

## Unit 6, Lesson 8: The Revolution Begins (Stamp Act Riots)

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### Lesson Overview

Students will analyze historical materials relating to the Stamp Act and draw conclusions about the Act's effects

### Delaware Standard(s)

- **History Standard 1, 4-5 [Chronology]:** Students will study historical events and persons within a given time frame in order to create a chronology and identify related cause-effect factors.
- **History Standard 2a, 4-5 [Analysis]:** Students will draw historical conclusions and construct historical accounts from primary and secondary source materials
- **History Standard 2b, 4-5 [Analysis]:** Students will examine historical materials relating to a particular region, society, or theme; chronologically arrange them; and analyze change over time.

**Big Ideas:** change over time, causes-effects, conclusions, standing armies

### Essential Questions

- What effect(s) did the Stamp Act have on the colonists and their relationship with British authorities back in the mother country?

### Enduring Understandings

- Students will understand that the Stamp Act angered many colonists to the point of violence because they viewed it and other acts of Parliament as abuses of power and violations of their rights - property rights in particular. The Stamp Act proved to be a turning point in terms of souring relations between the colonists and their mother country.

### Resources

- [Google Slides - Includes Resource 1: Background to the Stamp Act](#)
- [Resource 2: Image Analysis](#)
- [Resource 3: How Did Colonists React to News of the Stamp Act](#)
- [Resource 4: Primary Source Analysis](#)
- [Resource 5: Timeline of the Stamp Act](#)

### Procedures

1. **Warm-Up:** Pose the following to students and have them turn and discuss with a partner:  
*What thoughts would go through your mind if you went home from school today and saw soldiers with guns standing in the streets?*
  - a. **Explanation for the Prompt:** students learned in previous lessons that Parliament decided to keep British soldiers in the colonies after the French and Indian War. The importance of that decision can be vastly underestimated. The next procedure will deepen students' understanding of why a "standing army" alarmed the colonists. The

war was over and, normally, this would mean the soldiers disappear from the towns and streets. Well-read colonists who studied history absorbed the fear of “standing armies” i.e., armies standing among civilian populations during times of peace. This was a red flag that hinted at plans to enforce acts that could be interpreted as tyrannical.

- b. This information lays a foundation for understanding the tensions between the soldiers and the people of the colonies (Boston specifically) that will culminate in the “Boston Massacre.”
2. **Review and Introduce the Lesson - Mini Lecture:** Explain the following points to students as you project [Resource 1: Google Slides - Background to the Stamp Act](#).
- a. Colonists were very angry, especially because of the Stamp Act as it meant that they would have to pay taxes on so many things that they used (e.g., all legal documents, newspapers, playing cards etc.). The act would affect many colonists.
  - b. Colonists adopted a slogan that became the rallying cry for their emerging revolution - “no taxation without representation.” Remember, the colonists were not allowed to vote for members of Parliament. So, they had no one in Parliament to represent them. Parliament was now taking away their property without the consent of their representatives.
  - c. Colonists also believed that their rights as Englishmen were being taken away without their consent (e.g., their money through taxes, their land, and homes because of the Proclamation Act)
  - d. Colonists believed that Britain was putting soldiers - a “standing army” - in the colonies during peacetime to make sure that the colonists obeyed the unfair laws. Many did not accept the idea that the soldiers were there to protect them. Colonists who read history believed that a “standing army” during peacetime was a convincing sign that a government was abusing its power (becoming tyrannical). Some also conclude that the Proclamation Act was designed to contain colonists in an area small enough that the British soldiers could keep an eye on them.
  - e. Colonists organized groups called “The Sons of Liberty” that would make sure that unfair laws were not being enforced and that their rights as Englishmen were protected

After the slide presentation, tell students that they are going to read and analyze three sources that will help them understand how the colonists reacted to Parliament’s new laws - with the Stamp Act as the featured example because it was the most controversial act.

3. **Read and Analyze:** Students will be doing two readings in preparation for the checks for understanding. This is preparing them for state assessments in which they are asked to engage with multiple sources.
- a. Source 1:
    - i. Distribute copies of [Resource 2: Image Analysis](#). Read and explain the directions on the paper then have students do a think-pair-share based on the questions at the bottom of the page.
  - b. Source 2:
    - i. Distribute Copies of [Resource 3: How Did Colonists React to News of the Stamp Act](#) - a modified (for grade 4) primary source account of what happened when word spread that the Stamps had arrived from Great Britain and there were people in the colonies who were going to have the job of collecting the taxes. Set the purposes for the reading. Ask students to focus on the following questions:

1. How would you describe the actions taken by the colonists?
      2. Were those actions justified?
      3. What effects do you think the actions are likely to have...
        - a. on other people living in the colonies who watched or learned about what the “mobs” did?
        - b. people back in England?
    - ii. Discuss the answers with students.
  - c. **Source 3 (Document Analysis):**
    - i. Distribute copies of [Resource 4: Primary Source Analysis](#). Read the directions as students follow along. Then have students complete the task on the bottom of the page.
      1. How would you describe the actions taken by the colonists?
      2. Were those actions justified?
      3. What effects do you think the actions are likely to have...
        - a. on other people living in the colonies who watched or learned about what the “mobs” did?
        - b. people back in England?
    - ii. Discuss the answers with students.
4. **Video Reinforcement and Extension:** Overview of Stamp Act and reactions from NBC Learn [here](#) (3:52)
  - a. At this point in their learning, students should understand most of the video. There are two new pieces of content introduced. They are:
    - i. Navigation Acts - no need to spend time on this unless students ask questions. In the 1660s Parliament passed these acts. They required colonists to ship all goods on English ships (even though the costs might have been lower if they used different ships). The acts also required colonists to have any goods purchased from outside the British empire to be shipped to England first where Parliament would impose a tax on the goods. They would then be shipped on British ships to the colonies where the prices to colonists would include the additional costs of shipping and the tax.
    - ii. Boycotts - you should pause and highlight the fact that colonists decided to boycott British goods until the Stamp Act was repealed. This is an effective strategy and a good alternative to the violence that the mobs exhibited. At a time when England needed money, the last thing they needed was for the colonists to stop buying their goods. And this caused people IN England to oppose the Stamp Act because it would now hurt their income.
      1. Women played a very important role in the success of the boycotts. Daughters of Liberty began making “homespun” (clothing made in the colonies) so that the colonists would not have to buy British clothing. Students should be aware of the boycott strategy and its effectiveness over time in history (e.g., the Montgomery bus boycotts following Rosa Parks famous act of civil disobedience).
5. **Timeline Analysis:** Distribute copies of [Resource 5: Timeline of the Stamp Act](#). Ask students to read the dates and events listed on the timeline then respond to the prompt at the bottom of the page.

- a. One point you may want to emphasize as you go over the students' responses involved the Declaratory Act. No need to memorize the title of the act but students should be aware that, while Parliament finally agreed to repeal the Stamp Act they made it very clear in the Declaratory Act that they were NOT relinquishing their right to tax colonists "in all cases whatsoever".
  - b. The drove home their point the following year when they imposed new taxes on glass, lead, paper, paint, and tea (see last event on the timeline).
6. **Debrief:** Revisit the essential question and enduring understanding for the lesson.
  - a. What effect(s) did the Stamp Act have on the colonists and their relationship with British authorities back in the mother country?
7. **Extension Option:** Draw students attention back to [Resource 2: Image Analysis](#) and the skull and bone image of the Stamp Act stamp circulated by colonists. Have students pick an act of Parliament and draw a small poster that uses images and text to communicate a point of view (colonists or British authorities).