**Overview:** The American Revolution is the foundation to all of U. S. history. By studying our birth as a nation, we gain a better understanding of who we are and we are better able to foster and preserve the vision of our founding fathers.

Historical Background: The American Revolution began in the mid 1700s and ended with the Treaty of Paris signed in 1783. As John Adams said, “The revolution was effected before the war commenced. The revolution was in the minds and hearts of the people.” Following the French and Indian War, the colonists began feeling the confidence that victory brings. They increasingly saw themselves as a separate entity, one that could defend itself against any opposing threat. Of course, King George III and Parliament were viewing the situation quite differently. They were affirming their need for the colonies in order to remain a world power and to generate revenue through taxes and trade. Prompted by this perception, the British government increased control over the colonies and levied taxes, which in turn led to the rebellion known as the American Revolution.

One tax imposed upon the colonists was the Sugar Act in 1764. This tax was suggested to Parliament by Prime Minister George Grenville, who felt the colonists should help pay the debt accrued by the French and Indian War. This act placed duties on molasses and sugar. It was not only that Parliament passed this tax that grieved the colonists so, but that the British took great strides in enforcing this law. The British would stop and search colonial ships for smuggled goods. As a reaction to this tax, the rallying cry "taxation without representation" was born through the ideas of Samuel Adams and James Otis and noised throughout the colonies. In 1765, the Stamp Act was proposed. Under this act, the colonists were required to pay for a stamp or seal to be placed on all paper goods they bought. These goods included legal documents, licenses, newspapers, pamphlets and playing cards. Refusal to buy these stamps could mean jail time or a fine for a colonist. Reaction to the Stamp Act was loud and demonstrative. The colonists boycotted those goods or simply refused to buy the stamp. This caused British merchants to appeal to Parliament to repeal the law and they did in 1766. Only one year later, Parliament came up with another tax, the Townsend Acts. This law placed duties on imported glass, lead, paint, paper and tea. The monies collected from this tax paid for military costs in the colonies and the salaries of colonial governors. Women began taking an active role in the resistance to increased British control. They formed the Daughters of Liberty who promoted a boycott of all British goods. "The tighter the cord of unconstitutional power is drawn round this bundle of arrows, the firmer it will be," boasted Sam Adams as he observed the colonies unify in the boycott. Not all their actions were peaceful. We often don't hear about the gangs who tormented Loyalists, causing them to sleep with pistols by their bedside or the young boys who pelted wouldbe customers with dung, dirt or snowballs spiked with seashells. It is not so surprising that the "Boston Massacre" occurred. In March 1770, a soldier was injured in a fight with a dock man. The Redcoats retaliated by placing notices throughout Boston warning of an attack on the townspeople, if this raucous behavior continues. An outraged crowd of Patriots gathered at the Custom House, taunting and jeering at the nine-man guard. The crowd threw snowballs and brickbats. The guards being out numbered by the angry mob, fired in self defense. When the air cleared, five colonists lay dead or dying. One month later, the Townshend Act was repealed.

In 1773, Parliament passed the Tea Act, which allowed the East India Company to sell tea at a cheaper price directly to the colonists. Parliament hoped this would end the boycott of the tea and decrease the smuggling. Colonists, fearing this would set a precedent that would put the colonial merchant out of business, made a united front against the Tea Act. When three ships carrying British tea docked at Boston Harbor in November 1773, the Sons of Liberty demanded they leave immediately. (The Sons of Liberty were a group of men whose purpose was to protest taxes and intimidate tax collectors.) When Governor Hutchinson failed to force their departure, the Sons of Liberty devised the Boston Tea Party. They dressed up as Native Americans in order to hide their true identity, entered the 3 ships and dumped the contents of 342 chests of tea into Boston Harbor. This type of patriotic activity was the kind in which Sam Adams, master planner of the Sons of Liberty, reveled.

When news reached the shores of England, Lord North, the new Prime Minister was filled with rage and indignation. Parliament decided to punish Massachusetts with The Intolerable Acts, as the colonists named them. Their given name was the Boston Port Acts. There were 4 intolerable laws imposed on the colonists through these acts.

1. Boston Harbor was closed until it could pay for all the tea that was dumped in to the harbor.
2. The royal governor could decide if and when the Massachusetts legislature could meet.
3. Any crimes committed by a royal official would be tried in England, not the colonies.
4. Colonists were forced to provide living quarters, candles and beverages to British soldiers.

Parliament intended to make an example of Massachusetts causing the other colonies to separate from Massachusetts for fear of being treated in the same manner. They also thought that Massachusetts would need their trade so badly that they would yield to their requests and pay back the cost of the tea quickly. What actually happened was the reverse of England's hopes! The Intolerable Acts united all the colonies. Outraged by the audacity of England to take away the basic rights of the Massachusetts colonists, the other twelve colonies were spurred into action. They came to the aide of Massachusetts, making sure needed supplies were transported and distributed to them.

It came as no surprise that eventually the only recourse appeared to be war. It began on an April day in 1775. The British had received word that the colonists were stockpiling the King's munitions in Concord and they aimed to retrieve them. Colonists in Lexington received word the Redcoats were marching their way bound for Concord. A group of brave, proud colonists took their stand on the Lexington green. Confronted by the Redcoats and asked to retreat, these men remained vigilantly stationary. Someone fired a shot, the "shot heard round the world," and the American Revolutionary War began. Students will be studying key events that led to this Revolution.

**Major Understanding:** The American Revolution, the birth of our nation, was fueled and powered by many individuals and events. Looking at primary source accounts of key events will contribute to an understanding of the causes of the revolution and the struggles colonists faced as they moved from being loyal to the King to rebelling outright against him.

**Excerpt from the Sugar Act**

Whereas it is expedient that new provisions and regulations should be established for improving the revenue of this kingdom, and for extending and securing the navigation and commerce between Great Britain and your Majesty’s dominions in America, which, by the peace, have been so happily enlarged: and whereas it is just and necessary, that a revenue be raised, in your Majesty’s said dominions in America, for defraying the expences of defending, protecting, and securing the same; we, your Majesty’s most dutiful and loyal subjects, the commons of Great Britain, in parliament assembled, being desirous to make some provision, in this present session of parliament, towards raising the said revenue in America, have resolved to give and grant unto your Majesty the several rates and duties herein after-mentioned; and do most humbly beseech 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 twenty ninth day of September, one thousand seven hundred and sixty four, there shall be raised, levied, collected, and paid, unto his Majesty, his heirs and successors, for and upon all white or clayed sugars of the produce or manufacture of any colony or plantation in America, not under the dominion of his Majesty, his heirs and successors; for and upon indigo, and coffee of foreign produce or manufacture; for and upon wines (except French wine;) for and upon all wrought silks, bengals, and stuffs, mixed with silk or herbs of the manufacture of Persia, China, or East India, and all callico painted, dyed, printed, or stained there; and for and upon all foreign linen cloth called Cambrick and French Lawns, which shall be imported or brought into any colony or plantation in America, which now is, or hereafter may be, under the dominion of his Majesty, his heirs and successors, the several rates and duties following; that is to say, For every hundred weight avoirdupois of such foreign white or clayed sugars, one pound two shillings, over and above all other duties imposed by any former act of parliament.

**Excerpt from the Stamp Act**

WHEREAS by an act made in the last session of parliament, several duties were granted, continued, and appropriated, towards defraying the expences of defending, protecting, and securing, the British colonies and plantations in America: and whereas it is just and necessary, that provision be made for raising a further revenue within your Majesty’s dominions in America, towards defraying the said expences: we, your Majesty’s most dutiful and loyal subjects, the commons of Great Britain in parliament assembled, have therefore resolved to give and grant unto your Majesty the several rates and duties herein after mentioned; and do most humbly beseech 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 November, one thousand seven hundred and sixty five, there shall be raised, levied, collected, and paid unto his Majesty, his heirs, and successors, throughout the colonies and plantations in America which now are, or hereafter may be, under the dominion of his Majesty, his heirs and successors, For every skin or piece of vellum or parchment, or sheet or piece of paper, on which shall be ingrossed, written or printed, any declaration, plea, replication, rejoinder, demurrer, or other pleading, or any copy thereof, in any court of law within the British colonies and plantations in America, a stamp duty of three pence.

**The Timeline-Events and Year**

1. **The Sugar Act-1764**-a tax placed on molasses and sugar
2. **The Stamp Act-1765**-colonists were required to pay for a stamp or seal to be placed on all paper goods they bought. These goods included legal documents, licenses, newspapers, pamphlets and playing cards.
3. **The Boston Massacre-1770**-an angry mob of colonists taunt British soldiers. Someone fires and then five colonists are shot and killed by British soldiers.
4. **The Tea Act-1773**-allowed the East India Company to sell tea at a cheaper price directly to the colonists
5. **The Boston Tea Party-November, 1773**-Sons of Liberty, dressed as Native Americans, dumped the contents of 342 chests of tea into the Boston Harbor
6. **The Intolerable Acts (The Boston Port Act)-1774**-England’s punishment of the colony of Massachusetts for the Boston Tea Party. One of the punishments was to close the Boston Harbor.
7. **The Battle of Lexington and Concord-1775**-the first shots of the American Revolutionary War were fired in this battle

**Anonymous Account of the Boston Massacre**

A Short Narrative of the Horrid Massacre in Boston. Printed by Order of the Town of Boston. Re-published with Notes and Illustrations hy John Doggett, Jr., (New York, 1849), vp. 13-19; 21- 22; 28-30.

THE HORRID MASSACRE IN BOSTON, PERPETRATED IN THE EVENING OF THE FIFTH DAY OF MARCH, 1770, BY SOLDIERS OF THE TWENTYNINTH REGIMENT WHICH WITH THE FOURTEENTH REGIMENT WERE THEN QUARTERED THERE; WITH SOME OBSERVATIONS ON THE STATE OF THINGS PRIOR TO THAT CATASTROPHE

It may be a proper introduction to this narrative, briefly to represent the state of things for some time previous to the said Massacre; and this seems necessary in order to the forming a just idea of the causes of it.

At the end of the late [French and Indian] war, in which this province bore so distinguished a part, a happy union subsisted between Great Britain and the colonies. This was unfortunately interrupted by the Stamp Act; but it was in some measure restored by the repeal of it. It was again interrupted by other acts of parliament for taxing America; and by the appointment of a Board of Commissioners, in pursuance of an act, which by the face of it was made for the relief and encouragement of commerce, but which in its operation, it was apprehended, would have, and it has in fact had, a contrary effect. By the said act the said Commissioners were "to be resident in some convenient part of his Majesty's dominions in America." This must be understood to be in some part convenient for the whole. But it does not appear that, in fixing the place of their residence, the convenience of the whole was at all consulted, for Boston, being very far from the centre of the colonies, could not be the place most convenient for the whole. Judging by the act, it may seem this town was intended to be favored, by the Commissioners being appointed to reside here; and that the consequence of that residence would be the relief and encouragement of commerce; but the reverse has been the constant and uniform effect of it; so that the commerce of the town, from the embarrassments in which it has been lately involved, is greatly reduced.

It was not expected, however, that such an outrage and massacre, as happened here on the evening of the fifth instant, would have been perpetrated. There were then killed and wounded, by a discharge of musketry, eleven of his Majesty's subjects, viz.:

* Mr. Samuel Gray, killed on the spot by a ball entering his head.
* Crispus Attucks, a mulatto, killed on the spot, two balls entering his breast.
* Mr. James Caldwell, killed on the spot, by two balls entering his back.
* Mr. Samuel Maverick, a youth of seventeen years of age, mortally wounded; he died the next morning. • Mr. Patrick Carr mortally wounded; he died the 14th instant.
* Christopher Monk and John Clark, youths about seventeen years of age, dangerously wounded. It is apprehended they will die.
* Mr. Edward Payne, merchant, standing at his door; wounded.
* Messrs. John Green, Robert Patterson, and David Parker; all danger- ously wounded.

The actors in this dreadful tragedy were a party of soldiers commanded by Capt. Preston of the 29th regiment. This party, including the Captain, consisted of eight, who are all committed to jail.

There are depositions in this affair which mention, that several guns were fired at the same time from the Custom-house; before which this shocking scene was exhibited. Into this matter inquisition is now making.

**Captain Preston’s Account of the Boston Massacre**

It is [a] matter of too great notoriety to need any proofs that the arrival of his Majesty's troops in Boston was extremely obnoxious to its inhabitants. They have ever used all means in their power to weaken the regiments, and to bring them into contempt by promoting and aiding desertions, and with impunity, even where there has been the clearest evidence of the fact, and by grossly and falsely propagating untruths concerning them. On the arrival of the 64th and 65th their ardour seemingly began to abate; it being too expensive to buy off so many, and attempts of that kind rendered too dangerous from the numbers

And has ever since their departure been breaking out with greater violence after their embarkation. One of their justices, most thoroughly acquainted with the people and their intentions, on the trial of a man of the 14th Regiment, openly and publicly in the hearing of great numbers of people and from the seat of justice, declared "that the soldiers must now take care of themselves, nor trust too much to their arms, for they were but a handful; that the inhabitants carried weapons concealed under their clothes, and would destroy them in a moment, if they pleased". This, considering the malicious temper of the people, was an alarming circumstance to the soldiery. Since which several disputes have happened between the townspeople and the soldiers of both regiments, the former being encouraged thereto by the countenance of even some of the magistrates, and by the protection of all the party against government. In general such disputes have been kept too secret from the offi- cers. On the 2d instant two of the 29th going through one Gray's ropewalk, the rope-makers insultingly asked them if they would empty a vault. This unfortunately had the desired effect by provoking the soldiers, and from words they went to blows. Both parties suffered in this afftay, and finally the soldiers retired to their quarters. The officers, on the first knowledge of this transaction, took every precaution in their power to prevent any ill consequence. Notwithstanding which, single quarrels could not be prevented, the inhabitants constantly provoking and abusing the soldiery. The insolence as well as utter hatred of the inhabitants to the troops increased daily, insomuch that Monday and Tuesday, the 5th and 6th instant, were privately agreed on for a general engagement, in consequence of which several of the militia came from the country armed to join their friends, menacing to destroy any who should oppose them. This plan has since been discovered.

On Monday night about 8 o'clock two soldiers were attacked and beat. But the party of the townspeople in order to carry matters to the utmost length, broke into two meeting houses and rang the alarm bells, which I supposed was for fire as usual, but was soon undeceived. About 9 some of the guard came to and informed me the town inhabitants were assembling to attack the troops, and that the bells were ringing as the signal for that purpose and not for fire, and the beacon intended to be fired to bring in the distant people of the country. This, as I was captain of the day, occasioned my repairing immediately to the main guard. In my way there I saw the people in great commotion, and heard them use the most cruel and horrid threats against the troops. In a few minutes after I reached the guard, about 100 people passed it and went towards the custom house where the king's money is lodged. They immediately surrounded the sentry posted there, and with clubs and other weapons threatened to execute their vengeance on him. I was soon informed by a townsman their intention was to carry off the soldier from his post and probably murder him. On which I desired him to return for further intelligence, and he soon came back and assured me he heard the mobb declare they would murder him. This I feared might be a prelude to their plundering the king's chest. I immediately sent a non-commissioned officer and 12 men to protect both the sentry and the king's money, and very soon followed myself to prevent, if possible, all disorder, fearing lest the officer and soldiers, by the insults and provocations of the rioters, should be thrown off their guard and commit some rash act. They soon rushed through the people, and by charging their bayonets in half-circles, kept them at a little distance. Nay, so far was I from intending the death of any person that I suffered the troops to go to the spot where the unhappy affair took place without any loading in their pieces; nor did I ever give orders for loading them. This remiss conduct in me perhaps merits censure; yet it is evidence, resulting from the nature of things, which is the best and surest that can be offered, that my intention was not to act offensively, but the contrary part, and that not without compulsion. The mob still increased and were more outrageous, striking their clubs or bludgeons one against another, and calling out, come on you rascals, you bloody backs, you lobster scoundrels, fire if you dare, G-d damn you, fire and be damned, we know you dare not, and much more such language was used. At this time I was between the soldiers and the mob, parleying with, and endeavouring all in my power to persuade them to retire peaceably, but to no purpose. They advanced to the points of the bayonets, struck some of them and even the muzzles of the pieces, and seemed to be endeavouring to close with the soldiers. On which some well behaved persons asked me if the guns were charged. I replied yes. They then asked me if I intended to order the men to fire. I answered no, by no means, observing to them that I was advanced before the muzzles of the men's pieces, and must fall a sacrifice if they fired; that the soldiers were upon the half cock and charged bayonets, and my giving the word fire under those circumstances would prove me to be no officer. While I was thus speaking, one of the soldiers having received a severe blow with a stick, stepped a little on one side and instantly fired, on which turning to and asking him why he fired without orders, I was struck with a club on my arm, which for some time deprived me of the use of it, which blow had it been placed on my head, most probably would have destroyed me. On this a general attack was made on the men by a great number of heavy clubs and snowballs being thrown at them, by which all our lives were in imminent danger, some persons at the same time from behind calling out, damn your bloodswhy don't you fire. Instantly three or four of the soldiers fired, one after another, and directly after three more in the same confusion and hurry. The mob then ran away, except three unhappy men who instantly expired, in which number was Mr. Gray at whose rope-walk the prior quarrels took place; one more is since dead, three others are dangerously, and four slightly wounded. The whole of this melancholy affair was transacted in almost 20 minutes. On my asking the soldiers why they fired without orders, they said they heard the word fire and supposed it came from me. This might be the case as many of the mob called out fire, fire, but I assured the men that I gave no such order; that my words were, don't fire, stop your firing. In short, it was scarcely possible for the soldiers to know who said fire, or don't fire, or stop your firing. On the people's assembling again to take away the dead bodies, the soldiers supposing them coming to attack them, were making ready to fire again, which I prevented by striking up their firelocks with my hand. Immediately after a townsman came and told me that 4 or 5000 people were assembled in the next street, and had sworn to take my life with every man's with me. On which I judged it unsafe to remain there any longer, and therefore sent the party and sentry to the main guard, where the street is narrow and short, there telling them off into street firings, divided and planted them at each end of the street to secure their rear, momently expecting an attack, as there was a constant cry of the inhabitants to arms, to arms, turn out with your guns; and the town drums beating to arms, I ordered my drums to beat to arms, and being soon after joined by the different companies of the 29th regiment, I formed them as the guard into street firings. The 14th regiment also got under arms but remained at their barracks. I immediately sent a sergeant with a party to Colonel Dalrymple, the commanding officer, to acquaint him with every particular. Several officers going to join their regiment were knocked down by the mob, one very much wounded and his sword taken from him. The lieutenant-governor and Colonel Carr soon after met at the head of the 29th regiment and agreed that the regiment should retire to their barracks, and the people to their houses, but I kept the picket to strengthen the guard. It was with great difficulty that the lieutenant-governor prevailed on the people to be quiet and retire. At last they all went off, excepting about a hundred.