“Gentlemen may cry, peace, peace; but there is no peace. The war is actually begun! The next gale that sweeps from the north will bring to our ears the clash of resounding arms! Our brethren are already in the field! Why stand we here idle? What is it that gentlemen wish? What would they have? Is life so dear or peace so sweet as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God—I know not what course others may take; but as for me, give me liberty or give me death!” —Attributed to Patrick Henry

How did it come to this? Before the French and Indian War, most colonials considered themselves English citizens, loyal to the new, respected and admired young king, George III, his government, and Parliament…if they thought about them at all. The economic relationship of the colonies and Britain was one of mutual gain. On the other side of the Atlantic,
the political relationship was, for the most part, a policy of “salutary neglect,” leaving the governance of each colony to their own legislatures. By 1775, however, things had changed. King George and Parliament had declared the American colonies to be in a state of “open and avowed rebellion” and, on July 2, 1776, the colonies declared themselves independent of Britain. What happened?

**Breaking Down the Silos**

The major purpose of studying any episode in the human experience is to understand the causes and consequences of events. To help students understand how and why things happened, educators need to present trends and events using the analytical skills of civics, economics, and geography. Sweeping narratives of the human experience help us make connections across historical time and global space. We can highlight those connections most helpfully by developing meaningful and generalizable explanations that address the “why” of what happened. Too often, however, our narratives rely heavily on the roles of individuals and groups to explain the course of history and make little use of the types of systemic and analytical thinking that are integral to the social sciences. This article provides an example of the use of civics, economics, and geography to deepen students’ understanding of the multiple causes and consequences of the American Revolution...to present a story well told.

**What is Civics?**

The *C3 Framework for Social Studies State Standards* characterizes *Civics* as stated below:

*IN A CONSTITUTIONAL DEMOCRACY, productive civic engagement requires knowledge of the history, principles, and foundations of our American democracy, and the ability to participate in civic and democratic processes. People demonstrate civic engagement when they address public problems individually and collaboratively and when they maintain, strengthen, and improve communities and societies. Thus, civics is, in part, the study of how people participate in governing society.*

Civic learning centers on the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to create informed, responsible, actively engaged citizens. It demands a knowledge-base for students to understand our democratic system of government: *What it is, how it operates, how it is different from other forms of government, how it impacts the daily lives of people and how it was established in America.* A study of the American Revolution is a good place to start.

An intentional focus on developing *civic skills* is also critical for students to engage in civic activities effectively and responsibly. Opportunities for students to dialogue about controversial issues in respectful, civil ways is vital. So is the ability to work collaboratively with diverse groups, communicate ideas clearly, and work with policymakers to introduce or influence policies that address real world problems.

Engaging students in high quality civic learning activities contributes significantly to building *dispositions* among young people to act as responsible, engaged citizens throughout their lives. They are more likely to vote in elections, willingly serve on juries, attend public meetings and forums, and work to influence public policies at local, state, and national levels.

The future of our democracy relies on each generation to be equipped with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to maintain the integrity

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of the democratic principles and ideals established by the Founders. Waiting until grade 12 government class to acquire these attributes is too late. As this article demonstrates, they can be part of every story of our past.

**What is Economics?**

“Effective economic decision-making requires that students have a keen understanding of the ways in which individuals, businesses, governments, and societies make decisions to allocate human capital, physical capital, and natural resources among alternative uses. This economic reasoning process involves the consideration of costs and benefits with the ultimate goal of making decisions that will enable individuals and societies to be as well off as possible. The study of economics provides students with the concepts and tools necessary for an economic way of thinking and helps students understand the interaction of buyers and sellers in markets, workings of the national economy, and interactions within the global marketplace. Economics is grounded in knowledge about how people choose to use resources. Economic understanding helps individuals, businesses, governments, and societies choose what resources to devote to work, to school, and to leisure; how many dollars to spend, and how many to save; and how to make informed decisions in a wide variety of contexts. Economic reasoning and skillful use of economic tools draw upon a strong base of knowledge about human capital, land, investments, money, income and production, taxes, and government expenditures.”

As mentioned in another article in this issue, economics is the study of decisions concerning ways to use scarce resources to achieve goals. The human experience, viewed with this perspective in mind, can investigate decisions that people made and the reasons for those decisions. What were their goals, what resources were available to achieve those goals, what were alternative ways to use the resources to achieve the goals, what were the advantages and disadvantages of each alternative, which alternative presented the best choice, and what was the cost of that choice? In addition to benefit/cost analysis, teachers can use markets to help explain historical phenomena. How have markets for silk, tobacco, wine, olive oil, salt, cotton, oil, and a myriad of other products affected historical events? How did the introduction of money and financial markets influence production, trade, and living standards in different times and places? How have governments used economic tools to enhance their power? What caused the Great Depression and how can we avoid other similar situations like the Great Recession of 2007? How have old and new globalizations influenced the rich and the poor? Do the gains of globalization outweigh the losses? How can society compensate those who are hurt by globalization? Investigations of these and other questions give students a richer understanding of past, present, and future events. The purpose of K-12 economics instruction is to empower students to achieve their goals in the global economy by using the analytical tools of economics to make informed decisions.

**What is Geography?**

Geography is a discipline that helps us understand the Earth as the home to people. Physical geography gives us a language to discuss the natural features of the planet. The language of human geography allows us to express the interconnections between natural and human pro-

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cesses as humans occupy, adapt to, and modify the physical space afforded by Earth. Consideration of geographic space parallels, and richly combines with, consideration of historical time. Concepts of place and region highlight the material distinctiveness of particular locations as well as the importance of perception and culture in describing how people relate to their environments. Geography, nonetheless, is not about the memorization of specific names assigned to places or types of features. Those are simple points of fact. Just as “Where?” is the most familiar type of geographic query, a map (or globe) is the most familiar tool with which geographers seek to answer this question. A map is a helpful device for assembling and communicating geographic information, and learning to read or make maps requires learned skills, but geography is much more than mapping.

A discipline presents a unique way to explain, the world. Disciplinary thinking and analysis skills, which taken together are sometimes called geographic literacy, define geography. As reflected in the History-Social Science Framework for California Public Schools, the geographic lens focuses the learner on two crucial perspectives, one emphasizing location and the characteristics of places (spatial perspective) and the other emphasizing interactions between people and their environments (environmental or ecological perspective) (Geography for Life, 2012). The ecological perspective helps explain why the vast majority of the world’s population is located in coastal areas. Coastal locations correspond to environmental characteristics that support human activities—availability of freshwater, moderation of climate, accessibility to transportation, etc. The Framework also mentions the importance of paying attention to scale (local, regional, national, global) in understanding how the world works. Patterns, perceptions, and relationships we observe as important at one scale may not be apparent or significant at another scale. When we “zoom in” to analyze phenomena at a local scale, we see detail. When we “zoom out” to analyze phenomena across expanding spaces, such as a global scale, we lose access to that detail but gain the ability to see larger patterns and processes. Scale matters.

**The Story: The Impact of the French and Indian War**

The French and Indian War changed the perspectives of Britain and the colonies towards each other. It is probably safe to say that neither group thought too much about the other prior to the war. Both enjoyed the “salutary neglect” by the British towards the colonies. That changed during and after the war. The British who had fought alongside the colonists doubted their commitment to the war, their bravery, their loyalty and their skills. Some of the colonists were trading with the French, creating the suspicion that they were more interested in pecuniary rewards than British victory. The colonists resented the haughty attitude and contempt that the British displayed toward the colonial soldiers. Perhaps most important, the British felt that the war was fought to protect the colonials from the French and the Indians, and that the colonials should help pay the debt that Britain had incurred by fighting on American soil. British troops remained in the colonies after the victory over the French and Indians, for the stated purpose of defending the colonials against the French to the northwest, the Indians to the West, and the Spanish to the south. Maintaining these troops was an expensive venture.

**Differences Among the Colonies**

The original colonies were situated on a strip of land between the Atlantic Ocean and the
Appalachian Mountains with French colonies to the North and Spanish colonies to the South. During the period between 1620 and 1763, geographic and economic differences separated the colonies into three distinct “regions” (See Figure 1).

A broad coastal plain in the **southern colonies** afforded abundant space for farming. Long growing seasons were conducive to highly profitable cash crops such as tobacco, indigo, and rice—cotton would come later. Navigable rivers facilitated the transport of agricultural goods to the coast and back to Europe.

The coastal plain narrows north of the Chesapeake Bay and left less room for farming, but the **middle colonies** had fertile soil, a temperate climate, and plenty of rain. Growing grain and livestock became major economic activities. The middle colonies contained iron ore and a vast supply of wood—the ingredients necessary to produce pig iron and iron bar for export to British manufacturing centers. Harbors provided opportunities for trade.

In the **northern colonies**, rocky soils and short seasons restricted farming, but forests provided timber for shipbuilding and furs as resources to develop and exploit, and colder offshore waters meant an abundance of fish and whales for harvest. In later years, rum became a major product. Besides building ships, the New England colonists became traders. Economic activities centered largely on importing and exporting, particularly in the Boston area. Concentrated populations also served as a labor resource.

Three different forms of government and relationships with Britain developed during the period of colonization.

- **Charter Colonies:** These colonies were self-governing entities. It was a common practice of the King to issue a charter to a group of individuals to allow them to establish a colony and govern themselves. In Jamestown, Massachusetts Bay Colony, and the Connecticut Colony the Plymouth Company was granted charters that allowed colonists to organize representative assemblies to govern themselves.

- **Proprietary Colonies:** English monarchs also granted land to proprietors, as favors, allowing them full governing rights. New York, New Jersey, North Carolina, South Carolina, New Hampshire and Maryland were established as proprietary colonies under the absolute authority of proprietors.

- **Royal Colonies:** These colonies were ruled directly by British monarchs. The King had control over all unsold public lands and appointed a governor and council to assist him.

   By the 1760s most colonies were under the direct control of the Crown.

   In addition to geographic, economic, and political differences, the colonies differed in terms of countries of origin, religion, attitudes towards slavery, population density, and more. What could Britain have done to bring such disparate groups together to the extent that a large portion of the population (some estimates are as high as 40%) favored rebellion. A compelling question might be, “How did British legislation help unite many of the colonists in spite of their geographic, economic, political, religious, and national origin differences, to the point that they were willing to fight for independence?”

**And so it Begins**

Colonial land speculators (including Washington, Franklin, Jefferson, and Paine) had purchased land west of the Appalachian Mountains. Some colonial settlers had purchased land from the Native Americans and established homes in the area. Because of strife between the settlers and the Indians and to appease the Indians, Britain stationed troops in the area. In 1763, to reduce the expense of supporting these troops,
King George declared that colonials could neither buy land from the Indians nor settle there, taking away their rights to free movement, travel, and trade. The Proclamation was largely ignored and British troops remained in the western lands.

The table below lists the different proclamations and acts of Parliament that eventually led to the Declaration of Independence.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>British Purpose</th>
<th>Impact on Civil Liberties</th>
<th>Groups Affected</th>
<th>Colonial Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1763 Proclamation of 1763 – no colonial settlements or land ownership west of the Appalachians. Those already there had to leave.</td>
<td>Save money by keeping colonists away from Indians avoiding the need for British soldiers policing the area</td>
<td>Restricted movement, travel, and trade.</td>
<td>Colonial settlers on the land, wealthy Virginians who owned land west of the Appalachians (Washington, Franklin, Jefferson, Paine, et.al.)</td>
<td>Boundary was widely disregarded, with colonists continuing to settle to the west and land speculators hiring agents to explore (e.g., Daniel Boone).</td>
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<tr>
<td>1764 Sugar Act</td>
<td>Protect British West Indies sugar and molasses refiners against less expensive sugar from Spanish and French colonies</td>
<td>Parliament had the right to regulate trade but not to raise revenue. No trial by jury.</td>
<td>New England rum producers put out of work, and merchants and consumers in general.</td>
<td>New England distillers reduced importation of less expensive, higher quality sugar from non-British sources.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1764 Currency Act – forbids use of paper money for payment of private debts, only silver and gold coins acceptable</td>
<td>Establish monetary stability, prevent inflation, protect financiers who had loaned money to colonials.</td>
<td>Restricted colonists’ ability to use debt financing to import commodities.</td>
<td>Farmers and working class who were in debt and were repaying debts with less valuable paper money than they had borrowed.</td>
<td>Colonial boycott of British goods, hurting British merchants in hope that they would influence Parliament to rescind tax legislation. Delaware was only colony not to object.</td>
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<td><strong>1765</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Stamp Act</strong> – Stamped paper required for legal documents, diplomas, almanacs, newspapers and playing cards. First time a tax was levied not to regulate trade, but to raise money from the colonists.</td>
<td>Raise money to support 10,000 British troops who were protecting colonists from French and Indians. If successful, would raise only 20% of the costs of the troops.</td>
<td>Colonists had no say in the imposition of the tax. Representation in Parliament denied.</td>
<td>Lawyers, clergymen, journalists business owners.</td>
<td>Colonial leaders under threat of bodily harm resigned from jobs as stamp distributors and collectors. Stamp Act Riots (looting and burning of homes, tarring and feathering) involving ordinary colonists began in Massachusetts and Rhode Island; strengthening of the boycott, First Continental Congress)Sons of Liberty resistance organizations formed in several colonies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Quartering Act</strong> – each colonial assembly required to provide bedding, cooking utensils, firewood, beer or cider, and candles</td>
<td>Support British military presence and legal authority in the colonies.</td>
<td>Violated private property rights.</td>
<td>Colonial governments had to cover costs, so all colonists were affected. Despite being illegal according to act, some private citizens in New York, Massachusetts and Pennsylvania were forced to quarter British soldiers in their homes.</td>
<td>New York, Pennsylvania, and Massachusetts colonial governments resisted taking responsibility for housing British troops, tried to make their own laws forbidding quartering in private homes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Event</td>
<td>Explanation</td>
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<tr>
<td>1766</td>
<td>Quartering Act expanded; assemblies must house soldiers in taverns and unoccupied houses</td>
<td>More British troops in colonies who needed housing</td>
<td>Private property rights</td>
<td>All colonial assemblies forced to pay expensive housing costs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repeal of Stamp Act</td>
<td>Parliament has the right to make laws concerning the colonies “in all cases whatsoever”</td>
<td>Right to colonial self-governance severely limited</td>
<td>All colonists</td>
<td>Good news: Stamp Act victory</td>
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<tr>
<td>1770</td>
<td>Boston Massacre</td>
<td>After provocation by a group of colonists, British troops fire into the crowd, killing five and wounding three</td>
<td>Violence by British troops likely to go unpunished, though Massachusetts response did affirm right to due process under law</td>
<td>Bostonians, immediately, but eventually all colonists concerned with “British aggression.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>1773</td>
<td>Tea Act – reduced but enforced tea tax, tea can only be carried in British ships, only tea appointed agents can sell tea</td>
<td>Parliament thought colonists would be happy with reduction in tea tax</td>
<td>Violated their rights as British citizens to have representatives in Parliament that could vote on the proposed taxes.</td>
<td>Boston merchants who had been selling tea, American shippers and sailors tea consumers</td>
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<td>1774</td>
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<td><strong>Quebec Act/ Massachusetts Government Act - Re-</strong></td>
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<td><strong>voked Massachusetts Charter, gave British officials direct control of Massachusetts government</strong></td>
<td>Punishment for Tea Party</td>
<td>Revoked the right of self-government; extended border of Quebec south to Ohio River, limiting colonial expansion</td>
<td>New Englanders join other colonists in becoming increasingly supportive of rebellion. When Continental Army is raised, Massachusetts colonists form majority.</td>
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<td>1775</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>New England Restraining Act</strong></td>
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<td>Restricted trade to only Britain, Ireland, and British West Indies</td>
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<td>Second Continental Congress convened which eventually signed the Declaration of Independence.</td>
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</table>
Story Summary

Initially, King George and Parliament simply wanted the colonials to pay a small share of the expenses of the French and Indian war and the cost of ongoing support of British troops stationed in the colonies. The colonists were threatened on three sides—French colonies to the North, Indian land to the West, and Spanish colonies to the South. The major issue was, of course, taxation without representation. British officials continued to attempt to find methods of taxation that they thought would be least odious to the colonials but they failed to consult with the colonials (A one-way voyage across the Atlantic took anywhere from six weeks to three months). As time went on, they alienated almost every socio-economic group in the colonies. Colonists responded in a number of ways. Many remained loyal to the British crown and refused to participate in any acts of resistance. Others reacted through peaceful acts we would consider today as civic engagement exercises: circulating petitions, sending writs of protest to the King and Parliament, or adopting resolutions of protest. Some operated under the guise of “civil disobedience” by participating or leading boycotts and protests. Still others engaged in violent acts of defiance including burning of buildings, destruction of property (the Boston Tea Party and the burning of Governor Hutchinson’s home), and terrorism including tarring and feathering of British officials and fellow colonials.

The British response was increasing repression by King George and Parliament, which robbed many of the colonials of their livelihood and of their rights. The major complaint of the colonials was not about any one of the taxes since some of the same taxes were also imposed in Britain, but rather the way in which these taxes were arbitrarily imposed. It might be said that this was all a big misunderstanding. Could it have been avoided? If the King and Parliament had allowed each colony to send two representatives as members to the House of Commons, that would have given them 26 members in a body of 432, a token representation, but a representation.

What Civics Adds to the Story

Civic learning centers on providing students with the civic knowledge, skills, and dispositions they need to become informed, responsible, and engaged citizens. As noted, studying the causes and consequences of the American Revolution is an effective way to build these competencies for students.

In California fifth grade classrooms, students learn about the foundation of our American democracy—how, when, and why it occurred and how people became civically engaged to bring about change. It becomes their first lesson in civic learning that should set the stage for civic engagement for the rest of their lives.

Why did Europeans come to the New World? The Age of Enlightenment in 18th century Europe advanced ideals of personal freedom, liberty, tolerance, and constitutional government. These ideals became motivating factors for individuals and families to leave their homeland to migrate to a relatively unknown environment to exercise freedoms believed to be fundamental rights of all mankind. Freedom of conscience, freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom of expression, freedom of assembly, and freedom of movement were among the many freedoms colonists believed to be rights that could not and should not be restricted by government.

From the time that the colonies were originally settled until the eve of the revolution, con-
trol of the colonies gradually shifted to the king and parliament. As taxes were imposed without their consent, colonists believed their freedom of expression and representation was violated. Protests, petitions, and gatherings were quickly put down by government officials. Freedom of expression, speech, and the press were punishable and denied to many. Minority religious groups were ostracized. The right to privacy was denied when colonists were required to quarter British soldiers.

Most important, the right to self-government was a right that many of the colonies had enjoyed for over 100 years. It wasn’t just the taxes and restrictive acts that dismayed the colonists; it was the fact that they had no say in the imposition of the taxes. Thus the phrase that resounded throughout the colonies, “No taxation without representation.” While many of the King’s proclamations and parliament’s acts affected different groups in different ways, the lack of a voice in legislation affected them all.

Students learn how the many systems, rules and policies dictated from their native country sparked a myriad of responses, ranging from passivity to civil disobedience, and ultimately armed conflict. They realize that people’s responses to challenges in the past, were influenced by prior (historical) experiences, economic circumstances, and geographic factors. The taxes imposed on the colonists with the Sugar Act, Stamp Act, Townshend Act, and Tea Act hurt people in their pocketbooks. Vast distances, as explained later in this article describe how geographic aspects of distance decay, regionalism, and spatial variation, also influenced reactions to policies imposed upon colonists. All of these royal and parliamentary acts gradually eroded the civil rights of the colonists. The Intolerable Acts of 1774 further exacerbated tensions and drove more people into civil engagement, concluding finally, with revolution.

As students examine the series of events leading to the American Revolution, we would expect them to learn of the philosophical ideas of John Locke, Adam Smith, Montesquieu, Thomas Paine and others that re-envisioned basic rights of man during the Enlightenment period; ideas that influenced the thinking of the Founders and their motivation to seek independence. Who, when, and how British legislation impacted different groups of colonists and how the colonists reacted to constraints from England presents a unique lesson on civic engagement. Could the revolution have been avoided if there had been clearer communication and negotiation between Great Britain and the colonies or if the basic personal freedoms could have been mutually agreed upon and respected by both colonists and the British government?

Finally, it is important to ask, are there issues in today’s world that command the attention of citizens and policymakers? What have we learned from studying examples of civic engagement in the past to inform civic action today? Are young people prepared to address today’s challenges in effective, responsible ways? If not, what can we do to prepare them to be informed, actively engaged citizens in today’s world?

What Economics Adds to the Story

**Benefit/Cost Analysis:** The founders who signed the Declaration of Independence had a fundamental question to answer: Do the advantages of independence outweigh the disadvantages? In economics parlance, they had to conduct a benefit/cost analysis. These are the questions they asked and answered.

**What is our goal and what resources do we have to pursue that goal?** Our goal is to maximize our well-being in terms of our relationship with Great Britain. Our available resources are our people with all of their skills,
knowledge, experience and personal qualities (human capital) as well as our natural and manufactured resources (geography of the land, weapons, modes of transportation, etc.)

What are our alternatives? Declare independence or attempt to negotiate an agreement?

What are the advantages and disadvantages of both alternatives? This is a classroom lesson based on the information above. See the Council on Economic Education’s lesson, The Costs and Benefits of American Independence.

What will we choose and what is the opportunity cost of that choice? They chose to fight for independence, they gave up the opportunity to continue negotiations with Britain in hopes of addressing their grievances peacefully.

Review the choice, what were the consequences of the choice? This is the unit of American history after the ratification of the Constitution.

The Principle of Exchange: Voluntary exchange benefits the traders. This is a simple but powerful concept and the basis for exchange. Rice, indigo, hemp, rum and other spirits, wool, timber, fish, sugar, molasses, tea, clothing, firearms, and many other products were all part of the colonial—British exchange. This is one of the reasons for the economic success of the colonies and one of the major advantages of attempting to avoid a break with Britain. While the British tried to acquire raw materials from the colonies, convert them to finished goods, and sell the finished goods to the colonists, the colonists began developing the production of finished goods themselves. With the non-importation boycotts, colonists agreed to cease buying products from British merchants, putting extreme pressure on the merchants’ businesses. As a result, the merchants lobbied Parliament to repeal some of the legislation most harmful to the colonists. While exchange benefits the traders, a lack of exchange harms the traders.

Tariffs are a tax on imported products. The sugar tax was a tariff on molasses imported from the Spanish and French West Indies. A tariff is a tax, paid by the importer and, where possible, passed on to the consumer in terms of higher prices. Molasses is a major ingredient of rum. With 140 distilleries, the production of rum employed a large number of people in New England. After the imposition and enforcement of a new tax on French and Spanish molasses, rum producers were “forced” to buy the higher priced British West Indies molasses. The price of rum produced in New England rose, driving many producers out of business, causing rum workers to lose their jobs and rum producers to lose their businesses.

The demand for workers is a derived demand. This is just a fancy way of saying that the jobs of workers in a particular industry depend upon supply and demand for their product. If the demand for the product or the supply of the product falls, workers in that industry will lose their jobs. The price of molasses increased due to a tariff on cheaper French and Spanish West Indies molasses which the colonials had been buying. After the tariff, the only molasses available to them was the more expensive and lower quality molasses from the British West Indies. Many rum producers could not earn a profit using the higher priced molasses so they lost their businesses and let go any employees they had working for them.

Colonial paper currency vs. silver and gold coins and British Pounds Sterling or Spanish Dollars. Money is the oil that greases the engines of commerce. Barter (the exchange of one good for another good) is inefficient and cumbersome. Would-be buyers have to find sellers who want the products they are trying to sell. Commodity money (goods such as tobacco, wampum, and other products) is also impractical
since the quality of goods traded may vary over time. For a time, British exporters accepted colonial tobacco in payment for their products until the colonists began sending over rotting tobacco. Paper currency such as our dollars today are useful in exchange as long as sellers are confident that the paper money will maintain its value, able to buy the same amount of goods and services a year from now as it can today. When Virginia and other colonies printed their own currencies, monetary chaos ensued since the value of the currencies varied from day to day and from colony to colony. British exporters and financiers were reluctant to accept these currencies as repayment of debt; they wanted stable currencies such as gold and silver coin, or British Pound Sterling or Spanish Dollars. Additional problems with paper currencies were counterfeiting and inflation.

To address these issues, Parliament passed the Currency Act which restricted the issue of new paper currencies and the reissue of existing currencies. Only coins, British Pounds Sterling, and Spanish dollars could be used for repayment of private debt. Since acceptable currency was extremely scarce, colonists ability to exchange goods and services and borrow and lend was limited, leading to financial hardships for many.

What Geography Adds to the Story

Understanding the colonies in geographic space. Colonists in British North America were far from home. The distance between England and the colonies, across the northern Atlantic Ocean, presented a practical challenge. Over time it also had cultural and political implications. Colonists, some born in England and some not, saw themselves as having different interests and identities in comparison to other British subjects living in England. The English crown ultimately struggled to project its authority across the wide ocean in the age of sail. This distance occurs within the space of a rapidly expanding British Empire. England attempted to control increasing amounts of space, including the seas as well as terrestrial territories. England competed against other ambitious empires that were also interested in identifying and exploiting resources found within new territories. Companies and colonists authorized by the British government explored and occupied this space on behalf of the empire. They extracted raw materials (timber, beaver pelts, gold, etc.) to trade or use in manufacture of desirable goods, developed lands into agricultural landscapes (tobacco, rice, wheat) or settlements (to secure religious freedoms or facilitate trade), and even looked to incorporate indigenous people into economic transactions as suppliers, consumers, or slaves. The British Empire eventually became the largest in the history of humankind (Ferguson, 2004), but American independence occurred before “Britain’s Imperial Century” from 1815-1914 (Hyam, 2002).

The colonies as thirteen separate places in three distinct regions. Places are particular and unique from each other. They develop under specific conditions and build up character over time, as inhabitants adapt to physical realities and modify physical environments to reflect their cultures and aspirations. Importantly, the English government authorized 13 different colonies, each defined as a separate place and a distinct opportunity to increase the strength of the British Empire. As discussed above, organizing the colonies into three regions helps us to make sense of the similarities and differences among them. Looking more closely, if we take into account the other factors that attach to territory (legal structures, population size and distribution, religious and ethnic identities, and a myri-
ad of physical environmental variables) we can see that each colony is unique. In fact, distinct local communities existed as well. From colony to colony, perceived differences in the costs and benefits of continued British rule meant that New England colonists could be increasingly opposed to British authority while residents of southern colonies and New York trended more loyalist. After generations in North America, colonists likely felt more like Pennsylvanians or South Carolinians than (loyal) British subjects. Each colony or settlement could become a focal point for friction and resistance to the imposition of power. Each place had a different story to tell.

**Boundary disputes related to the Proclamation of 1763.** Just as the Atlantic Ocean defined the eastern edge of the colonial territories, the Appalachian Mountains defined the western frontier for the early colonial period. The frontier was not a fixed edge. While the colonial population was largely concentrated near the Atlantic coast, several colonies actually established land claims that extended beyond the mountains, even as far west as the Mississippi River. Some industrious colonists were already working on exploiting economic opportunities in these lands. The Appalachian frontier suddenly became a boundary when England enforced the Proclamation of 1763 (see Figure 2). The proclamation forbid colonists from settling west of a line drawn along the mountain ridge in hopes of maintaining friendly relations between England and Native American populations in the interior of the country. England hoped this would prevent tribes from joining with France in a potential future war over colonial claims. In a context in which the expansion the empire had previously seemed to be all-important, this new boundary became a major point of friction between England and the colonists. Colonial leaders saw this move to limit territorial expansion as an unreasonable restriction, and the new line on the map served as a symbol to mobilize support for revolution.

From colony to colony, perceived differences in the costs and benefits of continued British rule meant that New England colonists could be increasingly opposed to British authority while residents of southern colonies and New York trended more loyalist. Colonists also became rooted in their new homes over time, and their understanding of their specific location on the earth, within the empire, and in relation to other places informed their identity. It is also important to note that the distance between Maine and Georgia is 1300 miles making communications among the colonies difficult in the era of horse-based transportation. After generations in North America, colonists likely felt more like Pennsylvanians or South Carolinians than loyal British subjects. Each colony or settlement could become a focal point for friction and resistance to the imposition of power. Each place had a different story to tell.

A compelling question might be, “How did British legislation help unite many of the colonists in spite of their geographic, economic, political, religious, and national origin differences, to the point that they were willing to fight for independence?”

**Lessons for Today**

**Creating engaged citizens and empowered participants in the global economy.**

As stated in the *California History-Social Science Framework*\(^3\)

We want students to:

- **Evaluate rules, laws, and public policy in terms of effectiveness, fairness, costs, and conse-

\(^3\)California History-Social Science Framework, pp. 278-279.
quences and propose modifications or new rules to address deficiencies.

Use deliberative discussion including consideration of multiple points of view in making decisions or judgments on controversial political and social issues.

Construct and evaluate arguments and counter arguments and positions on issues using appropriate discipline-specific claims and evidence from multiple sources.

Analyze a specific school or community school problem or issue using appropriate disciplinary lenses from civics, economics, geography and history; propose and evaluate strategies and options to address it; and take and evaluate individual or collaborative actions and/or make presentations on the issue to a range of venues outside the classroom.

Conclusion

A thorough investigation of the American Revolution includes a rich analysis of the economic, geographic, historic, and civic implications of the issues and struggles leading up to the Declaration of Independence. It also provides an ideal staging ground for preparing students for civic and economic life. Developing a multidisciplinary approach for students to examine issues of the past helps them apply that same approach to understanding the complex issues facing us today. Issues concerning immigration, tariffs, gun violence, health care, climate change and many others all have political, economic, and geographic dynamics to them as well as consequences that affect our daily lives. To address these issues effectively and responsibly, it is important to understand the multi-faceted aspects of solutions proposed. It is not “as simple as that.”

Using the Inquiry Arc

Compelling Question: Was the American Revolution Inevitable?

Supporting Questions:
- What were the major geographic, economic, and political differences between the colonies?
- How did these differences tend to divide the colonies?
- What goals did the British have in imposing the proclamations and legislation?
- What were the goals and grievances of the colonials?
- Why did King George and Parliament feel that they were justified in their actions?
- Why did the colonists feel that the King and Parliament were not justified in their actions?
- On what issues do you think the two groups might have agreed? What issues proved more difficult?
- How did the distance between England and the colonies affect the relationships between colonists and the King?

Divide the class into different groups representing specific colonies (you don’t have to include all 13 colonies, just those that are mentioned in the chart above) and have them consider how British actions might have impacted them. Have each group explain to the class how they are affected both politically and economically, and how those British acts shifted their ideas about rebellion. You might want to turn this into a play.

Divide the class into two groups and have them use benefit/cost analysis to present a case for loyalty to the King or rebellion. Remember to distinguish advantages and disadvantages from benefits and costs.

Assign particular roles to groups of students to negotiate a settlement between the British and the colonials. Use the Olive Branch Petition as a guide.
Application to Today

Are there issues and problems in today’s society that are “compelling” to today’s students? Yes, of course. Can we use the inquiry arc to address them in effective ways? Yes. There are a number of civic learning protocols, reflected in the C3 Framework that assist teachers in guiding students to address real world problems in effective ways.

- Identify and characterize a modern day issue in a way that is unbiased and allows for a multitude of perspectives to be explored.
- Provide students with access to information that reflects the economic, geographic, political, and societal perspectives that inform or influence the issue.
- Carefully analyze the complex, often competing perspectives through introspective study and open civil dialogue.
- Reach a conclusion or solution to the problem studied and contemplate a variety of ways to communicate it.
- Take informed action by reaching out to policymakers or others who can have the most direct impact on solving the problem.

The world is far more complex than we often realize and each new challenge faced by the next generation will command a set of skills, attitudes, and knowledge to meet them effectively. Each lesson of history provides that opportunity to prevent us from repeating the mistakes of the past and prepare young people to create a world better than what they have inherited.

Figure 1. This illustrative map divides the thirteen colonies into three separate regions. The map also shows how the Proclamation of 1763 established a western boundary to the colonial territories and an Indian Reserve. Current state boundaries are shown for reference, not the colonial boundaries in place in 1775.
Figure 2. Detail of Cram’s Physical United States Map shows how the Appalachian Mountains are far enough away from the coast to allow for a broad coastal plan in the southern colonies, where a longer growing season also supported agricultural activities. (Accessed from http://www.vidiani.com/large-detailed-physical-map-of-the-usa/ on November 18, 2019.)

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