answer Questions**

**Directions: Analyze the documents and answer the short-answer questions that follow each document in the space provided.**

**Document 1**

Ezra Stiles (1727-1795), a future president of Yale College, was serving as pastor in Newport at the time he wrote this letter.

Not only Britain, but all Europe are Spectators of the Conflict, the Arduous Struggle for Liberty. We consider ourselves as laying the foundation of a glorious future Empire, and acting a part for the Contemplation of Ages. America is ambitious of conducting with that Prudence, Wisdom, Counsel, and true Greatness, which may com[m]end them to the Admiration of Posterity and the World.... The Resolutions of Parliament instead of intimidating only add Fuel to the Flame, invigorate & strength the Resolutions of the Americans. We have the united Wisdom of the Continent incessantly exercised in deliberating, projecting & resolving the public Measures adapted to the present momentous Exigency: and if deserted by our Brethren in Great Britain, and abandoned by the World, we confidently trust in Our GOD that he will deliver us.... America is ready for the last Appeal, which however shocking and tremendous, is by the Body of the Colonies judged less terrible than the Depredations of Tyranny & arbitrary Power....

1. What does Ezra Stiles predict of the American colonists?

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2. To what extent is Stiles fed up with or in favor of Parliament's decision?

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**Document 2**

Continental Congress, July 6, 1775, Authors: Thomas Jefferson & John Dickinson

A declaration by the Representatives of the United Colonies of North America, now met in General Congress at Philadelphia, setting forth the causes and necessity of their taking up arms.

Lest this declaration should disquiet the minds of our friends and fellow-subjects in any part of the empire, we assure them that we mean not to dissolve that Union which has so long and so happily subsisted between us, and which we sincerely wish to see restored.-Necessity has not yet driven us into that desperate measure, or induced us to excite any other nation to war against them.-We have not raised armies with ambitious designs of separating from Great Britain, and establishing independent states. We fight not for glory or for conquest. We exhibit to mankind the remarkable spectacle of a people attacked by unprovoked enemies, without any imputation or even suspicion of offence. They boast of their privileges and civilization, and yet proffer no milder conditions than servitude or death.

In our own native land, in defence of the freedom that is our birth-right, and which we ever enjoyed till the late violation of it-for the protection of our property, acquired solely by the honest industry of our fore-fathers and ourselves, against violence actually offered, we have taken up arms. We shall lay them down when hostilities shall cease on the part of the aggressors, and all danger of their being renewed shall be removed, and not before.

With an humble confidence in the mercies of the supreme and impartial Judge and Ruler of the universe, we most devoutly implore his divine goodness to protect us happily through this great conflict, to dispose our adversaries to reconciliation on reasonable terms, and thereby to relieve the empire from the calamities of civil war.

1. What is Thomas Jefferson proposing American colonists should do?

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2. Using excerpts from Document 2, why should the American colonists fight, what is their purpose?

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### Document 3

Excerpt from the Proclamation of 1763 by King George III on October 7, 1763:

And We do further declare it to be Our Royal Will and Pleasure, for the present as aforesaid, to reserve under our Sovereignty, Protection, and Dominion, for the use of the said Indians, all the Lands and Territories not included within the Limits of Our said Three new Governments, or within the Limits of the Territory granted to the Hudson's Bay Company, as also all the Lands and Territories lying to the Westward of the Sources of the Rivers which fall into the Sea from the West and North West as aforesaid.

And We do hereby strictly forbid, on Pain of our Displeasure, all our loving Subjects from making any Purchases or Settlements whatever, or taking Possession of any of the Lands above reserved. without our especial leave and Licence for that Purpose first obtained.

And. We do further strictly enjoin and require all Persons whatever who have either wilfully or inadvertently seated themselves upon any Lands within the Countries above described. or upon any other Lands which, not having been ceded to or purchased by Us, are still reserved to the said Indians as aforesaid, forthwith to remove themselves from such Settlements.

And whereas great Frauds and Abuses have been committed in purchasing Lands of the Indians, to the great Prejudice of our Interests. and to the great Dissatisfaction of the said Indians: In order, therefore, to prevent such Irregularities for the future, and to the end that the Indians may be convinced of our Justice and determined Resolution to remove all reasonable Cause of Discontent.



After the French and Indian War, England controlled all of North America east of the Mississippi River. Many colonists wanted to move across the Appalachian Mountains to Ohio Country, the great western frontier that the French had controlled before the war. The British government however, passed a law called the **Proclamation of 1763**, saying that these lands were to be reserved for the Indian Nations. By making this land “Indian Territory,” the British hoped to prevent any further Native American conflicts. The law stated that colonists could not move westward over the Appalachian Mountains. Those settlers who were already living there were to return to the east. By keeping colonists contained east of the Appalachians, the British could also more easily collect taxes from the colonists.

1. Why would the Proclamation of 1763 upset the colonists?
2. Why did King George II ask the Parliament to enact the Proclamation of 1763?
3. How could the Proclamation of 1763 be viewed as a cause of the American Revolution?

**Document 4**

These excerpts are from Letter 2 from December 7, 1767 from a collection of 12 Letters from *A Farmer in Pennsylvania*, (1767-1768) by John Dickinson. Dickinson was a Pennsylvania political leader who served in the Stamp Act Congress of 1765. Later in his career, he served in the Continental Congress, and later still, in the Constitutional Convention. In the following statement, Dickinson condemned some of the new taxes being imposed by Parliament.

There is another late act of parliament, which appears to me to be unconstitutional, and as destructive to the liberty of these colonies, as that mentioned in my last letter; that is, the act for granting the duties on paper, glass, &c. [the Townshend Act].

The parliament unquestionably possesses a legal authority of regulate the trade of Great Britain, and all her colonies. I have looked over every statute (law) relating to these colonies, from their first settlement of this time; and I find every one of them founded on this principle, till the Stamp Act administration...All before, are calculated to regulate trade...The raising of revenues...was never intended...Never did the British parliament, (until the passage of the Stamp Act) think of imposing duties in America for the purpose of raising a revenue.

Here then, my dear countrymen ROUSE yourselves, and behold the ruin hanging over your heads. If you ONCE admit, that Great-Britain may lay duties upon her exportations to us, for the purpose of levying money on us only, she then will have nothing to do but to lay those duties on the articles which she prohibits us to manufacture- and the tragedy of American liberty is finished . . . If Great-Britain can order us to come to her for necessaries we want, and can order us to pay what taxes she pleases before we take them away, or when we land them here, we are as abject slaves...

1. Why does John Dickinson object to the Stamp Act and the Townshend Acts?

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2. According to Dickinson, was Parliament justified in imposing taxes on the colonies?

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3. Why does Dickinson urge his fellow colonists to rouse themselves?

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**Document 5**

On March 5, 1770, a crowd of Boston boys and men surrounded a number of British soldiers and began taunting and cursing them while they pelted them with snowballs. Order quickly broke down, and the frightened soldiers fired into the crowd. When the shooting ended, several people were dead and more were wounded. This engraving by Paul Revere, a leader of the Boston Sons of Liberty, was sent throughout the Colonies in the following weeks to arouse anti-British feelings.



Source: Paul Revere, *The Bloody Massacre perpetrated in King Street Boston on March 5th, 1770*. Revere's print appeared on or about March 28, 1770.

1. How does the engraving tell a different story from the above description of the Boston Massacre?

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2. Why do you think Patriots described this incident as the "Boston Massacre" even though only 5 people were actually killed?

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3. What do you think Paul Revere's intent was when he created this engraving?

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4. Describe how the soldiers in the picture are organized. Are they firing from close range or from a distance?

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5. Are the colonists in the crowd armed with weapons or fighting back?

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**Document 6 Source: George Hewes, An Eyewitness Account of the Boston Tea Party (1773)**

The tea destroyed was contained in three ships, lying near each other at ... Griffin's wharf, and were surrounded by armed ships of war...

It was now evening, and I immediately dressed myself in the costume of an Indian, equipped with a small hatchet... 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. When I first appeared in the street after being thus disguised, I fell in with many who were dressed, equipped and painted as I was, and who fell in with me and marched in order to the place of our destination.

When we arrived at the wharf, ... they divided us into three parties, for the purpose of boarding the three ships which contained the tea ... as soon as we were on board the ship ... [they] ordered me to go to the captain and demand of him the keys to the hatches and a dozen candles. I made the demand accordingly, and the captain promptly replied, and delivered the articles; but requested me at the same time to do no damage to the ship or rigging. 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 ... 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...

George Robert Twelve Hewes, a Boston shoemaker, participated in many of the key events of the Revolutionary crisis. Over half a century later, Hewes described his experiences to James Hawkes. When Parliament passed the Tea Act in 1773, colonists refused to allow cargoes of tea to be unloaded. In the evening of December 16, with Hewes leading one group, the colonists dressed in "the costume of a Indian." They boarded the ships in Boston harbor and dropped the tea overboard. Hewes' account shed light on how resistance became revolution. The "Boston Tea Party," as it became known in the 19th century, became a powerful symbol of the Revolution. And Hewes, artisan and ordinary citizen, was celebrated as a venerable veteran of the struggle for Independence.

1. George Hewes describes the events of the Boston Tea Party on December 16 of 1773. Describe his bias. \_\_\_\_\_

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2. Why were colonists so angry that they boarded ships containing tea in Boston and other colonies?

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3. What were they instructed to do with the tea? Why do you think they did that?

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### Document 7

Thomas Paine was an English-American political writer, theorist, and activist who had a great influence on the thoughts and ideas which led to the American Revolution and the United States Declaration of Independence. He wrote three of the most influential and controversial works of the 18th Century: *Common Sense*, *The Rights of Man* and *The Age of Reason*. Thomas Paine was a self-educated Quaker from England. After running into Benjamin Franklin in England, Paine moved to Philadelphia and became and editor of the Pennsylvania Magazine.

Source: Thomas Paine, *The American Crisis*, December 23, 1776.

"THESE are the times that try men's souls. The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of their country; but he that stands it now, deserves the love and thanks of man and woman. Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered; yet we have this consolation with us, that the harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph. What we obtain too cheap, we esteem too lightly: it is dearness only that gives everything its value.... Britain, with an army to enforce her tyranny, has declared that she has a right (not only to TAX) but 'to BIND us in ALL CASES WHATSOEVER,' and if being bound in that manner, is not slavery, then is there not such a thing as slavery upon earth."

1. What is meant by the line, "These are the times that try men's souls"?

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2. What does Paine mean when he writes, "What we obtain too cheap, we esteem too lightly."

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3. What is the main idea of this document?

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**Document 8**

These excerpts are from the "Declaration of Independence," adopted by the Continental Congress on July 4, 1776.

The history of the present King of Great Britain is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations (unlawful seizures), all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States

In every stage of these Oppressions, We have petitioned for Redress in the most humble terms: Our repeated Petitions have been answered only by repeated injury. A Prince, whose character is thus marked by every act which may define a Tyrant, is unfit to be the ruler of a free people.

1. How does this document describe King George?

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2. Was the Declaration an objective, unbiased statement of the American-British conflict? Explain.

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**Document 9**

**Colonists Tar and Feather a Loyalist**



Though the tarring was not usually fatal, it was extremely unpleasant. Applying the burning hot tar to bare skin usually caused painful blistering and efforts to remove it often made the condition worse. The adding of feathers which stuck to the tar added to the humiliation and made the victim a comical figure. Sometimes tar was applied to the clothing, and was only a minor warning. Although illegal, it was common to threaten or attack British government employees in the colonies. No stamp commissioner or tax collector was actually tarred and

feathered but by the day the Stamp Act tax went into effect, there were no stamp commissioners left in the colonies to collect it.

1. What happened to a person's skin after tar was applied to it?

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2. Why were feathers added to the tar after it was applied?

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3. Who is being attacked in this picture?

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**Document 10**

1. What 3 things did the Quartering Act force the colonists to provide for the British soldiers?

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2. Why were New Yorkers especially angry with the Quartering Act?

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Tun Tavern, Philadelphia

In 1765, the British sent 40,000 soldiers to the colonies to help collect taxes from the colonists. The **Quartering Act** forced colonists to provide British troops with a place to live (living quarters) and to give them food and supplies. The British Parliament told some American colonists that they must let the soldiers live in their homes. Many colonists had strong feelings about this new British law and the overwhelming presence of British troops. In the colony of New York, which was the headquarters for the British Army, distrust of the British soldiers grew.

**Document 11**

1. Why did Patriots feel the disjointed snake would be a good symbol for their cause?

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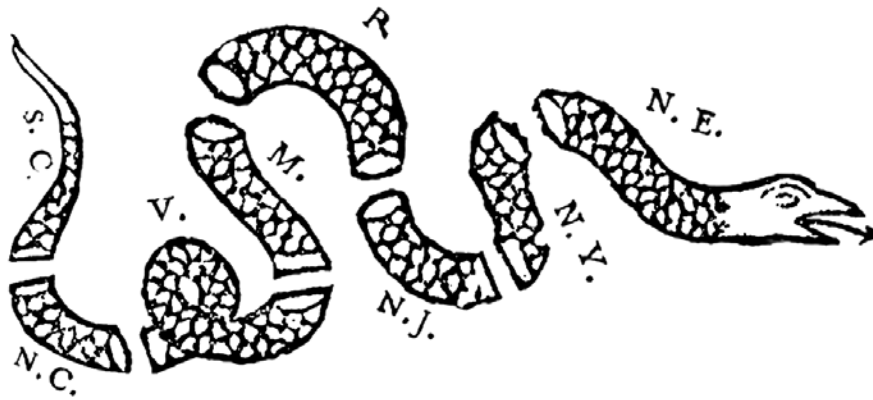
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**J O I N, or D I E.**

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**Document 12**

The Radicalism of the American Revolution (1993), by Gordon S. Wood



1. What does this author think is the most important component to come out of the American Revolution, defend your answer.

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2. The aspects that made the American Revolution so great and unique have been passed down through generations of Americans. Which specific parts are a part of the American ideal that have survived to this day?

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**Tasks**

- Answer the question or questions for each document. (25 points)
- Construct and write a thesis. Possible questions to answer: (15 points)
  - Using the documents and your understanding of the Revolutionary War period, analyze the extent to which the American Revolution was truly "revolutionary?"
  - Which people and events directly contributed and impacted the outcome of the American Revolution?
  - Express the validity (prove this correct) of this statement: the American colonists were justified in their desire to revolt against the British Crown.
- Develop an introduction and conclusion paragraph (7 sentences each) that includes your thesis. (20 points)
- Circle or underline the transitions in your sentences. (5 points)
- Uses 3 or less pronouns. (5 points)
- Creates 3 supporting body paragraphs that utilize the documents to support the thesis. (30 points)

**Part B: Thesis**

**Directions:** After analyzing the documents, please construct a thesis that utilizes most of the documents to prove something correct. A thesis is not a question but something you can prove with these documents, **see the questions above**. Think of the economic, political, and social components. You could discuss information about: the acts passed by British Parliament, political cartoons, newspaper articles, engravings of pictures, protests, and clashes between the colonists and the British.

Write your thesis here.

List your three themes here: **leadership, legislation, colonial grievances, economic, social, proclamations, etc.**

A. \_\_\_\_\_

B. \_\_\_\_\_

C. \_\_\_\_\_



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**Part D - First Paragraph's Theme:**

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	Document Name	How does the document support your thesis?
Document used to support your claims in paragraph #1		
Document used to support your claims in paragraph #1		
Document used to support your claims in paragraph #1		





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**Part E - Second Paragraph's Theme:**

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	Document Name	How does the document support your thesis?
Document used to support your claims in paragraph #2		
Document used to support your claims in paragraph #2		
Document used to support your claims in paragraph #2		



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**Part F - Third Paragraph's Theme:**

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	Document Name	How does the document support your thesis?
Document used to support your claims in paragraph #3		
Document used to support your claims in paragraph #3		
Document used to support your claims in paragraph #3		



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**Part G - Conclusion Paragraph:** After writing your thesis, please construct a conclusion paragraph (7 sentences) that restates your thesis and one last supporting piece of information. The conclusion restates your theme, style, and the purpose of your paper. This is the time to impress the reader!

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