

Name _____

Events Leading to Revolution Unit
WRITTEN RESPONSE
Is Violence Necessary for Change to Happen?

Directions: The following is an excerpt from a famous speech given in Parliament in March, 1775. In the speech, Edmund Burke, a well-known member of Parliament, gives his argument for how to solve the crisis between Britain and its American colonies.

As you read the speech, ask yourself:

(1) How might Burke have answered the question: Is violence necessary for change to happen?

(2) What reasons would he give to support this response?
[Underline them.]

People say America is a noble object well worth fighting for. Certainly it is, if fighting a people is the best way of winning them over. But I confess I favor wise government much more than the use of force. I consider force to be a very poor way of keeping a people who are as numerous, as active, and as proud as the Americans tied to us in a profitable and subordinate way.

First, let me say that the results of using force may not be lasting ones. Force may stop people's actions for a moment, but it does not end the need of using it again. And no nation can be governed if it must continually be conquered.

My next objection concerns the uncertainty of using force. That is, if the use of force does not succeed, you have no other action left to take. Power and authority are sometimes achieved by kindness. But they can never be achieved after violence and force have failed to gain them.

Another objection to force is that you damage the thing you are fighting for by your very efforts to preserve it. ...It has been ruined in the struggle. Nothing less will content me than a whole America...I do not want to break the American spirit because it is that very spirit which has made America important to us...

The love of freedom is the outstanding feature in the Americans' character. This fierce spirit of liberty is probably stronger in the English colonies than in any other people on earth....

The colonies draw these ideas and principles from you. Their love of liberty, like yours, is attached to this specific point of taxing....The fact is that they did apply your general arguments in this way. And your manner of governing them—whether throughwisdom or mistake—confirmed their belief that they, as well as you, had an interest in these [same ideas].

Source: Adapted from Edmund Burke's Speech in *Conciliation with America*, edited by Albert S. Cook, 1896 in *Sources in American History: A Book of Readings*. Orlando: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, Inc., 1986.

1. How might Edmund Burke have answered the question—*Is violence necessary for change to happen?* _____

2. What are two reasons he gives to support his argument?

3. Write a letter to Edmund Burke that either agrees or disagrees with his argument about violence and the English colonies.

a. If you agree with Burke's reasons, choose two of them. Then in 1-2 paragraphs explain each reason by using factual evidence from the unit.

b. If you disagree with Burke, give two of your own reasons why you think violence is necessary for change to happen. Then in 1-2 paragraphs explain each of your reasons by using factual evidence from the unit.