

History Paper Research Notes

Conflict in the Colonies

1. The Threat to American Self-Government

- a. “British taxation brought on the American Revolution, but not because of the money involved. What concerned Americans was power. They objected to being regulated, or taxed, by a foreign legislature in which they had no representation. Since they were not allowed to elect members to the British Parliament, there was no one in that body to look out for their interests.”¹
- b. “On the other hand, each colony had its own elected assembly, which had won some significant powers. The first of these was the power of the purse, the right to levy taxes and to spend the revenue. This was the key to every other power. In some colonies, such as Massachusetts, the assembly paid the governor’s salary. This gave them substantial influence over that one official, who represented the king.”²

2. Stamp Act

- a. “Grenville also persuaded Parliament to pass the Stamp Act of 1765. The act placed new duties on legal documents such as wills, diplomas, and marriage papers. It also taxed newspapers, almanacs, playing cards, and even dice.”³
- b. “All items named in the law had to carry a stamp showing that the tax had been paid. Stamp taxes were used in Britain and other countries to raise money. However, Britain had never required American colonists to pay such a tax.”⁴

3. “No Taxation Without Representation”/Americans React To The Stamp Act

- a. “When British officials tried to enforce the Stamp Act, they met with stormy protests. Riot broke out in Boston, New York City, Newport, and Charleston. Angry colonists threw rocks at agents trying to collect unpopular tax. Some tarred and feathered the agents. In Boston, a mob burned an effigy, or likeness, of the English tax collector and then destroyed his home. John Adams, a Massachusetts lawyer, wrote “Our presses have groaned, our pulpits have thundered, our legislatures have resolved, our towns have voted, the crown officers everywhere trembled.”⁵
- b. “The fury of the colonists shocked the British. After all, Britain had spent a great deal of money to protect the colonies against the French. Besides, people living in Britain were paying much higher taxes than the colonists were. Why, the British asked, were colonists so angry about the Stamp Act?”⁶
- c. “Colonists replied that the taxes imposed by the Stamp Act were unjust. The taxes, they claimed, went against the principle that there should be no taxation without representation. That principle was rooted in English traditions back to the Magna Carta.”⁷

4. Patrick Henry

- a. “A young lawyer, Patrick Henry, became well known as a violent critic of British policies. His speeches in the House of Burgesses moved listeners to both tears and anger. Once, Henry attacked Britain with such fury that some listeners cried out, “Treason!” Henry boldly replied, “If this be treason, make the most of it!”⁸

5. The Sons of Liberty I

- a. “To protest British policies, some angry colonists formed the Sons of Liberty. From Boston to Charleston, Sons of Liberty staged mock hangings of cloth or straw effigies dressed like British officials. The hangings were meant to show tax collectors what might happen to them if they tried to collect the unpopular taxes.”⁹
- b. “The Sons of Liberty were ordinary people—ropemakers, dockworkers, butchers, bakers, and candlestick makers. Paul Revere, who became one of the leading Boston rebels and the chief messenger, was a pewter-and silversmith.”¹⁰

¹ Norman K. Risjord and Terry L. Haywoode, *People and Our Country* (New York: Hold, Rinehart and Winston, Publishers, 1982), 84.

² Norman K. Risjord and Terry L. Haywoode, *People and Our Country* (New York: Hold, Rinehart and Winston, Publishers, 1982), 84.

³ James West Davidson, Pedro Castillo, and Michael B. Stoff, *The American Nation* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2002), 144.

⁴ James West Davidson, Pedro Castillo, and Michael B. Stoff, *The American Nation* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2002), 144.

⁵ James West Davidson, Pedro Castillo, and Michael B. Stoff, *The American Nation* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2002), 144.

⁶ James West Davidson, Pedro Castillo, and Michael B. Stoff, *The American Nation* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2002), 144.

⁷ James West Davidson, Pedro Castillo, and Michael B. Stoff, *The American Nation* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2002), 144.

⁸ James West Davidson, Pedro Castillo, and Michael B. Stoff, *The American Nation* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2002), 147.

⁹ James West Davidson, Pedro Castillo, and Michael B. Stoff, *The American Nation* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2002), 145-147.

¹⁰ Norman K. Risjord and Terry L. Haywoode, *People and Our Country* (New York: Hold, Rinehart and Winston, Publishers, 1982), 86.