Who Decides Taxes?

Read how a dispute over representation became a dispute over rights.

8.C.1.3.A "Analyze the primary cause of the American Revolution as it relates to violations of rights as Englishmen, exemplified in the lack of colonial representation in Parliament."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the right colonists said Parliament violated, then circle two details showing why colonists believed Parliament did not represent them.

A Tax and a Right

1 In 1765, a printer in Boston could not legally sell a newspaper without paying for stamped paper. The Stamp Act placed a tax on printed goods in Britain's American colonies. Parliament, Britain's lawmaking body, passed the act to help pay the empire's costs after a costly war. Many colonists did not object to helping pay those costs. They objected to who decided the tax. Voters in Britain chose members of Parliament, but colonists could not vote for anyone in that body.

2 Colonists often called themselves Englishmen and claimed the same political rights as people in Britain. They argued that a tax should be approved by representatives chosen by the people who paid it. Many colonies had elected assemblies that approved local taxes, although voting was limited to some residents. Parliament said its members represented all British subjects, even people who could not vote for them. Opponents in the colonies rejected that claim: no member of Parliament depended on colonial votes. To them, taxes imposed from London violated a right they expected to keep.

3 Parliament repealed the Stamp Act in 1766, but it insisted that it still had the power to make laws for the colonies. Later taxes on imported goods, including tea, revived the conflict. Colonists protested in different ways, from refusing to buy certain goods to publicly challenging royal officials. Some still hoped to remain part of the British Empire. As disputes grew, however, the question kept returning: could a government claim colonists' loyalty while taxing them through lawmakers they had no part in choosing? This struggle over political rights helped drive the colonies toward revolution.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Why did the Stamp Act raise a question about colonists' rights, not just the cost of a newspaper?

2. How did colonial assemblies support the colonists' argument about who should approve taxes?

3. Parliament said it represented all British subjects. Why did its opponents in the colonies reject that claim?

4. Why did repealing the Stamp Act not end the dispute over rights?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine a neighbor claims colonists protested only because taxes cost money. In four or five sentences, explain why lack of representation made taxation a question of rights as Englishmen. Use at least two facts from the passage and explain how the conflict could lead toward revolution.

ANSWER KEY

Who Decides Taxes?

GRADE 8 · 8.C.1.3.A

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the right colonists said Parliament violated, then circle two details showing why colonists believed Parliament did not represent them. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Why did the Stamp Act raise a question about colonists' rights, not just the cost of a newspaper?	**Parliament taxed printed goods, but colonists could not vote for its members. Colonists believed taxes should be approved by representatives chosen by the people paying them.**
2	How did colonial assemblies support the colonists' argument about who should approve taxes?	**Elected colonial assemblies approved local taxes. Colonists argued that representatives chosen by the people paying a tax should approve it.**
3	Parliament said it represented all British subjects. Why did its opponents in the colonies reject that claim?	**Colonists could not vote for members of Parliament, and no member depended on colonial votes.**
4	Why did repealing the Stamp Act not end the dispute over rights?	**Parliament still claimed the power to make laws for the colonies, and later taxes revived the conflict over taxing colonists without representatives they chose.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

It was not just the cost of taxes that angered many colonists. They believed Englishmen should approve taxes through representatives they chose, but colonists could not vote for Parliament. Their elected assemblies approved local taxes, showing that the question was who had the power to tax. When Parliament kept claiming that power after repealing the Stamp Act, the dispute over rights helped push the colonies toward revolution.

Accept answers that distinguish opposition to a tax's cost from opposition to taxation by a Parliament colonists could not elect. Students may also cite Parliament's claim to represent all British subjects or the later taxes that revived the conflict.