

**Behind the Scenes: Boston Tea Party**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

In what came to be known as the Boston Tea Party, members of the Sons of Liberty, dressed as Indians, boarded three British tea ships, confiscated 342 chests of tea, and proceeded to unceremoniously dump them into Boston Harbor. The Sons of Liberty were protesting the virtual monopoly granted by Parliament (British Government) to the East India Company (a British company) over the American tea trade. The event described above is familiar to most Americans, but the details of the Boston Tea Party are likely unfamiliar.

The “Destruction of the Tea,” as it was called until the 1830s, was one of the most carefully planned acts of rebellion in American history. While it’s true that the Sons of Liberty dropped over 92,000 pounds of tea worth nearly two million dollars in today’s money into Boston Harbor, they were very careful not to damage the ships or private property. According to the reports of the time, there was no visible damage to the three ships other than a single broken padlock. The padlock, in fact, was replaced by the Sons of Liberty the following day. Furthermore, there was no reports of anything stolen or looted from the ships other than the tea. Several opportunistic Boston citizens were reprimanded or taken into custody by the leaders of the raid for trying to fill their pockets with the discarded tea for their own purposes. Interestingly, the participants in the Boston Tea Party followed the “tea party” by cleaning the decks of the ships and putting back in place anything that was moved during the raid! That said, the vast quantities of tea dumped into the harbor fouled the water and floated in great mats for days to come. To prevent looters from trying to salvage the tea from the water, members of the Sons of Liberty would sail out into the harbor and attempt to sink the tea with clubs and oars. Despite their reputation as bloodthirsty vigilantes who reveled in tarring and feathering hapless tax collectors or loyalists, not one person was killed or injured by the Sons of Liberty in the Boston Tea Party.

Following the raid, participants in the Boston Tea Party knew they could be severely punished if their identities were discovered. Although there are 116 people documented to have participated in the Boston Tea Party, many more remained anonymous for fear of punishment. Following the “party” many participants fled Boston immediately. Only one man, named Francis Akeley, was caught and imprisoned by the British.

**1. Which of the following best describes why the Sons of Liberty staged the Boston Tea Party?**

- A. They didn't want the British tea ships in Boston Harbor
- B. They wanted to use the tea for their own purposes
- C. They were angry at the British
- D. They were protesting an act by Parliament that affected the American tea trade

**2. Which of the following assertions does the author make?**

- A. Most people know nothing about the Boston Tea Party
- B. Few people know why the Boston tea Party happened
- C. Most people don't know the details of the Boston Tea Party
- D. Most people don't know how much tea was dumped into the harbor

**3. The Sons of Liberty...**

- A. carefully planned the details of the Boston Tea Party.
- B. carelessly planned the details of the Boston Tea Party.
- C. used violence to intimidate people during the Boston Tea Party.
- D. destroyed private property during the Boston Tea Party.

**4. Which of the following does the author seem surprised about?**

- A. That members of the Sons of Liberty tried to sink floating tea to prevent looters from trying to steal it
- B. That Francis Akeley was arrested and imprisoned
- C. That over 92,000 pounds of tea were dumped into the harbor
- D. That the Sons of Liberty actually cleaned the decks of the British ships after the Boston Tea Party

**5. Which was NOT true?**

- A. There were likely many more participants in the Boston Tea Party than those that were actually documented
- B. According to the author, the Sons of Liberty did not live up to their violent reputation in the Boston Tea Party
- C. Francis Akeley was the only person actually imprisoned as a result of his actions in the Boston Tea Party
- D. The tea destroyed by the Sons of Liberty would be worth tens of millions of dollars today

- 6. To which of the following questions would “many participants fled Boston immediately” be the answer?**
- A. What happened after the Boston Tea Party?
  - B. Where did the Sons of Liberty go after the Boston Tea Party?
  - C. What happened to participants of the Boston Tea Party who were identified?
  - D. Why did the organizers of the Boston Tea Party try to escape Boston?
- 7. Which of the following were referred to as “opportunistic” in the second paragraph?**
- A. The organizers of the Boston Tea Party
  - B. Those who reported about the Boston Tea Party
  - C. Those who attempted to steal tea during the Boston Tea Party
  - D. The Sons of Liberty