Pressure and Persuasion

How colonial protests carried political ideas

SS24.US1.1b "Analyze the means by which colonists protested British policies and the ideas communicated through colonists' speeches and written pamphlets."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline each protest method in the passage, circle the claim Henry made and the claim Dickinson made, then draw a line from one circled claim to a method it helps justify.

More Than a Tax Protest

1. In 1765, Britain passed the Stamp Act, requiring colonists to buy stamped paper for newspapers, legal documents, and other printed materials. British leaders hoped the tax would help pay for defending North America. Many colonists objected because Parliament taxed them even though they elected no representatives to it. Merchants and customers responded by refusing to buy British goods, hoping lost sales would pressure British merchants to demand repeal. In some towns, crowds also threatened stamp distributors, causing many to resign. The boycott applied economic pressure, while intimidation made the law harder to enforce. Neither action was a speech or pamphlet, but both carried a political message.

2. Protesters also argued in public meetings and elected assemblies. Patrick Henry spoke in Virginia's House of Burgesses in 1765 against the Stamp Act. He argued that Virginians' own elected representatives, not Parliament, had the right to tax them. His speech addressed lawmakers who could support resolutions opposing the act. It framed the dispute as a question of political authority, not simply the cost of paper. Speeches could persuade listeners and prompt votes, but they could not directly stop a tax collector. Printers could carry reports of such arguments beyond one chamber, so readers in other colonies could debate the same claim.

3. In 1767 and 1768, John Dickinson published *Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania* as newspaper essays, later collected in a pamphlet. He challenged Parliament's Townshend duties on imported goods such as tea and paper. Dickinson argued that a tax meant to raise revenue from colonists without their consent violated their rights, even if it was collected at a port rather than through stamps. The printed essays traveled farther than one assembly speech and gave readers an argument they could share. Dickinson urged peaceful pressure, including refusing British imports. By linking consumer choices to consent, he made a boycott both a practical weapon and a statement about government.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did refusing British goods and threatening stamp distributors put different kinds of pressure on Britain?

2. What claim did Henry make in his speech, and why was the House of Burgesses a useful place to make it?

3. How did Dickinson use the duties collected at ports to argue about consent, rather than just the price of imports?

4. How could Dickinson's pamphlet and a boycott work together to communicate an idea beyond one town?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine Parliament proposes a new tax on British-made fishing nets sold in the colonies. Write a four- or five-sentence pamphlet appeal that names a peaceful protest method, explains how it could pressure decision-makers, and makes a claim about colonists' rights in your own words.

ANSWER KEY

Pressure and Persuasion

GRADE 10 · SS24.US1.1b

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline each protest method in the passage, circle the claim Henry made and the claim Dickinson made, then draw a line from one circled claim to a method it helps justify. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did refusing British goods and threatening stamp distributors put different kinds of pressure on Britain?	**Refusing British goods aimed to reduce merchants' sales so they would seek repeal. Threatening stamp distributors drove many to resign, making the tax harder to enforce.**
2	What claim did Henry make in his speech, and why was the House of Burgesses a useful place to make it?	**Henry claimed that Virginians' elected representatives, not Parliament, had the right to tax them. He addressed lawmakers who could support resolutions against the Stamp Act.**
3	How did Dickinson use the duties collected at ports to argue about consent, rather than just the price of imports?	**He argued that collecting a revenue tax at a port still violated colonists' rights if they had not consented to the tax.**
4	How could Dickinson's pamphlet and a boycott work together to communicate an idea beyond one town?	**The pamphlet spread his argument about consent to readers in different places. Refusing British imports put pressure on merchants while showing support for that argument.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Parliament's proposed tax on British-made fishing nets asks coastal families to pay lawmakers they did not elect. Colonial assemblies should decide whether to tax their communities. Refuse to buy British-made nets and choose locally made nets instead. Lost sales may push British merchants to ask Parliament to drop the tax, while our choices show that consent matters.

Accept accurate paraphrases that connect a protest method to both its practical effect and its political message. For the pamphlet, accept other peaceful methods if the student explains how they could pressure decision-makers.