

What were the causes of dissatisfaction in the colonies?

Reading



Set a Purpose

As you read, list the reasons why the colonists were unhappy with British rule. Was their discontent justified?

Britain had spent a great deal of money on soldiers and supplies to protect the Thirteen Colonies during the Seven Years War. It seemed fair to the British parliament that the colonies should share in this kind of expense. Besides, many British politicians thought the American colonists had stirred up the trouble with the French and the First Nations in the first place. However, when the British government tried to tax the American colonists to raise this money, it met with resistance.

The Issue of Rights

American colonists believed that the British government was ignoring their interests. They also felt that their rights as British subjects were being trampled by the government. The British government's actions, they said, violated the Bill of Rights, Magna Carta, and other measures that protected their lives and property. American colonists remembered the English Civil War and the struggle against tyranny. They were also influenced by the example of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy.

EXPLORING SOURCES

First Nations and American Democracy

The idea of peacefully joining different states under one government was unknown in Europe. The Haudenosaunee Confederacy provided just such a model for the American colonies, and today this is called a federal system.

The idea of different tribal councils sending representatives to the main council was copied by the American senate system. The separation of civilian authority from the military was also modelled on the Haudenosaunee Confederacy.

But perhaps the most important influence was the model of egalitarian, or equal, societies. Most colonists were amazed at the freedom from social classes enjoyed by Aboriginal peoples.

Thinking IT THROUGH

1. Explain the system of federalism. How did federalism strengthen and benefit both the Haudenosaunee Confederacy and the Thirteen Colonies? Can you see any issues with this type of political structure? Use specific details to clarify your thinking.

The Congress, on the occasion of the 200th Anniversary of the signing of the United States Constitution, acknowledges the historical debt which this Republic of the United States of America owes to the Iroquois Confederacy [Haudenosaunee Confederacy] and other Indian Nations for their demonstration of enlightened, democratic principles of government and their example of a free association of independent Indian nations...

Congressional Record of the Senate of the United States of America, 1987

On the other side of the Atlantic, in London, it seemed that the Civil War and the Glorious Revolution had made parliament supreme. It seemed natural to many British politicians, but not all, that the colonists had to follow the laws that parliament made—period.

land speculator a person who buys and sells land for a profit

Land Speculation and the Ohio Valley

In 1763, there had been a series of attacks on British forts and some American settlements in the Ohio Valley. These attacks had been inspired by an Ottawa leader, Pontiac, who had attacked Fort Detroit. This caught the attention of British officials, who wanted to end costly warfare between First Nations and colonists and maintain friendly trade relationships.

The Royal Proclamation of 1763 was meant to keep American settlements out of the vast Ohio Valley region. This went against the wishes of American **land speculators**, who wanted to own and then sell the thousands of hectares of arable land in the Ohio Valley. To them, it seemed that the British government was too willing to give up land to First Nations peoples.

Did You Know?

The Royal Proclamation of 1763 has never been cancelled, and many modern Aboriginal land claims refer to it. Lawyers have successfully argued that the Canadian government must recognize the Royal Proclamation.

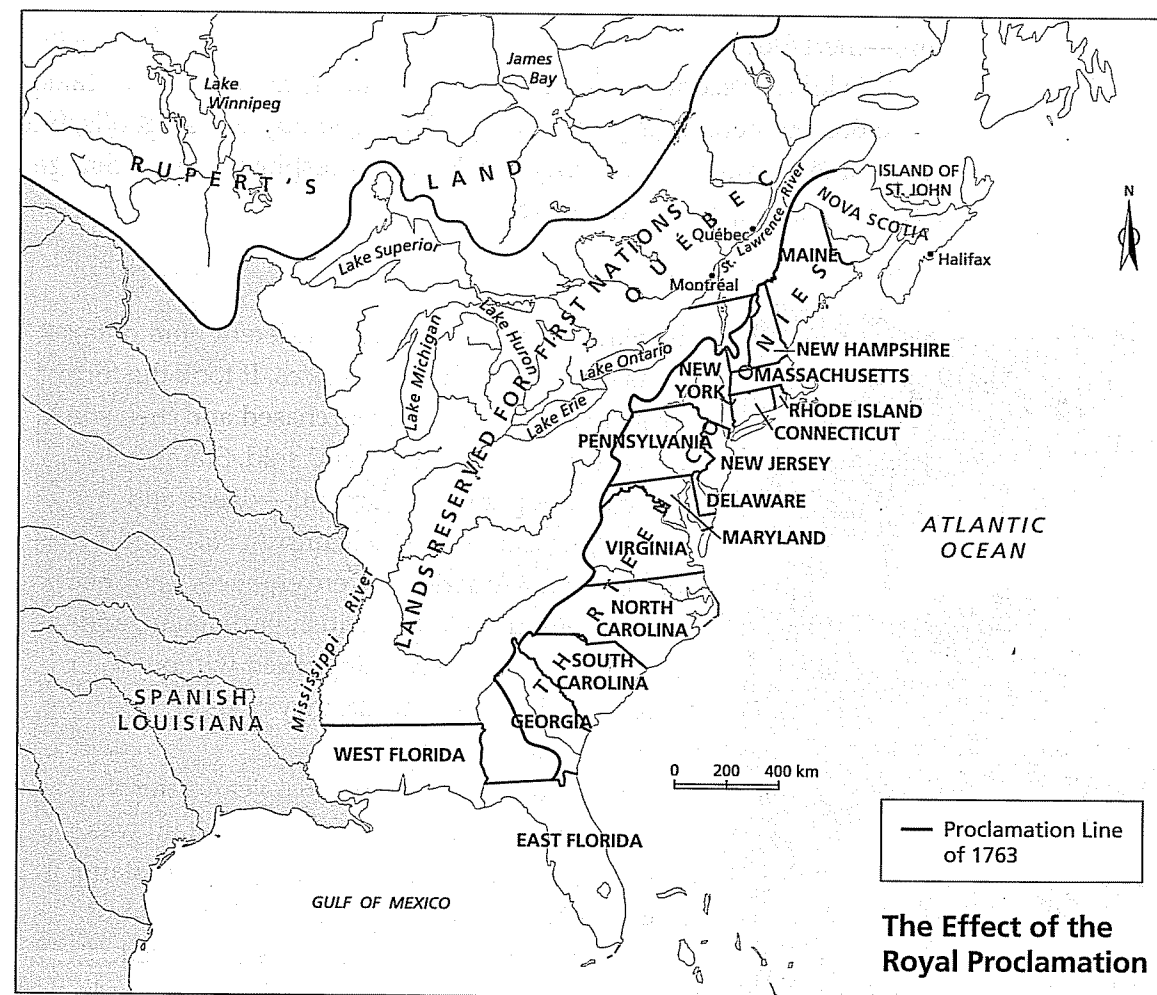


FIGURE 5-5 This copy of a British Army map of 1767 shows what lands Americans were forbidden to settle (west of the red line). Unfortunately, some American settlers were already on the wrong side of the line. Many others saw the Royal Proclamation as a temporary measure and began secretly scouting out lands for speculation.