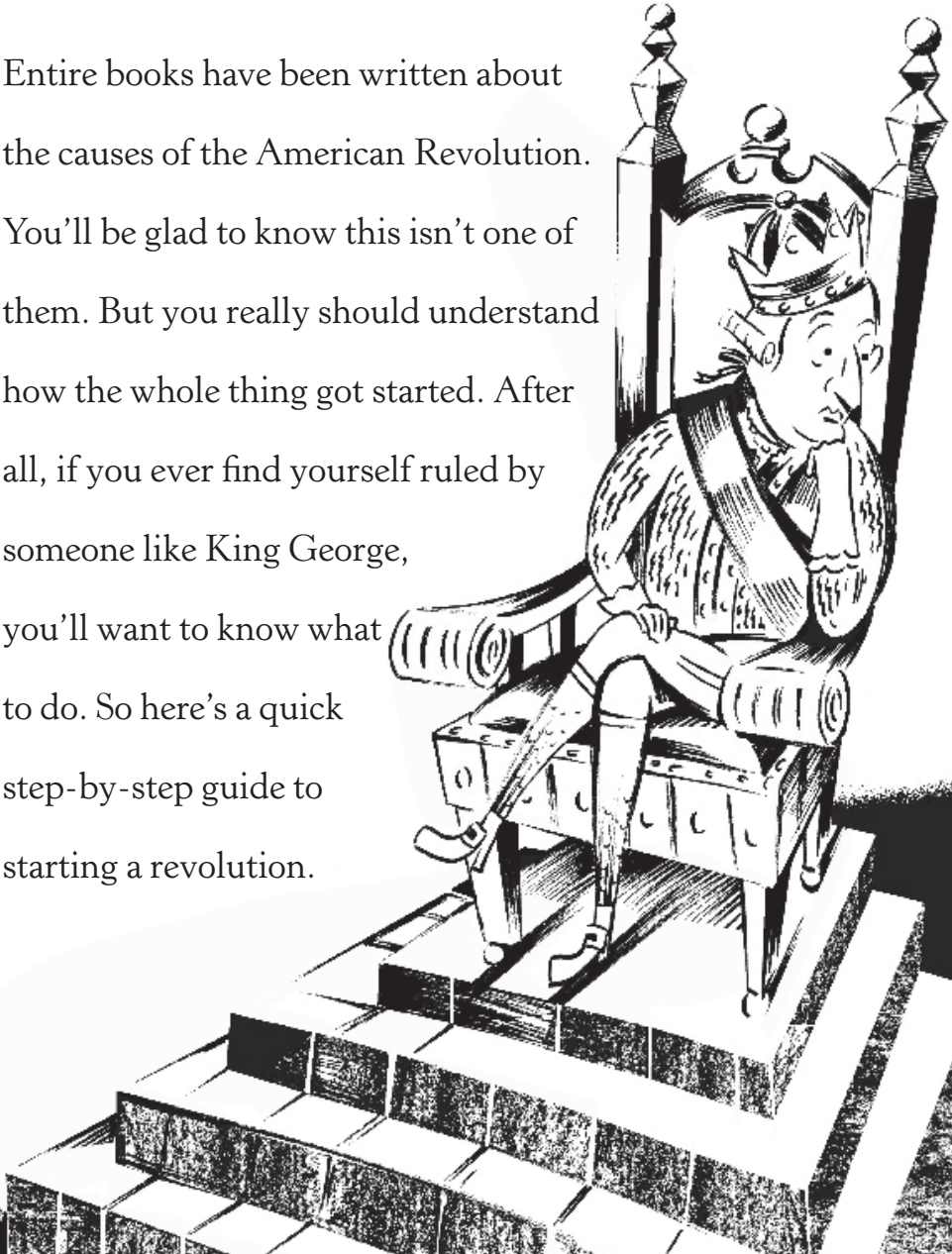


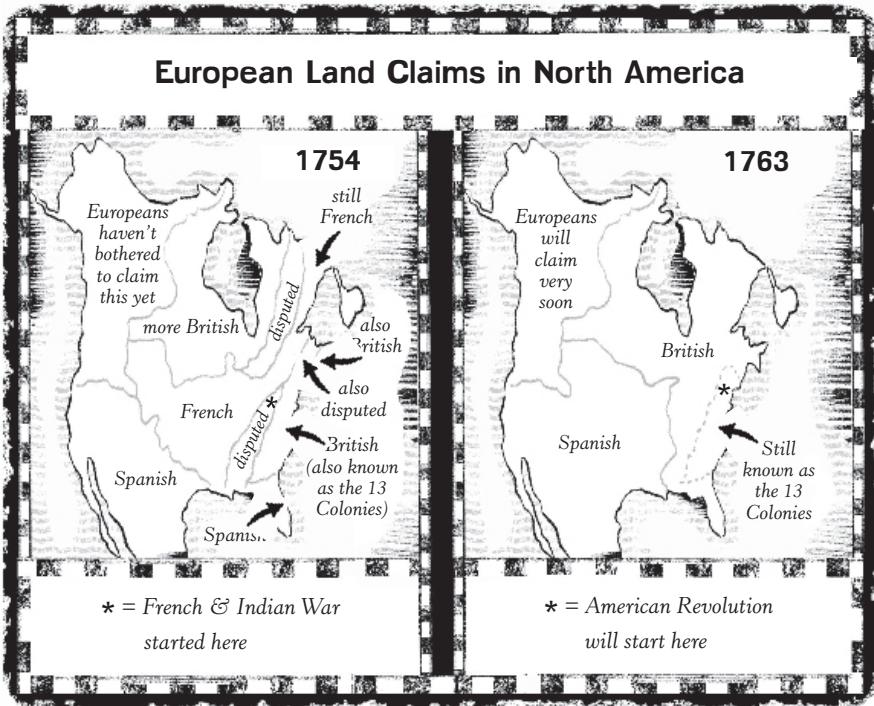
# How to Start a Revolution

Entire books have been written about the causes of the American Revolution. You'll be glad to know this isn't one of them. But you really should understand how the whole thing got started. After all, if you ever find yourself ruled by someone like King George, you'll want to know what to do. So here's a quick step-by-step guide to starting a revolution.



## Step 1: Kick Out the French

Let's pick up the action in 1750. Britain, France, and Spain had carved up North America into massive empires, as you can see on the map below. You'd think they'd be satisfied, right? But Britain and France both wanted to see their name on even more of the map. Let's face it, they both wanted the *whole* map. (It didn't bother them that most of the land actually belonged to Native Americans.)



To Britain and France, this seemed like a good reason to fight a war. You can call it the French and Indian War or the Seven Years War—either way, the British won. Britain took over France's land in North America. For Britain, this was the good news.

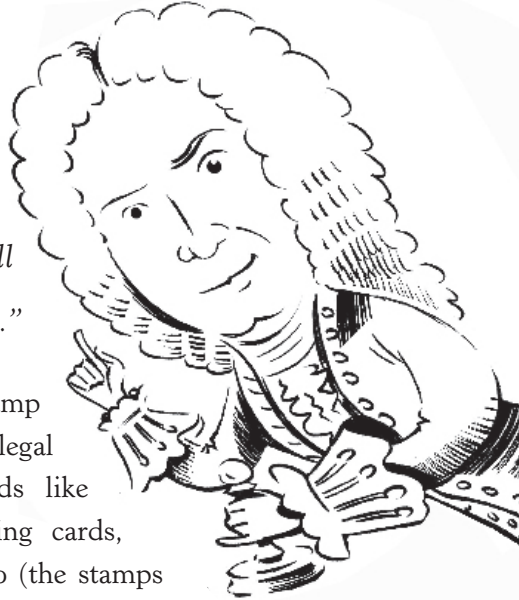
## Step 2: Tax the Colonists

**H**ere's the bad news: war is really expensive. The British were left with a mountain of debt. And now they had to keep 10,000 soldiers in North America to protect all their new land. That's not cheap. British Prime Minister George Grenville started thinking of ways to raise some quick cash. You can guess the idea he came up with, can't you?

That's right, he decided to tax the British colonists. Grenville really felt that the thirteen Colonies owed Britain the money. As he put it:

*“The nation has run itself into an immense debt to give them protection; and now they are called upon to contribute a small share toward the public expense.”*

Grenville's plan was called the Stamp Act. When colonists signed any legal document, or bought paper goods like newspapers, books, or even playing cards, they would have to buy stamps too (the stamps showed that you had paid the tax). A few members of Parliament warned that the Stamp Act might spark protests in the colonies. But young King George III (he was twenty-two) liked the idea. He didn't expect any problems.

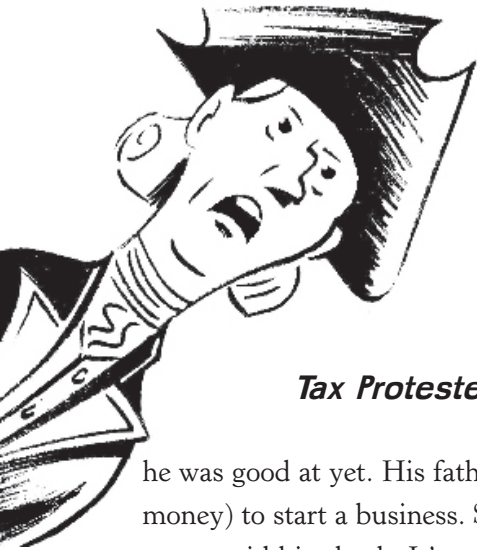


**George  
Grenville**



## Step 3: Hang the Taxman

**K**ing George never did understand Americans. No one likes a tax increase, no matter what the reasons. Besides, the 13 Colonies had been pretty much governing themselves for years. And self-government obviously includes coming up with your own taxes. So colonists started shouting the slogan:



### ***Tax Protester***

*“No taxation  
without representation.”*

Meaning basically: “We’re not paying!”

Shouting is easy, but how do you actually avoid paying the tax? Samuel Adams of Boston had that figured out. Adams was in his early forties and he hadn’t really found anything he was good at yet. His father once gave him 1,000 pounds (a lot of money) to start a business. Samuel loaned half of it to a friend, who never paid him back. It’s safe to say Samuel had no talent for business. All he wanted to do was write about politics and argue in town meetings. How far can that get you in life?

Pretty far, actually. Because when the time came to protest the Stamp Act, Adams was ready to take the lead. He figured it like this: *The Stamp Act is supposed to go into effect in November 1765, right? Well what if there’s no one around to distribute the stamps? Then we won’t have to buy them. Simple.*

The job of distributing the stamps in Boston belonged to a man



named Andrew Oliver. When Oliver woke up one morning in August, he was informed that a full-sized Andrew Oliver doll was hanging from an elm tree in town. Pinned to the doll was a nice poem:

*What greater joy  
did New England see,  
Than a stamp man  
hanging on a tree.*

It got worse. That night a crowd of Bostonians, yelling about taxes, cut down the doll and carried it to Oliver's house. They chopped off its head and set it on fire. Then they started breaking Oliver's windows.

As you can imagine, Andrew Oliver found this whole experience fairly frightening. He wasn't so eager to start giving out the stamps in Boston.

That was exactly how Adams had planned it. Similar scenes took place all over the thirteen Colonies. Calling themselves Sons of Liberty, protesters gave plenty of stamp agents the Andrew Oliver treatment. The agents quit as fast as they could. (Can you blame them?) So when the tax went into effect, there was no one around to collect it.