

**Made in America: Colonial Imports, Exports, & Boycotts**  
**For Grades 3 & 5**

**Lesson #2- Imports and Exports**

Introduction

You might have heard the myth that colonists/early settlers were “self-sufficient”. What does that mean? Do you think that we made everything we needed here in the colonies? We didn’t! In this lesson students will look at pictures of things from colonial people’s houses and guess what we imported and exported. They’ll also learn about a law, called “The Sugar Act” that told colonists about some of the things they had to import from England.

1. Explain the terms “import” and “export” and tell students they will first guess what the American colonies imported and exported.

There are a couple of ways to do this step of the lesson. If you can work with the whole class via an online platform, you might show the slideshow of the items that are listed below. As students view each slide, ask them to guess whether the item was an import or an export and write down their answers. As an alternative, a worksheet is attached to this lesson which shows all of the items below. It can be given out as at-home work, followed by an online discussion. You can print one worksheet for each student and they can put a mark by each item, such as “i” for import or “e” for export, or, they might cut up the worksheet into individual images so that they can create piles of imports and exports. You might need to explain “porcelain” (a kind of pottery), “stockings” (long socks worn by everybody), and “molasses” (syrup made from sugar cane).

porcelain (teapot)	glass (bottles)	wood	molasses
tea	fur	leather	cloth
tobacco	ribbon	salt	cotton stockings
salted, dried codfish	rice	sugar cones	nails
fish hooks	green coffee beans	pepper	

2. For an online discussion: Go over students’ guesses and then provide the right answers. They can either correct their worksheets or adjust their piles of images. Ask the questions below. If an online discussion isn’t possible, give each student a copy of the “Worksheet for Step #2”, included in this lesson plan. You’ll need to go over students’ answers for where the imports in the list below came from.

- Which group of items is bigger? (imports) We were supposed to buy a lot of things from England, and it was against the law for us to make much on our own.
  
- Some things on the import list come from other countries. Guess where these things came from:
  - tea (China and India)
  - porcelain (China)
  - coffee beans (India, Turkey, Africa)
  - pepper (India)
  - salt (islands off the east coast of South America)
  - molasses (the Caribbean Islands)

Because the American colonies belonged to England, we could only import from and export to that country. We weren't supposed to trade with the other countries. England got those things from the other countries and raised the prices before selling them to us.

- The items in the export group have something in common, other than being exports. Here's a hint: Are there any human-made things in the export group? (no) These are called "raw materials". Because "Mother England" owned the American colonies, we had to send our raw materials only to her.

This all sounds very unfair, doesn't it? Hold those thoughts. We'll be discussing them at the end of this lesson.

3. This step can be done in a couple of ways: option #1- as an online discussion with the whole class; or option #2- as a combination of work students can do at home and an online discussion. They will be examining excerpts from the 1764 Sugar Act to try to make sense of it and discover why England felt the need to tax the colonists. Regardless of how you decide to teach this step, it would be best if each student has their own copy of the excerpts.

#### Option #1- a class discussion via an online platform

A. Ask for a volunteer to read aloud the first of the four excerpts and then ask for another volunteer to reword it. You might ask them to complete this sentence, "In other words, ....." Proceed in the same way for each of the excerpts.

#### B. Discussion-

- Not only did the colonists have to buy a number of things from England, but they had to pay taxes on them as well. What were the reasons for the tax? (encourage sugar trade, cover the cost of defending the colonies, stop smuggling, and make trade between England and the colonies safer)
- Mother England needed more money! She wasn't sure she had enough to pay her army to fight and the wars from a few years past (like the French and Indian War) had cost a lot of money that England still needed to pay off. The English government decided to make the colonists pay for these expenses by taxing them on items they needed and wanted.
- If you were a colonist, how would you feel about having to buy so many things from England, even though many of them could be made here or imported from another country, and probably for a lower price?
- How would you feel about only being allowed to trade with England?
- How might you feel about being forced to pay taxes to help England continue to make money and pay what she owed to other countries?

Like you, the colonists were mad! In your next lesson you'll learn about some of the things they did to fight back before the Revolutionary War started.

#### Option #2-a combination of at-home work and an online discussion

A. Ask students to rewrite the excerpts to make sense to themselves. You might assign a different excerpt or two to each student or let them work in pairs to rewrite the whole thing.

B. Hold the same online discussion as above.

Imports

Porcelain  
Tea  
cloth  
molasses  
Fish hooks  
Pepper  
Green coffee beans  
Glass  
Ribbon  
Nails  
Cotton stockings  
Sugar cone  
Leather  
Salt

Exports

salted, dried codfish  
wood  
tobacco  
rice  
fur

## Excerpts from the 1764 Sugar Act

An **act** for granting certain **duties** in the British colonies and **plantations** in America

for continuing..... and making **perpetual**, an act ...(for the better **securing** and encouraging the trade of his Majesty's sugar colonies in America;)

for applying the **produce of such duties**, ... towards **defraying** the expences of defending, protecting, and securing the said colonies and plantations;

and for ... preventing the **clandestine conveyance** of goods to and from the said colonies and plantation, and improving and securing the trade between the same and Great Britain.

### Vocabulary

Act- law

Clandestine conveyance- secret movement

Defraying- helping to cover a cost

Duties- taxes

Perpetual- forever

Plantations- colonies or new settlements

Produce of such duties- the money from the taxes

Securing- making safe

## Resources

[Road to Revolution for Kids: Sugar Act](#)

[Sugar Act- original text](#)

[The Sugar Act of 1764- Facts & Worksheets](#)

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Guess which things are imports. Put **i** by them. Guess which things are exports. Put **e** by them.



**Salted, dried codfish**



**Cones of sugar**



**Cloth**



**Pepper**



**Rice**



**Stockings**



**Glass**



**Porcelain**



**Tobacco**



**Ribbon**



**Salt**



**Wood**



**Fish Hooks**



**Tea**



**Molasses**



**Fur**



**Green Coffee Beans**



**Leather**



**Nails**

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**Lesson #2- Imports and Exports, Worksheet for Step #2**

1. Here are the right answers for imports and exports. Correct your worksheet or your piles to match these lists.

The colonists imported

Porcelain  
Tea  
cloth  
molasses  
Fish hooks  
Pepper  
Green coffee beans  
Glass  
Ribbon  
Nails  
Cotton stockings  
Sugar cone  
Leather  
Salt

They exported

salted, dried codfish  
wood  
tobacco  
rice  
fur

Which group of items is bigger- the imports or the exports?

We were supposed to buy a lot of things from England and it was against the law for us to make much on our own.

2. Some things on the import list come from other countries. Guess where these things came from.

- tea
- porcelain
- coffee beans
- pepper
- salt
- molasses

Because the American colonies belonged to England, we could only import from and export to that country. We weren't supposed to trade with the other countries. England got those things from the other countries and raised the prices before selling them to us.

The items in the export group have something in common, other than being exports. Here's a hint: Are there any human-made things in the export group?

These are called "raw materials". Because "Mother England" owned the American colonies, we had to send our raw materials only to her.