

# Why Did the American Revolution Happen?

## A Story of Cause & Effect, Part I

### Cause:

**Great Britain** needed a source of income (money) to begin paying the massive war debts it had accumulated from fighting in, and ultimately winning, **The Seven Years' War**.

### Effect:

**King George III & British Parliament** decided to tax the American colonies, or make them pay an extra fee (more money), for everyday goods.



### Cause:

**British Parliament** passed the **Sugar Act (1764)**, which put a tax on **molasses** and **sugar** imported into the colonies. Much of Newport's economy depended on imported **sugar** and **molasses** to make **rum**, and this tax was seen as a threat to many Newporters' livelihoods.

### Effect:

Many Newporters turned to smuggling goods and other ways of avoiding paying the British tax, so much so that King George III sent his Royal Navy to patrol the New England coast and enforce the tax.



### Cause:

In addition to enforcing the **Sugar Act** by stopping and searching ships suspected of smuggling goods, the British Navy also **impressed**, or forcibly enlisted, local sailors into military service on British ships.

### Effect:

Violence between British troops and American colonists became more and more common. Only a few months after the **Sugar Act** went into effect, Rhode Island colonists occupied Fort George on Goat Island and fired cannon shots at a British customs (a.k.a. tax) enforcement vessel in Newport Harbor.



### Cause:

**British Parliament** passed the **Stamp Act** in March 1765, which required colonists to pay for individual stamps to be placed on paper products including newspapers, pamphlets, legal documents, and even playing cards.

### Effect:

Violent protests broke out in cities and towns across North America over the **Stamp Act** going into effect in the summer of 1765.

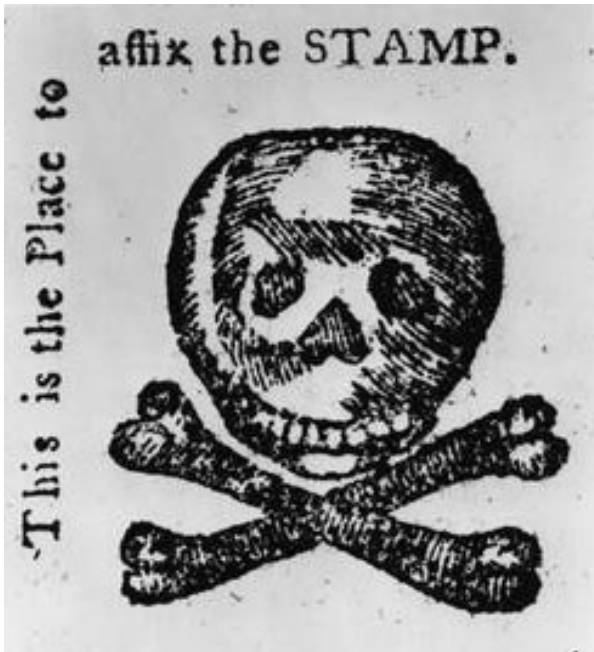


## The Stamp Act of 1765

### In the News:

This cartoon was published in the *Pennsylvania Gazette* as a response to the passage of the **Stamp Act**.

What does the imagery tell us about how colonists, or at least the artist, felt about the Stamp tax and how it would affect their lives?



This drawing depicts the news of the **Stamp Act** being read in Boston for the first time.

How did the people of Boston react to the news based on this drawing? How can you tell?



*Bostonians Reading the Stamp Act,*  
New York Public Library.



# How/Why Did the American Revolution Happen?

## A Story of Cause & Effect, Part II

### Cause:

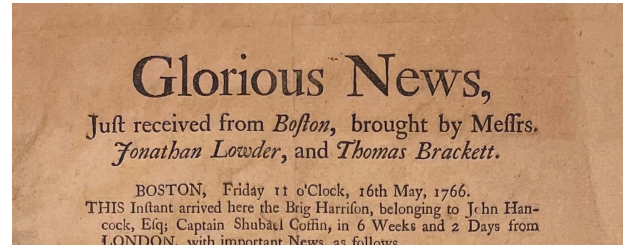
Violent protests broke out in cities across North America over the **Stamp Act** going into effect. In Newport, a mob threatened the designated Stamp distributor, hung **effigies** of supporters of the **Stamp Act**, then ransacked the home of outspoken **Loyalist** Martin Howard.

### Effect:

**British Parliament** repealed the **Stamp Act** 7 months later.

### In the News: The Repeal of the Stamp Act

A special edition broadside (a.k.a. news sheet) was printed announcing that **King George III** repealed the **Stamp Act**.



“It is impossible to express the Joy the Town (Newport) is now in, on receiving the above, great, glorious and important News---The Bells in all the Churches were immediately set a Ringing, and we hear the Day for general Rejoicing will be the Beginning of next Week.”

**How did the people of Newport react to the news of the repeal of the Stamp Act?**

**Highlight or circle the key words and phrases from the above quote that support your answer.**



### Cause:

**Parliament** enacted another series of taxes, known as the **Townshend Acts**, on the colonies. These Acts added extra fees for purchasing dozens of everyday items imported from Britain, including paint, lead, and tea.

### Effect:

Smuggling in the colonies became increasingly more common as an act of protest against **King George III** & **British Parliament**, as well as a way to avoid the extra fees.



# How/Why Did the American Revolution Happen?

## A Story of Cause & Effect, Part III

### Cause:

British customs officials seized notable **Patriot** John Hancock's ship in Boston after finding smuggled wine onboard.

### Effect:

The seizure of this ship sparked days of rioting in Boston & weeks of unrest throughout New England. British troops were eventually sent to Boston to try and maintain order amid the chaos.

*About one year after the Liberty was seized by British, a mob in Newport recaptured the ship from the British, scuttled the ship (purposely sank it), took all the valuables onboard, and burned it in retaliation.*



### Cause:

British troops opened fire on a crowd of Bostonians throwing rocks and snowballs, killing three colonists.

### Effect:

Word about the killing spread and colonists across North America condemned the incident as an atrocity, calling it the **Boston Massacre**. One month later, **British Parliament** repealed all of the **Townshend Acts**, except for the tax on tea.

### In the News: Before the Boston Massacre

Solomon Southwick, printer of the *Newport Mercury*, sent holiday wishes to his subscribers with this poem, part of which reads:

**“May GEORGE the Third long fill the BRITISH THRONE!  
Protector of the Good, oppressing None:  
And may his Royal Race succeed in Pow'r  
Till Time and earthly Kingdoms be no more!”**



*Newport Mercury, January 1, 1770.*

### In the News: After the Boston Massacre



*Newport Mercury, May 27, 1771.*

Solomon Southwick began printing some editions of the *Newport Mercury* with this bold masthead:

**“Undaunted by TYRANTS,  
We'll DIE or be FREE.”**

What differences do you notice about how Solomon Southwick talks about King George III between 1770 and 1771? Highlight/circle them above.



# How/Why Did the American Revolution Happen?

## A Story of Cause & Effect, Part IV

### The Gaspee Affair - June 1772

British customs cruiser HMS *Gaspee*, while chasing a Newport merchant vessel, ran aground on the coast of Narragansett Bay. While it struggled to refloat, a group of men led by John Brown of Providence attacked the vessel, wounded the captain and burned the ship.

Although Great Britain demanded an investigation into the incident to arrest the guilty parties, no one was ever legally identified or punished.



*Burning of the Gaspee,*  
New York Public Library.



#### **Cause:**

**British Parliament** enacted the **Tea Act**, which gave the **British East India Company** a monopoly, or total control over, colonial tea sales.

#### **Effect:**

Led by the **Sons of Liberty**, several dozen Bostonians boarded three **British East India Company** ships and destroyed 340 chests of tea by throwing them into Boston Harbor in protest of the **Tea Act**.



#### **Cause:**

To punish the town of Boston for the destruction of the East India tea, **Parliament** enacted the **Coercive Acts**, also known as the **Intolerable Acts** in the colonies. These Acts expanded British military presence in North America, and directed the British Navy to blockade Boston Harbor, meaning no other ships could sail in or out of Boston's busy port.

#### **Effect:**

The **Continental Congress**, a meeting of 56 representatives from 12 colonies, met in Philadelphia for more than a month debating a united response to the **Intolerable Acts**. They decided to **boycott** British goods until the **Intolerable Acts** were repealed and formed the Continental Association to organize and enforce the **boycott** across the colonies.



# How/Why Did the American Revolution Happen?

## A Story of Cause & Effect, Part V

### Cause:

Tensions between colonists and British troops continued to rise with the enforcement of the **Intolerable Acts** and the widespread **boycott** of British goods. On April 18, 1775, about 700 British soldiers were sent to destroy Patriot military supplies stored in Concord, MA. Patriot leaders found out about this plan ahead of time, and not only moved the supplies, but sent riders out on horseback to warn Massachusetts militia units of British movements.

### Effect:

Patriot militiamen and British troops meet in Lexington, MA, at sunrise on April 19, 1775. The “shots heard around the world” were fired, and the Revolutionary War officially began.

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**Explain in your own words why the American Revolution happened. Do you think going to war was unavoidable? Was there anything either side could have done differently to avoid all-out war?**



## Discussion Questions

1. Have you ever been afraid to voice your opinion?
2. What do you do when friends or loved ones disagree with you on important issues?
3. Where do you get your news?
4. How do you know which news sources to trust?
5. Is violence ever justifiable to effect political change? If so, when?
6. What issues would you risk your life for?

