British attempts to assert tighter control over its North American colonies and the colonial resolve to pursue self-government led to a colonial independence movement.

I. British Actions and Colonial Reactions
   A. New Revenues and Regulations
      i. Sugar Act
         a. The Sugar Act was the first law passed by Parliament to raise revenue for the British Crown. It was designed to tighten enforcement of English customs laws in America.
         b. It also established Admiralty Courts, which consisted of crown-appointed judges and no juries.
         c. Following bitter protests from the colonists, British officials lowered the duties.
      ii. Quartering Act
      iii. Stamp Act
         a. Purpose
            1. The act’s primary purpose was to raise revenue to support British troops stationed in America.
            2. This direct tax was already in effect in England. It required revenue stamps on printed paper, legal documents, newspapers, pamphlets, and advertisements.
         b. Issues Raised by the Colonists
            1. Does Parliament have the right to tax the colonies?
            2. Can Parliament truly reflect colonial interests?
            3. Virtual Representation
               ▪ A debate was provoked over the issue, and the Stamp Act Congress met to discuss the issue of “taxation without representation.” They issued the “Declaration of the Rights and Grievances of the Colonies,” claiming that only their elected assemblies could impose taxes.
               ▪ Each member of Parliament claimed to represent the interests of the whole country, even the empire, despite the fact that his electoral base consisted of only a tiny minority of property owners from a given district.
               ▪ Colonists insisted that the English Parliament had no more right to pass laws for the colonies than any colonial legislature had the right to pass laws for England.
         c. Sons and Daughters of Liberty
            1. Secret societies such as the Sons of Liberty were formed to intimidate tax collectors. Samuel Adams was one of the key members.
            2. They used tactics such as creating “liberty trees” and burning effigies of British officials.
d. Significance
1. The imperial struggles of the mid-18th century, as well as the new British efforts to collect taxes without direct colonial representation or consent and to assert imperial authority in the colonies, began to unite the colonists against perceived and real constraints on their economic activities and political rights.
2. The colonists demonstrated their willingness to use violence rather than legal means to frustrate British policy.
3. The British maintained that the colonies had no right to independence from parliamentary authority.
4. Patriot leaders claimed that the act denied them their British birthrights.
5. Many colonists believed they were entitled to all the rights and privileges of British subjects.

e. Non-Importation Agreements
1. In response to the Stamp Act, many Americans refused to buy British products, creating a hole in one of the major markets for British goods.
2. The revenue Britain gained from the stamp tax was considerably less than the revenue lost due to non-importation agreements.

f. Repeal
1. The act was repealed because of a colonial boycott of British exports.

iv. Declaratory Act
a. Repealed the Stamp Act but asserted the full power of Parliament to make laws binding the colonies “in all cases whatsoever.”

B. Second Phase of the Crisis
i. Townshend Acts
a. Duties on tea, glass, and paper to raise money to pay crown officials in the colonies. Crown officials would then be independent of colonial assemblies which had paid their salaries (all revenue had previously come from elected lower house representatives).
b. Also included strict customs enforcement and writs of assistance, which provided British officials a general license to search anywhere.
c. Charles Townshend claimed he could raise revenue through duties because Americans had accepted these external taxes to regulate trade as legal.

ii. Colonial Response
a. John Dickinson’s “Letters from a Pennsylvania Farmer”
1. The letters regarded the non-importation and non-exportation agreements against Great Britain in response to its taxes, duties, and regulations.
2. England could regulate commerce, but duties required the consent of colonial assemblies.
3. Though conciliatory in tone, his letters made clear that Britain’s policies were wrong and deprived the colonies of their lawful rights.
4. Ultimately, the letters urged united action on the part of the colonists.
b. Samuel Adams’s “Massachusetts Circular Letter”
1. Samuel Adams and fellow radicals in the Massachusetts legislature circulated letters to all the colonies urging them to boycott British goods.
iii. Repeal of the Townshend Acts
   a. Lord North repealed the Townshend Acts in 1770 minus a tax on tea, a lasting symbol of Parliament’s power to tax.

iv. Boston Massacre
   a. In 1768, 4,000 British troops were assigned to Boston to ensure orderly customs collections. The people of Boston resented the quartering of troops to protect customs officials.
   b. Bostonians resented the British troops and often taunted them. On March 5, 1770 a rowdy gang of men and boys threw snowballs and rocks at a British soldier guarding the Boston customs house across from the state house. Captain Thomas Preston and a few soldiers came to his aid. An unknown person shouted, “Fire!” and the soldiers did, killing 5 colonists including Crispus Attucks, a former slave, who became the first person to die for the nation’s liberty.
   c. Two Boston Sons of Liberty used the shooting incident as propaganda to stir revolutionary fervor.
      1. Samuel Adams publicized it as a massacre of innocent victims.
      2. Paul Revere, with his engraving of a British soldier firing on unarmed men and women (entitled “The Bloody Massacre”) sent prints to newspapers in each colony.
   d. Boston lawyer John Adams courageously defended Preston and his men in their murder trial, for he believed they fired in self-defense. All were acquitted except two who were convicted of manslaughter. They were branded on the thumb and released.

C. Renewal of the Conflict
   i. Committees of Correspondence
      a. Initiated by Samuel Adams, leaders of first Massachusetts then various colonies exchanged letters about British activities, believing the officials were conspiring against colonial liberties.
      b. By 1774 an intercolonial information network existed that would unite the colonies in fighting for their liberties.
   ii. Gaspee
      a. One incident frequently discussed in the committee’s letters was that of the Gaspee, a British customs ship that had caught several smugglers. In 1772, it ran aground off the coast of Rhode Island.
      b. A group of American colonists disguised as Indians ordered the British crew ashore and then set fire to the ship.
      c. The British ordered a commission to investigate and bring guilty individuals to England for trial.
   iii. Boston Tea Party
      a. The Tea Act made the price of the struggling East India Company’s tea cheaper than smuggled Dutch tea.
      b. In response to the Tea Act, Bostonians dressed as Native Americans boarded a British ship and dumped 342 chests of tea into the harbor.
      c. Colonial reaction was mixed, as many believed the action was too radical.
iv. Intolerable Acts
   a. Coercive Acts
      1. The Coercive Acts were Parliament’s angry response to the Boston Tea Party.
      2. They were designed to punish Massachusetts in general and Boston in particular. Massachusetts lost many of its chartered rights, and the Port of Boston was closed until damages caused by the Tea Party were paid. The Coercive Acts also provided for the quartering of troops in the colonists’ barns and empty houses.
   b. Quebec Act
      1. The Quebec Act organized Canadian lands that had been gained from France.
         ▪ Roman Catholicism was the official religion. The predominantly Protestant Americans resented the recognition given to Catholicism.
         ▪ The government had no representative assembly.
         ▪ Quebec’s boundary extended to the Ohio River.
      3. The act took away lands that American colonists had claimed in the Ohio Valley. Americans feared Britain would attempt similar laws in the colonies to take away representative government.

II. Philosophical Foundations of the American Revolution
   A. Enlightenment Ideas
      i. Colonial leaders based their calls for resistance to Britain on arguments about the rights of British subjects, the rights of the individual, local traditions of self-rule, and the ideas of the Enlightenment. These ideals that inspired the revolutionary cause reflected new beliefs about politics, religion, and society that had been developing over the course of the 18th century.
      ii. Enlightenment ideas and philosophy inspired many American political thinkers to emphasize individual talent over hereditary privilege, while religion strengthened Americans’ view of themselves as a people blessed with liberty.
      iii. The effort for American independence was energized by colonial leaders such as Benjamin Franklin, as well as by popular movements that included the political activism of laborers, artisans, and women.