

SECTION 2

Building Colonial Unity

Guide to Reading

Main Idea

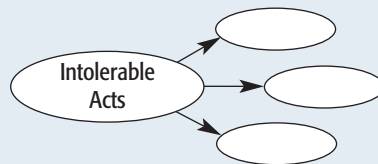
As tensions between colonists and the British government increased, protests grew stronger.

Key Terms

propaganda, committee of correspondence

Reading Strategy

Organizing Information As you read the section, re-create the diagram below and describe how the Intolerable Acts changed life for colonists.



Read to Learn

- why Boston colonists and British soldiers clashed, resulting in the Boston Massacre.
- how the British government tried to maintain its control over the colonies.

Section Theme

Groups and Institutions Colonists banded together to protest British laws.

Preview of Events



American protest banner

AN American Story

In the spring of 1768, British customs officials in Boston seized the *Liberty*, a ship belonging to John Hancock, a merchant and protest leader. The ship had docked in Boston Harbor to unload a shipment of wine and take on new supplies. The customs officials, however, charged that Hancock was using the ship for smuggling. As news of the ship's seizure spread through Boston, angry townspeople filled the streets. They shouted against Parliament and the taxes it had imposed on them. The *Liberty* affair became one of the events that united the colonists against British policies.

Trouble in Boston

Protests like the *Liberty* affair made British colonial officials nervous. In the summer of 1768, worried customs officers sent word back to Britain that the colonies were on the brink of rebellion. Parliament responded by sending two regiments of troops to Boston. As angry Bostonians jeered, the newly arrived "redcoats" set up camp right in the center of the city.



Many colonists, especially those living in Boston, felt that the British had pushed them too far. First the British had passed a series of laws that violated colonial rights. Now they had sent an army to occupy colonial cities.

To make matters worse, the soldiers stationed in Boston acted rudely and sometimes even violently toward the colonists. Mostly poor men, the redcoats earned little pay. Some of them stole goods from local shops or scuffled with boys who taunted them in the streets. The soldiers competed off-hours for jobs that Bostonians wanted. The townspeople's hatred for the soldiers grew stronger every day.

The Boston Massacre

Relations between the redcoats and the Boston colonists grew more tense. Then on March 5, 1770, the tension finally reached a peak. That day a fight broke out between townspeople and soldiers. While some British officers tried to calm the crowd, one man shouted,

“We did not send for you. We will not have you here. We'll get rid of you, we'll drive you away!”

The angry townspeople moved through the streets, picking up any weapon they could find—sticks, stones, shovels, and clubs. They pushed forward toward the customhouse on King Street.

As the crowd approached, the sentry on duty panicked and called for help. The crowd responded by throwing stones, snowballs, oyster shells, and pieces of wood at the soldiers. “Fire, you bloodybacks, you lobsters,” the crowd screamed. “You dare not fire.”

After one of the soldiers was knocked down, the nervous and confused redcoats did fire. Several shots rang out, killing five colonists. One Bostonian cried out:

“Are the inhabitants to be knocked down in the streets? Are they to be murdered in this manner?”

Among the dead was **Crispus Attucks**, a dockworker who was part African, part Native American. The colonists called the tragic encounter the **Boston Massacre**.

The Word Spreads

Colonial leaders used news of the killings as **propaganda**—information designed to influence opinion—against the British. Samuel Adams put up posters describing the “Boston Massacre” as a slaughter of innocent Americans by bloodthirsty redcoats. An engraving by Paul Revere showed a British officer giving the order to open fire on an orderly crowd. Revere's powerful image strengthened anti-British feeling.

The Boston Massacre led many colonists to call for stronger boycotts on British goods. Aware of the growing opposition to its policies, Parliament repealed all the Townshend Acts taxes except the one on tea. Many colonists believed they had won another victory. They ended their boycotts, except on the taxed tea, and started to trade with British merchants again.

Some colonial leaders, however, continued to call for resistance to British rule. In 1772 Samuel Adams revived the Boston **committee of correspondence**, an organization used in earlier protests. The committee circulated writings about colonists' grievances against Britain. Soon other committees of correspondence sprang up throughout the colonies, bringing together protesters opposed to British measures. (See page 962 of the *Primary Sources Library* for readings about colonial resistance.)

Reading Check Explaining How did the Boston Massacre contribute to the repeal of the Townshend Acts?

The Boston Massacre

The British soldiers never stood trial for the massacre. Eight soldiers and the commanding officer at the Boston Massacre were jailed and tried for murder. Many Patriots thought it was an act of disloyalty to defend the soldiers. The soldiers' hopes for justice rested in the hands of John Adams, who believed that even the enemy should be given a fair trial. Two of the soldiers were found guilty of manslaughter. The others were found not guilty on grounds of self-defense. Some Patriots questioned Adams's loyalty; others argued that the trial showed even the hated redcoats could receive a fair trial.



MORE ABOUT...

The Boston Tea Party

The Boston Tea Party is one of the significant events leading ultimately to American independence.

Most of the Townshend Acts are repealed. The tax on tea remains.

In November 1773, the citizens of Boston refuse to allow three British ships to unload 342 chests of tea.

On the evening of December 16, Boston citizens disguised as Native Americans board the ships and empty the tea into Boston Harbor.

King George III and Parliament respond by closing the city port.

“Fellow countrymen, we cannot afford to give a single inch! If we retreat now, everything we have done becomes useless!”

— *Samuel Adams, December 1773*



A Crisis Over Tea

In the early 1770s, some Americans considered British colonial policy a “conspiracy against liberty.” The British government’s actions in 1773 seemed to confirm that view.

The British East India Company faced ruin. To save the East India Company, Parliament passed the **Tea Act** of 1773. This measure gave the company the right to ship tea to the colonies without paying most of the taxes usually placed on tea. It also allowed the company to bypass colonial merchants and sell its tea directly to shopkeepers at a low price. This meant that East India Company tea was cheaper than any other tea in the colonies. The Tea Act gave the company a very favorable advantage over colonial merchants.

Colonial Demands

Colonial merchants immediately called for a new boycott of British goods. Samuel Adams

and others denounced the British monopoly. The Tea Act, they argued, was just another attempt to crush the colonists’ liberty.

At large public meetings in Boston and Philadelphia, colonists vowed to stop the East India Company’s ships from unloading. The Daughters of Liberty issued a pamphlet declaring that rather than part with freedom, “we’ll part with our tea.”

Parliament ignored warnings that another crisis was brewing. The East India Company shipped tea to Philadelphia, New York, Boston, and Charles Town. The colonists forced the ships sent to New York and Philadelphia to turn back. The tea sent to Charles Town was seized and stored in a warehouse. In Boston, a showdown began.

The Boston Tea Party

Three tea ships arrived in Boston Harbor in late 1773. The royal governor, whose house had been destroyed by Stamp Act protesters, refused





to let the ships turn back. When he ordered the tea unloaded, Adams and the Boston Sons of Liberty acted swiftly. On December 16, a group of men disguised as Mohawks and armed with hatchets marched to the wharves. At midnight they boarded the ships and threw 342 chests of tea overboard, an event that became known as the **Boston Tea Party**.

Word of this act of defiance spread throughout the colonies. Men and women gathered in the streets to celebrate the bravery of the Boston Sons of Liberty. Yet no one spoke of challenging British rule, and colonial leaders continued to think of themselves as members of the British empire.

The Intolerable Acts

When news of the Boston Tea Party reached London, the reaction was quite different. King **George III** realized that Britain was losing control of the colonies. “We must master them or totally leave them alone.” Not prepared to give up, the king and Parliament vowed to punish Boston. In the spring of 1774, Parliament passed the **Coercive Acts**, very harsh laws intended to punish the people of Massachusetts for their resistance.

The Coercive Acts closed Boston Harbor until the Massachusetts colonists paid for the ruined tea. This action prevented the arrival of food and other supplies that normally came by ship. Worse,

the laws took away certain rights of the Massachusetts colonists. For example, the laws banned most town meetings, an important form of self-government in New England. Another provision permitted royal officers to be tried in other colonies or in Britain when accused of crimes.

The Coercive Acts also forced Bostonians to shelter soldiers in their own homes. Parliament planned to isolate Boston with these acts. Instead the other colonies sent food and clothing to demonstrate their support for Boston. The colonists maintained that the Coercive Acts violated their rights as English citizens. These included the rights to no quartering of troops in private homes and no standing army in peacetime without their consent.

The Quebec Act, passed shortly after the Coercive Acts, further angered the colonists. This act set up a permanent government for Quebec and granted religious freedom to French Catholics. Colonists strongly objected to the provision that gave Quebec the area west of the Appalachians and north of the Ohio River. This provision ignored colonial claims to the area. The feelings of the colonists were made clear by *their* name for the new laws—the Intolerable Acts.

 **Reading Check Summarizing** List the effects of the Coercive Acts on the citizens of Boston.

SECTION 2 ASSESSMENT

Checking for Understanding

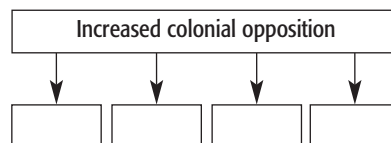
- Key Terms** Use these terms in sentences that relate to the Boston Massacre: **propaganda, committee of correspondence.**
- Reviewing Facts** How did colonial leaders use the Boston Massacre to their advantage?

Reviewing Themes

- Groups and Institutions** Why were the committees of correspondence powerful organizations?

Critical Thinking

- Drawing Conclusions** Do you think the Boston Tea Party was a turning point in the relationship between the British and the colonists? Explain.
- Organizing Information** Re-create the diagram below and describe how colonists showed their opposition to British policies.



Analyzing Visuals

- Picturing History** Examine the material about the Boston Tea Party on page 138. What artifacts are shown? When did the “tea party” take place?

Interdisciplinary Activity

Art Draw a cartoon strip showing the story of the Boston Tea Party. Use at least four cartoon frames to present the sequence of events from your point of view. Compare your cartoon to a classmate’s and describe his or her point of view.