

LEVELED Book • X

King George III

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Focus Question

What kind of leader was King George III?

Words to Know

allies
boycotts
decline
legacy
levied
mentor

minister
monarchy
Parliament
symptoms
treaty
tuberculosis

Front cover: A painting of King George III by Sir Nathaniel Dance, 1773

Title page: A portrait of King George III when he was the prince of Wales, by Jean-Etienne Liotard, 1754

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King George III
World Leaders
Level X Leveled Book
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Correlation

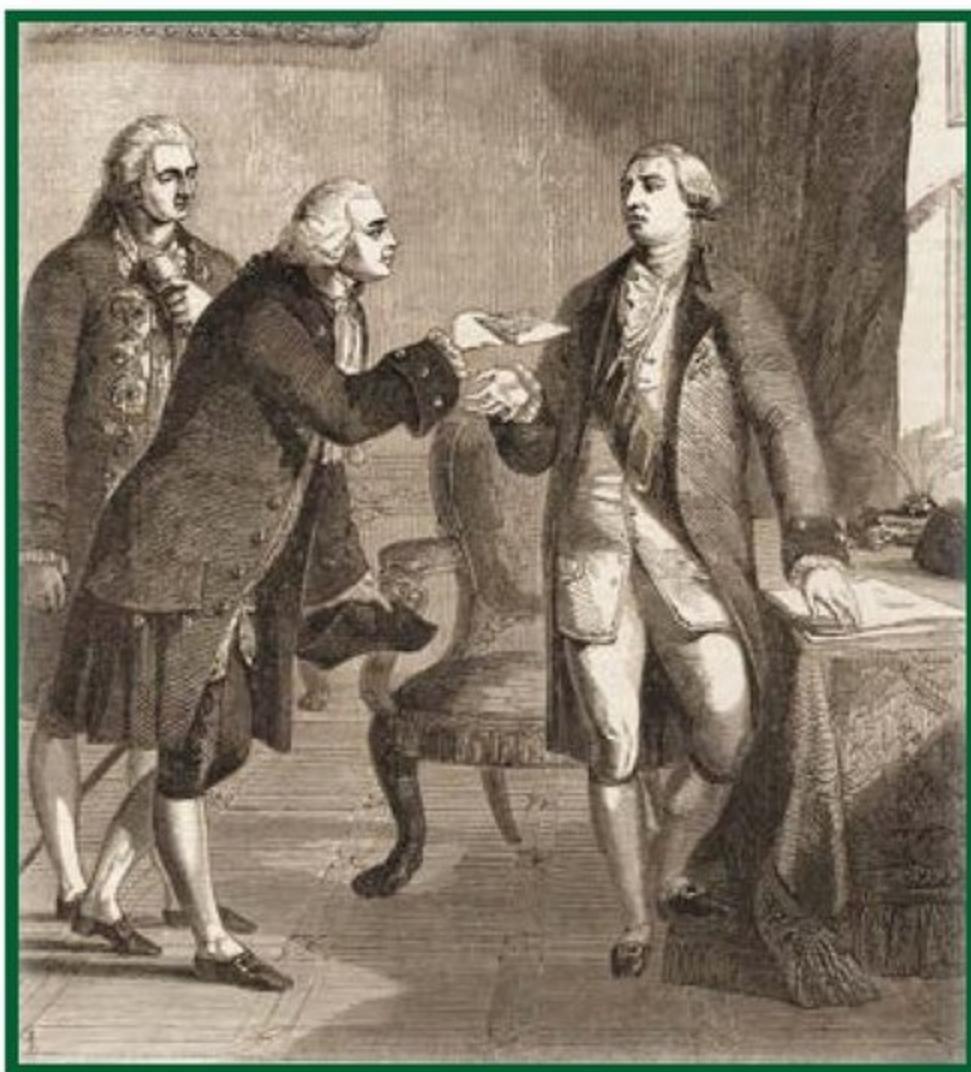
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England, Ireland, and Scotland



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John Adams (left), from the United States, extends an offering to George III (right) of England in 1785.

A Historic Meeting

John Adams, one of America's Founding Fathers, traveled to England in 1785 to meet with King George III. Adams stood before the king, who looked at Adams skeptically. The United States had declared its independence from Great Britain just nine years earlier, and relations between the two nations were rocky.

Adams humbly offered the United States' hand in friendship. He spoke of honor and affection between the two nations and expressed good wishes for the king's health and happiness. The king smiled, replying that he accepted Adams's offer, and the brief meeting ended.

Great Britain, the country King George III ruled and loved, had suffered due to the loss of the American colonies. He was determined, and vowed to lead his nation to greatness again.

The Making of a King

Princess Augusta of Wales gave birth to George on June 4, 1738. His royal family included his grandfather, King George II, and his father, Frederick, Prince of Wales. The king and Frederick did not get along. Their political opinions differed, which created family tension.

Young George grew up in that stressful environment. A sensitive and emotional boy, George struggled with his education, even though his parents provided excellent teachers. It wasn't until the age of eleven that he learned to read.

One year later, his father died of a lung ailment, leaving George the heir to the British throne. The future king turned to his teacher, Lord Bute, for support. He would soon need it.



Portraits show young Prince George (left) and Lord Bute (right). Lord Bute taught the king about the government and the world.

North American British Territories in 1763



In the mid-1700s, Great Britain was a powerful ruler in different places around the world. Its colonies in India and North America provided markets where British merchants sold goods. The British **monarchy** led the way for the nation. However, the British **Parliament** often clashed with the king.

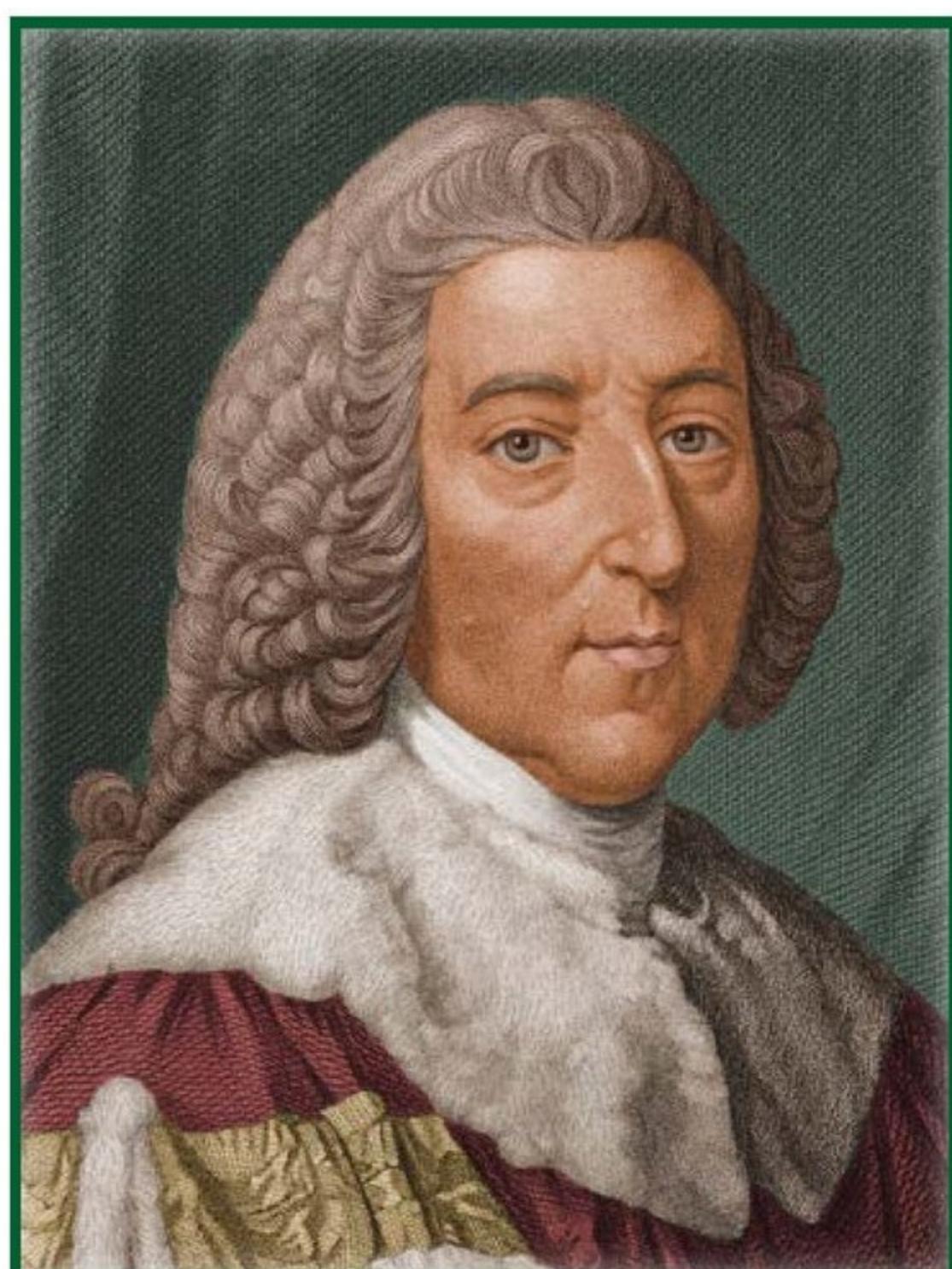
In 1760, George II died, and at the age of just twenty-two, George became King George III. At that time, Great Britain was in the middle of fighting for control of land in the Seven Years' War against France and other countries in Europe. Battles also took place in North America, where the war was called the French and Indian War. When Great Britain won the war, it gained many French territories and grew larger than ever before.

Two Officials Clash

The victories in the Seven Years' War thrilled King George III, but the British public did not give him much credit. Instead, William Pitt, war **minister** to King George, earned the praise.

William Pitt was an enemy of Lord Bute, the king's **mentor**. Pitt and Bute argued at the end of the war. Pitt wanted to expand the war into Spain, but Bute and the king did not. The conflict became so heated that Pitt resigned his post in the king's ministry. The king appointed Bute prime minister, the leading position in the king's ministry. Bute formally ended the Seven Years' War with a **treaty** signed in 1763. He resigned shortly after that.

William Pitt was the driving force behind Britain's victory. Even so, Lord Bute opposed him and urged George III to do the same.





King George selected Sophia Charlotte as his wife without having met her. She arrived in England, met the king, and married him the next day.

A Royal Family

George III may have lost his closest political advisor, but he had gained a partner for life. In 1761, the king married a German princess named Sophia Charlotte. Their long, successful marriage lasted more than fifty years, and they had fifteen children together.

Happy at home, George was determined to be a great leader. He worked hard to learn more about the British Parliament and how it could be improved. The king remained keenly aware of global affairs as well.

A Simple Man

Despite his royal rank, King George enjoyed the simpler things in life. He loved agriculture and spent many days inspecting his kingdom's farms. His favorite activities included horseback riding, music, attending the theater, and playing cards.

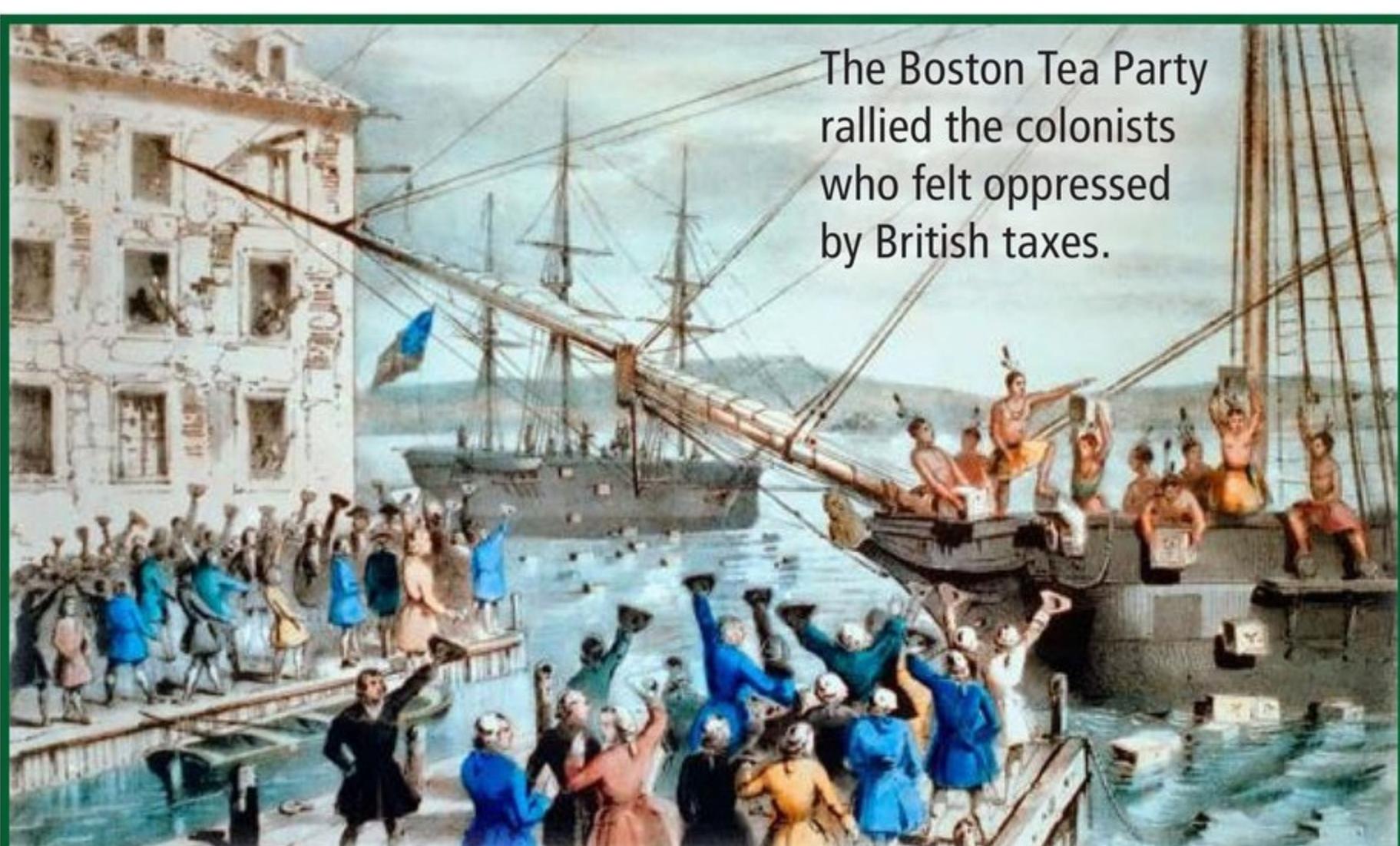


The Colonies

The greatest challenge King George III faced was the American Revolution. The war began with a series of parliamentary acts that outraged the American colonists.

Great Britain **levied** taxes on goods the colonists used: the Sugar Act taxed molasses; the Stamp Act taxed all printed paper; and the Townshend Acts taxed paint, glass, and tea. The colonists opposed the taxes and issued **boycotts** of British goods.

Then, on the night of December 16, 1773, a group of colonists dressed as Native Americans boarded a British ship docked in Boston Harbor. The ship carried crates of tea, and the colonists dumped the crates into the water. King George responded to the Boston Tea Party with a challenge: “The colonies must either triumph or submit.”



America Fights Back

The American Revolution began in 1775, when soldiers fired shots at the Battles of Lexington and Concord in Massachusetts. King George realized he needed more troops to lead Great Britain to victory, so he hired the services of about thirty thousand German soldiers, called Hessians.

Teamed with the Hessians, the king's army defeated the colonists in some early battles. However, when General George Washington led a surprise attack in late 1776, the British were pushed back. In 1778, a decisive event occurred: the French joined the American side. Supported by their **allies**, the Americans won the war in 1781. King George, sensing he might be blamed for the defeat, claimed, "I am innocent of the evils that have occurred."

Upon declaring independence from Britain in 1776, some colonists tore down a statue of King George in New York City.



At times, King George III's illness resulted in violent outbursts, and he was restrained.



Illness and Revolution

In the late 1780s, after the loss of the colonies, people around King George III began to notice his failing health. He seemed nervous. He said strange things and talked to imaginary people. He could be violent, too, shouting and pushing people. These were just the emotional **symptoms**—he weakened physically as well.

Deeply alarmed, the king's family and ministers asked doctors to help. They conducted treatments common during that era. They had the king drink medicine, and they opened his veins and bled him. They also began a course of strict discipline, punishing the king harshly if he acted strangely. This treatment appeared to help, and soon the king began working again.



The political cartoon "The Rival Gardeners" expresses how both George III and Napoleon had their own gardens (lands) to attend to.

A revolution in Ireland also commanded the king's attention around that time. The conflict centered on religion. Ireland was a Catholic nation, and Great Britain's Parliament had passed laws limiting the rights of Catholics living there. After the British army stifled a rebellion, Great Britain's Parliament merged with Ireland's in 1800, creating the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland.

The king's challenges were not over, though, and the early 1800s saw Great Britain at war with France once again. After the French Revolution of 1789, a young general named Napoleon Bonaparte rose to power in France. Napoleon wanted to conquer lands in Europe, including Great Britain. England had to defend itself. The Napoleonic Wars ended in 1815 with Great Britain and its allies again defeating Britain's old rival.

A New King George

In 1809, Great Britain celebrated George III's fiftieth year on the throne. Despite his reign's rough beginnings, the king had reached new heights of popularity, and most subjects believed that George III had led his country well for half a century. Thousands of his subjects cheered him.

The following year, the king suffered a terrible tragedy. His youngest daughter died suddenly of **tuberculosis** at the age of twenty-seven. The king was shocked and heartbroken. Soon the symptoms of his earlier illness returned. He went into a steep physical and mental **decline**.

In 1811, it became clear that the king could no longer perform his duties. The British Parliament

named his eldest

son, George, as regent, or temporary ruler.

When George III

finally passed away

in January 1820, young

George ascended

to the throne just as

his father had done

decades earlier.

George IV served as king from 1820 to 1830.



A Complex Portrait

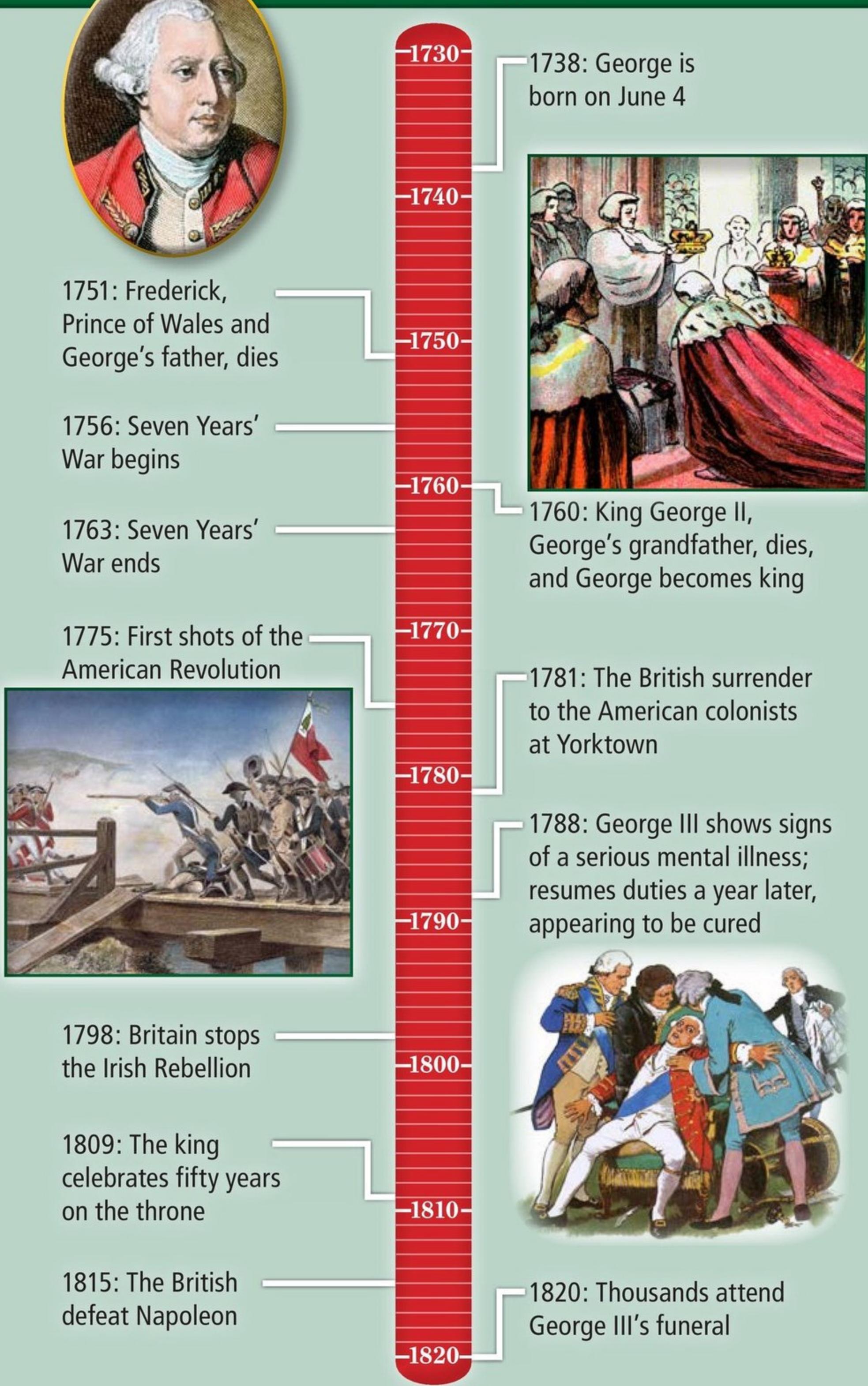
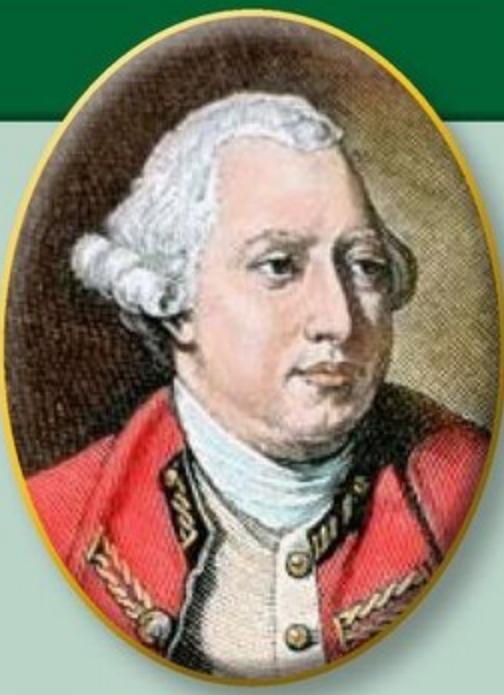
King George's legacy offers a picture of a complicated yet strong leader. Some people think of George III as the king who let the American colonies win their independence. Others think of him as the ruler who went insane. Many historians, however, have begun to rethink their opinions of him. Some historians believe symptoms of his mental illness are linked to physical disease.

As a leader, George III always put his country first. He rallied and led his nation to victories in the Seven Years' War and the Napoleonic Wars. He also fought hard to keep the British colonies in America. The king's personal life has also been given more consideration, and history has shown that George was a hard worker, a loyal husband, and a loving father.

King George reigned for sixty years—longer than any monarch before him.



The Life of George III



Glossary

allies (<i>n.</i>)	people or groups that join with others for a common cause (p. 10)
boycotts (<i>n.</i>)	refusals to buy or take part in something in order to make points or force change (p. 9)
decline (<i>n.</i>)	a steady drop in amount, quality, value, or strength (p. 13)
legacy (<i>n.</i>)	something handed down from the past to the present (p. 14)
levied (<i>v.</i>)	collected something, such as a tax, by government authority (p. 9)
mentor (<i>n.</i>)	an experienced teacher and advisor (p. 7)
minister (<i>n.</i>)	a government official (p. 7)
monarchy (<i>n.</i>)	a government ruled by a single, nonelected person, such as a king or queen (p. 6)
Parliament (<i>n.</i>)	the lawmaking body of the government of the United Kingdom (p. 6)
symptoms (<i>n.</i>)	specific signs of illness or injury (p. 11)
treaty (<i>n.</i>)	a formal agreement of peace or friendship between two nations or groups (p. 7)
tuberculosis (<i>n.</i>)	a serious disease of the lungs (p. 13)

King George III

A Reading A-Z Level X Leveled Book

Word Count: 1,311

Connections

Writing

How do you think King George III should be remembered? Write an essay explaining your answer using details from the book and outside resources.

Social Studies

Make a timeline of the wars King George III was involved in during his reign. Include details about each war on your timeline.

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