Understanding the events that led British colonists in North America to shift their identity from British subjects to rebels, fighting for the independence of the American colonies, is central to the 5th-grade history curriculum. To understand that shift, students must recognize and appreciate the impact of laws passed by the British government to pay for debt they incurred defending the Colonies, as well as the colonists’ reactions to those laws.

Examining what led colonists to declare independence offers the opportunity to teach a key historical thinking concept that aligns closely with the Common Core: cause and consequence. As part of a larger unit of study about the causes of the American Revolution, students examine how events have multiple causes and multiple short-term and long-term consequences. In this lesson, students focus on one British policy, the Townshend Acts, and the multiple reactions of the American colonists, in order to answer the focus question: How did the Townshend Acts influence colonists’ feelings about British rule?

This lesson includes a number of strategies designed to improve student reading comprehension, writing ability, and critical thinking, such as the ability to explain the relationships or interactions between two or more events based upon information in the text, the use of evidence, and writing explanations. It also supports the development of productive English Language development.
Standards

_California History-Social Science Standards:_

5.5 Students explain the causes of the American Revolution.

1. Understand how political, religious, and economic ideas and interests brought about the Revolution (e.g., resistance to imperial policy, the Stamp Act, the Townshend Acts, taxes on tea, Coercive Acts).

_California History Social Science K-5 Analysis Skills: Historical Interpretation:_

3. Students identify and interpret the multiple causes and effects of historical events.

_Common Core State Standards:_

_R.I. 5. 3._ Explain the relationships or interactions between two or more individuals, events, ideas, or concepts in a historical, scientific, or technical text based on specific information in the text

_R.I.5.8._ Explain how an author uses reasons and evidence to support particular points in a text, identifying which reasons and evidence support which point(s).

_W.5.1._ Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information.

a. Introduce a topic or text clearly, state an opinion, and create an organizational structure in which ideas are logically grouped to support the writer’s purpose.

b. Provide logically ordered reasons that are supported by facts and details.

c. Link opinion and reasons using words, phrases, and clauses (e.g., consequently, specifically).

d. Provide a concluding statement or section related to the opinion presented.

_California English Language Development Standards for Grade 5:_

_C. Productive:_

9. Expressing information and ideas in formal oral presentations on academic topics

10. Writing literary and informational texts to present, describe, and explain ideas and information, using appropriate technology

11. Supporting own opinions and evaluating others’ opinions in speaking and writing

12. Selecting and applying varied and precise vocabulary and language structures to effectively convey ideas
Sources


Paul Revere’s engraving of British troops landing in Boston in 1768.


Procedures

**Step 1**
Distribute *Roots of Revolution, Student Handout 1*. Students will begin their study of the Townshend Acts and the colonists’ response to them by reading the context paragraph as a pre-reading for the lesson. This secondary source introduces students to the reasons that the British imposed taxes. Following the directions on the handout, have students draw arrows to show how individual events and actions are related; this will help them understand the British motivations and the colonists’ response. After they have connected the events listed in the boxes, have them share their diagram with one or more partners; discuss any discrepancy. Circulate during these discussions to make sure students understand the cause and effect relationship between events. Once they have reached consensus on the cause and effect graphic, have students discuss the three questions listed on the handout. Circulate during these discussions to answer any questions they may have and correct any misunderstandings.

**Step 2**
Distribute *The Townshend Acts, Student Handout 2*. Students will unpack the central message and argument in an excerpt from the Townsend Acts and determine how Britain justified its passage. As a whole class, read the background section. In pairs or groups of three, have students analyze the word cloud and discuss their impressions of the excerpt based upon this graphic. (Make sure they notice the vocabulary hints provided). Following the directions provided in the handout, deconstruct the first excerpt. Circulate during these discussions to make sure students understand the British government’s reasons for the Townshend Acts. Next, have students analyze the second excerpt using the directions provided. Review their annotations by circulating during their discussions and asking for volunteers to share their annotations with the rest of the class. Finally, in pairs or groups of three, have students discuss questions 7A-C.

**Step 3**
Now that students understand the British perspective, students will evaluate the Boston Non-importation Agreement, which is the colonists’ response to the Townshend Acts. Distribute *Boston Non-Importation Act, Student Handout 3*. Using this primary source, students will determine the effects of the Townshend Acts and the colonial response. To begin, review the Background section at the top of the page. Next, have students read and mark the text using the three colors of highlighter or marker to distinguish between British actions, colonial problems, and the colonial response. colonists’ views and short and long term consequences. Finally, have students break down the text further by completing the chart on the second page of the handout and discussing their selections with their partners. This activity will likely be a challenge for some students; it would likely be worthwhile to review a completed chart together as a whole class to ensure comprehension.
Procedures

Distribute **Review: Impact of the Townshend Acts, Student Handout 4.** This handout uses sentence starters to assess student understanding of the Townshend Acts, and their impact on relations between the Colonies and the British Crown. Students should use **Student Handouts 1-3** to complete this initial review assignment orally. Students should then be asked to write a one-paragraph answer in response to the focus question: *How did the Townshend Act influence the way colonists felt about British rule?* If necessary, distribute **Assessment: Impact of the Townshend Acts, Student Handout 5.** This paragraph frame will help students respond to the historical investigation question, should they need additional assistance organizing their thoughts.

* Note: you'll find a number of images included within the directions for this lesson, each with bibliographical citations. Although analysis of historical images is not the focus of this lesson, asking students to consider these images in conjunction with their study of the primary and secondary sources included here will likely support student understanding of the period.

*A view of the Town of Boston in New England and British ships of war landing their troops, 1768. Source: Boston Public Library, File # 07_10_000099*
Student Handout 1

Roots of Revolution

Directions: Read these two background paragraphs below about the events leading to the American Revolution. As you read, notice the cause and effect relationship in the sentences. After you read the paragraphs draw arrows between the events listed in the boxes to identify the relationship between them. Note that some causes (or actions) can lead to more than one effect. The first one is done for you. Review your diagram with your partners and discuss any differences between how you connected the events.

1. Why did the British Parliament tax the American colonists?
2. Why did the American colonists oppose the taxes?
3. What did the American colonists do to oppose the taxes? What was the result of their actions?

From 1754 to 1763, the British fought in the French and Indian War over land occupied by the French, north and east of the Atlantic colonies. As a result of financing this war, Britain developed a large debt [money owed]. The British parliament decided to place taxes on the American colonies to raise money to pay back this debt. One of these taxes was the Stamp Act, which imposed a fee on most printed materials. After meeting colonial resistance and protest over the Stamp Act, the Parliament [the English legislature] repealed [cancelled] it. In another attempt to raise money, parliament passed the Townshend Acts. These new laws taxed paper, paint, glass, and tea bought from Britain.

Colonists did not believe that the British parliament had the right to tax them. The colonists believed they could tax themselves. These new taxes increased the colonists’ distrust of the British. Colonists decided to boycott [refuse to buy] British goods. And, some colonists began making more of their own goods as a sign of anger and resentment toward the British. Because of the boycott, parliament repealed the taxes on all British imports, except the tax on tea.

Because the British financed the French and Indian War

Parliament repealed the taxes on all British imports, except tea.

The British government decided to tax the American colonies to pay for the debt.

The British developed a large debt.

The colonists did not believe that the British had the right to tax them. They resisted and protested the taxes passed by the Parliament and became distrustful of the British government.

Parliament also passed the Townshend Acts, which charged a fee for paper, paint, glass, and tea.

One of the taxes was the Stamp Act, which charged a fee for printed materials.

The colonists decided to boycott British goods and making more of their own goods.
Student Handout 2

The Townshend Acts, 1767 (Page 1 of 3)

Background: In Roots of Revolution (Student Handout 1), you read about the actions that led to tension between the American Colonies and the British government. The Townshend Acts, passed by the British Parliament, were one of the major causes of distrust and anger toward the British. To understand why this upset the colonists so much, we need to focus on the language the British used both to justify the tax, and provide specific rules for collection of money from the colonists.

1. Consider the following word cloud, which is made up of words from a small excerpt from the Acts. The font size of individual words is based on the number of times a word is used in the excerpt. In other words, words printed with larger font were used more frequently. Based on this word cloud, what was the perspective of the British toward the colonies? (Vocabulary Hints: dominions = colonies, revenue = money, in this case from taxes; defraying = covering or paying for the cost)

The Townshend Acts, 1767 (Page 2 of 3)

2. Next, read the first excerpt in its original language:

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WHEREAS it is expedient that a revenue should be raised in your Majesty’s dominions in America, for making a more certain and adequate provision for defraying the charge of the administration of justice, and the support of civil government, . . . .

and towards further defraying the expenses of defending, protecting, and securing, the said dominions; . . . .
```

3. The following chart will help organize the excerpt to help clarify the meaning. Following your teacher’s directions and referring to the vocabulary hints on the previous page, fill in the open boxes, stopping to discuss the questions in the right hand column.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Connection or circumstance</th>
<th>Noun or noun phrase</th>
<th>Verb or verb phrase</th>
<th>Who, what, or where</th>
<th>Questions for discussion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Whereas it is expedient that</td>
<td>should be raised</td>
<td>in your Majesty’s dominions in America,</td>
<td>What needs to be done and where?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>for</td>
<td></td>
<td>a more certain and adequate provision</td>
<td>Rewrite “…certain and adequate provision” in your own words:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>for</td>
<td>defraying</td>
<td></td>
<td>What does the word “justice” refer to?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>for</td>
<td>the expenses of defending, protecting, and securing the said dominions...</td>
<td></td>
<td>This section refers to the costs the British suffered during what war?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Townshend Acts, 1767 (Page 3 of 3)

4. Based upon your answers on the chart and discussion with your classmates, identify the three reasons why the British believed they deserved taxes from the colonists:

5. The next excerpt from The Townshend Acts explains the specific taxes. It first explains when the taxes would begin. Then it explains who will get the money. Finally, it lists some of the items to be taxed. Read the excerpt first. (Vocabulary hints: Avoirdupois = ounces; Pound = 16 ounces; Pence = penny; Shilling = 12 pence)

That from and after the twentieth day of November, one thousand seven hundred and sixty seven, there shall be raised, levied, collected, and paid, unto his Majesty, his heirs, and successors, for and upon the respective goods herein after mentioned, which shall be imported from Great Britain into any colony or plantation in America . . .

the several rates and duties following; that is to say,

For every hundred weight avoirdupois (pounds) of crown, plate, flint, and white glass, four shillings and eight pence.

For every hundred weight avoirdupois of green glass, one shilling and two pence.

For every hundred weight avoirdupois of red lead, two shillings.

For every hundred weight avoirdupois of white lead, two shillings.

For every hundred weight avoirdupois of painters colours, two shillings.

For every pound weight avoirdupois of tea, three pence.

For every ream of paper, usually called or known by the name of Atlas Fine, twelve shillings.

6. Next, annotate the text:

a. In the left-hand column, write the date that the tax started.
b. Underline all the people who would receive the taxes.
c. Draw a box around the country whose goods will be taxed.
d. Circle any specific items that would be taxed.

7. Finally, discuss the following questions:

a. Review your answer to question #4 above, which asked you to explain why the British felt they needed to tax the colonists. Do these reasons justify the new taxes on the colonists?
b. Why would the British tax items going to the Colonies? What impact do you think this would have upon British businesses? What would it do to businesses in the Colonies?
c. How do you think the colonists would respond to the Townshend Acts?
Student Handout 3

Boston Non-Importation Agreement, 1768 (Page 1 of 2)

Background: In Student Handout 2, you read about The Townshend Acts, laws passed by the British Parliament in 1767, which taxed the Colonies for a variety of imported British goods. Just as the Townshend Acts were passed by the British Parliament because of British debt from the French and Indian War, the Non-Importation Agreement was signed by Boston’s merchants and traders in response to the Townshend Acts. Support for this Agreement spread beyond Boston – colonists in New York and Philadelphia also joined the agreement. The following excerpt contains two important parts of the agreement. Like the Townshend Acts excerpt, the first section of this source provides the justification or reasons for the agreement. The second section explains the specific actions the colonists agreed to take.

Directions:

1. Read the following excerpt from the Boston Non-Importation Agreement:

The merchants and traders in the town of Boston, having taken into consideration the deplorable situation of the trade and the many difficulties it at present labours (works) under on account of the scarcity (shortage or lack) of money . . . ; the heavy taxes levied to discharge the debts contracted by the government in the late war; the embarrassments and restrictions laid on the trade by the several late Acts of Parliament; together with the bad success of our cod fishery this season, and the discouraging prospect of the whale fishery . . . and we thereby rendered (made or left) unable to pay the debts we owe the merchants in Great Britain, and to continue the importation of goods from thence:

... That we will not send for or import any kind of goods or merchandise from Great Britain, either on our own account, or on commissions, or any otherwise, from January 1, 1769, to January 1, 1770, except salt, coals, fish-hooks and lines, hemp, duck, bar lead and shot, wool-cards, and card-wire.

That we will not purchase of any factors, or others, any kind of goods imported from Great Britain from January 1, 1769, to January 1, 1770. That we will not import on our own account, or on commission, or Purchase from any Who shall import from any other colony in America, from January 1, 1769, to January 1, 1770, any tea, glass, paper, or other goods commonly imported from Great Britain.

That we will not, from and after January 1, 1769, import into the province any tea, paper, glass, or painters’ colours, until the Acts imposing duties (taxes) on these articles have been repealed.


2. Reread the source and highlight individual phrases within the excerpt with 3 colors:

- Yellow = actions taken by the British government and problems in the fishing industry
- Green = problems for the Colonists caused by the actions taken by the British government
- Blue = actions taken by the Colonists in response to the problems resulting from the British government’s actions
3. Fill in the following chart to clarify how British actions led to colonial action, following the highlights you completed on the Agreement text on the previous page.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>British Actions &amp; Fishing Problems</th>
<th>Colonial Problems</th>
<th>Colonial Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(What did the British do? What problems did the fishing industry face?)</td>
<td>(What problems were created by British actions and problems in the fishing industry?)</td>
<td>(What did the colonists do in response to the problems created by British actions?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The British ______________________ the colonists.</td>
<td>The colonists couldn’t pay the debts they owed to ______________________.</td>
<td>Colonists would not ________________ goods from Great Britain themselves.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The British restricted ______________________.</td>
<td>The ________________ couldn’t import goods from Great Britain.</td>
<td>Colonists would not buy goods that had been __________________ from Great Britain by someone else.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>________________ was not successful.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Some of the goods they refused to import included __________________.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. Discuss the following questions with your group:
   • What were the consequences of the Townshend Acts?
   • How did the colonists respond to the problems caused by the Townshend Acts?
   • What goods are not included in the boycott? Why might the colonists continue to import salt, coals, fish hooks and lines, duck lead and shot, wool cards, and card wire despite the boycott?
Review - Impact of the Townshend Acts

Directions: Review Student Handouts 1-3. With a partner, discuss the following questions:

What were the Townshend Acts?

The British Parliament placed taxes on American Colonies because:
___________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

The British Parliament thought taxing the American colonists was reasonable because
___________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________________________________.

The American colonists thought the taxes were unreasonable because
___________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________________________________.

How did this affect the colonists?

One problem caused by the Townshend Acts was:
___________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________________________________.

Another problem was:
___________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________________________________.

How did the colonists respond?

In the Non-importation Agreement, Boston merchants and traders blamed Britain for:
___________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

How did Parliament respond to the boycott?

The British parliament responded to the boycott of British goods by:
__________________________________________________________________________________________________________________.

How did the Townshend Acts influence how the colonists felt about British rule?

This series of events made the American colonists feel ___________________________ toward Britain.
Assessment - Impact of the Townshend Acts

Directions: After discussing the Townshend Acts, its effect on the colonists and their response, use all the sources and evidence from class discussions to answer the focus question: How did the Townshend Act influence the way colonists felt about British rule?

In 1767, Great Britain passed the _______________________________, which _______________________________.

Because of this new law and other economic hardships in the colonies, the colonists were unable to _______________________________. Because of this new law and other economic hardships in the colonies, the colonists were unable to _______________________________. In response to this act, Boston _______________________________ signed the _______________________________ in ___________. In this agreement, the colonists promised to ________________, or refuse to buy _______________________________. As a result of these actions by the colonists, the British _______________________________.

Because of the Townshend Acts, colonists felt _______________________________ about British rule.