



Sample answer III

Using three or four points, how did conflict between the American colonists and Britain over political representation help create a revolutionary situation in the period up to 1775?

The British Empire was so engaged in war with France and other conquests throughout the 150 years that it left America in 'salutary neglect' to govern political and economic affairs alone. Following victory in the French and Indian War and the passing of the Treaty of Paris (1763) and Proclamation Act 1763, colonists saw no reason for British troops to remain in America. However, the British Parliament was faced with a 130 million pound war debt and decided to tax colonists for their defence against enemies. Also, Britain saw the need for a development of law and policy in America and thus British troops would be needed for a foreseeable future. By 1765 the Quartering Act was established by Parliament requiring colonies to meet the costs of feeding and housing British troops. Widespread opposition was generated, particularly in New York, where the local assembly refused to comply with the obligations of the Act. The Declaratory Act 1766 outlined Britain's political sovereignty over the colonies and the colonists' subordinate role to the British Crown and Parliament. Although the Declaratory Act did not stir much discontent, many saw it as sinister evidence that Britain intended to pass further taxation policies and subordinate the Colonial Assembly. The coercion of a British 'standing army' during the Boston Massacre (1770) and the unfair 'taxation without representation' were considered by the Thirteen Colonies to be a denial of liberty for 'freeborn English men'. The ability of British Government to tax was unwelcomed by the colonists who rejected the genuineness of Britain's right to tax through 'virtual representation'. The untimely conflict, as a result of the Coercive Acts (1774) along with Thomas Paine's justification of American sovereignty in 'Common Sense', convinced colonists that independence was necessary to release them from the shackles of British tyranny.
