

Name _____ Date _____

British Colonial Policy: A Tradition of Neglect

Directions: Assume that you are a French observer traveling in the American colonies in late 1763. On your return home, you expect to write a series of articles on the status of the American colonies in the British Empire. You will interview both a member of the Massachusetts legislature and the royal governor of New York. In doing background research for your interviews, you have listed several critical bits of information regarding both British and colonial developments. Your task now is to list, on your own paper, the six most perceptive questions you can formulate to ask *each* official. At the end, you will write a one-sentence conclusion showing why the recent British victory in the French and Indian Wars appears to foreshadow difficult times ahead in British-colonial relations.

Notes: Essential British Developments, 1607–1763

"Sir Robert Walpole, who became the king's chief minister in 1721, believed that it was to England's interest to let the colonies flourish without interference; and his policy of 'salutary neglect' continued until the 1760s."

Charles Sellers, Henry May, and Neil R. McMillen, *A Synopsis of American History, Vol. 1*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: Rand McNally College Publishing Company, 1974), p. 21.

"The English government wrongfully assumed that once the colonies were established, often without any help other than a written charter, they could be ignored much of the time. Most people in England had little interest in the colonies; the few who had direct dealings with settlers in the New World were merchants, concerned only with markets or raw materials."

Charles S. Miller and Natalie Joy Ward, *History of America, Vol. 1* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1971), p. 94.

"The recent war (French and Indian War) had almost doubled the English national debt, which stood at +70,000,000 in 1756 and had risen to +130,000,000 in 1763. Taxpayers already grumbled at the rates and would certainly grumble more if asked to bear the total burden of imperial defense. Means would have to be found, it seemed to the ministers, to shift some of the expense to the colonists, who had also profited from the war and whom the garrisoned posts would protect."

Oscar Handlin, *The History of the United States, Vol. 1* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1967), p. 193.

"Neither Crown nor Parliament created much in the way of special machinery for colonial affairs, and for the most part regular executive agencies expanded their activities to include the colonies. Final authority over the colonies resided in the Privy Council, but the actual task of supervision was carried on by committees of the Council, regular agencies, and one specially constituted board (Board of Trade)."

Clinton Rossiter, *The First American Revolution* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1956), p. 106.

"The result of (this) conjunction of too much organization for detail and too little concern for unity—especially when intensified by distance, slowness of communication, inferiority of personnel, corruption, bribery, and colonial obstinacy—was a large measure of self-government for the colonies."

Rossiter, *First American Revolution*, p. 108.

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Essential Colonial Developments, 1607–1763

"Connecticut and Rhode Island, both founded without authority from the Crown, were granted royal charters of incorporation at the time of the Restoration. . . . In these two colonies, the pattern of self-government was most firmly established. Although the Crown retained considerable authority over their military, diplomatic, and commercial affairs, the extent of supervision was spotty and discontinuous."

Rossiter, *First American Revolution*, p. 103.

"By 1765, the assembly was dominant in almost every colony in continental America. The royal power of disallowance was still strong enough to prevent a complete overriding of the governor and other imperial officials, but shrewd observers were beginning to realize that only the full power of Parliament was now equal to the centrifugal practices of the assemblies."

Rossiter, *First American Revolution*, pp. 117–118.

"In the old colonial system, a colony was to be a colony in the most obvious sense of the word: a perpetually subordinate agricultural and extractive area that served the mother country as a source of raw materials, a safety valve for excess or unwanted population, and a market for finished goods."

Rossiter, *First American Revolution*, p. 31.

"The key economic fact about colonial New England was that it was an area fitted by nature for commerce rather than agriculture. New Hampshire, Connecticut, Rhode Island, and Massachusetts formed the most unsatisfactory group of colonies, 'the most prejudicial Plantation to this Kingdom,' from the English point of view, for they produced no important staple for export."

Rossiter, *First American Revolution*, p. 40.

"Whatever the state of economic theory in colonial America, economic fact pointed toward the future. The long-run trend of the colonial economy was one of expansion—in population, productivity, capital accumulation, opportunity, social mobility, goals of enterprise, and open-mindedness of economic thought."

Rossiter, *First American Revolution*, p. 39.

"The region lying between Albany and Baltimore supported the best-balanced economy in colonial America. Like New England a booming commercial area, it was far less dependent on circuitous trading to pile up remittances to England. . . . Toward the middle of the eighteenth century it took the lead from New England in the number and productivity of its manufacturing enterprises. Climate, soil, topography, and ingenuity combined to make the middle colonies, especially Pennsylvania, the soundest economic unit in the imperial structure."

Rossiter, *First American Revolution*, p. 45.