

Give me liberty, or give me death!

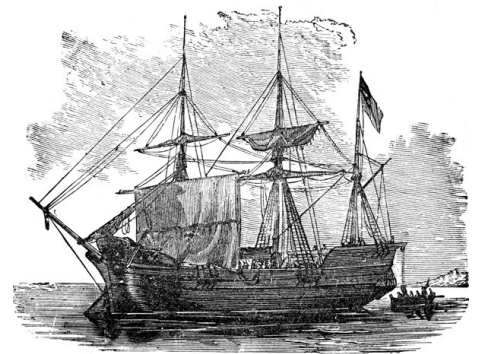
Patrick Henry

Really? Was it that bad? By 1776, the American colonists living under English rule thought so. In fact, things were so bad that they went to war to gain their independence. But why? What could have been so intolerable?

The first Englishmen came to America four hundred years ago looking for gold, silver, and a waterway to Asia. They were part of a trading company that convinced the king of England to grant them a **charter** giving them permission to set up a colony in America. But they did not find what they were looking for. Times got so hard those first settlers had to eat rats and even each other to keep from starving to death. Pretty soon, though, more people arrived and times got better. The English were here to stay.

Hail to the King

Back in England, the King probably figured he had a pretty good deal. Other people got seasick sailing across the ocean to settle an untamed land while he sat in his palace ruling England. Except that being king just wasn't what it used to be. Back in the 1200s, a king could really do what he wanted! But this was the 1600s, and now the English people had representatives in **Parliament** who made laws and stood up for peoples' rights. They even gave advice to the king. Bah!



You Don't Mind If We . . . Uh . . .

Govern ourselves, do you? In America, the colonists needed some kind of government to deal with everyday problems. After all, the king was on the other side of the ocean. And because of Parliament, the colonists were used to having a say in government. In Virginia Colony, the first settlers decided each community should have two representatives and that all the representatives would meet together. Farther north, in Plymouth, the colonists signed a **compact** agreeing to form a majority-rule government where all the men would vote on whatever issues came up. (Women didn't get to vote in 1620.) Even so, the king still controlled the colonies, and the colonists had to follow England's laws.

The **House of Burgesses** was the group of representatives in Virginia. The **Mayflower Compact** was the agreement the Plymouth colonists signed while they were still on board the *Mayflower*, before they set foot on dry land. Even then, they knew they would need a government!

We're Doing Just Fine, Thanks

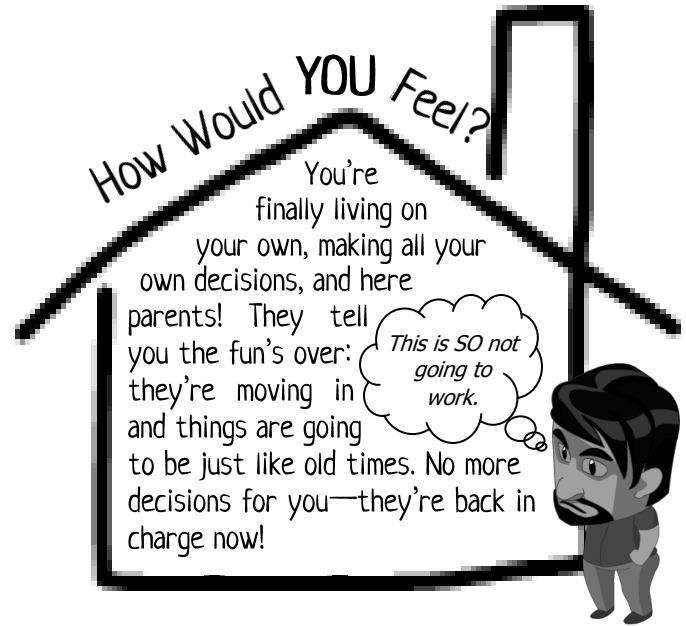
England had a lot of other colonies besides those in America and plenty of other problems to deal with. The king and Parliament didn't have much time to pay attention to the American colonists. By the mid-1700s there were 13 colonies, and each colony had its own government. These little governments grew stronger and more used to being in control. When problems came up, the colonial governments took care of things themselves. The colonists were out on their own, making their own decisions, governing things the way they wanted to without much interference.



The Thirteen Colonies

A Raw Deal

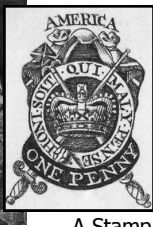
But then times got tough, and the British government went looking for money. Great Britain, which now included both England and Scotland, saw its colonies around the world as a source of profit. Colonies were places to cut timber, grow crops such as cotton and coffee, and mine for valuable minerals. The king forced the colonists to sell these raw materials back to England at really cheap prices. People in England would use the materials to make finished products. But did the colonists get a bargain on these items because they provided the materials? No way! The king forced the colonists to buy the finished products at extra high prices.



Hmm... What about taxing the American colonists?



King George III



A Stamp

Looking for a Fast Buck?

That was only the beginning. In the mid-1700's, Britain fought two expensive wars. Britain had taken out a lot of debt to pay for the war, so it went looking for a way to make money fast. Taxing the American colonists seemed like the perfect idea. So in 1765, Britain passed the **Stamp Act**, which forced colonists to put expensive tax stamps on all legal documents, as well as newspapers, calendars, and almanacs. The colonists had an answer for that: They quit buying British goods! But this *boycott* didn't work for long. Britain repealed the Stamp Act after one year, but things did not get better.

From Bad to Worse

As soon as the Stamp Act was gone, the British passed the **Declaratory Act** saying that the colonies were dependent on the king and declaring that all laws passed in the colonies had no effect. As if that weren't bad enough, Britain also passed the **Townshend Revenue Act**, taxing things it knew the colonists couldn't make for themselves: paint, glass, paper, lead, and tea. This Act also allowed British government workers to search peoples' houses and even break down doors to seize items the homeowner hadn't paid taxes for. The **Quartering Acts** of 1765 and 1774 forced certain colonists to let British troops live in their houses. In the 1770s, a series of laws cracked down on rebellious activity in Massachusetts colony. Colonists called these the **Intolerable Acts**.



During the *Boston Tea Party*, colonists were so angry about a law called the Tea Act that they snuck onto a cargo ship during the night and dumped hundreds of crates of tea into the Boston harbor!

Enough is Enough!

The colonists finally decided there was only one solution: Independence! On July 4, 1776, leaders of the colonies signed the Declaration of Independence, breaking ties with Britain. It wasn't that easy, though. There was the small matter of fighting a war against Britain to make that freedom real. When the Americans won the Revolutionary War, Britain lost all control of the colonies. The United States of America was born.

A. Phrases to Know. Learn these phrases from the Declaration of Independence by matching each one with its definition.

- ___ 1. Unalienable rights
- ___ 2. Pursuit of happiness
- ___ 3. Natural rights
- ___ 4. Consent of the governed
- ___ 5. Just powers
- ___ 6. Self-evident

- A. Rights people are born with
- B. Can be seen just by looking at it
- C. Permission of those under the government's rule
- D. Rights that cannot be taken away
- E. Trying to find joy and contentment
- F. Powers that are fair

B. Reconstruct the Declaration. The outline below shows the 4 parts of the Declaration of Independence and what each part is for. You will get a set of cutouts with statements that are in the Declaration. Decide which section each statement belongs in and piece the Declaration back together!

Part 1: Preamble

An introduction explaining why the Declaration is being written.

Part 2: Natural Rights

The colonists explain the rights of people and the role of government power.

Part 3: Grievances

A list of the colonists' complaints.

Part 4: Resolution of Independence

The colonists declare their independence from Britain.



Hey, King: Get Off Our Backs!

Name: _____

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C. Fill In the Blank. One of the most famous parts of the Declaration of Independence is written below. Use words from the word bank to complete it. HINT: Look for combinations of words you defined in the matching activity!

consent **life** **evident** **happiness** **people**
powers **abolish** **liberty** **equal** **rights**

We hold these truths to be self-_____, that all men are created _____, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable _____, that among these are _____, _____, and the pursuit of _____.

That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just _____ from the _____ of the governed,

That whenever any form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the _____ to alter or _____ it



Cutout Activity p.2

Hey, King: Get Off Our Backs!

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Fill In the Blank. Look in the reading to find the missing piece of each sentence.

1. A _____ is a signed agreement.
2. The _____ Acts forced colonists to house British troops.
3. Britain saw its colonies as a source of _____.
4. If you sold a newspaper in 1765, you would have to put a _____ on it.
5. We celebrate the 4th of July because that's when the _____ was signed.
6. The Townshend Revenue Act allowed the government to _____ peoples' homes.
7. Virginia Colony's first government was called the _____.
8. The colonists had to follow the laws of _____.



Odd One Out. In each set, cross out the word that doesn't belong. In the oval, explain what the three remaining words have in common.

- Glass
- Cotton
- Lead
- Tea

9.

- Mayflower Compact
- Stamp Act
- Declaratory Act
- Quartering Act

10.

- Minerals
- Timber
- Crops
- Paint

11.

- Legal documents
- Newspapers
- Troops
- Calendars

12.

- Boycott goods
- Search houses
- Fight a war
- Destroy tea

13.

Cause and Effect. Match each effect with its cause listed below.

EFFECTS

- ____ 14. In the 1600s, the king could not just do what he wanted.
- ____ 15. The first colonists started their own governments.
- ____ 16. Colonists were used to having a say in government.
- ____ 17. Britain needed a way to make money.
- ____ 18. The colonists boycotted British goods.
- ____ 19. The British taxed paint, glass, and lead.
- ____ 20. The colonists declared independence.
- ____ 21. Britain lost control of the colonies.

BECAUSE...

- A. They were angry about the Stamp Act taxes.
- B. The British government was too far away to deal with daily problems.
- C. They were tired of the way the British were treating them.
- D. He shared power with Parliament.
- E. The colonists won the Revolutionary War.
- F. They knew the colonists could not make those products themselves.
- G. In England, the Parliament represented people in government.
- H. It was in debt after fighting expensive wars.