

Lesson 8: The Bostonians in Distress

Content Questions

What were the five acts that British Parliament passed as punishment for the Boston Tea Party?

What did each of these acts do and what was the message Britain was trying to convey through the Intolerable Acts?

Topical Essential Question

What was the effect of the Intolerable Acts on the American colonists?

Overarching Essential Question

What are the causes of the American Revolution?

Learning Objectives

Students will be able to describe the five acts known as the Coercive/Intolerable Acts.

Students will be able to explain the message Britain was trying to convey through the Intolerable Acts.

Students will be able to infer the effect that these acts had on the American colonists.

Do Now: If you were a British leader, how would you have reacted to the Boston Tea Party?

Look at the following image. It is a political cartoon created by American colonists titled "Bostonians in Distress."

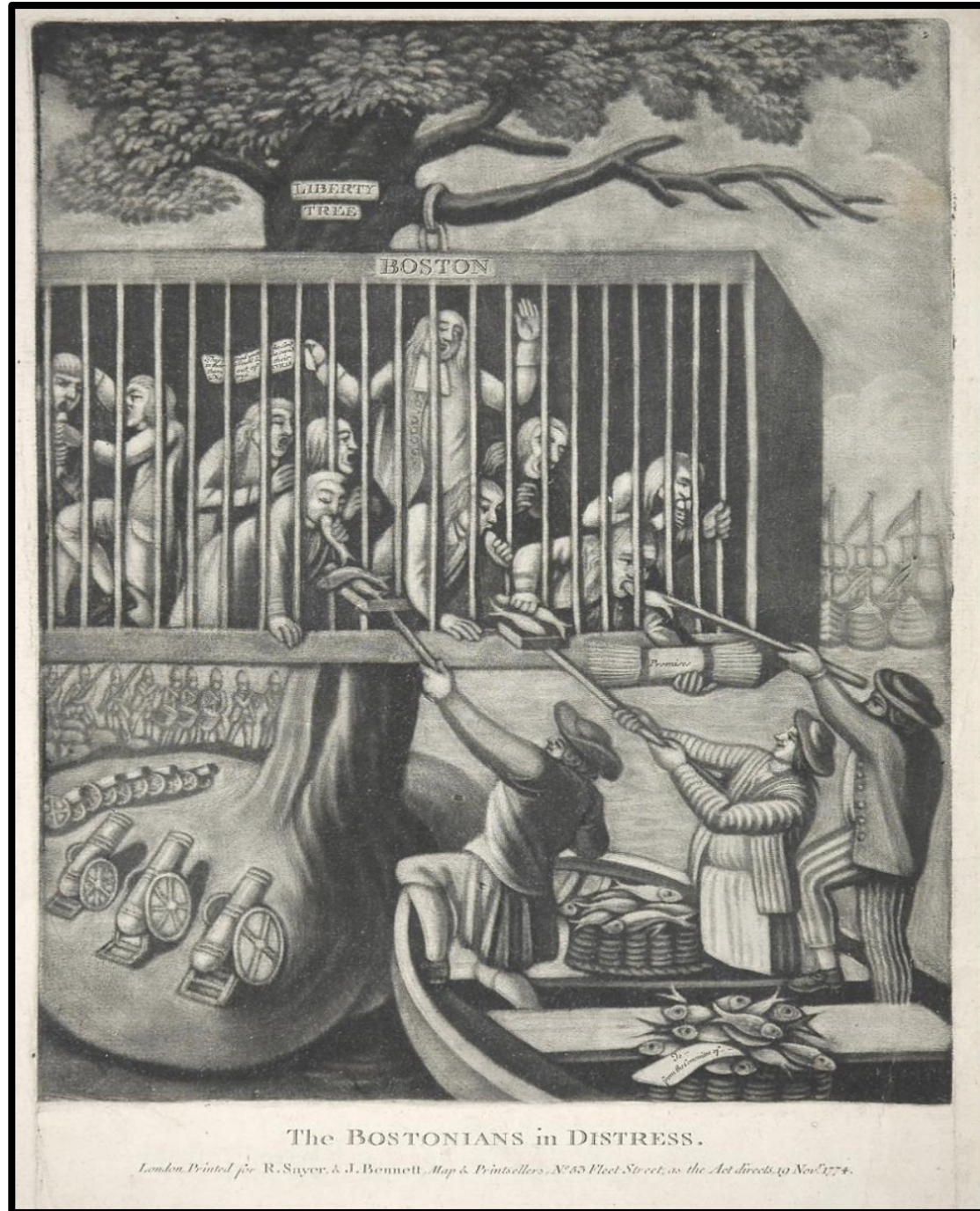
What do you think is happening in this cartoon?

What is the purpose of the cartoon?

How are the British portrayed in this cartoon?

How are the American colonists portrayed in this cartoon?

What symbols do you see to promote the American colonists?



The BOSTONIANS in DISTRESS.

London Printed for R. Sayer, & J. Bennett, Map & Printers, No. 65 Fleet Street, as the Act directs, 10 Nov 1774.

The Boston Port Act Analysis

What is the purpose of this act?

What do you think the impact of this act would be for the colonists and for the British?

How could have this act created "distressed Bostonians?"

tested by the Boston Tea Party incident. When they heard that 342 chests of tea belonging to the British East India Company were destroyed, they took action.

The Coercive Acts

British Prime Minister, Lord North, declared to Parliament:

"The Americans have tarred and feathered your subjects, plundered your merchants, burnt your ships, denied all obedience to your laws and authority; yet so clement and so long forbearing has our conduct been that it is incumbent on us now to take a different course. Whatever may be the consequences, we must risk something; if we do not, all is over."

So, the British responded with a series of acts intended to punish Boston for its actions — acts that they termed the Coercive Acts. These acts included:

"The Boston Port Act" — which closed the port of Boston until the tea was paid for from the Boston Tea Party

"The Administration of Justice Act" — which allowed British officials accused of murder while enforcing British laws to be tried in England.

"The Massachusetts Government Act" — which brought the control of the government of Massachusetts directly under the control of the British government by requiring that almost all positions in the colonial government be appointed by either the Royal Governor or the King. Also, no town meetings were permitted without permission of the Governor and only business approved by the Governor could be discussed.



Rudolf Ackermann 1808

Britain's House of Lords, the upper house of Parliament, helped issue a series of acts in response to the Boston Tea Party and the American colonies' continual rebellion.

Great Britain : Parliament - The Boston Port Act : March 31, 1774

An act to discontinue, in such manner, and for such time as are therein mentioned, the landing and discharging, lading or shipping, of goods, wares, and merchandise, at the town, and within the harbour, of Boston, in the province of Massachusetts's Bay, in North America.

WHEREAS dangerous commotions and insurrections have been fomented and raised in the town of Boston, in the province of Massachusetts's Bay, in New England, by divers ill-affected persons, to the subversion of his Majesty's government, and to the utter destruction of the publick peace, and good order of the said town; in which commotions and insurrections certain valuable cargoes of teas, being the property of the East India Company, and on board certain vessels lying within the bay or harbour of Boston, were seized and destroyed: And whereas, in the present condition of the said town and harbour, the commerce of his Majesty's subjects cannot be safely carried on there, nor the customs payable to his Majesty duly collected; and it is therefore expedient that the officers of his Majesty's customs should be forthwith removed from the said town: May it please your Majesty that it may be enacted; and be it enacted by the King's most excellent majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the lords spiritual and temporal, and commons, in this present parliament assembled, and by the authority of the same, That from and after the first day of June, one thousand seven hundred and seventy-four, it shall not be lawful for any person or persons whatsoever to lade put, or cause or procure to be laden or put, off or from any quay, wharf, or other place, within the said town of Boston, or in or upon any part of the shore of the bay, commonly called The Harbour of Boston, between a certain headland or point called Nahant Point, on the eastern side of the entrance into the said bay, and a certain other headland or point called Alderton Point, on the western side of the entrance into the said bay, or in or upon any island, creek, landing place, bank, or other place, within the said bay or headlands, into any ship, vessel, lighter, boat, or bottom, any goods, wares, or merchandise whatsoever, to be transported or carried into any other country, province or place whatsoever, or into any other part of the said province of the Massachusetts's Bay, in New England; or to take up, discharge, or lay on land, or cause or procure to be taken up, discharged, or laid on land, within the said town, or in or upon any of the places aforesaid, out of any boat, lighter, ship, vessel, or bottom, any goods, wares, or merchandise whatsoever, to be brought from any other country, province, or place, or any other part of the said province of the Massachusetts's Bay in New England, upon pain of the forfeiture of the said goods, wares, and merchandise, and of the said boat, lighter, ship, or vessel or other bottom into which the same shall be taken, and of the guns, ammunition, tackle, furniture, and stores, in or belonging to the same: And if any such goods, wares, or merchandise, shall, within the said town, or in any the places aforesaid, be laden or taken in from the shore into any barge, hoy, lighter, wherry, or boat, to be carried on board any ship or vessel coming in and arriving from any other country or province, or other part of the said province of the Massachusetts's Bay in New England, such barge, hoy, lighter, wherry, or boat, shall be forfeited and lost.

The Administration of Justice Act Analysis

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Great Britain : Parliament - The Administration of Justice Act; May 20, 1774

An act for the impartial administration of justice in the cases of persons questioned for any acts done by them in the execution of the law, or for the suppression of riots and tumults, in the province of the Massachuset's Bay, in New England.

WHEREAS in his Majesty's province of Massachuset's Bay, in New England, an attempt hath lately been made to throw off the authority of the parliament of Great Britain over the said province, and an actual and avowed resistance, by open force, to the execution of certain acts of parliament, hath been suffered to take place, uncontroled and unpunished, in defiance of his Majesty's authority, and to the subversion of all lawful government whereas, in the present disordered state of the said province, it is of the utmost importance to the general welfare thereof, and to the re-establishment of lawful authority throughout the same, that neither the magistrates acting in support of the laws, nor any of his Majesty's subjects aiding and assisting them therein, or in the suppression of riots and tumults, raised in opposition to the execution of the laws and statutes of this realm, should be discouraged from the proper discharge of their duty, by an apprehension, that in case of their being questioned for any acts done therein, they may be liable to be brought to trial for the same before persons who do not acknowledge the validity of the laws, in the execution thereof, or the authority of the magistrate in the support of whom, such acts had been done: in order therefore to remove every such discouragement from the minds of his Majesty's subjects, and to induce them, upon all proper occasions, to exert themselves in support of the public peace of the provinces, and of the authority of the King and parliament of Great Britain over the same; be it enacted by the King's most excellent majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the lords spiritual and temporal, and commons, in this present parliament assembled, and by the authority of the same, That if any inquisition or indictment shall be found, or if any appeal shall be sued or preferred against any person, for murder, or other capital offence, in the province Of the Massachuset's Bay, and it shall appear, by information given upon oath to the governor, or, in his absence, to the lieutenant-governor of the said province, that the fact was committed by the person against whom such inquisition or indictment shall be found, or against whom such appeal shall be sued or preferred, as aforesaid, either in the execution of his duty as a magistrate, for the suppression of riots, or in the support of the laws of revenue, or in acting in his duty as an officer of revenue, or in acting under the direction and order of any magistrate, for the suppression of riots, or for the carrying into effect the laws of revenue, or in aiding and assisting in any of the cases aforesaid: and if it shall also appear, to the satisfaction of the said governor, or lieutenant-governor respectively, that an indifferent trial cannot be had within the said province, in that case, it shall and may be lawful for the governor, or lieutenant-governor, to direct, with the advice and consent of the council, that the inquisition, indictment, or appeal, shall be tried in some other of his Majesty's colonies, or in Great Britain; and for that purpose, to order, the person against whom such inquisition or indictment shall be found, or against whom such appeal shall be sued or preferred, as aforesaid, to be sent, under sufficient custody, to the place appointed for his trial, or to admit such person to bail, taking a recognizance, (which the said governor, or, in his absence, the lieutenant-governor, is hereby authorised to take), from such person, with sufficient surerries, to be approved of by the said governor, or, in his absence, the lieutenant-governor, in such sums of money as the said governor or, in his absence, the lieutenant-governor, shall deem reasonable for the personal appearance of such person, if the trial shall be appointed to be had in any other colony, before the governor, or lieutenant-governor, or commander in chief of such colony; and if the trial shall be appointed to be had in Great Britain, then before his Majesty's court of King's Bench, at a time to be mentioned in such recognizances; and the governor, or lieutenant-governor, or commander in chief of the colony where such trial shall be appointed to be had, or court of King's Bench, where the trial is appointed to be had in Great Britain, upon the appearance of such person, according to such recognizance, or in custody, shall either commit such person, or admit him to bail, until such trial; and which the said governor, or lieutenant-governor, or commander in chief, and court of King's Bench, are hereby authorised and impowered to do.

The Massachusetts Government Act Analysis

What is the purpose of this act?

What do you think the impact of this act would be for the colonists and for the British?

How could have this act created "distressed Bostonians?"

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Great Britain : Parliament - The Massachusetts Government Act; May 20, 1774

An act for the better regulating the government of the province of the Massachusetts Bay, in New England.

WHEREAS by letters patent under the great seal of England, made in the third year of the reign of their late majesties King William and Queen Mary, for uniting, erecting, and incorporating, the several colonies, territories, and tracts of land therein mentioned, into one real province, by the name of Their Majesties Province of the Massachusetts Bay, in New England; whereby it was, amongst other things, ordained and established, That the governor of the said province should, from thenceforth, be appointed and commissioned by their Majesties, their heirs and successors: It was, however, granted and ordained, That, from the expiration of the term for and during which the eight and twenty persons named in the said letters patent were appointed to be the first counsellors or assistants to the governor of the said province for the time being, the aforesaid number of eight and twenty counsellors or assistants should yearly, once in every year, for ever thereafter, be, by the general court or assembly, newly chosen: And whereas the said method of electing such counsellors or assistants, to be vested with the several powers, authorities, and privileges, therein mentioned, although conformable to the practice theretofore used in such of the colonies thereby united, in which the appointment of the respective governors had been vested in the general courts or assemblies of the said colonies, hath, by repeated experience, been found to be extremely ill adapted to the plan of government established in the province of the Massachusetts Bay, by the said letters patent herein-before mentioned, and hath been so far from contributing to the attainment of the good ends and purposes thereby intended, and to the promoting of the internal welfare, peace, and good government of the said province, or to the maintenance of the just subordination to, and conformity with, the laws of Great Britain, that the manner of exercising the powers, authorities, and privileges aforesaid, by the persons so annually elected, hath, for some time past, been such as had the most manifest tendency to obstruct, and, in great measure, defeat, the execution of the laws; to weaken and, in great measure, defeat, the execution of the laws; to weaken the attachment of his Majesty's well-disposed subjects in the said province to his Majesty's government, and to encourage the ill-disposed among them to proceed even to acts of direct resistance to, and defiance of, his Majesty's authority; And it hath accordingly happened that an open resistance to the execution of the laws hath actually taken place in the town of Boston, and the neighbourhood thereof, within the said province: And whereas it is, under these circumstances, become absolutely necessary, in order to the preservation of the peace and good order of the said province, the protection of his Majesty's well-disposed subjects therein resident, the continuance of the mutual benefits arising from the commerce and correspondence between this kingdom and the said province, and the maintaining of the just dependence of the said province upon the crown and parliament of Great Britain, that the said method of annually electing the counsellors or assistants of the said province should no longer be suffered to continue but that the appointment of the said counsellors or assistants should henceforth be put upon the like footing as is established in such other of his Majesty's colonies or plantations in America, the governors whereof are appointed by his Majesty's commission, under the great seal of Great Britain: Be it therefore enacted by the King's most excellent Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the lords spiritual and temporal, and commons, in this present parliament assembled, and by the authority of the same, That from and after the first day of August, one thousand seven hundred and seventy-four, so much of the charter, granted by their majesties King William and Queen Mary to the inhabitants of the said province of the Massachusetts Bay, in New England, and all and every clause, matter, and thing, therein contained, which relates to the time and manner of electing the assistants or counsellors for the said province, be revoked, and is hereby revoked and made void and of none effect; and that the offices of all counsellors and assistants, elected and appointed in pursuance thereof, shall from thenceforth cease and determine: And that, from and after the said first day of August, one thousand seven hundred and seventy-four, the council, or court of assistants of the said province for the time being, shall be composed of such of the inhabitants or proprietors of lands within the same as shall be thereunto nominated and appointed by his Majesty, his heirs and successors, from time to time, by warrant under his or their signet or sign manual, and with the advice of the privy council, agreeable to the practice now used in respect to the appointment of counsellors in such of his Majesty's other colonies in America, the governors whereof are appointed by commission under the great seal of Great Britain: provided, that the number of the said assistants or counsellors shall not, at any one time, exceed thirty-six, nor be less than twelve.

The Quartering Act Analysis

What is the purpose of this act?

What do you think the impact of this act would be for the colonists and for the British?

How could have this act created "distressed Bostonians?"

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Great Britain : Parliament - The Quartering Act; June 2, 1774

An act for the better providing suitable quarters for officers and soldiers in his Majesty's service in North America.

WHEREAS doubts have been entertained, whether troops can be quartered otherwise than in barracks, in case barracks have been provided sufficient for the quartering of all officers and soldiers within any town, township, city, district, or place, within his Majesty's dominions in North America: And whereas it may frequently happen, from the situation of such barracks, that, if troops should be quartered therein, they would not be stationed where their presence may be necessary and required: be it therefore enacted by the King's most excellent majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the lords spiritual and temporal, and commons, in this present parliament assembled, and by the authority of the same, That, in such cases, it shall and may be lawful for the persons who now are, or may be hereafter, authorised by law, in any of the provinces within his Majesty's dominions in North America, and they are hereby respectively authorised, empowered, and directed, on the requisition of the officer who, for the time being, has the command of his Majesty's forces in North America, to cause any officers or soldiers in his Majesty's service to be quartered and billeted in such manner as is now directed by law, where no barracks are provided by the colonies.

II. And be it further enacted by the authority aforesaid, That if it shall happen at any time that any officers or soldiers in his Majesty's service shall remain within any of the said colonies without quarters, for the space of twenty-four hours after such quarters shall have been demanded, it shall and may be lawful for the governor of the province to order and direct such and so many uninhabited houses, out-houses, barns, or other buildings, as he shall think necessary to be taken, (making a reasonable allowance for the same), and make fit for the reception of such officers and soldiers, and to put and quarter such officers and soldiers therein, for such time as he shall think proper.

III. And be it further enacted by the authority aforesaid, That this act, and every thing herein contained, shall continue and be in force, in all his Majesty's dominions in North America, until the twenty-fourth day of March, one thousand seven hundred and seventy-six.

The Quebec Act Analysis

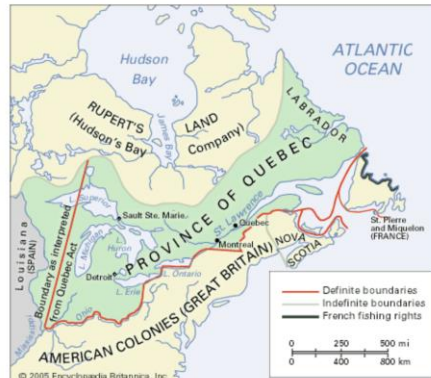
What is the purpose of this act?

What do you think the impact of this act would be for the colonists and for the British?

How could have this act created “distressed Bostonians?”

The Quebec Act

For some reason, Parliament seemed to pass law after law intended to provoke the colonists in these years. Right after passing the Coercive Acts, it passed the Quebec Act, a law that defined the terms of the government of the colony. The law declared the Roman Catholic Church was the official church in Quebec. It also said that an appointed council, rather than an elected body, would make the major decisions for the colony. The boundary of Quebec was extended into the Ohio Valley. This land had previously been promised to the American colonies.



After the Quebec Act was passed, rage spread through the 13 American colonies. By writing this one law, the British Crown gave the land to the French still living in North America. This was land that was clearly desired by the American colonists. By giving control to Catholics, Parliament was also showing the limits of Protestant America.



Colonists sometimes took out their anger over unfair taxes on the tax collector, as depicted in this drawing from 1774.

Great Britain : Parliament - The Quebec Act: October 7, 1774

An Act for making more effectual Provision for the Government of the Province of Quebec in North America.

WHEREAS his Majesty, by his Royal Proclamation bearing Date the seventh Day of October, in the third Year of his Reign, thought fit to declare the Provisions which had been made in respect to certain Countries, Territories, and Islands in America, ceded to his Majesty by the definitive Treaty of Peace, concluded at Paris on the tenth day of February, one thousand seven hundred and sixty-three: And whereas, by the Arrangements made by the said Royal Proclamation a very large Extent of Country, within which there were several Colonies and Settlements of the Subjects of France, who claimed to remain therein under the Faith of the said Treaty, was left, without any Provision being made for the Administration of Civil Government therein; and certain Parts of the Territory of Canada, where sedentary Fisheries had been established and carried on by the Subjects of France, Inhabitants of the said Province of Canada under Grants and Concessions from the Government thereof, were annexed to the Government of Newfoundland, and thereby subjected to Regulations inconsistent with the Nature of such Fisheries:

May it therefore please your most Excellent Majesty that it may be enacted; and be it enacted by the King's most Excellent Majesty, by and with the Advice and Consent of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and Commons, in this present Parliament assembled, and by the Authority of the same: That all the Territories, Islands, and Countries in North America, belonging to the Crown of Great Britain, bounded on the South by a Line from the Bay of Chaleurs, along the High Lands which divide the Rivers that empty themselves into the River Saint Lawrence from those which fall into the Sea, to a Point in forty-five Degrees of Northern Latitude, on the Eastern Bank of the River Connecticut, keeping the same Latitude directly West, through the Lake Champlain, until, in the same Latitude, it meets the River Saint Lawrence: from thence up the Eastern Bank of the said River to the Lake Ontario; thence through the Lake Ontario, and the River commonly call Niagara and thence along by the Eastern and South-eastern Bank of Lake Erie, following the said Bank, until the same shall be intersected by the Northern Boundary, granted by the Charter of the Province of Pennsylvania, in case the same shall be so intersected: and from thence along the said Northern and Western Boundaries of the said Province, until the said Western Boundary strike the Ohio: But in case the said Bank of the said Lake shall not be found to be so intersected, then following the said Bank until it shall arrive at that Point of the said Bank which shall be nearest to the North-western Angle of the said Province of Pennsylvania, and thence by a right Line, to the said North-western Angle of the said Province; and thence along the Western Boundary of the said Province, until it strike the River Ohio; and along the Bank of the said River, Westward, to the Banks of the Mississippi, and Northward to the Southern Boundary of the Territory granted to the Merchants Adventurers of England, trading to Hudson's Bay; and also all such Territories, Islands, and Countries, which have, since the tenth of February, one thousand seven hundred and sixty-three, been made Part of the Government of Newfoundland, be, and they are hereby, during his Majesty's Pleasure, annexed to, and made Part and Parcel of, the Province of Quebec, as created and established by the said Royal Proclamation of the seventh of October, one thousand seven hundred and sixty-three.

Exit slip:

Do you think Britain overreacted with passing the Intolerable Acts or do you think the acts were a suitable punishment for Bostonians rebelling in the Boston Tea Party?