CONCEPT **1 Stamp Act**



1. In March 1765, the British Parliament passed the Stamp Act, a tax on newspapers and all other printed materials in the American colonies. The British argued that the tax was needed to pay off debts that they had incurred while protecting the American colonists during the French and Indian War. The British thought that it was fair for the Americans to pay higher taxes. The Americans disagreed. Read the documents below and try to determine why the Americans were upset about the Stamp Act.
2. **Boston Editorial**

*Source: This letter appeared as an editorial in a Boston newspaper on October 7, 1765. The author is unknown.*

***Boston-Gazette, and Country Journal,* 7 October 1765**

1. *My Dear Countrymen,*

*AWAKE! Awake, my Countrymen and defeat those who want to enslave us. Do not be cowards. You were born in Britain, the Land of Light, and you were raised in America, the Land of Liberty. It is your duty to fight this tax. Future generations will bless your efforts and honor the memory of the saviors of their country.*

*I urge you to tell your representatives that you do not support this terrible and burdensome law. Let them know what you think. They should act as guardians of the liberty of their country.*

*I look forward to congratulating you on delivering us from the enemies of truth and liberty.*

**Questions: Answer in SARs Format**

1. **Sourcing:** Who wrote this document? When? For what purpose? What was the audience?

2. **Contextualization:** What was going on at the time the document was written? What were people doing?

What did people believe?

1. **John Hughes Letter**

*Source: The following letter was written by John Hughes, Stamp Distributor in Philadelphia, to his bosses in London. The Stamp Act was passed in March 1765 and went into effect November 1765.*

1. *Philadelphia January 13th 1766.*

*My Lords,*

*The colonists have been insulting His Majesty, saying that the Stamp Act was unconstitutional, and oppressive. Many believe that the Stamp Act is only being used to enrage the people, & at the same time, to conceal other plans.*

*It is apparent to many people here, that the Presbyterians, who are very numerous in America, are at the head of these riots. They are opposed to Kings and some begin to cry out,–No King but King Jesus. The leaders, and the Clergy, fill every newspaper with inflammatory pieces, so that the minds of the common people are kept in a continual ferment.... No one dares write anything that would calm the people down. Doing so would put the writer’s life and fortune in danger.*

1. *I am convinced the Presbyterians intend nothing less than the throwing off their allegiance and obedience to his*

*Majesty, & forming a Republican Empire, in America, & being Lords and Masters themselves.*

1. *I am daily Threatened, by Verbal Messages, and Anonymous Letters, with a Mob of several Thousand People, from the Jerseys, New York, and New England.*
2. *I conclude with praying, that the Almighty may secure the allegiance of America to the Crown of Britain, by destroying the seeds of rebellion, and by punishing the ringleaders of these riots.*
3. *I am, My Lords, Your most Obedient & Most Humble Servant, John Hughes*

**Vocabulary**

**Compels** forces

**Inflammatory** Arousing angry or violent feelings

**Ferment** agitation or excitement, typically leading to violence **Presbyterians a** major religion formed during the Great Awakening **Allegiance** loyalty

**Questions Answer in SARs format:**

3. **Sourcing:** Who wrote this and what is his job? Does he side with England or with the colonists? How do you know?

4. **Contextualization:** Based on his account, what is happening in America in 1766? How has the Stamp Act affected the author personally? Provide evidence from the document to support your answer.

5. Do you believe this account? Give one reason why you would trust his account, and one reason why you might not.

1. **London Newspaper Letter**

*Source: The following letter was written in a London newspaper. It shows that the British could not understand why the people of Boston were so upset about the Stamp Act.*

1. *From a London paper, January 27, 1766*

*The riotous behavior of the people in Boston is remarkable. I would have been less surprised by their behavior if we had taxed their beer, because everyone drinks beer. But the Stamp Act is a tax on none of the necessities of life. It does not affect the poor. And even a poor person can afford this little amount of money. The tax on newspapers only affects the rich—common people do not purchase newspapers. Isn’t it surprising, then, that the mob in Boston has begun to riot against this tax even before it has officially gone into effect?*

**Questions:**

6. **Sourcing:** What newspaper does this come from? What would you predict the author’s perspective will be on the Stamp Act? Was this written before or after the Stamp Act went into effect?

7. **Contextualization:** What happened in Boston? Why is the author surprised? Who reads the newspapers, according to the author?

**Section Questions:**

8. **Corroboration:** Where do the documents agree and where do they conflict?

9. **Corroboration:** Was the Stamp Act fair? How were the colonists treated by the British?

10. **Corroboration:** How did the colonists feel about their treatment?