

Boston Tea Party

The Boston Tea Party occurred on December 16, 1773. It was one of the key events leading up to the American Revolution.

Was it a big, fun party with tea?

Not really. There was tea involved, but nobody was drinking it. The Boston Tea Party was a protest by the American Colonists against the British government. They staged the protest by boarding three trade ships in Boston Harbor and throwing the ships' cargo of tea overboard into the ocean. They threw 342 chests of tea into the water.



Some of the colonists were disguised as Mohawk Indians, but the costumes didn't fool anyone. The British knew who had destroyed the tea.

Why did they do it?

At first, throwing tea into the ocean dressed as Mohawks might seem a bit silly, but the colonists had their reasons. Tea was a favorite drink among the British and the colonies. It also was a major source of income to the East India Trading company. This was a British company and the colonies were told they could only buy tea from this one company. They were also told they had to pay high taxes on the tea. This tax was called the Tea Act.

This didn't seem fair to the colonies as they were not represented in British Parliament and didn't have a say on how the taxes should be done. They refused to pay taxes on the tea and asked that the tea be returned to Great Britain. When it wasn't, they decided to protest Britain's unfair taxes by throwing the tea into the ocean.

Was it planned?

It's unclear to historians if the protest was planned. There had been a big town meeting earlier that day led by Samuel Adams to discuss the tea taxes and how to fight them. However, no one is quite sure if Samuel Adams planned the destruction of the tea or if a bunch of people just got mad and went and did it unplanned. Samuel Adams did later say that it was the act of people defending their rights and not the act of an angry mob.

It was just tea, what's the big deal?

It actually was a lot of tea. The 342 containers totaled 90,000 pounds of tea! In today's money that would be around a million dollars in tea.

Read the text and mark the statements T (true) or F (false):

1. The Boston Tea Party was a celebration where people enjoyed drinking tea together.

2. The protest involved American Colonists throwing tea into the ocean. _____
3. The colonists were successful in fooling the British by dressing as Mohawk Indians. _____
4. The Tea Act imposed high taxes on tea, which made the colonists angry. _____
5. Samuel Adams clearly planned the destruction of the tea during the town meeting. _____
6. The Boston Tea Party was a response to the colonies having no representation in British Parliament. _____
7. The amount of tea destroyed was insignificant and not worth much money. _____