

Background Information Sheet
(Activate Prior Knowledge)
Day 1

What was the setting?

- After the French and Indian War, the French had been driven out of North America and the English had control of all the land from the Mississippi River east to the Atlantic Ocean.
- British citizens had been taxed in order to pay for the previous wars and the cost of administering the new lands. The British government looked to the American colonies to help bear the cost of the war debt and administration of the colonies.
- The British Parliament passes a series of laws that taxed the American colonists.

Who were the American colonies?

- Some colonists were angry with the British government and ready to fight for their rights.
- These colonists saw calls for independence as disloyal. They felt that the British government should punish anyone committing acts of rebellion. They were called Loyalists or Tories and wished to remain under British rule.
- Neutral colonists were undecided or indifferent to the idea of independence and didn't want to get involved in any of the problems. About one third of the colonists were neutralists.
- Both the Patriots and Loyalists used every means, whether fair or unfair, right or wrong, legal or illegal, to persuade others. Both Patriots and Loyalists mistreated the other side, sometimes causing pain, suffering and even death.
- Eventually, the neutral colonists discovered that taking no side in the conflict was dangerous because both the Patriots and Loyalists were their enemies.

Who were the British?

- The British were citizens of Great Britain (England), which included the North American colonies.
- American colonists often called the British soldiers "redcoats" because of the color of their uniforms.
- The British government and its citizens felt that the American colonists needed to be responsible for paying the French and Indian war debts. British citizens in England were already highly taxed and were unwilling to contribute more to the costs of governing the colonies.