

The King's M & M's®

SIMULATION #9

Topic

Colonial America's reaction to the Stamp Act

Objective

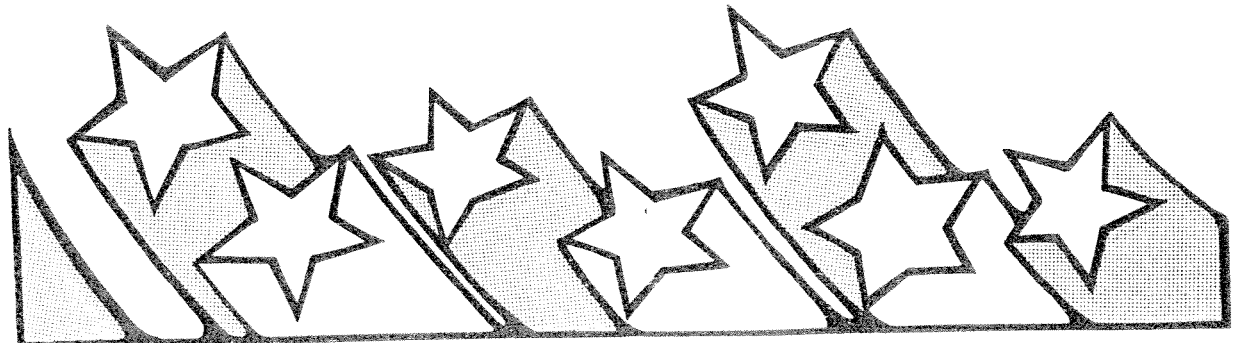
Students will explain why Americans were upset with British tax laws, such as the Stamp Act, after the French and Indian War. They will also identify two tactics colonials used to demonstrate their displeasure with these taxes.

Materials

- one 8 ounce (224grams) bag of M & M's®
- pages 37-39, reproduced on index paper or heavy stock
- one small paper cup for each student
- two plastic spoons (or surgical latex gloves)

Procedures

1. Prepare the Role Cards as directed on pages 37-38.
2. Cut out the Object Cards on page 39. Label the six cards with names of items commonly worn or possessed by students within class — e.g., jeans, running shoes, glasses, pens, jewelry. You do not need to use all six cards; three to six cards seem to work well for this simulation. In the corner box of each of the object cards, write a number ranging from one to three. As will be explained later, these numbers will represent a taxable value.
3. At the start of class give each student a paper cup containing ten M & M's®. Instruct students not to touch them.



The King's M & M's® (cont.)

Procedure (cont.)

4. Randomly pass out the role cards to students. Explain that those possessing the "King," "Parliament," and "Tax Collector" cards should proceed to the front of the room. The king should take a designated "seat of honor," and the members of Parliament should also have a specific area from which they will enact their roles.
5. Members of Parliament (those students possessing "Parliament" Role Cards) will draw from your previously compiled and prepared group of Object Cards. Parliament members announce to the "Colonists" what item is to be taxed (e.g., blue jeans), and anyone possessing that item will have to pay out the number of M & M's equal to the number written on the object card. So if the card marked "blue jeans — 3" is pulled, each colonist attired in blue jeans would relinquish three M & M's®.
6. Those students possessing "Tax Collector" role cards do all of the collecting using plastic spoons or gloves and all "taxes" are returned to Parliament. (Each tax collector has charge over half the room.) Taxes should be levied for at least three items but not more than six. If you have a good idea of what is popular in student dress, four items seems to be an optimum number for successfully relieving several students of all their candy and leaving many more with just two or three of their original total.
7. After all taxes have been levied, the funds are to be dispersed. The tax collectors each reap 10% of the take. Parliament receives 50% (these funds to be used to run the empire) to be split equally among the two students in that role. Finally, King George pockets the remaining 40% for himself. (These percentages have no real historical significance and are only an arbitrary breakdown for purposes to fit this simulation.) It is quite possible that while some students will have had all of their M & M's® confiscated, members of Parliament and the king will have upwards of thirty to forty pieces each to show for their efforts.



The King's M & M's[®] (cont.)

Procedure (cont.)

8. Some students may show definite feelings of displeasure just as some on the receiving end of this taxing generosity may gloat just a bit too much. The objective for this lesson should be completed during the withdrawal from the roles.

For Discussion

Understanding how the colonists reacted to the tax collectors and the various tax laws from the Stamp Act and beyond will be more relevant to the class at this crucial moment. Discuss the following questions:

- What was so unfair about how the class was taxed?
- How could it have been handled more fairly?
- Why were tax collectors tarred and feathered?
- Why were British goods boycotted?
- What methods and organizations were devised by the colonists in order to resist and circumvent these laws?
- How significant were these laws to the ultimate break from Great Britain?

Background

While it can be used as an anticipatory set, "The King's M & M's[®]" is most effective in the discussion about the Stamp Act after the topic has been introduced and formally presented. Sufficient background makes post-simulation review more meaningful. Since the colonists were upset about new taxes on paper and the lack of representation in the establishment of those taxes, this strategic activity attempts to draw students into a similar, albeit contrived, situation where items they value are arbitrarily removed from their possession without their input.

The students' frustration with the "unfairness" of the way they lost their candy can be easily compared to the substantial give and take on one of the central issues leading to revolution — taxation without representation.

