

Chapter 7 (Introduction) Were the English Colonists “freedom fighters” or “opportunists?”

Why did the colonists declare independence from England?

1607 – 1763 (the period of salutary neglect): HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The relationship between England (the mother country) and her 13 colonies in America (the child) was good because both sides were prospering economically. Politically, the colonists were happy because they were allowed to govern themselves without much interference from the King or Parliament, they also practiced free trade. **LESS MERCANTILISM**

1763 – 1775 (the period of protest, resistance and rebellion):

During this time period the good relationship ended, and 1763 became a turning point year in American history. The French and Indian War ended in 1763, and because they was caused the British to go into debt, the British needed to raise more revenue. The policy of salutary neglect ended, while the colonies faced increased taxation. The colonists became outraged because it affected colonial trade, infringed on their self-governing ways and violated their rights as English citizens.

1775 – 1783 (years of revolution)

By 1775, the colonists were divided. Some colonists remained loyal to the English government (loyalists). Others decided that the time for protest was over. They were called Patriots (people willing to sacrifice and die for a cause). They felt it was time to fight for their rights as English citizens, and eventually to separate from England completely. It was difficult to convince many colonists that independence from England was the right thing to do.

Sample Thesis: The colonists declared independence from England due to unfair laws and tyranny.

1 Reasons for the Revolution

Getting the Main Idea

Read each paragraph below. Then underline the sentence that best states the main idea of each paragraph.

1. England used a plan known as mercantilism to keep it rich and strong. According to this plan, a country becomes rich by selling more goods to other countries than it buys from them. England applied this plan to the American colonies. It passed many laws forcing the colonies to buy goods only from England. Americans could not trade directly with any other country. The American colonies came to depend on England for everything. Mercantilism thus prevented the American colonies from becoming as strong and as rich as they might have been.
2. In the French and Indian War from 1754 to 1763, England and the American colonies fought together against France for control of the Ohio Valley. Winning the war put England in debt. People there were already paying high taxes to cover the costs of the war. They believed that the Americans should pay their share of the costs. Thus, after the French and Indian War, England increased its taxes on the American colonies.
3. In 1765, England passed the Stamp Act. This law required Americans to pay a tax on all printed materials such as newspapers, playing cards, and wills. The American colonists did not like the Stamp Act. They organized against it. Groups called the Sons of Liberty were formed to encourage people to resist the Stamp Act. Some colonists beat up the English tax collectors. Others burned the hated stamps. A very popular method of protest was the boycott. This means that the people refused to buy anything made in England until the tax was removed.
4. To escape paying the growing number of English taxes, some Americans took up smuggling. They illegally brought in goods made in other countries without paying any taxes on them. England tried to stop the Americans from smuggling by using writs of assistance. Today these writs of assistance would be called search warrants. A present-day search warrant, however, must say what is being searched for and where it is being looked for. In colonial times, the English tax collectors used writs of assistance to search any home or business for any kind of goods.
5. In 1770, five American civilians were accidentally killed by English soldiers in what became known as the Boston Massacre. As had happened many times before, a crowd of people gathered outside the tax collector's house in Boston. The crowd was protesting the English taxes. The people became very noisy. English soldiers were called out to guard the building. The captain tried to quiet the crowd and ordered the people to go home. The Americans called out insults and began throwing rocks and snowballs at the English soldiers. In the confusion, someone gave the order to fire. The soldiers shot into the crowd. When the smoke cleared after the shooting, three were dead, and two others were fatally wounded. One of the dead was a black sailor who had been the leader of the crowd.