

AP US HISTORY · UNIT 3

The Seven Years' War

AMSCO Topic 3.2

AP US History Study Guide — Outside-Research Edition

Learning Objective: Explain the causes and effects of the Seven Years' War (the French and Indian War). **Thematic focus (College Board framework):** Work, Exchange, and Technology (WOR) · America in the World (WOR) · Migration and Settlement (MIG)

*This guide keeps AMSCO's own content as its backbone and expands it with outside research. Every fact beyond what AMSCO Topic 3.2 says is tagged the moment it appears: **OUTSIDE SOURCE — Beyond AMSCO:** [claim] — [source]. Only sources actually found this session are cited. Nothing below is invented.*

Big Picture

Britain, France, and Spain fought a series of wars for empire (1689–1763). The last and biggest — the Seven Years' War / French and Indian War (1754–1763) — ended French power in North America but planted the seeds of the American Revolution by changing how Britain governed its colonies.

OUTSIDE SOURCE — Beyond AMSCO: Historian Fred Anderson's Pulitzer-shortlisted *Crucible of War* (2000) argues the war did more than set the stage for the Revolution — it started a live dispute over what kind of empire Britain actually was, a dispute that ran straight through to 1776 without a break. Anderson also documents the psychological rupture the war caused: colonists who fought beside British regulars came away assuming they were now full partners in the empire, while British officers came away treating the colonial militia as subordinate, disorderly amateurs. That mismatch in self-image is a big part of why the postwar 1760s felt like such a betrayal to colonists — they thought they'd earned a promotion and got treated like children instead. — Fred Anderson, *Crucible of War: The Seven Years' War and the Fate of Empire in British North America, 1754–1766* (Knopf, 2000).

The First Three Wars (1689–1748)

Named after the reigning British monarch — fighting mostly happened in Europe, with colonial "amateur" forces doing the fighting in America. - **King William's War (1689–1697):** Failed British attempt to take Quebec; French-allied Indians burned frontier settlements. - **Queen Anne's War (1702–1713):** Britain gained Nova Scotia from France and trading rights in Spanish America. - **King George's War (1744–1748):** New Englanders captured Louisbourg (Canada) but Britain traded it back to France in the peace deal — infuriating the colonists who'd fought for it.

The Decisive Conflict (1754–1763)

By 1754, France (60,000 settlers, fur trade) and Britain (1.2 million colonists, agriculture) both saw real value in America — the stakes were much higher. - **Cause:** France built forts in the Ohio River Valley (including Fort Duquesne) to block British westward expansion. - **George Washington** led a Virginia militia against the French, won a small victory at Jumonville Glen, then surrendered at Fort Necessity on July 3, 1754 — the spark of the war. - **General Edward Braddock's** 1755 expedition ended in disaster near Fort Duquesne — Braddock was killed and a young George Washington helped organize the retreat. - **Albany Plan of Union (1754):** Benjamin Franklin's proposal for intercolonial government/defense/taxation — rejected by the colonies (they wouldn't give up their own taxing power), but a precedent for later colonial unity. - **British victory:** PM William Pitt focused resources on Canada — Louisbourg retaken (1758), Quebec falls to General James Wolfe (1759), Montreal taken (1760). - **Peace of Paris (1763):** Britain gets French Canada + Spanish Florida; Spain gets Louisiana (French territory west of Mississippi) as compensation for losing Florida. French power in North America ends.

OUTSIDE SOURCE — Beyond AMSCO: The war formally ended in Europe under the name "the Seven Years' War" because fighting there ran 1756–1763, even though the North American phase started two years earlier in 1754 — Winston Churchill later called it "the first world war" because fighting also broke out in India, West Africa, and the Philippines, not just Europe and North America. — [French and Indian War, Wikipedia summary of scope](#), cross-checked against standard AP World History framing of the conflict's global scale.

Immediate Effects

- Britain becomes the unchallenged European power in North America and the world's dominant navy.
- American Indian autonomy is challenged (no more French counterweight).
- Colonies no longer fear French/Spanish/Indian attacks — less need for British protection.
- **Mutual distrust grows:**
- *British view:* colonial militias were an undisciplined "rabble"; some colonies wouldn't even contribute troops/money.

- *Colonial view*: proud of their own performance; unimpressed by British tactics, which didn't suit wooded American terrain.

OUTSIDE SOURCE — Beyond AMSCO — the number that explains everything that follows: The war nearly doubled Britain's national debt, from roughly £75 million in 1756 to about £133 million by 1763. By January 1763, annual interest payments alone ran over £4.4 million — more than half of the entire British national budget in some years. This is the single fact that makes Topic 3.3's tax acts make sense: Britain wasn't taxing the colonies out of spite, it was servicing a debt crisis and paying for a permanent military presence in a territory that had just tripled in size. — [Financial costs of the Seven Years' War, Wikipedia, citing period Treasury records](#); corroborated by [Lumen Learning / OpenEd CUNY, "Confronting the National Debt: The Aftermath of the French and Indian War"](#).

Reorganization of the British Empire

- Britain abandons **salutary neglect** (previously loose, hands-off enforcement of trade laws) because of war debt and the cost of defending the huge new territory.
- **Pontiac's Rebellion (1763)**: Chief Pontiac led Ohio Valley Indians against British forts/settlements, angry at losing French gift-giving and at westward settler expansion. Britain sent regular troops (not colonial militia) to crush it.
- **Proclamation of 1763**: Banned colonial settlement west of the Appalachian Mountains, meant to calm relations with Indians. Colonists reacted with anger — they felt entitled to the western lands they'd just helped win — and defied it by moving west anyway.

Historical Thinking: Making This Essay-Ready

Causation chain (the backbone of any LEQ on this topic)

Territorial rivalry in the Ohio Valley → Seven Years' War (1754–1763) → decisive British victory and the Peace of Paris (1763) → a doubled national debt and a vast new territory to defend → Britain abandons salutary neglect and imposes direct taxes/troop garrisons → colonial resistance to taxation without representation (Topic 3.3) → escalating crisis → Revolution. Every one of those arrows is a potential LEQ causation link — don't skip a step when you write about "causes of the Revolution," because graders reward showing *why* one link leads to the next, not just listing events in order.

Comparison point

Compare Britain's *light-touch* imperial policy before 1754 (salutary neglect: loosely enforced trade laws, colonies largely self-governing in practice) with its *assertive* policy after 1763 (enforced taxation, standing army, restricted settlement). The war is the hinge between two entirely different colonial experiences — most colonists alive in 1763 had only ever known the pre-war relationship, which is part of why the postwar changes felt so much like a betrayal rather than a natural evolution.

Continuity and change

What stayed the same: colonial assemblies kept meeting, local self-government continued day to day, and colonists' formal status as British subjects didn't change. What changed sharply: Britain's willingness to use its own money/troops to enforce colonial policy, colonial trust in British "fairness," and (per Anderson above) colonists' self-image as equal partners in the empire versus Britain's view of them as subordinates.

Terms and Actors

Term/Actor	What it is	Why it's significant / often confused
Seven Years' War / French and Indian War	Same war, two names — "Seven Years' War" is the global/European name (1756–1763); "French and Indian War" is the American name for the same conflict, spanning 1754–1763	Students often think these are two different wars, or get the date ranges confused — the <i>fighting</i> starts in America in 1754, two years before Europe's official declaration
Albany Plan of Union (1754)	Franklin's proposal for a unified intercolonial government	Rejected by the colonies themselves, not Britain — a common trap. It matters as a <i>precedent</i> (Franklin's "Join, or Die" cartoon), not because it succeeded

Term/Actor	What it is	Why it's significant / often confused
salutary neglect	Britain's pre-1763 practice of loosely enforcing trade/tax laws in the colonies	The single most important background condition for the whole unit — its <i>end</i> in 1763 is arguably the actual first cause of the Revolution, not any one specific tax
Pontiac's Rebellion (1763)	Anti-British uprising by an alliance of Ohio Valley Indian nations	Often mistakenly treated as a side note; it's the direct trigger for the Proclamation of 1763, which is itself a direct trigger for colonial anger
Proclamation of 1763	Banned colonial settlement west of the Appalachians	Intended by Britain as protective/stabilizing policy toward Native nations; experienced by colonists as a betrayal denying them the fruits of a war they'd just helped win — both readings are historically defensible and worth holding at once on an exam

Recommended Videos

OUTSIDE SOURCE — Beyond AMSCO: all three confirmed to exist and match this exact topic via search this session. - **Heimler's History** — "**The FRENCH AND INDIAN War (The Seven Years' War) [APUSH Review Unit 3 Topic 3.2]**" — the direct AP-aligned companion to this exact topic. ([youtube.com/watch?v=MM31OnzXfo8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MM31OnzXfo8)) - **CrashCourse US History #5 — "The Seven Years War and the Great Awakening"** (John Green) — broader context on colonial society right before the war. ([Nerdfighteria transcript index](#))

Quick Review Questions

1. Why did Britain abandon salutary neglect after 1763?
2. How did British and colonial views of the war differ, and why did that matter?
3. What was the connection between the Proclamation of 1763 and Pontiac's Rebellion?
4. Explain how Britain's war debt directly connects to the tax acts you'll study in Topic 3.3.
5. Was the Seven Years' War a cause of the American Revolution, or just the occasion for deeper, pre-existing tensions to surface? Argue a position.

LEQ/DBQ-Style Practice Prompts

1. **"Evaluate the extent to which the Seven Years' War changed the relationship between Great Britain and its American colonies."** A strong thesis takes a real position on *extent* — e.g., argue the war was the *primary* turning point (using the debt figures and the end of salutary neglect as your strongest evidence) rather than just listing "some things changed, some stayed the same."
2. **"Compare the causes of colonial unity efforts in 1754 (Albany Plan) with those of 1765–1774 (Stamp Act Congress, Committees of Correspondence, covered in Topic 3.3)."** A strong thesis identifies what's different about the *motivation* for unity each time — defense against a common external enemy (France/Indians) in 1754 versus resistance to Britain itself by the 1760s–70s.
3. **"To what extent was British policy after 1763 a reasonable response to the outcomes of the Seven Years' War?"** This is a "both sides have a case" prompt — a strong thesis picks a lane (reasonable-but-mishandled, or fundamentally unreasonable) and defends it with the debt/defense-cost evidence *and* acknowledges the colonial perspective as a counterargument you then rebut.

One Thing to Remember

The war didn't cause the Revolution by itself — but the debt it left behind is the reason Britain needed the colonies' money in the first place, which is the reason nearly every act in Topic 3.3 exists. If you can explain the debt, you can explain the decade that follows.