

## The Document-Based Question— The American Revolution

### Document 1— No Stamp Act! —Teapot, 1766

#### DESCRIPTION

This teapot was made in England about 1766-1770, possibly by the Cockpit Hill Factory, Derby, England. Inscribed on one side of the teapot is “No Stamp Act” and on the other is “America, Liberty Restored,” both within flower heads and stylized scrolling leaf tips in black. The cover is painted with a matching border.

Teapots such as this were made for sale to the American market soon after the 1766 repeal of the hated Stamp Act, passed by the British Parliament on March 22, 1765. The Stamp Act required American colonists to pay a tax on all printed materials—from documents to playing cards. This was the first direct tax on the American colonies and provoked an immediate and violent response throughout the colonies.

The Stamp Act and ensuing Stamp Act Crisis were crucial to the shaping of the political landscape in the U.S. According to historian Gordon Wood, the colonists’ response to the Stamp Act emphasized “the suffrage itself as a basic prerequisite of representation—an emphasis that had momentous implications for the development of American political thought.” Wood argues that the Stamp Act Crisis justified the formation of “numerous associations and congresses” and led to an attempt to draw “a distinction between external and internal taxes in an effort to delimit the separate spheres of authority the colonies and Parliament had held during the eighteenth century.”



In addition, the “No Stamp Act” teapot documents the often conflicted relationships between trade, international politics, and global. Associations between England and the colonies were certainly strong, and many British citizens supported or at least sympathized with the colonists. But the fact that this teapot was made in England for the American market to celebrate the repeal of an official Act of the British government speaks volumes about the importance of trade with colonial America to British industry. The experiences of the British pottery industry, as documented by this teapot, illustrate the rapid changes occurring in the international

economy of the 3rd quarter of the 18th-century. Before this period, ceramics were imported to the American colonies from many countries—Holland, France, Germany, and China as well as from England. Around the time the “No Stamp Act” teapot was made, England’s potteries were industrializing rapidly, increasing production, lowering costs, and forcing out competition in the American market. But, production capacity quickly outgrew existing demand. The potteries responded in many ways, one of which was to appeal to the American market with decorations that directly contradict British political will.

The teapot also serves as documentation of the intersections between home and public life. In the pre-revolutionary era, the fashionable social custom of taking tea was fast becoming politicized. In her 1961 monograph on tea drinking, Rodris Roth points to the importance of tea drinking to “the social life and traditions of the Americans” as well as to the political, historical, and economic importance that tea holds to U.S. history. By the time the “No Stamp Act” teapot was made, tea was very popular in the colonies and accessible to most Americans. The importance of tea and tea drinking to colonial society is underscored by the controversy surrounding it; in 1767 merchants and citizens protested the Townshend Act which imposed a duty on tea (as well as other commodities), and in 1773 the Boston tea party became a defining moment in American history.

## **Document 2— The Virginia Resolves of 1769**

The Virginia Resolves of 1769

*Resolved*, That it is the Opinion of this Committee, that the sole Right of imposing Taxes on the Inhabitants of this his Majesty's Colony and Dominion of *Virginia*, is now, and ever hath been, legally and constitutionally vested in the House of Burgesses, lawfully convened according to the ancient and establish Practice, with the Consent of the Council, and of his Majesty, the King of *Great-Britain*, or his Governor, for the Time being.

*Resolved*, That it is the Opinion of this Committee, that it is the undoubted Privilege of the Inhabitants of this Colony, to petition their Sovereign for Redress of Grievances; and that it is lawful and expedient to procure the Concurrence of his Majesty's other Colonies, in dutiful Addresses, praying the royal Interposition in Favour of the Violated Rights of *America*.

*Resolved*, That it is the Opinion of this Committee, that an humble, dutiful, and loyal Address, be presented to his Majesty, to assure him of our inviolable Attachment to his sacred Person and Government; and to beseech his royal Interposition, as the Father of all his people, however remote from the Seat of his Empire, to quiet the Minds of his loyal Subjects of this Colony, and to avert from them, those Dangers and Miseries which will ensue, from the seizing and carrying beyond Sea, any Person residing in *America*, suspected of any Crime whatsoever, to be tried in any other Manner, than by the ancient and long established Course of Proceeding.

## **Document 3— Samuel Adams, On The Rights of the Colonists, 1772**

All men have a right to remain in a state of nature as long as they please; and in case of intolerable oppression, civil or religious, to leave the society they belong to, and enter into another.

When men enter into society, it is by voluntary consent; and they have a right to demand and insist upon the performance of such conditions and previous limitations as form an equitable original compact.

Every natural right not expressly given up, or, from the nature of a social compact, necessarily ceded, remains. All positive and civil laws should conform, as far as possible, to the law of natural reason and equity.

As neither reason requires nor religion permits the contrary, every man living in or out of a state of civil society has a right peaceably and quietly to worship God according to the dictates of his conscience.

## **Document 4— Quakers Appeal to the Pennsylvania Assembly, 1775**

Having considered, with real sorrow, the unhappy contest between the legislature of Great Britain and the people of these colonies, and the animosities consequent therein, we have by repeated public advices and private admonitions, used our endeavors to dissuade the members of our religious society from joining with the public resolutions promoted and entered into by some of the people, which, as we apprehended, so we now find, have increased contention, and produced great discord and confusion. The Divine Principle of grace and truth which we profess, leads all who attend to its dictates to demean themselves as peaceable subjects, and to discountenance and avoid every measure tending to excite disaffection to the king as supreme magistrate, or to the legal authority of his government; to which purpose many of the late political writings and addresses to the people appearing to be calculated, we are led by a sense of duty to declare our entire disapprobation of them their spirit and temper being not only contrary to the nature and precepts of the gospel, but destructive of the peace and harmony of civil society, disqualifies men in these times of difficulty for the wise and judicious consideration and promoting of such measures as would be most effectual for reconciling differences or obtaining the redress of grievances.

From our past experience of the clemency of the king and his royal ancestors, we have grounds to hope and believe that decent and respectful addresses from those who are vested with legal authority, representing the prevailing dissatisfactions and the cause of them, would avail toward obtaining relief, ascertaining and establishing the just rights of the people, and restoring the public tranquillity; and we deeply lament that contrary modes of proceeding have been pursued, which have involved the colonies in confusion, appear likely to produce violence and bloodshed, and threaten the subversion of the constitutional government, and of that liberty of conscience for the enjoyment of which our ancestors were induced to encounter the manifold dangers and difficulties of crossing the seas and of settling in the wilderness.

We are therefore incited, by a sincere concern for the peace and welfare of our country, publicly to declare against every usurpation of power and authority in opposition to the laws and government, and against all combinations, insurrections, conspiracies, and illegal assemblies; and as we are restrained from them by the conscientious discharge of our duty to Almighty God, "by whom kings reign and princes decree justice," 4 we hope, through his assistance and favor, to be enabled to maintain our testimony against any requisitions which may be made of us, inconsistent with our religious principles, and the fidelity we owe to the King and his government, as by law established; earnestly desiring the restoration of that harmony and concord which have heretofore united the people of these provinces, and been attended by the divine blessing on their labors.

**Document 5— Janet Schaw— *Journal of a Lady of Quality, 1775***

It is a most unfortunate circumstance they have got time to inculcate this idea. Three months ago, a very small number had not anything to apprehend; a few troops landing and a general amnesty published would have secured them all at home. For I do not suppose them of such a martial spirit as voluntarily to have joined Cothor's standard. At present the martial law stands thus: An officer or committeeman enters a plantation with his posse. The Alternative is proposed: Agree to join us, and your persons and properties are safe. You have a shilling sterling a day; your duty is no more than once a month appearing under Arms at Wilmington, which will prove only a merry-making, where you will have as much grog as you can drink. But if you refuse, we are directly to cut up your corn, shoot your pigs, burn your houses, seize your Negroes, and perhaps tar and feather yourself. Not to choose the first requires more courage than they are possessed of, and I believe this method has seldom failed with the lower sort.

**Document 6— Charles Inglis, An Anglican Church Minister in New York City, *The Costs of Revolution, 1776***

I think it no difficult matter to point out many advantages which will certainly attend our reconciliation and connection with Great-Britain, on a firm, constitutional plan. I shall select a few of these; and that their importance may be more clearly discerned, I shall afterwards point out some of the evils which inevitably must attend our separating from Britain, and declaring for independency. On each article I shall study brevity.

1. By a reconciliation with Britain, a period would be put to the present calamitous war, by which so many lives have been lost, and so many more must be lost, if it continues. This alone is an advantage devoutly to be wished for. This author says- "*The blood of the slain, the weeping voice of nature cries, 'Tis time to part.*" I think they cry just the reverse. The blood of the slain, the weeping voice of nature cries-*It is time to be reconciled*; it is time to lay aside those animosities which have pushed on Britons to shed the blood of Britons; it is high time that those who are connected by the endearing ties of religion, kindred and country, should resume their former friendship, and be united in the bond of mutual affection, as their interests are inseparably united.
2. By a Reconciliation with Great-Britain, Peace - that fairest offspring and gift of Heaven - will be restored. In one respect Peace is like health; we do not sufficiently know its value but by its absence. What uneasiness and anxiety, what evils, has this short interruption of peace with the parent-state, brought on the whole British empire! Let every man only consult his feelings - I except my antagonist - and it will require no great force of rhetoric to convince him, that a removal of those evils, and a restoration of peace, would be a singular advantage and blessing.
3. Agriculture, commerce, and industry would resume their wonted vigor. At present, they languish and droop, both here and in Britain; and must continue to do so, while this unhappy contest remains unsettled.
4. By a connection with Great-Britain, our trade would still have the protection of the greatest naval power in the world. England has the advantage, in this respect, of every other state, whether of ancient or modern times. Her insular situation, her nurseries for seamen, the superiority of those seamen above others--these circumstances to mention no other, combine to make her the first maritime power in the universe---such exactly is the power whose protection we want for our commerce. To suppose, with our author, that we should have no war, were we to revolt from England, is too absurd to deserve a confutation. I could just as soon set about refuting the reveries of some brain-sick enthusiast. Past experience shews that Britain is able to defend our commerce, and our coasts; and we have no reason to doubt of her being able to do so for the future.

**Document 7— Thomas Paine, *The American Crisis*, 1776**

December 23, 1776

THESE are the times that try men's souls. The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of their country; but he that stands by it now, deserves the love and thanks of man and woman. Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered; yet we have this consolation with us, that the harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph. What we obtain too cheap, we esteem too lightly: it is dearness only that gives every thing its value. Heaven knows how to put a proper price upon its goods; and it would be strange indeed if so celestial an article as FREEDOM should not be highly rated. Britain, with an army to enforce her tyranny, has declared that she has a right (not only to TAX) but "to BIND us in ALL CASES WHATSOEVER" and if being bound in that manner, is not slavery, then is there not such a thing as slavery upon earth. Even the expression is impious; for so unlimited a power can belong only to God.

**Prompt:**

**Evaluate the extent of change in ideas about American independence from 1763-1783.**