Introduction

After the French and Indian War, tensions grew between the colonists and the British. The tensions eventually reached a point where the colonists began a war for their independence from British control. Click *Start* to learn about the events that led to the beginning of the Revolutionary War.

Timeline

Click and drag the slider to the right to investigate the major events that started America's war for independence.

Stamp Act - 1765
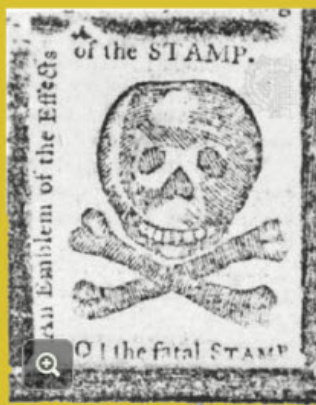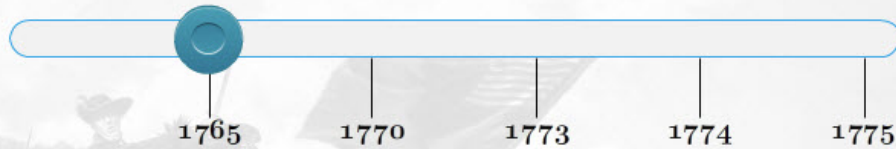
Click and drag the slider to the right to investigate the major events that started America's war for independence.

1765   1770   1773   1774   1775

• In 1765, The British government instituted the Stamp Act.

• Colonists were required to pay taxes for any printed materials, like newspapers, diplomas, licenses, and playing cards.

The French and Indian War had cost the British government a lot of money and the government was deeply in debt. In addition, the British were forced to keep a larger army of soldiers in the North American colonies to protect them. The British Parliament, which was their ruling legislature, felt that the American colonists should help pay for the war they started and for the British army that was protecting them. Thus the British parliament enacted several new taxes to raise money.

The first was the Sugar Act which was passed in 1764. It set taxes on a set of goods, the most significant being sugary products like molasses and rum while also passing rules to make it easier to enforce and collect the taxes. This hurt the American colonists' economy, causing them to get angry. To protest, the American colonists boycotted British goods and smuggled in non-British trade goods.

In 1765 the British Parliament passed the Stamp Act. This required the American colonists to pay taxes for any printed materials, like newspapers, diplomas, licenses, and even playing cards. Again, some colonists protested, but this time through more violent means. Potential stamp tax collectors were harassed and intimidated into resigning their positions, and little tax was collected.
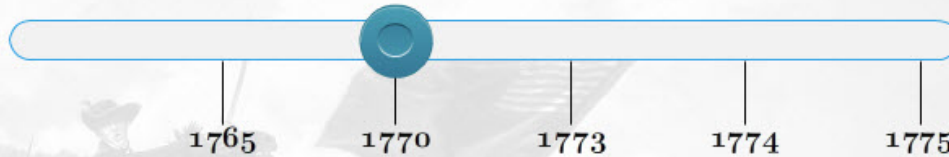
In 1767 the British Parliament thinking that the colonists were upset about being taxed on items made in the colonies, passed a series of additional taxes on goods imported or brought into the colonies which have come to be called the Townshend Acts. These only further angered some American colonists.

In addition to troubles with taxes, some American colonists believed their civil liberties as Englishmen were being violated by the British government. In 1765, the British Parliament passed the Quartering Act. This act required American colonists to provide housing and supplies to the British Army stationed in North America. American colonists protested considering it an undue burden to support an army they argued was not needed with the French defeated. Additionally, tax collectors were using writs of assistance or special government granted search warrants that allowed them to search buildings or ships that they suspected of having smuggled goods. American colonists felt that the writs of assistance were too easy to get and trampled on their individual freedoms.

Boston Massacre - 1770

A spiraling situation began to develop. As the British government tried to gain control, and tax the colonists, a number of the colonists began to push for greater independence from the British government. In response to the continued protests, the British government sent two regiments to Boston, Massachusetts. Boston was one of the especially rebellious cities. Now, the protesting anti-British colonists had a specific target for their anger, the British soldiers. Anti-British colonists took to taunting the soldiers, and were constantly trying to find ways to make them uncomfortable. On the night of March 5, 1770, things took a turn for the worse. Eight British soldiers fired upon a mob of rowdy anti-British colonists. The confrontation resulted in the deaths of five colonists, while injuring six more. The Boston Massacre, as the event later came to be called, increased the tensions between the anti-British colonists and the British government.

Boston Tea Party - 1773

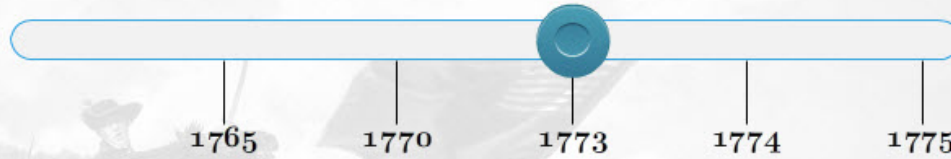Click and drag the slider to the right to investigate the major events that started America's war for independence.
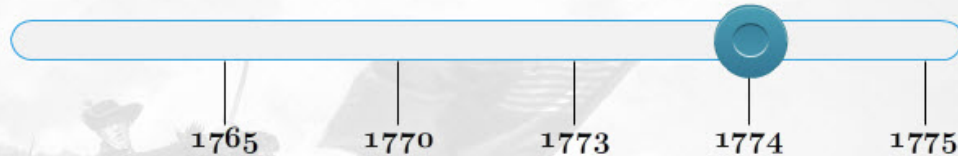
1765   1770   1773   1774   1775

- On December 16, 1773, colonists dressed as Native Americans boarded British ships carrying tea and dumped it into the Boston Harbor.

- This event became known as the Boston Tea Party.

On the evening of December 16, 1773, anti-British colonists, from a group calling themselves the Sons of Liberty, dressed as Native Americans. They boarded three British ships carrying tea to be sold to the colonists, and dumped it all into Boston Harbor, destroying the tea. This event, known as the Boston Tea Party, was another protest of the British government's efforts to raise revenues through taxes. The response by the British government was harsh, and came in the form of the Intolerable Acts. The city of Boston was put under military control and that military force would eventually start the American Revolution.

Continental Congress - 1774

Click and drag the slider to the right to investigate the major events that started America's war for independence.

1765   1770   1773   1774   1775

- A gathering of representatives from 12 of the 13 colonies met in Philadelphia beginning on September 5, 1774.

- This assembly, known as the First Continental Congress, decided to boycott English goods and ask for a repeal of the Intolerable Acts.
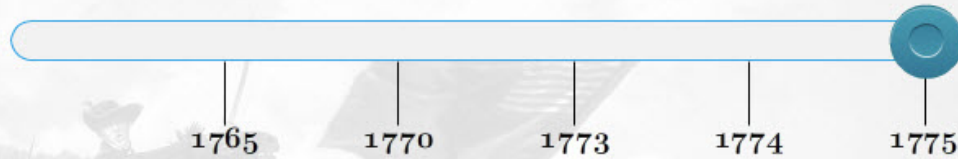
Angered over the colonists' decimation of British merchandise, King George III pressured Parliament to respond. In 1774, they did by passing a group of laws intended to punish the colonists for Boston Tea Party. These laws, known as the Intolerable Acts, included the Boston Port Act, an update to the Quartering Act, the Massachusetts Government Act, and the Administration of Justice Act. The Boston Port Act closed the port of Boston, until the city repaid all of the money lost as a result of the Boston Tea Party. The Quartering Act made it even easier for the British Army commanders to house soldiers in the vacated homes of colonists and other dwellings. The Massachusetts Government Act stated that the colonists of Massachusetts would no longer be able to elect the members of their executive body. The Administration of Justice Act allowed the trials of accused British officials to take place in England or elsewhere, if the defendant could not get a fair trial in Massachusetts.

Some American colonists saw the use of the Quartering Act, martial law in Boston, and the closing of the Boston Harbor as clear violations of their rights as Englishmen. As a response to these violations and to the Intolerable Acts imposed by the British government, a gathering of representatives from 12 of the 13 colonies met in Philadelphia, beginning on September 5, 1774. Georgia was the only colony not to send representatives to this meeting. This assembly would later be named the First Continental Congress, and marked the first time that nearly all of the colonies agreed to act together. The congress decided to boycott English goods. The representatives also prepared a letter to send to the British government, asking for the repeal of the Intolerable Acts. If the Intolerable Acts were not repealed, the congress agreed to meet again. At this time, the colonists still hoped for a peaceful reconciliation with England.

whro
EDUCATION

Lexington and Concord - 1775

Click and drag the slider to the right to investigate the major events that started America's war for independence.

1765   1770   1773   1774   1775

- Finding few weapons, the British began to retreat when they were attacked by minutemen.
- Minutemen were regular colonists who agreed to fight at a minutes notice.
- The British retreated to Boston.

The Intolerable Acts disbanded the Massachusetts colonial government, and replaced it with a British controlled government. In response, anti-British colonists started their own government outside of Boston, and began stockpiling weapons and supplies. When the British army in Boston found out about the weapons, they made secret plans to capture the materials. The colonists found out, and were warned that the British were coming.

On the morning of April 19, 1775, 700 British soldiers marched into Lexington, Massachusetts, and were faced by about 80 militiamen. Neither side was looking for a fight. But when a shot was fired, fighting broke out. It is unclear who fired the first shots.

The Massachusetts militiamen retreated quickly, and the British marched on to Concord, where they searched for the stockpiled weapons. Finding very little, they began to retreat when they were met and attacked by minutemen at the North Bridge in Concord. Minutemen, or regular colonists who agreed to come and fight at a minute's notice, engaged the British forcing them to retreat to Boston. During the retreat, more minutemen arrived to continually attack the British forces. With this battle, the American War for Independence, or the Revolutionary War, began.