

# Taxation Without Representation

Our History of Conflict and Compromise

Arthur W. Gloss

Junior Division

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Taxation without representation is wrong, and it has changed the world permanently. Taxation without representation caused many conflicts and compromises that ended them. Life would definitely not be the same as it is today if this topic did not exist. It is extremely important that we know what taxation without representation has caused so we understand why the United States is the way it is. England unfairly taxing Colonial America caused the American revolution which definitely shaped the way the world is today. It is important to be informed on this topic because it caused the formation of America.

There are many examples of how King George was abusing his power over the American Colonies. They had war debts to pay off from the French and Indian War so England felt that they could impose necessary taxes on colonies. One of those taxes was the Stamp Act that was passed in 1765. This tariff required that all special legal document paper have an approved tax stamp. Another tax that felt unfair to the colonists was the Townshend Acts which required American colonists to pay taxes on imported goods like tea. (Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation). The reason most colonists thought they should not pay those taxes is due to the fact that they were passed in Parliament in Britain and not by the American colony governments. The tea tax caused The Boston Tea Party of 1773. Another tea party took place in Yorktown, Virginia 1774. In 1774 the first Continental Congress met to create a list of complaints about the terrible way England was treating the colonies. Most people in early America felt that their concerns for the country were not being heard, which made the people in the colonies even more angry.

England taxing America caused the American revolution which lasted from 1775 to 1783. (Hirsch, 1993). A multitude of battles came out of this massive conflict. King George the Third was the ruler of England when the war took place. The entire reason the war happened was because American colonists were tired of England turning a deaf ear to their pleas being ignored in Parliament. The definition of taxation without representation is when one government taxes it's people without giving them a voice nor vote to represent themselves. The colonists of America wanted to be represented in Parliament. Taxation without representation is not right because it is similar to a dictatorship. America was founded because people wanted a government that would listen to their voice and not treat them like second class citizens. King George's infraction was to "...relinquish the right of Representation in the Legislature, a right inestimable to them and formidable to tyrants only." (National Archives).

The Boston Tea Party took place late at night on December 16, 1773. (Hirsch, 1993, p. 20). The goal of that event was for American colonists to rebel against England's unfair tax on tea. Colonists had already rebelled against other British taxes including taxes on newspapers, molasses, stamps, imported goods, and more. That night they had dumped 342 crates of tea into Boston Harbor. The event happened because many people felt that "taxation without representation is tyranny." (Hirsch, p.16) The colonists disguised themselves as Indians and dumped the tea off of three different ships. (Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation). The Boston Tea Party played an important part in starting a fire within American colonists to rise up and fight the British.

They wanted a government with fair taxes so they outlined the criteria for a fair government in the Declaration of Independence.

The formation of America is centered around The Declaration of Independence. It was signed July 4, 1776. The Fourth of July is now considered our national Independence Day. The colonists used the document to declare that America was independent from England. "Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed"... In other words governments that are righteous get their powers from the people and should listen to them, giving them a choice. The colonies tried to compromise with King George but "In every stage of these Oppressions We have Petitioned for Redress in the most humble terms: Our repeated Petitions have been answered only by repeated injury." (Declaration, 1776). The Declaration of Independence states that whenever a government is being unjust it is the right of the people to rise up and abolish that government and institute new government. (Declaration, 1776). The American Colonists even list the wrong things the king had done to them in this document. The Declaration of Independence is what the people of the American colonies used to declare to the British that they were no longer accepting England's rule. It is an extremely important document in America's history. America would not be the same if the Declaration of Independence never existed.

If you look at the British point of view, they thought that the Colonies demands were impossible to meet. They did attempt to do a small compromise by repealing the Stamp Act, but it didn't satisfy the American colonists for they wanted every British tax to be repealed. (London Annual Register, 1770). They felt it was their right to tax the

colonies since they were the property of the sovereign king of England. Britain's people felt that removing all taxes on America would be taking away from the people of England's Sovereign rights and it would make them give up great power to tax colonies in the future. They also felt that they would no longer be superior over America. (London Annual Register, 1770). The London Annual Register of 1770 showed that they were repealing and revising taxes but did not offer voting rights to the colonists.

Taxation without representation is a very important topic to study because it caused The American Revolution among other reasons. A nation was begun as a result of that conflict. It created a place where people could be free if their home country was in a war or if they wanted a better life. It created a place where people could have the right of representation which they might not have in their own countries. All that happened because of a war which was caused because of people not getting a say on what they wanted in their government.

Americans today still have to pay taxes, so the conflict continues. However, citizens get to vote, so there is no reason to revolt. Voting is the way citizens get to speak their mind. People vote so their voice will be heard by saying which candidate is best suited for the job and will best represent them. Voting is a part of the reason this country works. Part of the reason the United States gets so many immigrants every year is because they want to live in a place where they can have input on the way the government is run, rather than live under a dictatorship. To address the issues, America has a "Taxpayer Advocacy Panel, a Federal Advisory Committee to the Internal

Revenue Service (IRS), [which] helps to identify tax issues of importance to taxpayers and to provide a taxpayer perspective to the IRS.” (Taxpayer Advocacy Panel, 2018)

People still argue about taxes, but the main reason no one rebels is because America’s citizens get a vote. People vote so they can say who they think will help lower taxes and allocate money in the best possible way. “Today voting is our form of tax revolt.”(Hirsch, 1993). Compromise happens often when someone signs a new tax bill. A lot of people don’t like taxes but as Benjamin Franklin once said “... in this world nothing is certain but death and taxes.” (Hirsch, 1993). That quote states that you will almost always have to face taxes. Taxes help the government pay for a lot. Taxes may not be enjoyed but I don’t think that they are going anywhere soon.

It is a good thing that neither America nor England completely compromised because if they did life would be so much different. If you lived in America, you might be a British citizen now. You might not have the same rights as you do now. How odd to think about how much differently the world would look. The type of government you must obey would be different.

Compromise did happen eventually in 1783, otherwise we would be in trouble. The American Revolution ended with England leaving America alone and accepting the United States’s independence. Time eventually made England and America allies again. Compromise eventually ended the conflict known as the American Revolution.

I think doing this project broadened my horizons a lot. I find it interesting that I was able to discover how someone from England in the late 1700s felt about America. I wonder what a child from England would learn about the Revolutionary War since the

perspective is different when raised under a king. I am glad that I was able to explore a little bit about both perspectives of the story. I never considered learning about the British side of the American Revolution until I found primary resources during topic research.

This research has led me to conclude that the war was caused not by the taxes themselves but our lack of representation in the tax policy-making process. It seems like America just wanted to have a voice, but Britain would not let them, thus causing the war. It is interesting to consider how the world would have turned out if England didn't tax the colonists. If England had allowed us representatives in the lawmaking process would we be part of Great Britain today?

## Annotated Bibliography

### Primary Resources.

London Annual Register January 20, 1770. Badgerlink Newspaper Archive: Explore, Discover, Share. Database. January 27 2018.

I used this resource so I could find a newspaper from the 1700s. I found a newspaper that was originally published in England with this resource. The newspaper itself was very interesting because I knew what colonial America's side of the story but I didn't know Britain's side. This is a primary resource which showed the other side of the conflict from the perspective of the British.

National Archives and Records Administration. *Declaration of Independence: A Transcription*. National Archives and Records Administration, [www.archives.gov/founding-docs/declaration-transcript](http://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/declaration-transcript)

I found this online transcript of the Declaration of Independence. It is an inspiring document on why England was being unfair and the colonists had to become their own country.



## Secondary Resources.

Hirsch, Charles. *Taxation: Paying For Government*. Austin, Texas: Raintree STECK-VAUGHN Publishers, 1993. Book.

This book focused on all different topics that had to do with Taxes. It told about the different kinds of taxes. I used this secondary resource for information on the Boston Tea Party. It is a short book but I was able to get a lot of information from this book about modern day tax allocation issues of military, education, transportation, and other government spending topics of debate.

Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation. *Why Were the American Colonies Unhappy with the British Government?*,  
[www.historyisfun.org/pdf/tea-overboard/Why\\_were\\_the\\_American\\_colonies\\_unhappy\\_with\\_the\\_British\\_government.pdf](http://www.historyisfun.org/pdf/tea-overboard/Why_were_the_American_colonies_unhappy_with_the_British_government.pdf)

This was a pdf that I found. It contained much information on why the American colonies were treated badly. This is a good resource.

Taxpayer Advocacy Panel (TAP). *Taxpayer Advocacy Panel | Internal Revenue Service*, Accessed January 28, 2018. [www.irs.gov/advocate/taxpayer-advocacy-panel](http://www.irs.gov/advocate/taxpayer-advocacy-panel)

This is a genuine modern day government agency. It provides taxpayer resources.