

Causes of the American Revolution

Causes of the American Revolution

(A concise, organized outline for study or review)

1. Political Causes

Sub?cause	Description	Key Events/Examples
Lack of Representation	Colonists had no voting representatives in the British Parliament ? "no taxation without representation."	1765 Stamp Act protests; 1774 First Continental Congress
Royal Governance	Governors appointed by the Crown often ignored colonial assemblies and imposed royal directives.	Appointment of Thomas Hutchinson (MA) and other unpopular governors
Legal Restrictions	British courts and admiralty courts denied juries, undermining colonial legal autonomy.	1761 <i>Trial of John Peter Zenger</i> (press freedom) highlighted tensions

2. Economic Causes

Sub?cause	Description	Key Events/Examples
Mercantilist Policies	Colonies were required to supply raw materials and buy finished goods only from Britain.	Navigation Acts (1651?1763)
Taxation to Pay Debt	After the French?Indian War, Britain sought revenue from the colonies.	1764 Sugar Act; 1765 Stamp Act; 1767 Townshend Acts
Trade Restrictions	Limits on westward expansion and smuggling penalties hurt colonial merchants.	1764 Quartering Act (housing troops); 1770 Tea Act (lowered tea price but kept tax)
Economic Depression	Post?war recession increased unemployment and resentment toward British fiscal policies.	1768 Boston Non?Importation Agreement

3. Social & Ideological Causes

Causes of the American Revolution

Sub?cause	Description	Key Figures/Texts
Enlightenment Ideas	Concepts of natural rights, social contract, and John Locke's <i>Two Treatises</i> ; government by consent spread through pamphlets and colleges.	Thomas Paine's <i>Common Sense</i> (1776)
American Identity	Growing sense of a distinct "American" culture and self?reliance, especially among the colonial middle class.	"The Boston Massacre" (1770) as a rallying narrative
Religious Freedom	Many colonists (e.g., Baptists, Quakers) resented Anglican?dominated policies and sought religious self?determination.	1770s "Great Awakening" sermons emphasizing individual conscience

4. Immediate Catalysts (Events that Sparked Open Conflict)

Event	Date	Why It Mattered
Stamp Act Congress	Oct?1765	First unified colonial protest; declared taxes illegal without representation.
Boston Massacre	Mar?5,? 1770	Propaganda?rich killing of civilians inflamed anti?British sentiment.
Tea Act & Boston Tea Party	Dec? 1773	British attempt to bail out the East India Company ? colonists dumped 342 chests of tea.
Intolerable (Coercive) Acts	1774	Punitive measures (Boston Port Blockade, Massachusetts Government Act) pushed colonies toward unity.
First Continental Congress	Sep? 1774	Coordinated colonial response; drafted the "Declaration of Rights and Grievances."
Lexington & Concord	Apr?19,? 1775	First armed clashes; "shot heard 'round the world."

5. Long?Term Structural Factors

1. **Geographic Distance** – 3,000?mi separation made rapid communication impossible