

Educational materials developed through the Baltimore County History Labs Program, a partnership between Baltimore County Public Schools and the UMBC Center for History Education.

Road to Revolution: How did Actions and Responses Lead to an Independent United States?

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Grade Level: Middle

Duration: 8-10 days

Overview:

Liberty is defined as “the quality or state of being free.” It is this fundamental value that compelled North American Colonists to take up arms against Great Britain. Who or what was to blame for the start of the American Revolution? Can a single event be identified as the tipping point, or was armed conflict the inevitable result of an accumulation of many events and growing tensions over time? In this History Lab students will investigate the actions and reactions that led to revolution. Students will be challenged to take and defend a position on the causes for the Revolutionary War, using information gathered from a variety of primary and secondary source materials. They will examine maps, paintings, documents, cartoons, video clips and writings to support their arguments to this complex historical question.

History Standards:

National History Standards

Era 3 Revolution and the New Nation (1754-1820s)

Standard 1: The causes of the American Revolution, the ideas and interests involved in forging the revolutionary movement, and the reasons for the American victory.

Historical Thinking Standards

1. Chronological Thinking:
 - E. Interpret data presented in time lines and create time lines
 - F. Reconstruct patterns of historical succession and duration in which historical developments have unfolded, and apply them to explain historical continuity and change.
2. Historical Analysis and Interpretation:
 - B. Consider multiple perspectives
 - C. Analyze cause-and-effect relationships
 - J. Hypothesize the influence of the past
3. Historical Research
 - A. Formulate historical questions.
 - F. Support interpretations with historical evidence

Maryland State Curriculum Standards for United States History

History- Objective - Evaluate the political and social issues and events that led to the American Revolution, such as the effects of British Colonial policy

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Purpose:

In this History Lab, students will analyze the significance of the events preceding the American Revolution, in order to identify causes for the start of the war and determine whether or not war could have been avoided.

- Students will examine a “crime scene” to identify the important people in the Revolutionary War.
- Students will review the outcome of the French and Indian War, specifically the impact of the Proclamation Line of 1763.
- Students will examine the series of Acts passed and enforced by the British Parliament
- Students will review the growing Colonial response to the Parliamentary actions to identify key intensifying actions. They will determine through group discussion the “point of no return” that compelled the colonists to take up arms against the British.
- Students will review various primary and secondary sources to determine the actions and reactions which led to the start of the American Revolution.
- Students will analyze primary and secondary sources to develop and support a position on causation factors.

History Lab Objectives:

- Analyze results of the French and Indian War.
- Analyze British colonial policies and colonial reactions to these policies.
- Examine the economic impact of British policies on the colonists and England.

Topic Background:

Often lost in discussions of America’s bid for independence is the fact that Colonists never set out to be revolutionaries. The early eighteenth century brought decades of economic growth and increasing self-reliance to American shores. However, this came to a crashing halt when the British government imposed higher taxes and restraints on colonists after the conclusion of the French and Indian War, leading formerly loyal subjects to turn on their King.

The French and Indian War, a battle between Britain and France for supremacy in North America, was the first step on the colonists’ road to revolution. The territory that started it all was land in the Ohio Valley. Britain laid claim to all land from North Carolina to Nova Scotia and “to the west indefinitely;” the Ohio Valley, they reasoned, fell within the borders of the Virginia colony. The French claimed that the land was theirs, owing to early explorers and fur traders. The territory had a third claim – the Iroquois – who were there long before either French or British explorers “discovered” the American continent. By 1753, the dispute over the Ohio Valley was a powder keg waiting to explode. While the French fought to hold the territory, the British prepared to rout them for the last time by calling on American colonists to take up arms for King and Country.

Considering themselves loyal subjects willing to fight for the glory of England, colonists went to battle under the leadership of British officers – among them George Washington and William Pitt. Historian Fred Anderson describes George Washington during this period as, “a soldier of the British Empire, seeking to extend the authority of his king into the heart of the continent.” However, in order to win, the colonies would need to cooperate with one another on a level

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never before done. Ben Franklin graphically depicted the need for the thirteen colonies to unify in his famous 1754 cartoon, “Join or Die,” showing that together they could survive; however, if even one piece should separate, the entire entity would perish. This unification allowed the Anglo-American colonists to not only defeat the French in 1760, but it also allowed colonists to see that together these thirteen individual parts could be very strong indeed. Britain’s treaty with France gave control of North America, from the Atlantic to the eastern shore of the Mississippi River (including Canada and Florida) to the British.

The party left out of these negotiations were the Native Americans of the Ohio Valley. Colonists, believing the land was their battle prize, formed settlements in the valley; the British, in turn, built forts to protect them. In response, Native Americans rose up in insurrection, leading once again to war. Eventually the insurrection was quelled. The King, recognizing that peace with the Indians was only temporary, issued the Proclamation of 1763, which formally prohibited white settlement west of the Appalachian Mountains and ordered those already settled in this territory to “forthwith remove themselves.” This did not sit well with colonists. Some thought that the removal was a strategic maneuver by the king to keep the colonists under control by hemming them in on the East Coast. Others resented having land taken away that they had rightly won on the battlefield.

As peace settled in on the American colonies, questions grew as to who would pay for what ended up being a very expensive war. The cost for the war against the Indians and the French was staggering; by 1763, the war had doubled the British national debt to nearly £150 million and brought the country to the brink of bankruptcy. However, the spending didn’t stop with the war’s end. British troops were left in the colonies as a security measure against further Indian and French aggression. However, where the Crown saw these troops as securing the countryside against possible outside attacks, colonists saw it as an unnecessary military occupation. Moreover, a growing national debt meant only one thing to those in power in London – they would have to raise taxes to pay for the war and the colonists would have to bear the burden.

To the British these taxes seemed fair – after all, the average Briton paid 26 shillings a year in taxes in 1763, while the average colonist in Massachusetts only paid 1 shilling per year. The first of these taxes, the Sugar Act of 1764, was actually a continuation of an earlier act on sugar products; it was also a tax that merchants regularly evaded. The new law reduced the tax rate on sugar products, but raised the rate on others, including some not taxed under the earlier 1733 levies, and restricted other products all together. Other prohibitive legislation followed in quick succession: the Stamp Act (1765) taxed the paper for formal and legal documents, newspapers, playing cards; even dice; the Quartering Act (1765) forced citizens to provide room and board for the British troops “occupying” the colonies; and the Townshend Act (1767), which taxed glass, lead, paint colors, and paper imported into the colonies. While this tax wasn’t expected to raise much in the way of revenue Chancellor of the Exchequer Charles Townshend knew that once the law was in place, he could expand his program.

Not only did colonists worry that these taxes were setting a dangerous precedent, they also could not have come at a worse time. The colonies were in the midst of an economic depression, particularly in the Northeast. A succession of devastating fires burned downtown Boston – first in 1760 then again in 1761 – leveling huge sections of the city. Shortly after, Boston was hit by

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a devastating smallpox epidemic. The imposition of new and hard-hitting taxes infuriated the colonists. Not only did these taxes affect the economic well being of the colonies, in the eyes of the colonists, they were illegal. As Patrick Henry noted in his address to Virginia assembly in 1765, British law dictates that only Parliament can raise taxes in order that all British citizens – which they were – be represented. Up until 1764, any discussion of taxes on the colonies went through colonial legislatures. This time, however, Parliament bypassed the legislatures and levied the tax on the colonists directly, without representatives to speak for them in London.

The colonists protested these taxes both in an official capacity (offering petitions from state legislatures) and unofficially (by attacking local tax collectors), finally winning a small victory when Parliament repealed the Stamp Act in 1766. However, the ideology behind the tax had not changed. Parliament remained adamant it had the right to tax the colonists without representation in London and all attempts by colonists to convince them otherwise were rejected. This unlawful taxation, eviction from the Ohio Valley, and the military occupation of the colonies led many American colonists to believe that if Parliament and the King no longer respected their rights as British citizens, perhaps they were better off without Britain altogether. Committees within the colonies formed networks to coordinate protest efforts. While Bostonians tossed tea into the harbor in protest, New York and Philadelphia turned away ships carrying tea, forcing them back to Britain. Britain replied to this action by closing Boston Harbor until the taxes were paid. With each action and reaction, relations between Britain and its American colonies deteriorated. Understanding that war was inevitable, colonists formed militias and asked a former British officer from Virginia, George Washington, to lead them. In 1774, the newly formed Continental Congress informed Britain that colonists were no longer bound by the laws of Parliament, as long as Parliament denied colonists their basic rights and liberties. They knew it was only a matter of time and that they were already well on their way down the road to revolution.

Vocabulary:

coercive – by government force

duty – something that one is expected or required to do by moral or legal obligation

levy – impose or collect, as of a tax

monopoly – exclusive control of a good or service

Parliament – a legislative body of a country or colonies

primary source – a first-person account by someone who actually witnessed or took part in the experience or event being described

secondary source – the recorded findings of someone who did not observe the event, but who investigated primary evidence

Conducting the History Lab:

Objective: Using a series of primary source documents and pre-writing organizational tools as historical evidence, students will construct an argumentative essay about the events of the Pre-Revolutionary era.

This History Lab is designed as a multi-day instructional experience where students are looking at a “Historical Crime Scene.” An overall plan is provided for the activities to be completed on

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each day of the Lab, followed by the specific procedures for each step. Student and teacher versions are provided for one of the numbered Resource Sheets. An overview of the resource sheets arranged by their date of use can be found [here](#).

Day One - Initiate History Lab by Breaking down the “Crime Scene”

Introduce the History Lab by setting up the “crime scene.” Share with students that they are working to solve the crime acting as “history detectives.” The students will be building their case by working backwards and gathering evidence on the events leading to the American Revolution. The objective is for students to examine crime with a similar critical analysis as that of a historian.

Distribute the graphic organizer, **RS#1**, “Breaking down the Scene of the Crime.” Display painting, **RS#2**, Battle of Concord titled, “Scene of the Crime.” Use Road to Revolution Power Point (**RS#21**) or color copy/overhead for display. Do not reveal to students the source of the painting. Using the Quadrant Image Analysis strategy to view only a quarter of image at a time. Allow 2-minutes to examine each quadrant. Record observations from each quadrant.

Ask:

What objects, people and actions are visible in the painting?

What time period is being depicted?

What questions do you have after viewing the image?

Where would you look to find the answer to your questions?

Share with students the History Lab agenda (available on Power Point). Share with students the key question of the lab, “what incidents and events led to armed conflict in Colonial America;’ our crime scene. Tell students that in order to solve the crime, they will need to examine the suspects, determine the motive and analyze the evidence.

To establish the context of the British Parliamentary actions the French and Indian War needs to be reviewed. Students need to understand the significance of the conflict, markedly the establishment of the Proclamation Line. Distribute **RS#3**, “The Suspects.” As a class, read and discuss the background of the French and Indian War. Review student responses.

Distribute **RS#4**, “Examining the Motive.” Display map of the Proclamation Line of 1763 on **RS#5**. Review student responses. Summarize information concerning the Proclamation Line of 1763.

Conclude by having the students read through **RS#6**, “Interview with King George III.”

At the end of Day One, have students explain in writing the answers to the following questions:

What are major problems facing England after the French & Indian War?
Explain how the Proclamation Line of 1763 would benefit England.

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Day Two – Examining the Evidence

Explain that students will be working on gathering evidence for their case by reading and analyzing primary source excerpts. Remind students that primary sources are created by people who witnessed or actually participated in the historical event. The information gathered from the primary sources will be used as evidence to narrow down the list of suspects and determine the key motive that led to the scene of the crime.

Distribute **RS#7** titled, “Building the Case File,” a graphic organizer for students to use to organize information learned from the primary source evidence.

Using a Learning Stations strategy, have students work in small groups moving around the classroom to each station of evidence. The evidence files are excerpts from the British Parliamentary Acts. Using Evidence A: Stamp Act, model the process by reading the excerpt and answering the corresponding questions on **RS#7**. Distribute the evidence files, **RS#8**, “Evidence A-F.” Evidence files contain information on the following:

Evidence A: Stamp Act

Evidence B: Quartering Act

Evidence C: Stamp Act

Evidence D: The Townshend Act

Evidence E: The Tea Act

Evidence F: Coercive/Intolerable Act: Section A- Boston Port Act

Evidence F: Coercive/Intolerable Act: Section B- MA Government and Justice Act

Evidence F: Coercive/Intolerable Act: Section C – Quebec Act

Excerpts may be challenging to some lower ability readers. Differentiate the process by offering auto-summarized versions of the acts or have student work in groups organized by reading ability. One could also use the editing tool in Microsoft Word to add clues to the location of what the act said and why it was passed.

Conclude by summarizing the information gathered on from each primary source excerpt.

At the end of Day Two, have students review the material gathered from the various primary and secondary sources on British Parliamentary Actions and have them create three questions they have from the sources they have examined. These could be about the specific Acts, the reasons why Parliament may have passed the Act, impact on the colonists and the possible reactions of the colonists.

As a homework assignment, have students complete, **RS#9**, “Events Leading Up to the Crime Scene.” Students should add each of the acts to the timeline.

Day Three – Simulation – Walking in Their Shoes

To begin lesson, ask students:

How did the British decide to handle the debt accrued due to the French and Indian War?

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What were some of the British actions imposed on the colonists?
Who are the two leading suspects in our crime scene?

Summarize student responses.

Introduce the simulation, “The King’s M&Ms®.” This activity is adapted from “The King’s M&M’s” activity from *American History Simulations* published by Teacher Created Materials

Explain that today we are going to recreate British taxation by having a “King” and “Parliament” assign taxes to a group of “colonists.” Colonists will need to pay the taxes that apply to them with their own currency (M &Ms® candies). Randomly pass out role cards to students (**RS-19**). Once all have been handed out, have those who possess cards indicating anything other than colonists to the front of the room. Have each indicate their role and use a signs to reinforce their role.

Have students complete Part A **RS#10**, “The King’s M&Ms®.” Discuss.

Have all students count their “currency” to show that everyone (at this stage of the game) is just about equal. Complete #1 under Part B of **RS#10**. Inform students that the “King,” Parliament members,” and “tax collectors” may consume their currency (fun-size bag of M&Ms®), for they will be no taxes. The “colonists” will have to wait and see what taxes are imposed before consuming their own currency.

Members of Parliament will determine what taxes need to be imposed by reviewing the Colonial Tax Cards (**RS#20**). The selected card(s) should be handed over to the King who will read the proclamation of taxation to the colonists. Anyone in possession or fitting the description of the item to be taxed will need to pay out the number of M&Ms® equal to the number written on the tax card. The tax collectors should collect the taxes, count the number collected and return the “taxes” to the Parliament. Keep a total count on the board or overhead of how many M&Ms® were collected.

Continue by having the Parliament pull another tax card and have the King proclaim the new tax. The tax collectors should continue to collect, count and return the taxes to the Parliament. A grand total of collected taxes should be kept. Once 2 or 3 additional taxes have been levied, have students complete # 2 under Part B of **RS#10**. Levy 2 to 3 more additional taxes. (Total taxes levied should be no more than six.)

After all taxes have been levied, reveal the final total of collected taxes. Now complete Part C of **RS#10** in order to show how funds were dispersed in order to run the British Empire. (The percentages have no historical significance, but give students an idea of how the funds were broken down. It also makes it cross-curricular!) Be sure to throw away all collected taxes. Students may now eat the remaining “currency.”

To summarize have students independently complete Part D of **RS#10** then discuss.

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At the end of Day Three, have students view the image and answer the questions on **RS#11**, “Tar and Feathering.” Students should draw comparisons to the simulation of how colonial tax collectors were treated and attitudes toward Parliament and the King. Through further discussion, one can make comparisons to student behavior during the simulation to the following questions:

Why were tax collectors tarred and feathered?

How might colonists devise ways to resist or get around these laws?

Day Four and Five– Colonial Reactions

Introduce today’s lesson by asking the following questions:

Who are the four suspects in our case? Have we narrowed this down?

What was the cause of the French and Indian War?

Name one condition of the Proclamation Line of 1763.

Why did King George III decide to tax the colonists?

Name one act imposed by the Parliament. Give some information about it

Discuss student responses.

Inform students that they will be investigating colonial reactions to the Parliamentary actions of the British. Inform students that primary and secondary sources will be used when examining colonial responses. Remind students that a secondary source is an account written by someone who did not witness the event but wrote about it afterwards. Discuss which sources tend to be more accurate and the influence of bias on both types of sources.

Have students recall prior knowledge about the Boston Massacre. Display and gather information from students. To differentiate the process, share the video clip on the Boston Massacre from Part One, Disc One, “Join or Die” episode from the HBO Mini-Series, *John Adams*.

Proceed with the investigation by using a computer lab and **RS#12**, “HSI: Boston Massacre.” Have students work in small groups completing the resource sheet using the documents at the Historical Investigation Site at <http://web.wm.edu/hsi/index.html>. Students should answer the questions in the first row for each document, A-F. Possible answers for Document A have been modeled.

If a computer lab is not available, create a document packet from the website and have students use a Learning Stations format to complete **RS#12**. For low ability readers, one can auto-summarize the documents using Microsoft Word to highlight important pieces of information.

[Document A](#): Joy Hakim's Account of The Boston Massacre (1993)| [Word/PDF](#)

[Document B](#): Captain Thomas Preston's Account of the Boston Massacre (1770)| [Word/PDF](#)

[Document C](#): Anonymous Account of the Boston Massacre (1775)| [Word/PDF](#)

[Document D](#): *Boston Massacre*, Mar. 5, 1770. Chromolithograph by John Bufford| [Word/PDF](#)

[Document E](#): *The Boston Massacre* Engraving after the painting by Alonzo Chappel, 1868| [Word/PDF](#)

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Using information gathered during the investigation (evidence, timelines, primary/secondary sources, etc.) have students narrow it down to four key events and rank them in order of significance and influence by completing **R#17**, “Recipe for Conflict.”

On a wall or chalkboard, post the following events in chronological order, French and Indian War, Boston Massacre, Boston Tea Party, Battle of Lexington, and Declaration of Independence. Handout a simple Post-It Note to each student and have students write their choice for the most significant event on the Post-It. It may be one of the events on the board, or another. Have students place their event in the appropriate chronological place on the board. Discuss the events placed on the board and their overall impact on leading to conflict in Colonial America. After the discussion, ask students if anyone would like to change their choice. If so, have them state the reason(s) for the change.

Inform the students that many historians site different events as the start of the American Revolution. Post the following quote: “March 5, 1770...what’s about to happen will change America forever...This is how war starts.” Have students respond on whether they agree or disagree with the statement from the History Channel’s *America: The Story of US* series. They should use details and examples from the evidence files to support their response.

To conclude the History Lab and to assess student understanding of the incidents and events that led to armed conflict in Colonial America, students should complete **RS#18**, “You, the Detective: Road to Independence.” The resource sheet includes the directions for the assessment. Students explain the events that lead to armed conflict, identify and evaluate who was most responsible for the armed conflict, and determine if the armed conflict could have been avoided.

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