
How the American Revolution Made a Statement

The American Revolution

The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines the term 'revolution' as "a forcible overthrow of a government or social order in favor of a new system." This term was relatively new to not only Britain, but the whole world. The escalation from a group of unhappily taxed colonists to a war resulting in 25,000 American deaths was completely unexpected. The fact that a revolution was unheard of at this time may have been one of the reasons it was successful for the colonists. The colonists were expected to wilfully accept the taxes imposed by the British, but the seemingly unfair taxation and yearning for freedom made them become restless to the point of rebellion. The revolting of the Colonists shocked the world. The moment that served as an epiphany to every country was "The Shot Heard 'Round The World." The first shots of the Revolutionary War showed everyone that a revolution was indeed possible at this time. Before the actions of the war itself, there were preceding causes for one of the most shocking revolts in history. The American Revolution was a product of a financially draining French and Indian war for the British and a state of increased restlessness within the hearts of colonists. Unfair taxation was the greatest reason for the rebelling of the colonists, which ultimately led to a war that would alter the course of American history.

The French and Indian War indirectly created tension between the British and the colonists, pushing them closer to a revolution. After this war, the British found themselves in a staggering amount of debt. Historian A argues, "They saw no alternative but to tax the colonists to pay off that debt." As expected, what seemed reasonable to the British came across as offensive to the colonists. Debt was not the only monetary issue the British faced because of the war. Their land was expanded, and with more land comes more defensive troops. The troops needed to be paid for, and Historian A says, "Colonists, the British reasoned, should help paying for their own defense." The colonists looked at this payment as yet another tax being paid to the British. The snowball effect instilled anger and stirred the hearts of the colonists.

Some argue that the French and Indian War had the potential to 'cool the fire' of the colonists instead of rekindling it. If the French had won the war for the Empire, Historian A argues, "Colonists would have needed British protection against the French threat." Because there was not a threat, the colonies would not want to accept British taxes and policies. A French victory could have mitigated the emotion-filled want for a revolution in the minds of the colonists. When looking at the viewpoint of the British, it is understandable why they made the decisions they did concerning the taxation of colonists. By the same token, the colonists were not looking at any other point of view besides their own. They found themselves being forced to pay to the British and knew that a change needed to be made.

The colonists were being taxed by the British without being represented in the government that was taxing them. There were specific taxes that frustrated the colonists and drew them closer to a revolution. One of the most controversial taxes was the Stamp Act. This Act directly taxed the colonists and made them use stamped paper produced in London. This angered the colonists because printed materials were an everyday necessity to store owners and many others as well. This was not the only time that the British taxed the colonists on objects that colonists used

daily, but it was one of the first times. The Currency Act inconvenienced and frustrated colonists in 1764. The British banned the printing of paper money in American colonies. The colonists felt like the British controlled and oversaw everything in their lives, and their controlling of currency pushed them closer to the edge. Had the colonists been represented in British government, some of these unfair and imposing taxes and acts may have been contested. This would have cooled the tempers of the colonists, prolonging a revolution at the very least.

Through the escalations of rebellions against the British, we can see that the colonists constantly needed more power. The first rebellious colonists were organized in a private group called the "Sons of Liberty," who resisted the taxing by the British. However, what was once a small group spread to several other cities. The boycotting of British goods proved successful for a while, but many colonists stopped the boycotts in order to save their jobs. We see yet another escalation in rebellion, however, as the colonists staged the "Ultimate Boycott" three years later after the Tea Act was passed. The dumping of tea into the Boston Harbor by the Sons of Liberty took the rebellions to a new level. The British responded by declaring the Intolerable Acts, which made the colonists pay for the damage that they caused. Though they were taxed in response, we can see that as soon as the colonists found rebelling to be somewhat successful, they yearned for even more power, ultimately leading to a revolution.

The actions at Lexington and Concord created a 'breaking point' for the colonists, making a revolution inevitable. In Lexington, the infamous "Shot Heard Round the World" told the colonists and British that bloodshed and deaths were inescapable. Both sides knew they were at the brink of war. In the eyes of the colonists, war had begun when they surprised the British by attacking them in Concord. The ambush gave hope to the colonists, though they were poorly trained and outnumbered. The first shots fired at Lexington established a breaking point for the colonists, and the ambush at Concord pushed them over the edge. War was not just unavoidable, it was happening.

The Battles at Lexington and Concord led to two actions that solidified the reality of a Revolutionary War. The Second Continental Congress met shortly after this in order to prepare the colonists for war. The Olive Branch Petition is often overlooked in the story of the American Revolution, as it seems to go against the stubborn spirit of the colonists that is illustrated in textbooks. The British were given a 'last chance' before a war started. The colonists would end their resistance if the British withdrew their military and revoked the Intolerable Acts, an act that was a product of the Boston Tea Party. The petition was rejected, and this set the Revolutionary War in place.

In 1776, a document was approved that was used as a rallying cry for the American forces during the war. The Declaration of Independence was written by Thomas Jefferson. It was used as a message to the world, clarifying their reasoning for rebelling and going to war. Jefferson very clearly stated the specific actions of the British and the Parliament that pushed the colonists to the point of a revolution. We do see some emotion-filled tirades that speak negatively about King George III. The King of Britain is said to have, "...plundered our seas, ravaged our coasts, burnt our towns, and destroyed the lives of our people." While there are some passionate portions of the document, we do see Jefferson use specific examples to explain the reasons that led to a revolt. We see that the declaration attacks the system of government, stating that the British, "deprived us, in many cases, of the benefits of Trial by Jury." Though this is one of the more substantial reasons for an uprising, it is not the most important.

Taxation without representation is the greatest reason for the increased hostilities between the British and the colonists that ultimately led to a war. The Declaration of Independence lists this as one of the reasons behind the revolution. It speaks about how Parliament, "imposed Taxes on us without our Consent." While we may find the British's reasoning behind the taxation understandable, the colonists did not find it fair to pay taxes for a war that they were not a part of. The British seemed to continue piling taxes on the colonists. Every new tax that was added pushed them closer to the brink of an uprising. We find that many of the smaller insurgencies involving the colonists revolved around taxes. The Boston Tea Party was a product of the Tea Act. There were several boycotts surrounding certain taxations like the Stamp Act and the Townshend Acts. These uprisings soon snowballed into what we now call the American Revolution. Because the reasoning behind these revolts involved taxation, it becomes apparent that the unfair taxing of the colonists was the greatest cause of the Revolutionary War.

Regardless of debates concerning whether the Revolutionary War was just, there are several discernable causes for it occurring. With the French and Indian War leading to many of the reasons that the colonists used to rebel, some argue that one war led to another. The several taxes that the British placed on the colonists inadvertently coerced them to reply with boycotts and small uprisings, all of which fed into the stubbornness and pugnaciousness that generals and leaders of the colonists experienced. The American Revolution made a statement telling every country that it was possible for a group of people to successfully revolt against their mother country. This made it not only important to American people and history, but to the whole world.