

A Storm Over Taxes

FIND OUT

- Why did Britain issue the Proclamation of 1763?
- What steps did Britain take to raise money to repay its war debts?
- How did colonists protest British taxes?
- Why did the Boston Massacre occur?

VOCABULARY boycott, repeal, writ of assistance, nonimportation agreement, committee of correspondence

As Britain celebrated the victory over France, a few officials in London expressed some of their concerns. Now that the French were no longer a threat, they wondered, would the 13 colonies become too independent? Might the colonies even unite one day against Great Britain? Benjamin Franklin, who was visiting London at the time, gave his opinion:

“If [the colonies] could not agree to unite for their defense against the French and Indians, . . . can it reasonably be supposed there is any danger of their uniting against their own nation? . . . I will venture to say, a union amongst them for such a purpose is not merely improbable, it is impossible.”

But Franklin misjudged the situation. After the French and Indian War, new British policies toward the colonies aroused angry cries from Massachusetts to Georgia. Despite their differences, colonists were moving toward unity.

New Troubles on the Frontier

By 1760, the British had driven France from the Ohio Valley. Their troubles in the region, however, were not over. For many years, fur traders had sent back glowing reports of the land beyond the Appalachian Mountains. With the French gone, English colonists eagerly headed west to farm the former French lands.

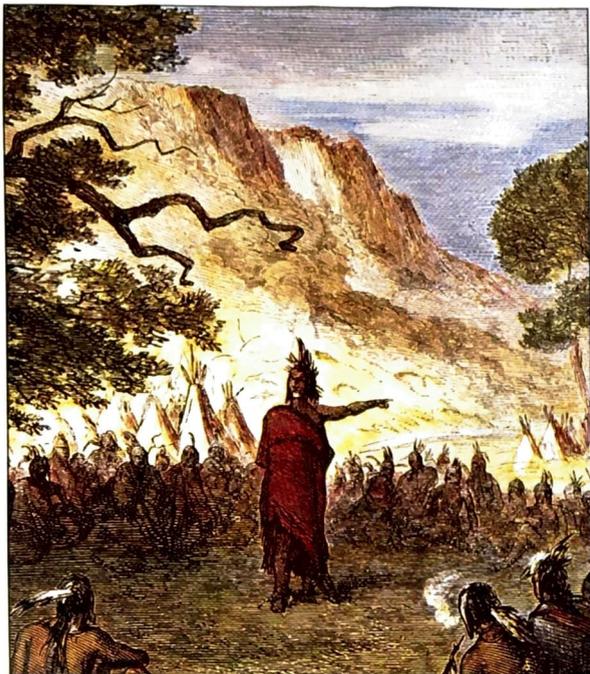
Relations with Indians worsen. Many Native American nations lived in the Ohio Valley. They included the Senecas, Delawares, Shawnees, Ottawas, Miamis, and Hurons. As British settlers moved into the valley, they often clashed with these Native Americans.

In 1762, the British sent Lord Jeffrey Amherst to the frontier to keep order. French traders had always treated Native Americans as friends, holding feasts for them and giving them presents. Amherst refused to do this. He raised the price of British goods traded to Indians. He also allowed English settlers to build forts on Indian lands.

Discontented Native Americans found a leader in Pontiac, an Ottawa chief who had fought with the French. An English trader remarked that Pontiac “commands more respect amongst these nations than any Indian I ever saw.” In April 1763, Pontiac spoke out against the British, calling them “dogs dressed in red, who have come to rob [us] of [our] hunting grounds and drive away the game.”

Fighting on the frontier. Soon after, Pontiac led an attack on British troops at Fort Detroit. Other Indians joined the fight, and in a few months they captured most British forts on the frontier. British and colonial troops struck back and regained much of what they had lost.

Pontiac’s War, as it came to be called, did not last long. In October 1763, the French informed Pontiac that they had signed the Treaty of Paris. As you have read,



Ottawa War Council Chief Pontiac led Native Americans against the British in the Ohio Valley. Here, Pontiac addresses a war council in 1763.
Economics For what uses did the British want Indian lands?

the treaty marked the end of French power in North America. As a result, the Indians could no longer hope for French aid against the British. One by one, the Indian nations stopped fighting and returned home. “All my young men have buried their hatchets,” Pontiac sadly observed.

Proclamation of 1763

Pontiac’s War convinced the British to close western lands to settlers. To do this, the government issued the **Proclamation of 1763**. The proclamation drew an imaginary line along the crest of the Appalachian Mountains. Colonists were forbidden to settle west of the line. The proclamation ordered all settlers already west of the line “to remove themselves” at once. To enforce the law, Britain sent 10,000 troops to the colonies. Few troops went to the frontier, however. Most stayed in cities along the Atlantic coast.

The proclamation angered colonists. Some colonies, including New York, Pennsylvania, and Virginia, claimed lands in the West. Also, colonists had to pay for the additional British troops that had been sent to enforce the law. In the end, many settlers simply ignored the proclamation and moved west anyway.

Stamp Act Crisis

The French and Indian War had plunged Britain deeply into debt. As a result, the tax bill for citizens in Britain rose sharply. The British prime minister, George Grenville, decided that colonists in North America should help share the burden. After all, he reasoned, it was the colonists who had gained most from the war.

New taxes. Grenville persuaded Parliament to pass two new laws. The Sugar Act of 1764 placed a new tax on molasses. The **Stamp Act** of 1765 put a tax on legal documents such as wills, diplomas, and marriage papers. It also taxed newspapers, almanacs, playing cards, and even dice. 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 used such a tax in its colonies.

When British officials tried to enforce the Stamp Act, they met with stormy protests. Riots broke out in New York City, Newport, and Charleston. Angry colonists threw rocks at agents trying to collect the unpopular tax. Some tarred and feathered the agents. In Boston, as you read, a mob burned an effigy, or likeness, of Andrew Oliver and then destroyed his home. As 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.”

No taxation without representation!

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. Why, the British asked, were colonists so angry about the Stamp Act?

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 dating back to the Magna Carta. (See page 86.)

Colonists insisted that only they or their elected representatives had the right to pass taxes. Since the colonists did not elect representatives to Parliament, Parliament had no right to tax them. The colonists were willing to pay taxes—but only if the taxes were passed by their own colonial legislatures.

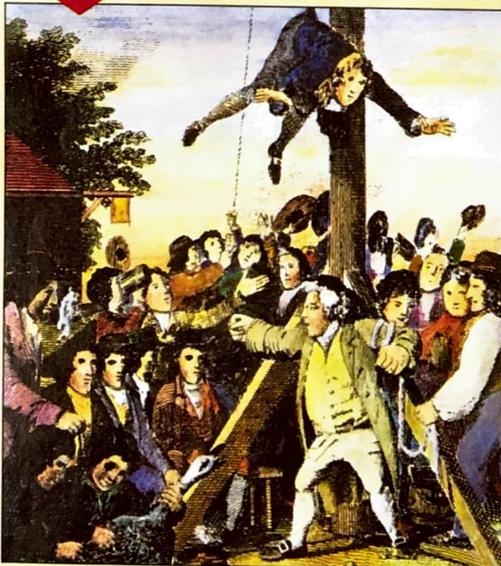
A call for unity. The Stamp Act crisis brought a sense of unity to the colonies. Critics of the law called for delegates from every colony to meet in New York City. There, the delegates would consider actions against the hated Stamp Act.

In October 1765, nine colonies sent delegates to what became known as the Stamp Act Congress. The delegates drew up petitions, or letters, to King George III and to Parliament. In these petitions, they rejected the Stamp Act and asserted that Parliament had no right to tax the colonies. Parliament paid little attention.

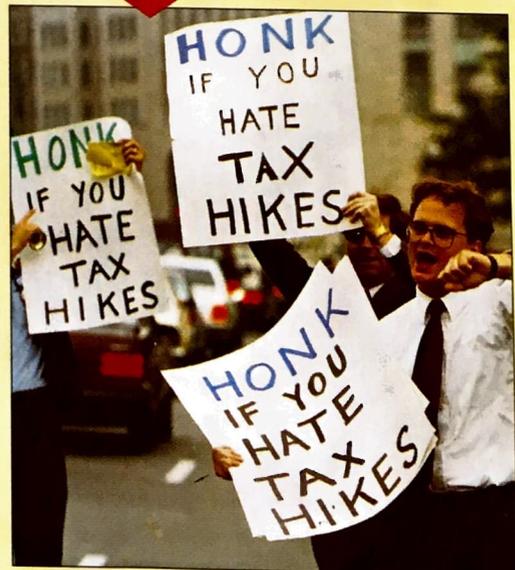
The colonists took other steps to change the law. They joined together to **boycott** British goods. To boycott means to refuse to buy certain goods and services. The boycott of British goods took its toll. Trade fell off by 14 percent. British merchants suffered.

LINKING PAST AND PRESENT

PAST



PRESENT



Protesting Taxes From colonial times, Americans exercised the right to protest unfair treatment. One issue that has stirred strong emotions is taxation. In the painting at left, colonists are protesting the hated Stamp Act of 1765. They have strung up one British tax collector from a Liberty Pole and are preparing to tar and feather another. Today, tax protests are more orderly but just as intense. In the picture at right, a demonstrator tries to gain the support of passing motorists. • What other issues have Americans protested in recent years?

So, too, did British workers who made goods for the colonies. Finally, in 1766, Parliament **repealed**, or canceled, the Stamp Act.

More Taxes

In May 1767, Parliament continued the debate over taxing the colonies. In one especially fiery exchange, George Grenville, now a member of Parliament, clashed with Charles Townshend, who was in charge of the British treasury:

“*Grenville:* You are cowards, you are afraid of the Americans, you dare not tax America!

Townshend: Fear? Cowards? I dare tax America!

Grenville: Dare you tax America? I wish I could see it!

Townshend: I will, I will!”

The next month, Parliament passed the **Townshend Acts**, which taxed goods such as glass, paper, paint, lead, and tea. The taxes were low, but colonists still objected. The principle, they felt, was the same: Parliament did not have the right to tax them without their consent.

The Townshend Acts set up new ways to collect taxes. Using legal documents known as **writs of assistance**, customs officers could inspect a ship's cargo without giving a reason. Colonists protested that the writs violated their rights as British citizens. Under British law, an official could not search a person's property without a good reason for suspecting the owner of a crime.

Colonists Fight Back

The colonists' response to the Townshend Acts was loud and clear. From north to south, merchants and planters signed **nonimportation agreements**. In these agreements, they promised to stop importing goods taxed by the Townshend Acts. The colonists hoped that the new boycott would win repeal of the Townshend Acts.

Colonists supported the boycott in various ways. Men and women refused to buy cloth made in Britain. Instead, they wore clothes made of fabric spun at home, or homespun. A popular Boston ballad encouraged women to avoid British cloth and “show clothes of your own make and spinning.” Harvard College printed its graduation program on coarse paper made in the colonies instead of buying British paper.

Some angry colonists joined the **Sons of Liberty**. This group was first formed during the Stamp Act crisis to protest British policies. Women set up their own group, known as **Daughters of Liberty**.

In cities from Boston to Charleston, Sons and Daughters of Liberty placed lanterns in large trees. Gathering around these Liberty Trees, as they were called, they staged mock hangings of cloth or straw figures 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.

Sons and Daughters of Liberty also used other methods to strengthen their cause. Some visited merchants to urge them to sign the nonimportation agreements. A few even threatened people who continued to buy British goods.

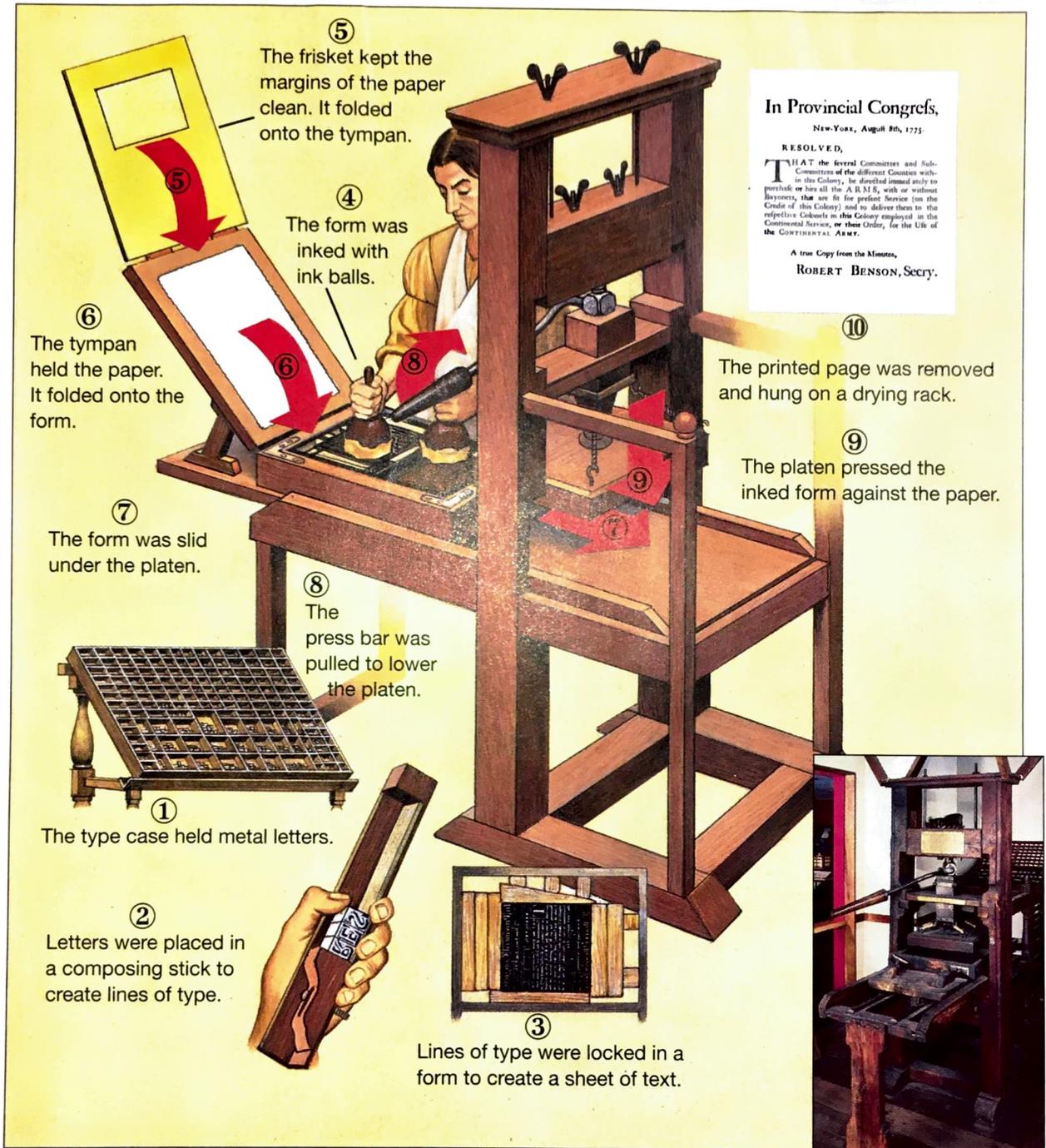
Leaders in the Struggle

During the struggle over taxes, leaders emerged in all the colonies. Men and women in the New England colonies and Virginia were especially active in the colonial cause.



History and You

Young colonial women considered it a great sacrifice to give up fine British cloth for rough “homespun.” Would you be willing to give up wearing blue jeans to protest an injustice?



In Provincial Congress,

New-York, August 26, 1775.

RESOLVE D,

THAT the several Committees and Sub-Committees of the different Counties within this Colony, be directed inmost haste to purchase or hire all the A. R. M. S. with or without bayonets, that are fit for present service (on the Credit of this Colony) and to deliver them to the respective Colonels in this Colony employed in the Continental Service, or their Order, for the Use of the CONFIDENTIAL ARMY.

A true Copy from the Minutes,

ROBERT BENSON, Secry.

Colonial Printing Press Colonial printers played an important role in uniting colonists against the British. Besides publishing newspapers and magazines, they also printed letters and pamphlets that kept colonists informed of anti-British activities. The drawing and photograph above are of a typical colonial printing press. **Science and Technology** Why would printing a document with this printing press be very time consuming?



The Mighty Pen Colonial writers supported the cause of liberty. Samuel Adams (left) and Mercy Otis Warren (right) used their pens to stir feelings against the British—Adams with his letters, Warren with her plays. Both of these portraits were painted by John Singleton Copley, a leading artist of the period. **Linking Past and Present** How do writers influence public opinion today?

In Massachusetts. Samuel Adams of Boston stood firmly against Britain. Sam Adams seemed an unlikely leader. He was a failure in business and a poor public speaker. But he loved politics. He was always present at Boston town meetings and Sons of Liberty rallies.

Adams worked day and night to unite colonists against Britain. He organized a **committee of correspondence**, which wrote letters and pamphlets reporting on events in Massachusetts. The idea worked well, and soon there were committees of correspondence in every colony. Adams's greatest talent was organizing people. He knew how to work behind the scenes, arranging protests and stirring public support.

Sam's cousin John was another important leader in Massachusetts. John Adams was a skilled lawyer. More cautious than Sam, he weighed evidence carefully before acting. His knowledge of British law earned him much respect.

Mercy Otis Warren also aided the colonial cause. Warren published plays that made fun of British officials. She formed a close friendship with Abigail Adams, who was married to John Adams. The two women used their pens to spur the colonists to action.

In Virginia. Virginia contributed many leaders to the struggle against taxes. In the House of Burgesses, George Washington joined other Virginians to protest the Townshend Acts.

A young firebrand, Patrick Henry, gave speeches that moved listeners to both tears and anger. In one speech, Henry attacked Britain with such fury that some listeners cried out, "Treason!" Henry boldly replied, "If this be treason, make the most of it!"

Centers of Protest

Port cities such as Boston and New York were centers of protest. In New York, a dispute arose over the **Quartering Act**. Under

CONNECTIONS

ARTS

SCIENCES

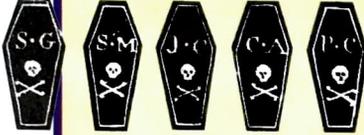
GEOGRAPHY

WORLD

ECONOMICS

CIVICS

Paul Revere and the Boston Massacre



Coffins of massacre victims

Could a picture change history? Paul Revere's engraving of the Boston Massacre, below, may not have caused the American Revolution. But it played a major role in whipping up colonial fury against the British.

In the engraving, Revere purposely distorted events. At right, for example, is a British officer, Captain Thomas Preston. Sword raised, he orders his men to fire. At left, unarmed and orderly citizens look on helplessly. A few distressed Patriots pick up their dead.

This scene, however, did not really take place. According to eyewitnesses, Captain Preston never gave an order to shoot. The redcoats, faced by an unruly and threatening mob, acted on their own and opened fire.

Revere altered other details, too. He

set the bloody scene in front of a building labeled Butcher's Hall. In fact, the building was the Boston customs house. Finally, at the bottom of the engraving, Revere lists seven dead. In truth, five Patriots, not seven, were killed. Revere wrote a poem to go with the engraving. It, too, sought to stir anti-British sentiment. One stanza is reprinted below.

Within days, copies of Revere's engraving appeared on walls all over Massachusetts. The "Bloody Massacre," as the engraving was titled, aroused cries of rage. Revere's vivid but distorted portrayal created a rallying point for colonists who resented British rule.

■ Name three ways that Revere's engraving distorted events to stir up anti-British feeling.

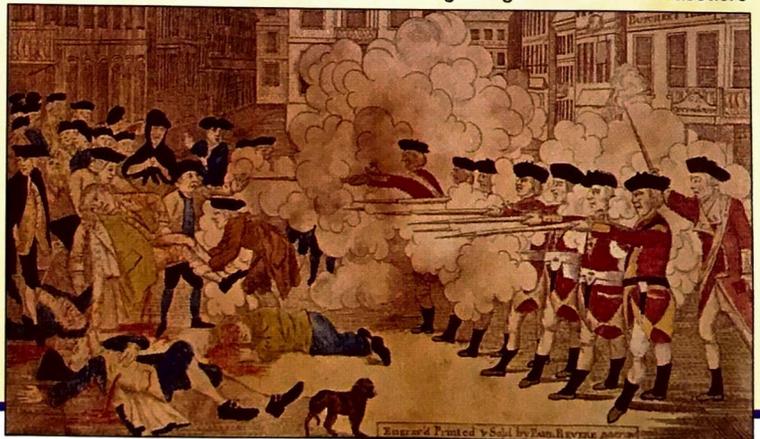
ACTIVITY

Create a poster to support a cause. Use words, pictures, or a combination of both.

"Unhappy Boston. See thy sons
deplere,
Thy hallow'd Walks besmear'd
with guiltless Gore:
While faithless Preston and his
savage Bands,
With murd'rous Rancour stretch
their bloody hands,
Like fierce Barbarians grinning
o'er their Prey,
Approve the Carnage and enjoy
the Day."

Revere's poem

Paul Revere's engraving of the Boston Massacre



that law, colonists had to provide housing, candles, bedding, and beverages to British soldiers stationed in the colonies. New Yorkers saw the law as another way to tax them without their consent. The New York assembly refused to obey the law. As a result, in 1767, Britain dismissed the assembly.

Britain also sent two regiments of British soldiers to Boston to protect customs officers from local citizens. To many Bostonians, the soldiers' tents set up on Boston Common were a daily reminder that Britain was trying to bully them into paying unjust taxes. When British soldiers walked along the streets of Boston, they risked insults or even beatings. The time was ripe for disaster.

The Boston Massacre

On the night of March 5, 1770, a crowd gathered outside the Boston customs house. Colonists shouted insults at the “lobsterbacks,” as they called the redcoated British who guarded the building. Then they began to throw snowballs, oyster shells, and chunks of ice at the soldiers.

The crowd grew larger and rowdier. Suddenly, the soldiers panicked. They fired into the crowd. When the smoke from the musket volley cleared, five people lay dead or dying. Among them was Crispus Attucks, a black sailor who was active in the Sons of Liberty.

Sam Adams quickly wrote to other colonists about the shooting, which he called the **Boston Massacre**. As news of the Boston Massacre spread, colonists' outrage grew.

The soldiers were arrested and tried in court. John Adams agreed to defend them, saying that they deserved a fair trial. He wanted to show the world that the colonists believed in justice, even if the British government did not. At the trial, Adams argued that the crowd had provoked the soldiers. His arguments convinced the jury. In the

end, the British soldiers received very light sentences.

Repeal of the Townshend Acts

By chance, on the day of the Boston Massacre, Parliament voted to repeal most of the Townshend Acts. British merchants, hurt by the nonimportation agreements, had pressured Parliament to end the Townshend taxes. But King George III asked Parliament to keep the tax on tea. “There must always be one tax to keep up the right [to tax],” argued the king. Parliament agreed.

News of the repeal delighted the colonists. Most people dismissed the remaining tax on tea as not important and ended their boycott of British goods. For a few years, calm returned.

SECTION 3 REVIEW

1. **Locate:** Appalachian Mountains.
2. **Identify:** (a) Pontiac's War, (b) Proclamation of 1763, (c) Stamp Act, (d) Townshend Acts, (e) Sons of Liberty, (f) Daughters of Liberty, (g) Sam Adams, (h) Mercy Otis Warren, (i) Quartering Act, (j) Crispus Attucks, (k) Boston Massacre.
3. **Define:** (a) boycott, (b) repeal, (c) writ of assistance, (d) nonimportation agreement, (e) committee of correspondence.
4. What event convinced Britain to issue the Proclamation of 1763?
5. How did Britain try to raise money to repay its war debt?
6. (a) Why did colonists object to the Stamp Act? (b) What actions did colonists take to protest the Townshend Acts?
7. **CRITICAL THINKING Drawing Conclusions**
Why do you think Pontiac felt he had to fight the British?

ACTIVITY Writing to Learn

Write an article for a colonial newspaper reporting the events of the Boston Massacre.