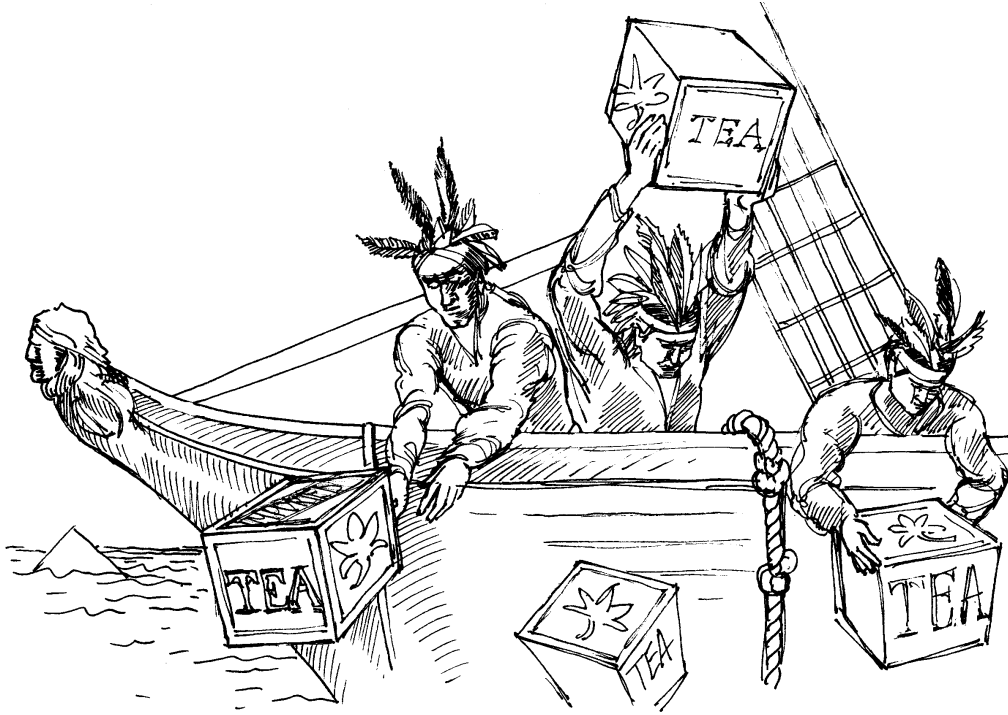


1773
The
B O S T O N
T E A P A R T Y



The CHARACTERS (in order of appearance)

NARRATOR

FIRST MR. SMITH • SECOND MR. SMITH

BOSTON CITIZENS 1-8

MR. JONES

BRITISH SOLDIERS 1-2

GOVERNOR HUTCHINSON: *Governor of Massachusetts colony*

JOSIAH QUINCY: *Boston radical*

SONS OF LIBERTY 1-8

SAMUEL ADAMS: *Boston radical*

MESSENGER

BRITISH SENTRIES 1-2

Act 1

THE TIME AND PLACE

December 16, 1773; Boston, Massachusetts

THE SETTING

Tremont Street, Boston, Massachusetts

NARRATOR: Something's going to happen tonight. I don't know what, but you can feel the tension and excitement in the cold air. The streets of Boston, normally quiet on a winter evening, are crowded with people. Some are milling about, others are in small groups arguing among themselves, and still others are shouting anti-British slogans. Relations between England and the American colonies have been strained lately, and I hear people actually talking about revolution. Some say they're ready to fight for liberty.

Wait, here comes a man. Let's ask him what's going on. Sir, sir, excuse me, sir—

FIRST MR. SMITH: Yes, what is it?

NARRATOR: I wonder, sir, if you could tell me what's going on tonight?

SMITH: Who are you?

NARRATOR: I'm the narrator.

SMITH: Oh. Well, I'm in something of a rush—

NARRATOR: I wonder if you could tell me what's going on here tonight?

SMITH: Where?

NARRATOR: Here. On Tremont Street. Boston, Massachusetts. What's your name, sir?

SMITH: My name? Ah . . . Smith, Mr. Smith.

NARRATOR: I won't keep you, Mr. Smith, but could you tell me why these people are so angry?

SMITH: I would love to stay and talk, but I'm late for a meeting.

NARRATOR: A meeting? A political meeting? Are you a member of the Sons of Liberty?

SMITH: Sons of Liberty? Never heard of them. Now if you'll excuse me. *He hurries off. Another man approaches.*

NARRATOR: Excuse me, sir, but I wonder if you could tell me what's happening here tonight.

SECOND MR. SMITH: Who are you?

NARRATOR: I'm the narrator.

SMITH: Oh. How do you do? I'm Mr. Smith.

NARRATOR: Smith? There are a lot of Smiths in Boston.

SMITH: As narrator, aren't you supposed to know everything?

NARRATOR: There are many different kinds of narrators.

SMITH: Haven't you heard of the tea tax?

NARRATOR: I've heard of it, but—

SMITH: The British are trying to punish us as though we were rude children. Well, we'll show—oh. The tea tax, yes. We were talking about the tea tax. Last summer, England passed the Tea Act. It gave the East India Company, a trade company, the right to determine who could sell tea in the colonies and who couldn't. Only those who profess loyalty to the Crown can sell tea. Since one million of we Colonists drink tea twice a day, that amounts to a lot of money. But that's not the main point. The main point is, if Parliament can control who sells tea, it can control who sells anything in the colonies.

NARRATOR: Then, Mr. Smith, sir, do you advocate a complete break with England?

SMITH: A complete break? Independence? Why, that would be treason. We're honorable people. England will come to her senses. We can work out our differences in an agreeable manner.

NARRATOR: I understand the Sons of Liberty are meeting tonight. Would you know anything about that?

SMITH: The Sons of Liberty? Oh. Let me see. Sounds familiar. Yes, isn't that a naturalist's club? They study birds, I believe, and butterflies.

NARRATOR: Actually, I believe it's a political organization.

SMITH: Politics? Oh. I don't follow politics. I'm merely a tea merchant.

NARRATOR: Tea? But, sir, didn't you just say that the tea tax was tyranny?

SMITH: Oh! Please excuse me. I have an appointment. With my blacksmith.

He walks off.

CITIZEN 1: Bloody Redcoats!

CITIZEN 2: Get off our shores!

CITIZEN 3: They're worse than Egyptian tyrants!

NARRATOR: Let's tag along behind Mr. Smith and see if we can learn anything more.

NARRATOR follows SECOND MR. SMITH to a building near the harbor. He goes in.

NARRATOR: What's this? A printer's shop. The Edes and Gillis Printing Office. I hear raised voices from upstairs inside. Let's see if we can—

MR. JONES: I'm sorry, but this is a private meeting. With all respect, you may not enter here.

NARRATOR: I'm the Narrator, and I was wondering if the Sons of Liberty were meeting here.

JONES: The Sons of Liberty? We're printers. We're discussing ink.

NARRATOR: What is your name, sir?

JONES: Uh . . . Jones. Mr. Jones. Now if you'll excuse me.

He closes the door.

CITIZEN 4: Down with the King!

CITIZEN 5: Down with England!

NARRATOR: Let's see if we can get the British viewpoint from Governor Hutchinson. The governor's residence is down this way, toward the harbor, only a five-minute walk. Wait, there are a couple of British soldiers over there in the shadows. Let's get their perspective. Good evening, officers.

SOLDIER 1: Here, now, we don't want no trouble.

NARRATOR: No, no trouble. I'd like to ask your opinions on the tea tax.

SOLDIER 2: Our opinion? You want *our* opinion?

NARRATOR: Why, yes.

SOLDIER 1: I don't think anybody ever asked us our opinion on anything.

SOLDIER 2: We're not officers. We're just common soldiers. Privates. Who are you?

NARRATOR: I'm the Narrator.

SOLDIER 2: And you want to know what we think of the tea tax? Well, we think it's unfair.

SOLDIER 1: That's right, but it's not really about tax or tea, is it, sir? We've been mulling it over. Look at it like this. These colonists already pay taxes. It's not like they're saying they won't pay any taxes at all.

SOLDIER 2: But the colonists have been acting uppity-like, saying they shouldn't be taxed if they don't have a vote on it in Parliament.

SOLDIER 1: You didn't hear this from me, but we agree with that. But the colonists? They're dreaming if they think King George is going to let them tell him what to do.

SOLDIER 2: Duck!

A rock hits the wall nearby.

SOLDIER 1: They're starting to throw stuff.

NARRATOR: Tell me, gentlemen, what are your orders?

SOLDIER 2: Our orders? Do nothing.

SOLDIER 1: Avoid trouble no matter what.

SOLDIER 2: Trouble is, if it comes down to violence, we're going to have to shoot these people even if we agree with them. Nobody's going to ask our opinions on it.

SOLDIER 1: Excuse us, we'd better move along.

They leave.

NARRATOR: Well, let's go on to Governor Hutchinson's house and hear what he has to say.

Act 2

THE SETTING *Governor Hutchinson's residence*

HUTCHINSON: First of all, I do not represent the British viewpoint, as you put it. I am a Massachusetts man. I have steadfastly opposed the sterner measures taken by the Crown thus far, but you must remember one fact. We are all Englishmen, and as such we are subject to the laws of Parliament and the Crown. If we do not like those laws, then we may petition Parliament with our grievances. But in the meantime we must abide by them.

NARRATOR: Some colonists say they should not be taxed by Parliament since they have no leader to represent them in Parliament. "No taxation without representation," is how they put it. The Sons of Liberty are saying that taxation without representation is tyranny.

HUTCHINSON: The Sons of Liberty! Don't talk to me about the Sons of Liberty. They're radicals. Look out there, look at that mob. We have mobs on the streets of Boston, and they've been incited by the rabble-rousing talk of men like Samuel Adams, Josiah Quincy, and Thomas Paine. They're radicals, every one of those Sons of . . . Sons of Liberty. Their cause is treason.

NARRATOR: Don't the colonists have the right to—

HUTCHINSON: I'll tell you about rights. It's really quite simple. It boils down to this: We as Americans have no rights other than those that the king and Parliament choose to recognize. Do you know what those Sons of Liberty want me to do? I'll tell you. They've demanded that I send those three tea ships anchored in the harbor back to England. They *demand* that I do this as a protest against the Tea Act.

NARRATOR: Are you going to do it?

HUTCHINSON: I most assuredly am not. Those ships have already cleared customs. It would be against the law to make them leave now. British law. Now if you'll excuse me I have work to do even at this late hour. There's a mob on my streets.

Act 3

THE SETTING

Sons of Liberty meeting, back on Tremont Street

JOSIAH QUINCY: Are we going to sit here and do nothing?

SONS OF LIBERTY: No! Nay!

QUINCY: Are we going to sit by while tyrants heap insult on injury?

SONS OF LIBERTY: No!

QUINCY: No? Then what shall we do? Talk? Discuss? Debate?

SON OF LIBERTY 1: No!

SON OF LIBERTY 2: We'll act!

SON OF LIBERTY 3: We'll act this very night!

QUINCY: Do you know what they say about us in the South? In Charleston, where patriots unloaded the tyrant's tea into a damp warehouse and let it rot, they say, "Bostonians are better at resolving what to do than doing what they resolve."

SON OF LIBERTY 4: The time for talk has passed!

QUINCY: What do you say, Samuel Adams?

SAMUEL ADAMS: You all know me, do you not? I am that same Sam Adams who has opposed tyranny and loved liberty. And I say this: Mr. Quincy and I have sent a demand to Governor Hutchinson. It is a simple demand. It says: Return those tea ships to England. We are committed to this demand. However, we must wait until the governor replies. But know this. If we act, the tyrant will call our actions treason, and he will react accordingly.

SON OF LIBERTY 5: Sam, the messenger's just come from the governor's residence.

MESSENGER: Governor Hutchinson says he will not return the tea ships to England.

QUINCY: Did he say nothing else?

MESSENGER: Nothing.

ADAMS: Gentlemen, this meeting can do nothing further to save the country.

Act 4

THE SETTING

Boston streets

NARRATOR: What's this! Indians? Mohawk Indians coming from the print shop? That couldn't be . . . They're carrying clubs and tomahawks, and they're—no, they're white men in disguise. They've darkened their faces with soot. They're hurrying down Tremont Street. Something is going to happen. Sir, sir, what's going on here?

SON OF LIBERTY 6: Step aside, step aside. We have no time to talk now.

NARRATOR: But why are you dressed like that?

SON OF LIBERTY 7: We're going to see how the King's tea mixes with salt water.

NARRATOR: What? Salt water? You mean—wait! Other men in disguise are joining from the side streets. They're heading for the harbor. I wonder . . . Sir, excuse me, sir, do you intend to attack the tea ships?

SON OF LIBERTY 8: We're unarmed, as you can see.

NARRATOR: But you have hatchets and clubs.

SON OF LIBERTY 1: We mean no harm to any man.

SON OF LIBERTY 2: We mean harm to King George's tea.

NARRATOR: They're running now. I'll try to keep up. Oh, no! There's an armed sentry at the head of Griffith's Wharf, and he's leveled his musket. Is there going to be violence?

SENTRY 1: Halt! Who are you men? What do you want?

SON OF LIBERTY 3: We want nothing from you.

SON OF LIBERTY 4: We ask you to step aside. We want no bloodshed, but as you can see, you are far outnumbered. Please step aside.

NARRATOR: Everyone is tense. What's going to happen? Wait—the sentry has lowered his rifle. He's letting the men pass. Now they're boarding the ship. They actually mean to do this—there's another sentry on deck!

SENTRY 2: Halt! You may not board here.

SON OF LIBERTY 5: A good evening to you, sir. As you can plainly see, you are outnumbered, and since we mean you no harm, we request you lower your musket and let us get on with our business.

SENTRY 2: Your business is treason, sir.

SON OF LIBERTY 6: So it is, but we will conduct it.

SENTRY 2: If you damage the ship, my captain will not go easy on me.

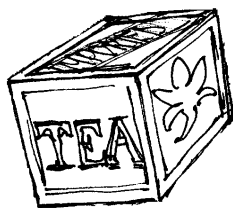
SON OF LIBERTY 6: Sir, if I had time, I would polish her binnacle.

NARRATOR: They're all going aboard now. I think I know what they're going to doYes. They're throwing bales of tea over the side into the harbor. They're sweeping the decks clean. It's a strange sight this night in Boston. A king's ship seized by men dressed as Mohawks—I can see them on deck outlined against the pale winter moon—as hundreds of pounds of tea drift away on the tide.

Well, there you have it, ladies and gentlemen. The Sons of Liberty are climbing back to Griffith's Wharf and dispersing in all directions. If there is war, and in it the colonists win their independence, then we will have witnessed history in the making. In any case, King George cannot ignore this affront. Something will surely happen now, but only time will tell its outcome.



B A C K G R O U N D
O N T H E
BOSTON TEA PARTY



WHEN KING GEORGE III and Parliament passed the Stamp Act in 1765, many American colonists decided to boycott English goods. Consequently, the Stamp Act was repealed. But in 1767, the Townshend Act went into effect. Taxes were placed on lead, glass, paint, paper, and tea. That act, too, was repealed after the colonists protested. Soon, England levied another tax under the auspices of the Tea Act of 1773. In addition to being taxed, tea could only be brought into the colonies by one company, the East India Company, and sold by government-licensed merchants. The colonists and Sons of Liberty again responded.

On November 11, 1773, the ships the *Dartmouth*, the *Eleanor*, and the *Beaver* arrived in Boston Harbor loaded with tea. The dock workers refused to unload the cargo. Governor Thomas Hutchinson, Royal Governor of the Massachusetts colony, demanded that the tax on the tea must be paid by midnight on December 16, 1773. That night more than 7,000 people gathered at Old South Church to hear speakers insist that the ships—with their cargo—go back to England. About 50 men in disguises separated themselves from the crowd and headed to Boston Harbor. They boarded the ships and dumped all 342 chests of tea into the harbor.

REVOLUTIONARY READING

Johnny Tremain by Esther Forbes (Houghton Mifflin, 1962)

The Boston Tea Party by Steven Kroll (Holiday House, 1998)

The Boston Tea Party by Richard Conrad Stein (Children's Press, 1998)



ACTIVITIES

To Throw or Not to Throw

On the night of December 16, 1773, where would your students have been? Would they have been aboard the *Dartmouth*, the *Eleanor*, and the *Beaver*? Would they have been part of the crowd that followed the “Mohawks” to the harbor? Or would they have stayed at home in protest against the Sons of Liberty's actions? Let the class form three groups. Ask the members of each group to discuss and debate their decisions with members from the other groups.

Was the Party a Success?

After the Boston Tea Party, the British closed Boston Harbor. No ships could go in or out, and so no goods or supplies could leave or come into the city. King George III also sent in more British troops to place Boston under military control. The colonists dubbed these actions “The Intolerable Acts.” Based on this information, do students believe that the Boston Tea Party was a success or a failure? Remind them to explain their reasoning fully.

“I Saw the Whole Thing”

Have pairs of students take on the roles of reporters and bystanders or participants at the Boston Tea Party. The reporters should formulate a list of questions to ask, and be prepared to follow up answers with more spontaneous questions; the bystanders or participants should be ready with their version of the events. After writing their news stories, reporters should let the interviewees look them over and make any changes. Encourage pairs to “publish” their stories for the rest of the class to read.

Simplify the Story

Challenge students to simplify the story of the Boston Tea Party for younger readers. They can make flip books or comic books, or illustrate their own easy-to-read books. Their books can be historical fiction, from the viewpoint of a fictional character involved in the Tea Party, or a nonfiction account. Share the books with a class of younger students.

Tea Time

Where does tea come from? How is it grown and harvested? Charge students with the task of finding out more about tea; for example, where it's grown, and why; how it's harvested; different types of tea; and its history as a beverage. You may want to have groups of students collaborate on this project. Suggest that students incorporate graphs, charts, illustrations, samples, maps, folktales, or songs into their presentations.

Amazing Dioramas

Discuss the locations that were important to the Boston Tea Party—the Old South Church, the Liberty Tree under which Sam Adams and other Sons of Liberty met, the streets of Boston between the church and harbor, and Boston Harbor. Tell students to create dioramas for the locations. Have them research what Boston looked like at the time what the Sons of Liberty, other Boston citizens, and British soldiers wore and the action that occurred there. Gather a variety of materials for students to use, such as boxes, cloth, plastic soldiers and animals, yarn, paints, and so on.