(1) **The Royal Proclamation** was the first constitution granted to Quebec by the British Government following the Treaty of Paris of 1763. The Proclamation, issued on October 7, 1763, gave Quebec its first civil government since the Conquest of 1760.

(2) The constitution defined the new territory of the colony - essentially the St. Lawrence Valley, and named it Province of Quebec. The inhabitants of the province were forbidden from entering the western territories without first obtaining a permit to be issued sparingly by the Governor. French civil and criminal laws were abolished and the Test Oath, established in the British Empire to prevent Roman Catholics from participating in the government, was introduced. Government was to consist of a Governor assisted by a Council; as soon as circumstances would be favorable, the Governor was to call for the formation of an elected Assembly which would be empowered to make laws and levy taxes.

(3) In issuing this constitution, the objectives of the British Government were complex:

1. they desired to create conditions in this colony to attract British immigrants; in order to do so, it was essential to lay the foundations of British type of institutions and laws; indeed, Quebec received the same constitution as several other colonies with the Royal Proclamation.
2. they also took for granted that the “Canadiens” would wish to assimilate. Once confronted with the “superior” British institutions, they believed that the Canadiens would wish to become British.
3. in 1763, the British Government was confronted with an open rebellion (the Pontiac Rebellion) by the natives of the Great Lakes region who feared that their rights would be affected adversely now that England controlled the entire northern half of the continent and that, consequently, they could not use the alliance of one European power to counterbalance the other. It was thus imperative for Britain to show good faith on this point. As a result, Britain guaranteed the natives their territory and endeavored to keep Europeans (from Quebec or elsewhere) out of the Great Lakes region.

(4) The Royal Proclamation, by abolishing French civil laws, put the seigneurial system in jeopardy and eliminated the legal requirement to pay the tithe to the Roman Catholic Church; two important social institutions of Quebec were thus threatened. The introduction of a legal system foreign to the people of Quebec constituted a major attack on their culture, as legal systems inevitably reflect a vision of the world peculiar to the culture that have created them. The reduction of the territory to the St. Lawrence Valley also showed a lack of understanding of local conditions as the economy rested on the fur trade which required a large territory to operate efficiently, and the control of the Great Lakes’-St. Lawrence system was essential to its proper functioning. The introduction of the test oath, and the resulting exclusion of the Canadiens from all positions connected to the government of the colony, rendered efficient government impossible as the Canadiens remained the vast majority of the population for decades.

(5) Essentially, what was wrong with the Royal Proclamation was that it was designed for a ‘British’ colony when in fact it was, and was to remain, one peopled by the Canadiens. British immigrants did not come into the colony until the Loyalists were to escape the American Revolution and the Canadiens did not assimilate, entering instead in a phase that historian Michel Brunet called: ‘passive resistance’. The British governors sent to Quebec (James Murray and Guy Carleton) understood rapidly that the constitution did not make much sense in the context of Quebec, refused to apply parts of it (for example, the Assembly was never called, much to the displeasure of the British merchants who had come to Quebec) and urged the British Government to make changes, especially as trouble in the American colonies made British power more and more tenuous and uncertain on this continent. Ultimately, the constitution was a failure because it failed to properly take into account the distinctiveness of Quebec. This mistake was to be corrected by the Quebec Act.

The Boston Tea Party

(1) Victory in the French and Indian War was costly for the British. At the war's conclusion in 1763, King George III and his government looked to taxing the American colonies as a way of recouping their war costs. They were also looking for ways to reestablish control over the colonial governments that had become increasingly independent while the Crown was distracted by the war. Royal ineptitude compounded the problem. A series of actions including the Stamp Act (1765), the Townsend Acts (1767) and the Boston Massacre (1770) agitated the colonists, straining relations with the mother country. But it was the Crown's attempt to tax tea that spurred the colonists to action and laid the groundwork for the American Revolution.

(2) The British East India Company had controlled all tea trading between India and the British colonies. As a result of the tea tax, the colonies refused to buy the British tea. Instead, they smuggled tea in from Holland. This left the British East India Company with warehouses full of unsold tea, and the company was in danger of going out of business.

(3) The British government was determined to prevent the British East India Company from going out of business. It was going to force the colonists to buy their tea. In May 1773, Prime Minister North and the British parliament passed the Tea Act. The Tea Act allowed the British East India Company to sell tea directly to the colonists, bypassing the colonial wholesale merchants. This allowed the company to sell their tea cheaper than the colonial merchants who were selling smuggled tea from Holland.

(4) This act revived the colonial issue of taxation without representation. The colonies once again demanded that the British government remove the tax on tea. In addition, the dockworkers began refusing to unload the tea from ships.

(5) The Governor of Massachusetts demanded that the tea be unloaded. He also demanded that the people pay the taxes and duty on tea.

(6) On the evening of December 16, 1773, a group of men calling themselves the "Sons of Liberty" went to the Boston Harbor. The men were dressed as Mohawk Indians. They boarded three British ships, the Beaver, the Eleanor and the Dartmouth, and dumped forty-five tons of tea into the Boston Harbor.

(7) Most colonists applauded the action while the reaction in London was swift and vehement. In March 1774 Parliament passed the Intolerable Acts which among other measures closed the Port of Boston. The fuse that led directly to the explosion of American independence was lit.