

Sections are numbered. Please read them in order.

1

TENSIONS GROW BETWEE...

In the next pages, you will learn more about King George III. He ruled Great Britain during this time. How did the king's personality and beliefs affect events in the colonies? Read on to find out.



In 1760, King George III took the throne in Great Britain. He came to power just as conflicts with the colonies began to grow. His personality traits and attitudes increased tensions. How did the king's point of view contribute to the break between his country and its American colonies?

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In 1748, a ten-year-old British boy named George acted in a play. He took the role of a noble hero, Cato. In the play, the ruler of Cato's country has become a tyrant. He has stopped listening to the people and has begun to behave as a dictator. But Cato believes deeply in the people's right to freedom. Rather than give in to a tyrant, Cato chooses to fight and die. "A day, an hour, of . . . liberty," he says, "is worth a whole eternity in bondage."

The play was popular in Great Britain at the time. Many people agreed with its ideas about liberty. Young George also believed in these ideas. He knew that he would one day be the king of Great Britain. He would have great power. But he believed that he must use his power for the good of the country. He realized that it would be his job to ensure the freedom and well-being of his people. The young man took these duties very seriously.

At that time, becoming king might have seemed in the far distant future to Prince George. His grandfather, George II, sat on the royal throne. His father, Prince Frederick, was next in line to be the king of Great Britain. Prince Frederick was just 41 years old. It appeared likely that George would have to wait many years to become king.

But George's time arrived much sooner than he expected. In 1751, Prince Frederick died suddenly. George was only 12 years old. And now, he was next in line for the throne.

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For the next several years, George prepared himself to rule his kingdom. He studied languages and math. He learned about science and other subjects. Prince George worked hard to prepare himself to a good king. He wanted desperately to be a worthy ruler of his people. In short, he was very tough on himself. While the young prince looked forward to becoming king, he was also painfully aware of his own failings. "I am young and inexperienced and want advice," he once wrote to his tutor.

The young prince was also very hard on others. He was quick to judge people's behavior. He often reacted badly to criticism and took it personally. He stubbornly held on to grudges against those who had insulted him or his family.

Prince George's personal traits were probably not unusual for a young person. But Prince George was not just any young man. For in 1760, his grandfather, King George II, died. Now, Prince George was king and ruler of Great Britain. At the age of 22, he had to lead his country. More important, he had to learn to deal with those who opposed him. Challenges came from within Great Britain. And as the 1760s wore on, challenges also came from across the ocean. The colonies in North America were growing increasingly dissatisfied with how Great Britain was treating them.

In 1760, the young king was ready to begin his new duties.

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In his first speech from the throne, he declared, "I glory [take pride] in the name of Britain." His greatest satisfaction, he said, was to serve the people. It was their love and support that would protect him. The public seemed to welcome this patriotic new king.

But Parliament felt otherwise. King George had hoped to be able to work with all the members of Parliament. But many of the members did not want to work with the king. They did not like his ideas. They thought that government worked best when Parliament was not under the king's control. They were worried that King George wanted too much power.

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King George's strong personality began to cause trouble. The king believed deeply in doing what he thought was right. Therefore, he held firmly to his ideas. He was very critical of those who did not agree with him. He found it difficult to work out compromises. His rigid attitude created many enemies in the government. He considered opposing ideas and criticisms to be personal attacks against him. One member of Parliament noted that the king was "capable of great resentment . . . and . . . of [holding on to] it."

The king's personality also caused problems with the

American colonies. During the 1760s, relations between Great Britain and the colonies became tense. As the conflict grew, the king would not even consider changing his views. He refused to listen to the colonists' concerns and frustrations. He did not believe that they had any right to protest against his actions. He felt that their complaints were an insult to him. He saw no merit in their point of view.



At first, the colonists hoped that they could persuade the king to be reasonable. After all, they had succeeded in persuading King George and his government to repeal the

Stamp Act. In New York, colonists even built a statue to thank the king for repealing several taxes in 1770.

But the king had had his own reasons for dropping the taxes. His reasons had little to do with the colonists' unhappiness. George had realized that enforcing the taxes would be costly. It made little sense to have taxes that lost money for the British government. George did not think that the British government was in any way wrong to tax the colonies. He did not agree with the colonists' angry protests against taxation without representation. Parliament would soon create new taxes, with George's full support. The king thought that this was fair and proper.

Indeed, George believed that the colonists' demands were outrageous. The more the colonists acted out in protest, the angrier King George became. Members of his government could see trouble coming. Some members even agreed with the American rebels and suggested that the king consider a compromise. George refused. He felt that it was his duty to hold on to his nation's colonies. He was furious that the colonists dared to challenge his power and his government. This anger clouded the king's judgment.

King George III had set Great Britain on a collision course with the American colonies. He would never give in to them. This attitude would lead to a break between the

colonies and his nation.