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Honors U.S. History

Period 3

**Causes of the American Revolution**

British geographic, military, and economic oppression caused the American Revolution. The combination of the Proclamation Line, the Intolerable Acts and British taxes, along the Boston Massacre led the colonists to revolt against the British.

The colonial population grew rapidly in the wake of the pilgrims' arrival in the New World. The area settled by colonists expanded exponentially, driving the Native Americans west, out of their well-established territories. Eventually, the problem grew large enough that the Native Americans banded together and fought back against the colonists. To prevent western trading from being threatened, the British issued the Proclamation of 1763, which made it illegal to settle west of an imaginary line drawn in the Appalachian mountains. This angered the colonists, who no longer had the room for expansion that they needed due to their rapid population growth. The Proclamation also made it easier for the British to control the colonists, since they were in a designated area. The British exerting their control over the colonists planted the seeds of rebellion in America.

On March 5, 1770, British soldiers fired on a crowd of civilians in Boston. They killed five people. Paul Revere, who was an early pro-revolution colonist, made a portrayal of the Massacre which was used to sway the masses towards revolution. It showed the redcoats in an organized line firing on women and children. It is a powerful image, and conveys the evil of the British in killing innocent Bostonians. In reality, the Bostonians had provoked the British, throwing rocks and snowballs at them and threatening them with clubs. However, few people who were not at the scene while it was happening had any way to know that the image was inaccurate, and therefore their only impression of the Massacre was of redcoats brutalizing unarmed civilians. The Boston Massacre turned the colonists, and especially Massachusetts, even more against England.

In 1774, Parliament passed four acts which applied only to Massachusetts. The first, called the Port Act, shut down all Massachusetts harbors, depriving Massachusetts of badly needed commerce. The second, called the Adminstration of Justice Act, eliminated the legal authority of all Massachusetts courts and required all matters of justice in the state to pass through British courts, making the legal process unreasonably slow. The third, called the Quartering Act, required Massachusetts residents to provide room and board for British soldiers who were staying in the state. This act made citizens lose virtually all control over their homes, as they could be taken over by the British with no notice. The final act, called the Massachusetts Government Act, restricted the Massachusetts government severely, and gave the British government jurisdiction over almost all matters of government in the state. In America, these four acts were known as the Intolerable Acts, and infuriated the citizens of Massachusetts. Massachusetts had been the most compliant with the British taxes and drafts, and having these oppressive laws placed on them after their model behavior was the final straw. Massachusetts was also the state done the most injustice by the British, and was also the first state to revolt; first at Lexington and Concord, and later at Bunker Hill.

If the British had dealt more fairly with the colonies in geographic, military, and economic matters, they might have prevented the American Revolution. Instead, they oppressed the colonists, and it cost them dearly.