

Mercantilism

If you were a colonist, there were probably few words you hated more than mercantilism. Mercantilism was a policy the British Empire imposed on their colonies. It was a way to ensure England’s government and England’s merchants made a lot of money – often by taking advantage of merchants in the colonies. Using taxation and trade barriers, England made it difficult for many of the colonists to earn any money.

To get around the unfair tactics of mercantilism, some colonists turned to smuggling goods. While illegal, smuggling was often the only way merchants in the colonies could make money.

What do you think was worse, British mercantilism or colonial smuggling? Why?

