



## The Tea Party and the Intolerable Acts

Grade level: 9–12

Time estimate: 1 50-to-70-minute class period

**BY STACI GARBER**

### Lesson overview:

Students will warm up by analyzing an image of the Boston Tea Party and discussing any prior learning they have about it. After reading about the causes and effects of the Boston Tea Party, students will analyze primary sources in order to construct a cause-and-effect chart.

### Objectives:

- Students will be able to explain how British tax, trade, and quartering policies toward the American colonists backfired and fueled anti-British sentiment.
- Students will be able to analyze primary sources to explain how restrictive British policies led directly to the Declaration of Independence.

### Vocabulary:

- Boycott
- Monopoly
- Port
- Tax

### Materials:

- Primary Source Image Warm-Up
- Vocabulary in Context Background Reading
- Primary Source Analysis

- Economic Causes and Effects Graphic Organizer
- Declaration of Independence Exit Ticket

## Prework:

Students should have foundational knowledge and understanding of the Boston Tea Party. We recommend that students complete the lesson on writs of assistance to better understand preceding economic policies the British imposed on the colonists.

## Warm-Up

- I. Distribute the warm-up, and have students view the image and note what they see, think, and wonder.
  - A. Students might notice people throwing crates off a boat while people on shore cheer. Students might note that the people are either colonists or Indigenous tribal members.
  - B. They might recognize this as the Boston Tea Party.
- II. Ask students what they already know about the event in the image.
  - A. Hopefully students have some prior knowledge of the Boston Tea Party and can explain that it was a colonial protest over a tea tax.
  - B. Few will know that this tea was actually cheaper than before, because Parliament allowed the British East India Company to export directly to the American colonies without going through middlemen in London.
  - C. Few will know that the Tea Act also granted a monopoly to the British East India Company, resulting in giving colonists fewer choices and essentially forcing them to pay the tea tax.
  - D. Few will know that the colonists dressed up as Indigenous tribal members (believed to be either the Algonquian or Mohawk tribal communities) to both disguise themselves and symbolically embody the violent behavior colonists stereotypically associated with those communities.
- III. Discuss student answers and provide context and additional information about the Boston Tea Party.

## Lesson Activities

### I. Background Reading

- A. Distribute the background reading.
- B. Have students read the background reading once without pen or pencil.
- C. Have students read a second time, noting the vocabulary words in bold and underlining context that can help define the words.
- D. Have students write definitions for the vocabulary words in the graphic organizer at the bottom of the page.
- E. Have students share definitions so that you can check for understanding.
  1. Boycott: a protest in which protesters avoid purchasing a specific good or service.
  2. Monopoly: economic situation in which only one manufacturer is permitted to sell a specific good or service.
  3. Port: place in which goods are exchanged with other places.
  4. Tax: government surcharge on a good or service meant to raise government revenue or discourage use of a good or service.

### II. Primary Source Analysis

- A. Distribute primary sources A–G.
- B. Have students work in pairs or small groups to answer the question under each source.
  1. Source A
    - a) According to John Adams, what caused the event he is describing?
    - b) Adams says that the tax on tea, passed without representation, caused the Tea Party.
  2. Source B
    - a) According to the text, why was the Quartering Act passed?

- b) The act says this is a punishment for mutiny and desertion and implies that colonial legislatures aren't doing all they can to provide housing for troops.

3. Source C

- a) According to the cartoon, how did the colonists react to increased British enforcement of trade policies?
- b) The image shows anti-British colonists forcing a loyalist to sign something.

4. Source D

- a) According to the text, what is the purpose of the Tea Act?
- b) The act says its purpose is to increase the amount of British East India Company tea imported into the colonies.

5. Source E

- a) According to the text, what caused the event described in the article?
- b) According to the article, the British customs officers did not allow the colonists to simply refuse delivery of the tea.

6. Source F

- a) According to the political cartoon, how did the colonists react to increased British control of trade?
- b) Colonists reacted by tarring, feathering, and otherwise harassing British customs officials.

7. Source G

- a) According to the text, what caused the event described in the article?
- b) According to the text, the British Port Act is a direct response to the destruction of tea by the citizens of Boston.

C. Have students discuss and share answers to check for accuracy and understanding.

III. Economic Causes and Effects Graphic Organizer

- A. Have students work in groups or pairs to complete the cause-and-effect chart by putting the letter of each source in the correct box.
    - 1. Box 1 should contain Source D.
    - 2. The two boxes after the first arrow should contain
      - a) Source A
      - b) Source E
    - 3. The two boxes after the second arrow should contain
      - a) Source B
      - b) Source G
    - 4. The last two boxes should contain
      - a) Source C
      - b) Source F
  - B. Discuss the positioning of the sources and clarify the economic causes (taxation, monopoly, boycotts) and effects (quartering to transfer costs of soldiers, and cutting off trade as punishment) of the policies.
- IV. Vignettes (If time allows, you may do this activity during the same class session or make it a Day 2 activity.)
- A. Break class into 7 groups.
  - B. Assign each group a primary source.
  - C. Have each group take a few minutes to construct a vignette such as a still photograph. They should arrange themselves as if to physically recreate this still photograph. They may leave one student out of the photograph to narrate or explain the vignette.
  - D. Have students present in the correct order as listed above to reinforce the causal nature of each of these actions.
- V. Exit Ticket
- A. Distribute exit ticket and have students complete the graphic organizer by relating each Declaration of Independence grievance with the Boston Tea Party.
    - 1. For Quartering large bodies of armed troops among us: Parliament wanted to shift the cost of British troops in the colonies to the colonists themselves and improve enforcement

of British trade policies after colonists destroyed tea in the Boston Tea Party.

2. For cutting off our Trade with all parts of the world: After the Boston Tea Party, Boston Harbor was shut down in order to punish the people.
3. For imposing Taxes on us without our Consent: Colonists did not want to pay the tax on tea because it was passed by Parliament, not by colonial legislatures. Even though the Tea Act made this tea more affordable by bypassing London, it still would have generated revenue without taxpayer consent, so it was thrown overboard.

B. Have students answer the question at the bottom of the page:

1. Based on the graphic organizer above, how did British taxation and trade policy lead to the Revolutionary War?
2. Colonists refused to pay taxes and follow British trade policy, choosing instead to produce goods themselves and boycott British products, which led to the Boston Tea Party. After the act of rebellion, Parliament instituted even harsher control over the colonies, which backfired and led to independence.

# The Tea Party and the Intolerable Acts

## Primary Source Warm-Up

Directions: Look at the image below. What do you see in, think about, and wonder about the image? What do you think is happening in the image? What do you already know about this event?



I see...	I think...	I wonder...

1. What do you think is happening in this image, and what do you already know about this event?

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## The Tea Party and the Intolerable Acts

### Vocabulary in Context Background Reading

In the years after the French and Indian War, the British government attempted a number of policies that would pay off war debts, enforce British trade policies, and pass on the cost of securing the colonies to the colonists themselves. The Stamp Act, which taxed paper used for official publications, was quickly repealed after intense colonial protest. The Sugar Act and the Townshend Acts taxed a variety of products that were key to the colonial economy, but the colonists quickly found ways to boycott, or refuse to buy, these products.

While colonists ramped up production of previous imported goods and their substitutes, British tax collectors and customs officers faced harassment and insubordination. British troops were sent to enforce trade policies and protect officials. Without the appropriate tax revenue to support these troops, the British Parliament passed Quartering Acts to force colonial legislatures to construct barracks and provide for feeding and maintaining the troops. Neither the colonists nor the British government benefited from these arrangements.

In an attempt to force the colonists to pay import taxes and improve the profitability of the British East India Company, Parliament repealed most of the Townshend Acts and gave the British East India Company a monopoly, making it the only company licensed to sell tea to the British colonies in North America while cutting out middlemen in London. This arrangement ultimately drove the overall price of tea down while maintaining the tax on the tea, a tax that the colonists had refused to pay.

Many colonists argued that Parliament lacked the power to tax the colonies. Limitations on the king's power to tax stretched back to the Magna Carta. Only representatives of the people had the authority to tax the people under British constitutional concepts. Therefore, despite the reduction in price, colonists were unwilling to import the tea and pay the taxes on it. In Boston in December 1773, the Sons of Liberty, dressed as Indigenous people, boarded a ship loaded with British



East India Company tea and threw the cargo overboard. More protests occurred in port cities up and down the coast.

In response, Parliament passed a series of laws that came to be known as the Intolerable Acts. The Boston Port Act of 1774 closed the port at Boston to all traffic, both for import and export, and the Quartering Act of 1775 allowed for the quartering of British troops directly on private property. Rather than force the colonists into submission, these policies fortified political opposition to British rule, increased harassment of British officials, and led directly to the tensions that caused the Revolutionary War.

Boycott:	Monopoly:
Port:	Tax:

# The Tea Party and the Intolerable Acts

## Primary Source Analysis

**Directions:** Use the following sources to determine which were causes and which were effects of the Boston Tea Party. Answer the question below each source in order to help you determine the place of the source on your graphic organizer.

### SOURCE A

The following is an excerpt from John Adams's diary entry on December 17, 1773. It can be found at: <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Adams/01-02-02-0003-0008>

Then there was no other Alternative but to destroy it or let it be landed. To let it be landed, would be giving up the Principle of Taxation by Parliamentary Authority, against which the Continent have struggled for 10 years, it was loosing all our labour for 10 years and subjecting ourselves and our Posterity forever to Egyptian Taskmasters—to Burthens, Indignities, to Ignominy, Reproach and Contempt, to Desolation and Oppression, to Poverty and Servitude.

According to John Adams, what caused the event he is describing?

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### SOURCE B

The following is an excerpt of the Quartering Act passed by the British Parliament on June 2, 1774. It can be found at: <https://www.battlefields.org/learn/primary-sources/quartering-act>

AN ACT to amend and render more effectual, in his Majesty's dominions in America, an act passed in this present session of parliament, intituled, An act for punishing mutiny and desertion, and for the better payment of the army and their quarters...

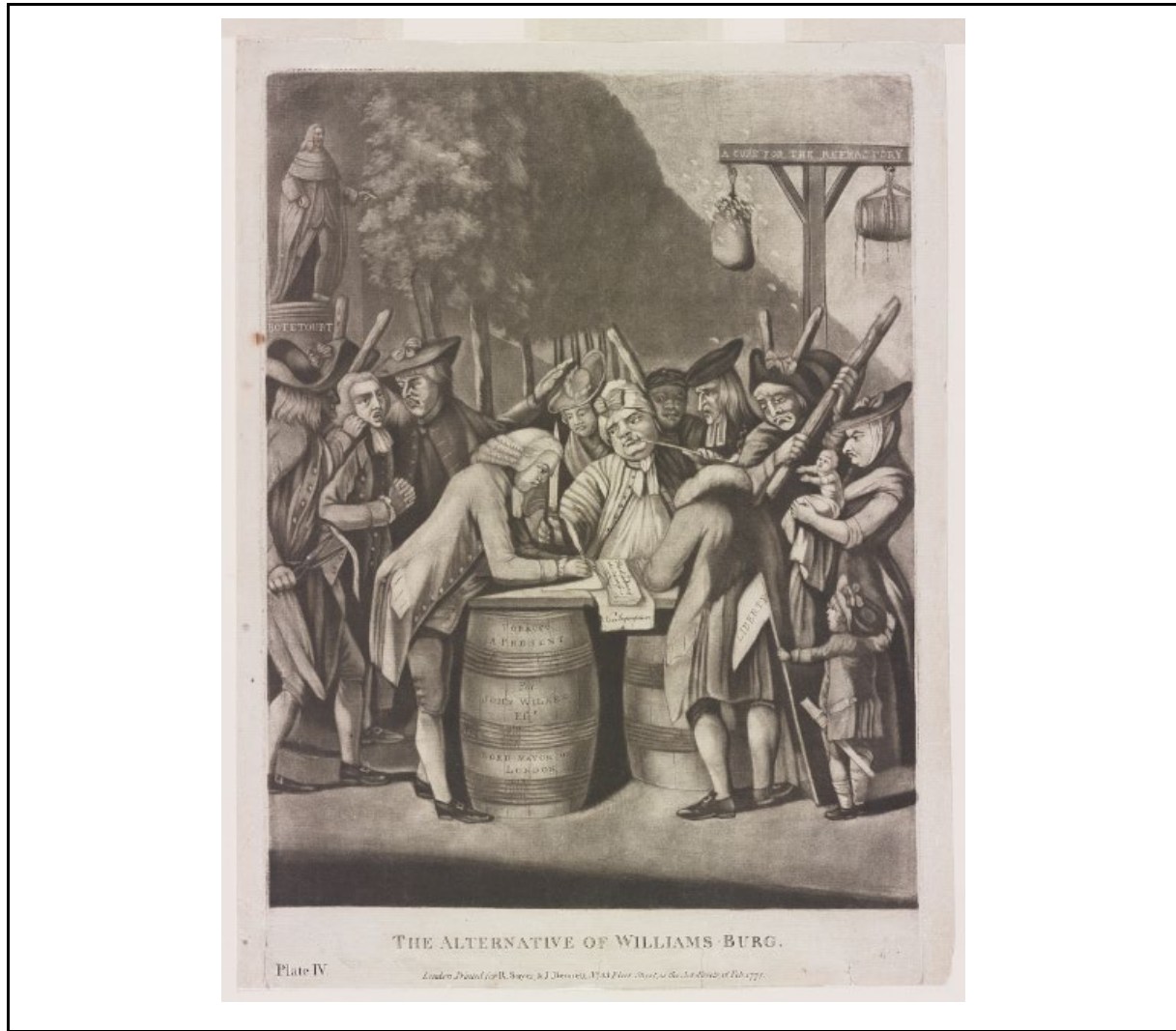
And be it further enacted by the authority aforesaid that, if it shall happen at any

time that any officers or soldiers in His Majesty's service shall remain within any of the said colonies without quarters for the space of twenty four hours after such quarters shall have been demanded, it shall and may be lawful for the governor of the province to order and direct such and so many uninhabited houses, outhouses, barns, or other buildings as he shall think necessary to be taken.

According to the text, why was the Quartering Act passed?

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## SOURCE C



The image below is a political cartoon entitled "The Alternative of Williamsburg" that shows a Virginia loyalist being forced by club-wielding liberty men to sign a document. The cartoon was published on February 16, 1775.

Robert Sayer and John Bennett, Publisher, and Philip Dawe. The alternative of Williams-burg. London: Printed for R. Sayer & J. Bennett. Photograph. Retrieved from the Library of Congress, [www.loc.gov/item/97514624/](http://www.loc.gov/item/97514624/)

According to the cartoon, how did the colonists react to increased British enforcement of trade policies?

## SOURCE D

The following is an excerpt from the Tea Act of 1773. It can be found at:

<https://www.battlefields.org/learn/primary-sources/tea-act>

An act to allow a drawback of the duties of customs on the exportation of tea to any of his Majesty's colonies or plantations in America; to increase the deposit on bohea tea to be sold at the India Company's sales; and to empower the commissioners of the treasury to grant licences to the East India Company to export tea duty-free.

According to the text, what is the purpose of the Tea Act?

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## SOURCE E

The following is an excerpt of an article in a Boston newspaper published on December 20, 1773.

The people finding all their efforts to preserve the property of the East India company and return it safely to London, frustrated by the tea consignees, the collector of the customs and the governor of the province, DISSOLVED their meeting. -- But, BEHOLD what followed ! A number of brave & resolute men, determined to do all in their power to save their country from the ruin which their enemies had plotted, in less than four hours, emptied every chest of tea on board the three ships commanded by the captains Hall, Bruce, and Coffin, amounting to 342 chests, into the sea ! ! without the least damage done to the ships or any other property. The masters and owners are well pleas'd that their ships are thus clear'd ; and the people are almost universally congratulating each other on this happy event.

According to the text, what caused the event described in the article?

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## SOURCE F

Below is a political cartoon from Boston in 1774. It shows a tarred and feathered customs officer, a noose wrapped around his neck, being forced to drink from a teapot.



A new method of macarony making, as practised at Boston. Photograph. Retrieved from the Library of Congress, <[www.loc.gov/item/2004673300/](http://www.loc.gov/item/2004673300/)>.

According to the political cartoon, how did the colonists react to increased British control of trade?

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## SOURCE G

The following is an excerpt of the Boston Port Act passed in March of 1774:

An Act to discontinue in such Manner, and for such Time as are therein mentioned, the landing and discharging, lading or shipping, of Goods, Wares, and Merchandise, at the Town and within the Harbour of Boston, in the Province of Massachusetts Bay, in North America.

Whereas dangerous commotions and insurrections have been fomented and raised in the town of Boston, in the Province of Massachusetts Bay, in New England, by divers ill-affected persons, to the subversion of his Majesty's Government, and to the utter destruction of the public peace, and good order of the said town; in which commotions and insurrections certain valuable cargoes of teas, being the property of the East India Company, and on board certain vessels lying within the bay or harbour of Boston, were seized and destroyed: and whereas in the present condition of the said town and harbour, the commerce of his Majesty's subjects cannot be safely carried on there, nor the Customs payable to his Majesty duly collected; and it is therefore expedient that the officers of his Majesty's Customs should be forthwith removed from the said town; may it please your Majesty that it may be enacted, and be it enacted by the King's most excellent Majesty, by and with the advise and consent of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and Commons in this present Parliament assembled, and by the authority of the same, that from and after the first day of June, 1774, it shall not be lawful for any person or persons whatsoever, to lade or put, or cause or procure to be laden or put, off or from any quay, wharf, or other place, within the said town of Boston, or in or upon any part of the shore of the bay, commonly called the Harbour of Boston.

According to this text, why was this act necessary?

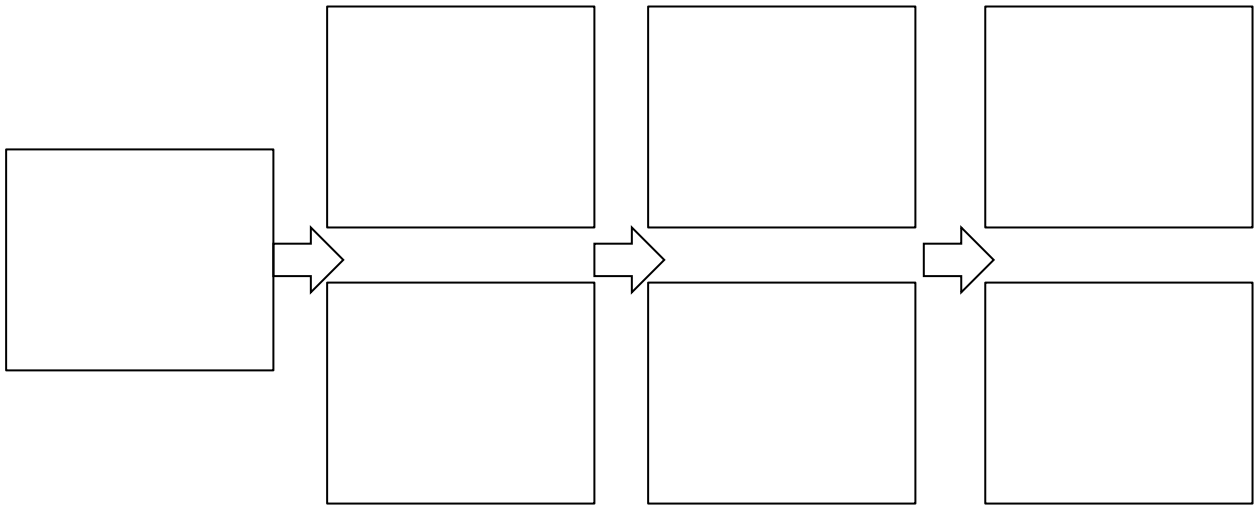
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# The Tea Party and the Intolerable Acts

## Economic Causes and Effects Graphic Organizer

Directions: Using the primary sources, complete the cause-and-effect chart below by writing the letter of each source in the box that matches its location on the chart, then answer the question that follows.



How did the establishment of a monopoly for the British East India Company affect the relationship between the British Empire and the American colonies?

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# The Tea Party and the Intolerable Acts

## Declaration of Independence Exit Ticket

Directions: For each complaint from the Declaration of Independence below, explain how the complaint was related to the Boston Tea Party and the British response to it.

Complaint	Explanation
For Quartering large bodies of armed troops among us:	
For cutting off our Trade with all parts of the world:	
For imposing Taxes on us without our Consent:	

Based on the graphic organizer above, how did British taxation and trade policy lead to the Revolutionary War?

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