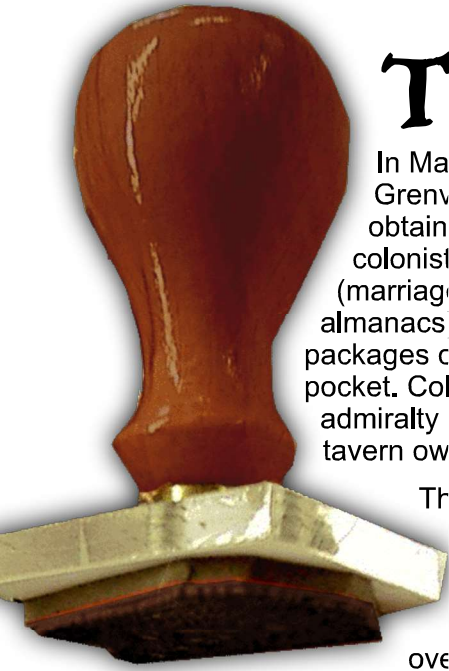


PROTESTING THE STAMP ACT



In March of 1765, Parliament, persuaded by Prime Minister George Grenville, passed the Stamp Act in order to pay of British debt obtained by the French and Indian War. The Stamp Act required colonists to purchase special stamped paper for all legal documents, (marriages and birth certificates, licenses, newspapers, pamphlets, and almanacs) and imposed special “stamp duties”(duty is a tax) on packages of playing cards and dice. The tax reached into every colonial pocket. Colonists who disobeyed the law were to be tried in the vice-admiralty courts, where convictions were probable. Colonial lawyers, tavern owners, merchants and printers were the most affected.

The colonists were united in their defiance against the new tax. Boston shop-keepers, artisans, and laborers organized a secret resistance group called the *Sons of Liberty*. One of its founders was Harvard-educated Samuel Adams. The Sons of Liberty organized boycotts of British goods, harassed customs workers, stamp agents, and sometimes royal governors. Facing mob threats and demonstrations, stamp agents all over the began colonies began quitting.

1. Who pushed for the Stamp Act? George Grenville
2. Why did the British Parliament need the tax? to pay off British debt obtained from the French and Indian War
3. How did the colonists protest the Stamp Act? boycotts of British goods, harassed customs workers, stop agents, and sometimes royal governors.
4. Who was one of the leaders of the resistance group formed to protest the Stamp Act? Samuel Adams

Some of the most extreme protests to the Stamp Act was the number of men who were tarred and feathered. Below describes what was typically done to someone who went through this punishment. The following description illustrates that being tarred and feathered was rarely all that was done to the person. They were often paraded around the town or treated with disrespect in other ways.

The following is recipe for tar and feathering by Massachusetts judge.

"First strip a person naked, then heat the Tar until it is thin, and pour it upon the naked Flesh, or rub it over with a Tar Brush. . . . After which, sprinkle decently upon the Tar, whilst it is yet warm, as many Feathers as will stick to it. Then hold a lighted Candle to the Feathers, and try to set it all on Fire; if it will burn so much the better. But as the Experiment is often made in cold Weather, it will not then succeed--take also an Halter and put it round the Person's neck, and then cart him the Rounds [meaning around to certain places in the community and put on public display]."

Then the person was usually taken into the streets of the city in a cart surrounded by mobs. He might be hanged or beaten. By this time, the victim was barely alive, exhausted and badly burned. The tar was hot and difficult to get off the body's burned skin, which often got infected. Those who survived couldn't not be helped by anyone, because a person caught helping could also be attacked by the mob.

8. What would be the purpose of tarring and feathering this person? The colonists wanted to scare tax collectors so Britain couldn't collect the tax and thus end the tax
9. How did protests like these help the colonial cause? Boycotts and protests help the colonists to put pressure on Britain to repeal their taxes.

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In March 1765, the British

Parliament announced a stamp tax. Although the tax was relatively small, beginning at a half penny, American colonists began to protest against the tax before it went into effect. The protests started with petitions, led to refusals to pay the tax, and eventually to property damage and harassment of tax and government officials. This political cartoon on right, shows a tax collector being tarred, feathered, and forced to drink tea by a group of riotous Bostonians. The Stamp Act protests would establish a pattern of violence against British officials that would, in some cases, involve physical assault.



1. What is the title of this cartoon? The Bostonian paying excise-man or tarring and feather
 2. What was happening when this cartoon was made? British had passed the Stamp Act, and the colonists were protesting
 3. Examine the picture. What's happening in this cartoon? Students should write about a tax collector who is tarred and feathered and is being forced to drink something by five colonists
 4. What is going on in the background of this picture? Boston Tea Party
 5. Why would a noose be hanging from the tree? The noose could be used to scare and terrorize their victim into believing he will be hanged to death. (Teacher's Note: protests often included burning someone in effigy)
 6. What is the cartoonist's opinion on these actions? Cartoonist dislikes these actions (Cartoon originally published in a British newspaper criticizing the colonists)
- What evidence proves your answer? The malicious & violent expressions on the Bostonian's snarling faces
7. Who do you think was the audience for this cartoon? British homeland or loyalists

To view a dramatized version of Tar and Feathering from HBO's mini series, Sam Adams, scan QR Code to the right, or go to <https://youtu.be/a1OYnYd0jOY>

