Before the Spark

Sort clues about the start of the American Revolutionary War.

6-12.HT2.8 "Construct historical arguments distinguishing the differences between long-term causes and triggering events using evidence from multiple relevant historical sources, perspectives, and interpretations."

NAME _____ DATE _____

LONG-TERM CAUSE	TRIGGERING EVENT
A buildup raises tension over months or years. It helps explain why people are ready to fight.	A spark happens just before or as fighting begins. It turns existing tension into open conflict.
For many seasons, rival villages disputed grazing land.	One night, a raid on cattle turned the villages' dispute into a battle.

1 SORT

8 items

Circle BUILDUP or SPARK for each numbered clue, then pick one clue from each group and explain how you knew.

1.	Stamp Act, 1765: Parliament taxed paper documents in the colonies.	BUILDUP	SPARK
2.	Townshend Acts, 1767: Parliament taxed goods imported by the colonies.	BUILDUP	SPARK
3.	British orders, April 1775: troops were sent to seize colonial military supplies at Concord.	BUILDUP	SPARK
4.	Boston Port Act, 1774: Parliament closed Boston's port.	BUILDUP	SPARK
5.	Colonial account, April 19, 1775: militia gathered at Lexington as British troops approached.	BUILDUP	SPARK
6.	Reports from April 19, 1775: gunfire broke out at Lexington.	BUILDUP	SPARK
7.	Colonial petition, 1774: colonists asked the king to undo laws they opposed.	BUILDUP	SPARK
8.	Colonial boycott agreement, 1774: colonists planned to stop buying British goods.	BUILDUP	SPARK

2 PROVE IT

Explain your thinking

Pick two items from Part 1. For each one, tell how you knew where it belonged.

ITEM # _____ **HOW I KNEW** _____

ITEM # _____ **HOW I KNEW** _____

3 MAKE YOUR OWN

One of each

Write one new BUILDUP example and one new SPARK example that helped start the American Revolutionary War; do not repeat a clue above.

BUILDUP _____

SPARK _____

CHALLENGE

In two sentences, use clues from a British source and a colonial source to explain how a buildup and a spark helped start the war.

ANSWER KEY

Before the Spark

GRADES 6-12 · 6-12.HT2.8

PART 1 · SORT

#	ITEM	CATEGORY	WHY
1	Stamp Act, 1765: Parliament taxed paper documents in the colonies.	**BUILDUP**	The tax added to colonial anger years before the war began.
2	Townshend Acts, 1767: Parliament taxed goods imported by the colonies.	**BUILDUP**	These taxes deepened a dispute that lasted for years.
3	British orders, April 1775: troops were sent to seize colonial military supplies at Concord.	**SPARK**	The troop movement led directly to the fighting on April 19.
4	Boston Port Act, 1774: Parliament closed Boston's port.	**BUILDUP**	The law increased tensions before the fighting began.
5	Colonial account, April 19, 1775: militia gathered at Lexington as British troops approached.	**SPARK**	The confrontation happened just before fighting began.
6	Reports from April 19, 1775: gunfire broke out at Lexington.	**SPARK**	The gunfire marked the start of open fighting.
7	Colonial petition, 1774: colonists asked the king to undo laws they opposed.	**BUILDUP**	The petition shows a dispute that was growing before the war.
8	Colonial boycott agreement, 1774: colonists planned to stop buying British goods.	**BUILDUP**	The boycott was part of a continuing dispute before the fighting.

PART 2 · PROVE IT

Accept any explanation that names the deciding feature from the rule box for the chosen item.

PART 3 · MAKE YOUR OWN (SAMPLE ANSWERS)

- **BUILDUP**: British troops stayed in Boston for years after 1768, increasing tension with residents.
- **SPARK**: On April 19, 1775, colonial militia and British troops fought at Concord's North Bridge.

Challenge: Parliament's 1774 Boston Port Act closed the port, adding to colonial anger over British rule. A colonial account describes militia gathering at Lexington as British troops approached on April 19, 1775, just before fighting began.

For Part 2, look for an explanation of how one clue shows growing tension and another shows an event tied directly to the start of fighting. Students should cite a detail from each chosen clue.