

# British identity dbq

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" To prohibit a great people from making all that they can of every part of their own produce advantageous to themselves, is a manifest violation of the most sacred rights of mankind." These views of Adam Smith were very much supported throughout the mid-18th century. Throughout this time, many new developments were made regarding American colonists view's of their sense of identity and unity as Americans. Due to an over controlling British government and a need for individuality as a country, colonists became Americans through their great fight to highly develop their sense of identity and unity as Americans. Of the many circumstances that promoted a developing American identity, British mercantilism and their following regulations on it is of the utmost importance. The British government believed that wealth was power and that a country's economic, military, and political wealth could be measured by the amount of gold or silver in its treasury. To amass this wealth, the British passed laws to regulate the mercantilist system. The Navigation Law conceded that all commerce flowing to and from the colonies could be transported only in British vessels. Other events that infuriated the colonists were the insufficient amount of currency in America as well as Britain's right to nullify any legislation passed by the colonial assemblies. One such thing that encouraged a unity amongst the colonists was Benjamin Franklin's cartoon showing the necessity of a unified American government. [Doc A] Although some may say the mercantilist system was excellent for the colonists, it actually burdened the colonists with annoying liabilities. Mercantilism stifled economic initiative and imposed a rankling dependency on British agents and creditors. With the continued efforts of complete control by the British, the colonists became livid and

developed a better sense of their identity as Americans; they knew what had to be done! One such thing that American colonists united themselves upon was the misrepresentation across the Atlantic. British Parliament consisted of many members from many areas, but not one of those members was able to convey the message from the colonies because there were no such representatives. Many members of Parliament, such as Edmund Burke, led the rest of Britain and Parliament to believe that the colonists were simply tenants in their land and were to abide by the laws of the British constitution. [Doc B] This mere thought unified the colonists and presented a situation that they could not take their eyes off of. Another influential assistant to the greatly developing American unity was the Stamp Tax. When Prime Minister George Grenville imposed this act, the colonists were again angry. The Act mandated the use of stamped paper certifying payment of tax on certain legal documents such as pamphlets, newspapers, diplomas, and marriage licenses. With the implications of this act, Grenville seemed to strike at the local liberties that the colonists had come to assume as a matter of right and the legislation also seemed to jeopardize the basic rights of the colonists as Englishmen. As expressed by Richard Henry Lee, "The wicked violence of the Ministry is so clearly expressed, as to leave no doubt of their fatal determination to ruin both countries." [Doc C] This view was widely believed by most of the colonists throughout this time. The colonists were unified in action against the Stamp Act with the many nonimportation agreements. Mobilizing in support of nonimportation gave ordinary American men and women new opportunities to participate in colonial protests. The Stamp act clearly affected the rights of the colonists and definitely caused for the

increase of unity amongst them. Other incidents which caused for great unity amongst the colonists were the Boston " Massacre", the Boston Tea Party, and the " Intolerable Acts". As control of the British ministry was seized by Charley Townshend, he enacted the Townshend Acts. These Acts held a tax on glass, white lead, paper, paint and tea. The colonists fought this Act greatly. They took the act as least serious as possible, defying it at all costs. They found ways to smuggle and import/export goods at higher efficiency than the seditious Acts allowed. As the British learned of these endeavors, they landed two regiments of troops in Boston; what followed was the unfortunate Boston " Massacre" in which 10 British redcoats shot 11 colonists. To follow this, the British East India Company faced bankruptcy and it was decided to allow the company a complete monopoly over the American tea business. When the company's tea reached Boston, roughly 100 Bostonians, slightly dressed as Indians, dumped the tea into the harbor. This action may have united the colonists more than was contrived. Parliament, however, followed the Boston Tea Party with measures that brewed revolution. In 1774 it passed a series of acts to chastise Boston. The most influential of these acts was the Boston Port Act, which closed the harbor until damages from the tea " spill" were paid. These " Intolerable Acts" weakened the Bostonians and pressed them to a desperation state pushing for support from the other colonies. They received their support well as documented by Collections; this proved unity amongst the colonies and greatly showed their identity as a forming country. [Doc G] These events marked the evolution of a forming union amongst the colonies and proved their existence to the world. With a revolution approaching, the Continental

Congress convened and again proved the perseverance of the colonists and the unity amongst them. The Congress' most significant action was the creation of The Association. This called for a complete boycott of British goods; nonimportation, nonexportation, and nonconsumption. As soon as this occurred, Parliament attempted to deny The Association, and a revolution was imminent. The Continental Congress began to collect arms in order to secure colonist's liberties; as they were treated like slaves instead of freemen. [Doc E] The colonists were ready to become Americans and to be treated as such. On the contrary of Peter Oliver's article on the American Revolution, the colonists were definitely not deceived by the few Demagogues; in fact, the American people had the necessary right to revolt and though and did just that. [Doc F] These views prompted an even greater unity amongst the colonists. The controlling British government, along with the need for taxation without representation, prompted colonists to reform their way of thinking and to unite as Americans. America provided the colonists the sense of a new beginning and a sense of pride to shape their identity as Americans. As stated by Hector St. John Crèvecoeur, " Here individuals are melted into a new race of men." [Doc H] These new men reached the ultimate goal of unity and grasped the great idea of their true American identity.