

The Boston Tea Party

December 16, 1773 | Grade 4 · Explain with evidence

Words to know

protest — show disagreement in public

trade — exchange goods or services

response — an action or answer after something happens

Look closely



Thomas Hyde Page's map of Boston and its harbor, circa 1775. The map offers geographic context, not a picture of the event.

Read the story

Protesters boarded ships and dumped 342 chests of tea into Boston Harbor. They opposed British tea policy and taxation. This was a protest, not a party with cups and cakes. Britain answered with restrictions.

The Tea Act connected taxation with East India Company trade. Some participants disguised themselves as Native people; that does not mean a Native nation organized the action. The protest escalated conflict.

Think, talk, and show evidence

1. State the main idea. Support it with two details from the reading.
2. Explain a change or challenge described in the text. Which words support your answer?
3. Use one vocabulary word in a new sentence about this event.
4. What can the image and caption help explain? What can they not tell you?

Follow-up reading: Parliament closes Boston's port

1774

Britain passed laws after the tea protest. One closed Boston's port to most trade. Workers lost business. Other colonies sent help. Opponents called the laws the Intolerable Acts.

Parliament called them the Coercive Acts. They also changed government and enforcement. Different names express viewpoints. Punishment intended to isolate Boston helped encourage cooperation elsewhere.

Compare the two readings. Explain one similarity or difference using a detail from each. Their order does not prove that one caused the other.

Teacher guide & source trail

Original classroom adaptation. Suggested reading levels are instructional choices, not standardized readability certifications. Use professional judgment and learner feedback.

ELA practice: RI.4.1: refer to details; RI.4.2: main idea and summary; RI.4.3: explain events; RI.4.7: interpret visual information; W.4.2 and SL.4.1: explain and discuss.

These tasks support selected skills in the [Massachusetts 2017 ELA framework](#); they do not establish mastery of an entire standard.

Answer guidance

Factual anchor: Protesters boarded ships and dumped 342 chests of tea into Boston Harbor. They opposed British tea policy and taxation. This was a protest, not a party with cups and cakes. Britain answered with restrictions. The Tea Act connected taxation with East India Company trade. Some participants disguised themselves as Native people; that does not mean a Native nation organized the action. The protest escalated conflict.

Accept accurate main ideas and explanations supported by the text. Vocabulary meanings are in the opening word bank. For picture questions, use the caption and credit below; distinguish what is visible from what is inferred. For comparison, accept a specific connection supported by both readings. Do not require personal accounts of trauma.

Continue the inquiry

[Research source for this event ↗](#)

[Research source for follow-up ↗](#)

[Event page, accessible HTML reading, and vocabulary game ↗](#)

Image: Thomas Hyde Page, Boston, its environs and harbour, c. 1775. Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division. Public domain.

[Image source and rights record ↗](#)

The PDF contains selectable English text and embedded fonts. For adjustable text and browser reading tools, use the event's HTML page. External sources may need adult guidance.