

The Boston Tea Party - I

**Lead:** On a cold December night in 1773, a small group of men disguised with printer's ink and paint vandalized three cargo ships lying at anchor in Boston Harbor. The so-called Boston Tea Party was a milestone on the road to Revolution.

**Intro.:** *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.

**Content:** It was all about business and taxes. Monopolies and taxes. Representation and taxes. People hated and were resigned to them at the same time. In the years leading up to the American Revolution, Britons paid a lot of taxes, Americans very little. England, distracted by a century and a half of civil war, religious dispute, and continental military adventures, largely had left the colonies to fend for themselves. The distance was too great and communications too slow for effective colonial administration. During this period the white colonists of British North America had grown increasingly accustomed to self-rule. On average, aside from the Dutch, they were the richest people in the world. They had evolved a system of representative government which varied from colony to colony, paying homage to the British monarch, but for the most part they conducted the affairs of the colonies as if that ruler did not exist.

**All that began to change after 1756 when Britain and France went to war. The Seven Years War, called the French and Indian War in North America, was the first truly global conflict. Britain acquired vast territories, most notably among them Canada, but also a huge war debt. By 1763 the Crown national debt was 123 million pounds, much of it expended to protect the North American colonies and take Canada from the French. The English people were being squeezed dry to pay for the war and the government of King George III thought it reasonable to tax the colonies for their own defense. It turned out to be a very bad idea. Next time: Taxation without representation.**

**At the University of Richmond, this is Dan Roberts.**

## Resources

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**Thomas, Peter David Garner.** *Tea Party to Independence: The Third Phase of the American Revolution.* Wotton-under-Edge, Gloucester, UK, 1991.

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