Your notes

GCSE History: revision notes

British America, 1713–83: empire and revolution

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The colonies and the Seven Years' War, 1713–63

- Britain had **thirteen colonies** on the east coast of North America. They traded through the **Navigation Acts**, and the southern colonies relied on enslaved Africans brought by the **triangular trade**.
- In the Seven Years' War (1756–63), known in America as the French and Indian War, Britain defeated France and gained Canada at the Treaty of Paris (1763). But the war left Britain in heavy debt.

Growing tension, 1763–74

- The Proclamation of 1763 stopped settlers moving west. Britain taxed the colonists: the Sugar Act (1764) and the **Stamp Act** (1765), repealed in 1766 after protests of '**no taxation without representation**'.
- The Townshend Acts (1767) taxed imports such as tea. British soldiers killed five colonists in the Boston Massacre (1770).
- In the Boston Tea Party (December 1773), colonists threw tea into Boston harbour. Britain replied with the Coercive Acts (1774), which colonists called the **Intolerable Acts**.

War and independence, 1775–83

- Fighting began at Lexington and Concord (April 1775). The **Continental Congress** made George Washington commander of the Continental Army.
- The Declaration of Independence was signed on 4 July 1776, written mainly by Thomas Jefferson. Victory at Saratoga (1777) brought France in on the American side (1778).
- The British surrendered at Yorktown (1781), and the Treaty of Paris (1783) recognised American independence.

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Key terms

Thirteen colonies	Britain's colonies on the east coast of North America.
Navigation Acts	Laws controlling colonial trade for Britain's benefit.
Triangular trade	Trade between Britain, West Africa and the Americas, including enslaved people.
Stamp Act	A 1765 tax on printed papers in the colonies.
No taxation without representation	The colonists' protest that they had no MPs in Parliament.
Intolerable Acts	The colonists' name for the 1774 Coercive Acts.
Continental Congress	The meeting of colonial representatives that led the revolution.

Quick questions

Cover the answers and test yourself: remembering is what makes it stick.

1. What did Britain gain at the Treaty of Paris (1763)?
2. Why did Britain start taxing the colonies after 1763?
3. What did the Proclamation of 1763 do?
4. What was the colonists' slogan against the Stamp Act?
5. What happened in the Boston Massacre (1770)?
6. What happened at the Boston Tea Party (1773)?
7. Where did the fighting begin in April 1775?
8. Who mainly wrote the Declaration of Independence?

Answers

1. Canada
2. To pay debts from the Seven Years' War
3. Stopped colonists settling west of the Appalachian Mountains
4. No taxation without representation
5. British soldiers killed five colonists
6. Colonists threw tea into Boston harbour
7. Lexington and Concord
8. Thomas Jefferson

What to do next

Practise 10 questions on this topic

Try 3 exam questions, with mark schemes

Read the lesson, one step at a time

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