Throughout the 1760s, citizens of the thirteen colonies in the present-day United States were upset with the British government’s rule over them. While most people know of the men who fought for the independence of the 13 colonies from Great Britain, few people know about the important role that women played. As you read, take notes on how colonial women challenged the British’s unfair treatment of the colonies.

During the American Revolution, women were not allowed to vote or fight in the army. But they found other ways to support the colonial fight for independence. For the first time, many women found a political voice. Some wrote letters and poems about politics, sending them anonymously\(^1\) to local newspapers. One writer criticized colonial men for not doing more to oppose unfair British laws. Her poem ended with the line, “Let the Daughters of Liberty nobly arise.” Women were calling on each other to stand up and do their part.

To fight the British, these “daughters of liberty” used the power they had: the power to choose what not to buy.

The Stamp Act was one of the unfair laws women fought. To raise money, the British government passed a law saying that colonial citizens had to pay a tax\(^2\) on every piece of printed paper they used. Everything — from newspapers and marriage licenses to playing cards — was taxed. Many colonists felt that this Stamp Act tax was unfair.

Many women — among them, those calling themselves “daughters of liberty” — agreed to boycott\(^3\) British goods to protest the Stamp Act. These women refused to use British cloth to make their clothes. Some women even refused to get married if their fiancés applied for a marriage license with a stamp on it! Eventually, the boycott was successful. When British merchants\(^4\) began to lose money because of the boycotts, the British government repealed — eliminated — the Stamp Act.

1. without using their name
2. an additional charge on goods that goes to the government
3. to refuse to buy something as a form of protest
4. a person involved in trade
After the Stamp Act was repealed, the British put another tax on colonial citizens. Now, everyday items such as paint, tea, paper, shoes, and clothes were being taxed. Once again, the “daughters of liberty” said no to British goods. Women who had once bought British fabric now began to spin thread and weave cloth at home. They were proud to wear their homespun clothes as a symbol of their strength. The “daughters of liberty” were standing up to the British.

Then came the Tea Act in 1773. This law allowed British merchants to sell tea in the colonies for less money than anyone else. Many colonists saw this as an attempt by the British government to force other tea merchants out of business. Once the other tea sellers were shut down, the British would raise the prices on their own tea. To the colonists, this was unacceptable.

Patriotic women now refused to buy tea. Because they could not grow English tea in America, they used local plants to make “liberty tea.” Using raspberry and mint leaves, verbena and lemon balm, even roses, violets, and goldenrod flowers, they brewed delicious hot drinks.

While colonial men fought the British with guns, women fought them with money. When they said no to British goods, they made the British government less able to pay its soldiers in the colonies. Some people say that in the fight for freedom, the decisions women made when buying goods may have been as important as the decisions men made when they picked up their guns.

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Text-Dependent Questions

Directions: For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. PART A: Which sentence describes the central idea of the text?
   A. Colonial women protested the British by refusing to buy their goods because they didn't believe in violence.
   B. Colonial women also contributed to the fight for independence from Britain by refusing to buy British goods.
   C. It was dangerous for colonial women to protest the government because women weren't allowed to speak up.
   D. The colonies could have won their independence much more quickly if women had been allowed to vote.

2. PART B: Which detail from the text best supports the answer to Part A?
   A. “During the American Revolution, women were not allowed to vote or fight in the army. But they found other ways to support the colonial fight for independence.” (Paragraph 1)
   B. “After the Stamp Act was repealed, the British put another tax on colonial citizens. Now, everyday items such as paint, tea, paper, shoes, and clothes were being taxed.” (Paragraph 5)
   C. “Then came the Tea Act in 1773. This law allowed British merchants to sell tea in the colonies for less money than anyone else.” (Paragraph 6)
   D. “While colonial men fought the British with guns, women fought them with money. When they said no to British goods, they made the British government less able to pay its soldiers in the colonies.” (Paragraph 8)

3. Which alternate title expresses the main idea of the article?
   A. Colonial Women's Limited Rights Under British Rule
   B. How Colonial Women Won Their Independence
   C. How Colonial Women Protested the British
   D. The British Governments' Unfair Treatment of the Colonies

4. Which of the following describes how the text is organized?
   A. The author summarizes the ways that women fought for independence against the British and then explains specific examples of their boycotts.
   B. The author describes how colonial men protested the British, and then how colonial women did.
   C. The author discusses colonial women's lives under British rule, and then their lives after gaining independence.
   D. The author discusses how colonial women steadily won more rights and respect, as they continued to protest the British.
5. How does the article help readers understand the connection between the actions of women and the colonies' fight against the British?
Discussion Questions

Directions: Brainstorm your answers to the following questions in the space provided. Be prepared to share your original ideas in a class discussion.

1. In the text, the author says, “For the first time, many women found a political voice” (Paragraph 1). Why do you think this is the first time women found a political voice? What do you think prevented them from speaking up before?

2. In the text, the author discusses how colonial women helped with the American revolution by refusing to buy British goods. Describe a time when you stood up for something you believed in. What did you do and how did standing up for something make you feel?

3. In the text, the author discusses how women didn't have the same rights as men. How did the contributions of women in the American Revolution compare to the contributions of men? How have women's rights changed since the time period discussed in the text?