



## The Stamp Act of 1765

In 1763, England had a very large debt from fighting the Seven Years War. In order to raise money to pay off this debt, King George III and the English Parliament began taxing the thirteen colonies. One of the first taxes that they created was the Stamp Act of 1765.

The Stamp Act required the colonists to pay taxes on a variety of goods including newspapers, legal documents, diplomas and playing cards. To prove that the tax had been paid, colonial merchants were required to use special paper containing the King's stamp. This "stamp" was a raised design, or seal, that was created by applying pressure to the paper with a special tool (be careful not to confuse this type of "stamp" with the modern postage stamp!).

When word of the Stamp Act reached the colonists, they reacted with anger and violence. Riots broke out at major cities up and down the Atlantic coast, and British tax collectors were threatened to be hung, beaten, or tarred and feathered (*see picture above*). In Maryland, one of the state's largest newspapers, the *Maryland Gazette*, decided to close down rather than print their issues on the King's stamped paper. Many colonial businessmen banded together and decided that they would not sell any goods imported from England as long as the Stamp Act existed. These agreements were known as non-importation agreements. When English vessels began arriving in colonial ports such as Boston and Philadelphia with shipments of stamped paper, they often had to be protected from angry mobs by British warships.



*This political cartoon shows a British tax collector being tarred and feathered by angry colonists.*



*The colonists felt that the Stamp Act meant death to liberty in America. A skull-and-cross-bone similar to this one was printed in the October 10, 1765 issue of the Maryland Gazette as a symbol of protest.*

On October 7, 1765, a group of colonial representatives met in New York City to formally protest the Stamp Act. This was known as the Stamp Act Congress, and nine of the thirteen colonies were in attendance. One of their biggest complaints was that no representatives from the colonies had been invited to England to discuss the creation of the new taxes. In effect, they were protesting "taxation without representation"!

Opposition to the Stamp Act was so strong that Parliament eventually voted to repeal, or cancel, the act on March 18, 1766. For the moment, the colonists had won an important victory in the battle over England's taxation policies. It also became clear that if King George III were to raise money by taxing the colonists in the future, he would need a military force in America to get them to cooperate.



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NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

### COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

DIRECTIONS: Read the text on the previous page, then answer the following questions in complete sentences. Write your answers on the lines provided.

1. What were four items taxed by the Stamp Act?

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2. How did the colonists react the news of the passing of the Stamp Act?

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3. How did the *Maryland Gazette* protest the Stamp Act?

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4. What was the Stamp Act Congress' main complaint about the Stamp Act?

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5. What did Parliament and King George III eventually decide to to about the Stamp Act?

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