**The Tax Acts**

Going to war is the most expensive thing a nation can do. Britain had to borrow a lot of money to win the French and Indian War. It needed to repay those debts. Also, Parliament believed it needed to continue to keep troops in the colonies to prevent further attacks, which would add to the debt.

It seemed only fair that colonists should pay part of the costs. Britain feared that waiting for 13 separate colonial legislatures to pass taxes and then collect and send tax money would not allow them to count on the money arriving quickly and regularly. So in 1765, Parliament began to pass direct taxes on the colonies that violated many of the rights of British citizens

**The Sugar Act** was the first tax act. It actually lowered a tax on sugar from an old Navigation Act designed to make sure colonists only bought sugar from British Caribbean islands, but it angered the colonists in two ways.

1. It wasn't designed to prevent trade with other nations; it was designed to raise money.
* **So it violated their right to be taxed by their own representatives.**
1. And it increased the power of tax collectors to catch smugglers! People charged with smuggling would be tried in a military court, not a colonial court with a colonial jury.
* **So they felt it violated their right to a trial by jury..**

Parliament also passed **the Stamp Act**. This act placed a tax on many different kinds of very necessary documents: wills, contracts, bills of sale, deeds to land, newspapers, and even playing cards! Again it had nothing to do with trade and was designed only to raise money. So again it was a violation of the right **to have representatives of the people approve all taxes, which had begun with Magna Carta.**

To protest these taxes, the colonists began to **boycott** British goods**. A boycott is an organized refusal to buy goods designed to send a message.** The slogan for the protests was, **“No Taxation without Representation.”**

The boycott prevented Britain from raising any money with the taxes. And the boycott also hurt all British merchants, who were no longer selling ***any*** goods. The merchants complained to Parliament and vowed to vote against members in the next elections. So these boycotts worked! Parliament **repealed (took back)** the Sugar and Stamp Acts.

But Parliament had not learned a lesson. At the same time, the Parliament passed **the Declaratory Act**, which "**declared**" that Parliament did have the right to tax the colonies.

And soon a new finance minister named Townshend asked Parliament to pass **the Townshend Acts**, which taxed imports such as glass, lead, paint, and tea. The idea was that colonists wouldn't be mad because these were luxury items, not necessary items. **BUT THE TAXES STILL VIOLATED THEIR RIGHT TO BE TAXED BY THEIR OWN REPRESENTATIVES!!!**

To top it off, Parliament passed an act creating **“Writs of Assistance.”** These writs could "assist" soldiers trying to catch smugglers by allowing soldiers to enter people’s homes and businesses to look for and seize items they believed had been smuggled. This was a **violation of their right to a warrant issued by a judge!!!!**

The colonists were furious!!! Parliament was not listening to their protests. **The Parliament seemed to be saying they weren't British citizens, as they didn't have the rights of British citizens.**