Causes and Effects of the American Revolution

After the French and Indian War, Britain needed money. As a result, the British government placed taxes on the American colonists. The British thought that the colonists should help pay for the war since it had been fought partly to defend the colonies.

The first tax was the Stamp Act. It said that colonists had to buy tax stamps for printed materials. Many colonists refused to pay. They said they had not voted on the tax (No taxation without representation). Colonists under the leadership of Samuel Adams formed the Sons of Liberty to protest the Stamp Act.

Since the Stamp Act did not work, Britain replaced it with a tax on imported goods, the Townshend Acts. So colonists refused to buy imports. The Daughters of Liberty formed to make tea and cloth.

The colonial boycott was hurting British merchants; therefore, King George III ordered British soldiers and warships to the colonies. Tensions rose to and explosive level in Boston between the colonists and the British soldiers on March 5, 1770. Shots were fired and in the end five people laid dead. This event became known as the Boston Massacre.

As a result of colonists' protests, Britain removed all taxes except the tax on tea. The Tea Act said that the British East India Company was the only company allowed to sale tea to the colonists. Angry Boston colonists led by Samuel Adams dressed as Mohawk Indians and threw a load of tea off a British ship into Boston Harbor. This event became known as the Boston Tea Party. That action caused Britain to punish Boston further.

In reaction to the Boston Tea Party, Parliament passed a series of laws known as the Intolerable Acts to punish the people of Boston. The people of Boston were ordered to feed and house British soldiers, Massachusetts was put under the control of Thomas Gage, and the port of Boston was closed until the people of Boston paid for the tea they destroyed. The Intolerable Acts had two effects: closing of the port hurt businesses that depended on trade and many people were out of work, but it also had a positive effect, it forced colonists to take sides. Those that supported the people of Boston became known as Patriots. Those that wanted to stay loyal to King George III and Britain became known as Loyalists.
In response to the Intolerable Acts, Americans representing 12 colonies (Georgia did not attend) met in Philadelphia for the First Continental Congress. They voted to stop trading with Britain until the Intolerable Acts were repealed, and to start training colonists to fight.

In March 1775 Patrick Henry made the most famous speech of his career. Henry warned Virginia’s militias to prepare for war with Britain. "I know not what course others may take; but as for me, give me liberty or give me death!" were the last words spoken at the meeting by Patrick Henry. War was inevitable.

1. Why did Britain tax the colonists?

2. What was the Stamp Act?

3. What were the Townshend Acts?

4. How many people died in the Boston Massacre?

5. What happened as a result of the Boston Tea Party?