

Name: _____ Date: _____

The Boston Tea Party

The British **East India Company** controlled the tea trade between India, Great Britain, and her colonies. By 1773, this company had a surplus of over 18 million pounds of tea. The tax on tea and the boycotts of British products by colonists had hurt the company.

On May 10, 1773, Parliament passed the **Tea Act**. The law gave a monopoly on tea to the East India Company. A **monopoly** is complete control over a product or service. Only the East India Company could import tea into the colonies. The law also permitted the East India Company to sell tea directly to the colonies through its own agents. Rather than raising the tax on tea, the Tea Act actually lowered it. By lowering the price, it was hoped that the colonists would buy more tea.

It would seem that any law that lowered taxes would be welcomed by the colonists, but that wasn't the case. The first to protest were colonial merchants who had been making money importing tea (sometimes legally, sometimes by smuggling). Other merchants joined the protest. They feared that if Parlia-

ment could grant a monopoly on tea to one company, it might grant monopolies on other products also, putting them out of business. Merchants also stirred up the colonial radicals by claiming this was simply another sneaky way for England to tax the colonists. As a result, crowds rioted in protest.

In December 1773, three British ships carrying East India tea anchored in Boston Harbor. The colonists refused to let the tea come ashore, and the ships refused to leave without unloading. Several thousand colonists complained to the governor, but he refused to listen. In protest of the Tea Tax, about 150 members of the **Sons of Liberty** disguised as Native Americans dumped 340 chests of tea into Boston Harbor on the night of December 16, 1773. This later became known as the **Boston Tea Party**.

Did You Know?

There was another "tea party" in the colonies. At the Yorktown Tea Party on November 17, 1774, two half-chests of tea were thrown into the York River.

Matching

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| _____ 1. East India Company | a. complete control over a product or service |
| _____ 2. Tea Act | b. protested against the Tea Tax |
| _____ 3. monopoly | c. tea dumped in Boston Harbor by Sons of Liberty |
| _____ 4. Sons of Liberty | d. gave a monopoly on tea to the East India Co. |
| _____ 5. Boston Tea Party | e. controlled the tea trade between India, Great Britain, and her colonies |

Activity

Directions: The colonial tax on tea amounted to about three cents a pound. Find out how much the sales tax is where you live. Compare the tax colonists paid on a pound of tea to the amount you would pay today on a pound of tea.

1. Today's sales tax: _____
2. Today's price for a pound of tea: _____
3. Sales tax on one pound of tea today: _____