

TEACHER'S GUIDE

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MISSION 1: "For Crown or Colony?"

The Townshend Acts, 1767

After the French and Indian War (Seven Years War) ended in 1763, Britain tried to tighten the reins on the colonists and rebuild its weakened treasury through a series of colonial taxes. When its first attempt – the Stamp Act – failed due to strong colonial opposition, the British Parliament tried again, passing the Townshend Duties two years later. The Townshend Duties (also known as the Revenue Acts) passed a tax on all paint, paper, lead, glass and tea that was imported into the colony. The new law also carried with it tougher enforcement measures including "writs of assistance" which gave customs agents the power to search and seize private property without a warrant.

. . . WHEREAS it is expedient that a revenue should be raised in your Majesty's dominions in America, for making a more certain and adequate provision for defraying the charge of the administration of justice, and the support of civil government, in such provinces where it shall be found necessary; and towards further defraying the expenses of defending, protecting, and securing the said dominions; 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 whereas by an act of parliament made in the fourteenth year of the reign of King Charles the Second . . . it is lawful for any officer of his Majesty's customs, authorized by writ of assistance under the seal of his majesty's court . . . to take a constable . . . to enter and go into any house, shop, cellar, warehouse, or room or other place, and, in case of resistance, to break open doors, chests, trunks, and other package there, to seize, and from thence to bring, any kinds of goods or merchandize whatsoever prohibited or uncustomed, and to put and secure the same in his Majesty's store-house . . .

Source: *The statutes at large ... [from 1225 to 1867]* by Danby Pickering. Cambridge: Printed by Benthem, for C. Bathurst ; London, 1762-1869