

# *The Boston Tea Party*



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**SYNOPSIS:**

The Boston Tea Party tells the story of the American Revolution in 55 minutes! Narrated and hosted by "Simple", our main character, the production is actually seven plays in one.

**Prologue:** *The Town Crier*

Simple sets the stage for the action to follow and introduces the characters: Mercy Otis Warren, our heroine; General "Gentleman Johnny" Burgoyne, our villain; and Crispus Attucks, our adventurer.

**Play #1:** *The Settlement of the Colonies*

The Players act out the difficulties in England that led to the settlement of the New World and alliances with the Native Americans.

**Play #2:** *The French and Indian Wars*

This war created a debt for England. King George and others decided to tax the colonists to pay for their protection.

**Play #3:** *The Tragedy of the Sugar Tax*

Some of the earliest taxes involved the

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Study Guide**

molasses-rum-slave trade which was based in New England.



**Play #4:** *The Stamp Act*

This act was the first of the "Intolerable Acts" which caused the colonists to object to "Taxation without Representation".

**Play #5:** *The Tea Act and the Boston Massacre*

Tea was the most important drink to the colonists. This tax led to discontent everywhere and the formation of the Sons and Daughters of Liberty.

**Play #6:** *The Blockade of Boston*

The stakes get higher and the tension builds as the Colonists realize that rebellion could mean life or death.

**Play #7:** *The Blockheads of Boston*

Simple must test his own patriotism and take a stand after Paul Revere's raid. The Revolution begins!



**PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS:** In this play with in a play, as in many Seem-To-Be Players productions, actors play multiple characters. A change in hat or clothing can transform one character into another.

The main characters are:

**MERCY OTIS WARREN** — A revolutionary "Daughter of Liberty". Mercy wrote as many



pamphlets as Thomas Paine and was well known by John and Abigail Adams and other revolutionaries. Her husband, James, was a Minuteman, and her brother, James Otis, was the first to argue in court against "taxation without representation". Mercy wrote a history of the revolution, and

she also wrote plays, including *The Blockheads of Boston*, 1775, in which Simple is one of her characters. In our play, Mercy represents the heroic cause of the colonists. Our actress also plays the following characters: Pilgrim Wife, George Washington, James Otis & Sam Adams.

**GENERAL "GENTLEMAN JOHNNY"**

**BURGOYNE** — A real life general in the British Army, he was later famous for his defeat at the Battle of Saratoga. He fancied himself "the next Shakespeare" and wrote many plays, including *The Blockade of Boston*, in 1775. Mercy's play, *The Blockheads of Boston* is a parody on the General's play. In our play, our actor playing Johnny represents the villainous Redcoats and also plays the following characters: Redcoat, British Oppressor, Governor Hutchinson, Prime Minister Grenville & Stamp Tax Collector.

**CRISPUS ATTUCKS** — A dock worker in Boston. Formerly a slave, Crispus worked hard and bought his own freedom. Crispus was one of five citizens killed during the Boston Massacre and was the first African-American casualty of that conflict. In our play, the actor Crispus also plays the following characters Mohawk Chief, Iroquois & Huron Warriors, British Thug, Royal Stamp and Paul Revere and the KING GEORGE III puppet.



**SIMPLE** — is a fictional character come to life from the pages of one of Mercy's plays. He is a prototype of an early American Theatrical characters also known as Sample Switchel or Toby. Simple is the "wise fool" and as such, both learns and teaches the most about the Revolution.

He's in the play but he doesn't know the ending! Our actor also plays Pilgrim Husband, French Trader, British Thug, Ebenezer Mackintosh, James Warren, Simple Mackintosh, Merchant, Sailor and becomes a Minuteman.

### **CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTIONS VS. THEATRICAL CONVENTIONS:**

When the Colonists began to organize, they had meetings called Conventions, Committees of Correspondence or Congresses. In these meetings the colonists established rules and procedures for the new country being born. Theatrical conventions establish rules and procedures for a specific production. The theatrical conventions you will see in this production include:

#### **1) Melodrama** —

In traditional American Melodrama, conflict is spelled out in its simplest most "black and white" form, so that the audience perceives each character and cause as good or evil. In realistic theatre, we look at all the reasons for each decision, while in Melodrama, the choices are much clearer. Because of this, a tradition began in the late 1800's and early part of the 20th century of "Booing" the villain and Cheering "Yay" the hero. Audiences also "Sigh" for the heroine with sympathy. Simple, as the Toby narrator, gives the audiences the rules for this sort of participation.

#### **2) Breaking the Fourth Wall** —

In realistic theatre there is a fourth wall between the actors and the audience. You can see the actors, but they can't see you. In Melodrama and highly theatrical pieces like this one, the actors often speak directly to the audience,

sometimes as their principal character and occasionally, even as the actor playing the character. This is called theatrical because everyone knows very clearly that this is "playing" a part rather than "being" a character.

**3) Transformational Theatre —**

Transformational theatre occurs whenever actors “transform” an idea or object with their imagination into something different. The actors in The Boston Tea Party don different hats and coats and grab small prop pieces and "transform" into many different characters. They establish where they are and what they are doing with simple statements, knowing that the audience will accept these like children at play.

**4) Musical Theatre —**

There are songs included in this play which are an artistic extension of the dialogue and action. This is part of American Musical Theatre tradition. Actors speak or deliver the same information through a song and dance, which may be highly unrealistic but theatrically compelling and entertaining. Art meets education meets entertainment in a piece like The Boston Tea Party.

**5) Puppetry —**

KING GEORGE III is a puppet. There are other props, like a "Stamp" that almost makes the actor into a puppet. This production mixes puppetry with live actors.

**ACTIVITES**

**TIME LINE:** Have your students create a timeline of the following events

1600 \_\_\_\_\_ ! \_\_\_\_\_ ! \_\_\_\_\_ ! \_\_\_\_\_ ! \_\_\_\_\_ ! \_\_\_\_\_ 1800

<p>Pilgrims land — 1620          French and Indian War — 1754 to 1763          Quebec Falls — 1761          Sugar Act — 1764          Stamp Act — 1765          Repeal of Stamp Act — 1766          Declaratory Act — 1766          Townshend Acts — 1767          British Troops land in 1768          Boston Massacre — 1770</p>	<p>Writs of Assistance — 1770          Townshend Acts Repealed — 1770          Except for Tea Tax — 1770          Tea Act — 1773          December 15th meeting, 1773          Boston Tea Party, December 16th, 1773          Coercive Acts, Intolerable Acts, Boston Closed, 1774          Paul Revere’s Ride, Battles of Lexington &amp; Concord, the war begins!!!! 1775</p>
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**POST PERFORMANCE DISCUSSION TOPICS:**

Conflict: Most plays are based on conflict. While it might appear that the principal conflict in The Boston Tea Party is between King George III and the colonists, students may identify other conflicts.

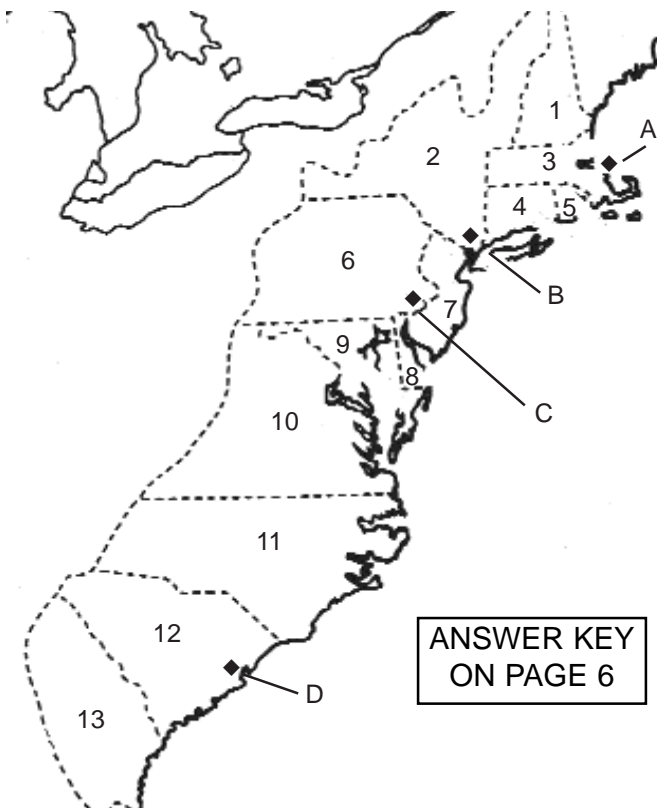
After the play, answer these questions to explore conflict:

- What does Mercy Otis Warren think a play is about?
- What does Gentleman Johnny Burgoyne think a play is about?
- What does Crispus Attucks think a play is about?
- What is this play about?
- Who wins?
- Who loses?
- What does Simple learn and what do we learn about the beginnings of our country?



**GEOGRAPHY:**

1. Here's a map — divide into small groups and see which group can name the 13 colonies the quickest.
2. Which colonies will become the Southern states in the Civil War? Which the Northern?
3. Which colonies were primarily agricultural, which fishing, shipping and industrial?
4. Find the diamonds and name the four major Port Cities. How many are in the North? How many in the South?



**GROUP DISCUSSION:**

Use these "What if" questions with your students:

- ....the colonists had just paid their taxes?  
What former colonies became countries in the British Commonwealth?  
How would we be like them?
- ....the British had won the war?  
What might have happened next?
- ....the French had come into the war sooner?
- ....we had not had George Washington on our side?

**MATH:**

Colonists dumped tons of tea into Boston Harbor to protest the tax.

Some math problems:

1. If each box of tea contained four 25 pound bags and there were 300 boxes in a ship, how many pounds of tea were thrown from each ship?  
Hint: (4 X 25 X 300)
2. Since there were three ships, if each had contained the same number of boxes, how many total pounds of tea went into the harbor?  
Hint: (the answer above X 3)
3. That total was worth 10,000 pounds of British Sterling (a silver coin). If one British Sterling was worth \$3.30 in U.S. dollars, what was the total value of the tea that went in the sea?  
Hint: (10,000 X \$3.30)
4. Today, the value of that tea would be 1.8 million dollars. For your most advanced question, how much has that 1776 British Sterling inflated? In other words, what would it be worth in today's money?  
Hint: (10,000 X \_\_\_\_\_ = \$1,800,000, therefore each Sterling would be worth \$\_\_\_\_\_)

**ART:**

Flags were important to the colonists. Some flags had drawings and slogans on them like the curled up snake flag which said, "Don't Tread on Me" and the flag of a tree which said "Liberty".

Here's another:



1. What do the initials on the flag stand for?
2. What does "Unite or Die" mean?

Make up your own flag with a slogan about freedom and a drawing which illustrates that slogan.

## WHY THE FOLLOWING CHARACTERS WERE IMPORTANT TO THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION:

**SAMUEL ADAMS** — Brother of future president John Adams, Sam Adams was the head of the Boston "Sons of Liberty". He was a firebrand revolutionary who believed that only armed conflict could gain the Americans their freedom.

**FRENCH TRADERS** — The French had better relations with the Native Americans than the British, often intermarrying with the tribes and living with them. They also tended to honor their trade treaties. For this reason, the French had more allies, including the Huron and Ottawa, both Great Lakes tribes.

**HURON & OTTAWA WARRIORS** — These Native Americans tended to side with the French, as they perceived both the British and the Colonists as "land grabbers".

**GOVERNOR THOMAS HUTCHINSON** — A Governor of Boston who was appointed by King George III, Hutchinson was not an evil man, but never in touch with the people. He didn't understand "what all the fuss was about." He finally left Boston to return to England after his house was looted and his life was threatened.

**EBENEZER MACKINTOSH** — was basically a 18th Century gang leader. Boston of the 1770's had a North End Gang and a South End Gang. Sam Adams convinced gang leader Mackintosh to unite both groups against the common British enemy. Mackintosh was not a true patriot but a born rioter and looter.

**MINUTEMEN** — these were militia, who served on an "as needed" basis, as opposed to the Regulars, who were soldiers who enlisted in the Continental Army. The Minutemen could be ready to fight in a flash, but often left the army to return home and work their farms.

**MOHAWKS** — these Native Americans were a band of the larger Iroquois tribe which tended to side with the British.

**JAMES OTIS** — Brother of Mercy, he was a well known lawyer who became a revolutionary. After a beating by the British his mind was never

the same. Before he died he went insane and burned all of his papers.

**PILGRIMS** — Early settlers of the Boston area, these Puritans were searching for religious freedom from English intolerance.

**PRIME MINISTER GRENVILLE** — One of the English Prime Ministers who was in favor of taxing the colonists. Another member of the Parliament included William Pitt (Pittsburgh was named after him) who opposed him, but Grenville had the ear of King George III.

**REDCOATS** — The British Soldiers were also called Redcoats because they wore bright red uniforms. They were referred to sometimes as "Lobsterbacks" because that's the color lobsters turn when boiled. The Minutemen adopted blue as their uniform color.

**PAUL REVERE** — A silversmith by trade, he became a "Son of Liberty" and was one of many messengers who warned the surrounding countryside that "the British are coming!" Paul Revere happened to take the exact route the British took and, consequently ended up in history. Other riders included Sybil Ludington, a heroic Revolutionary woman, and several young boys.

**STAMP TAX COLLECTORS** — These unpopular Tories (those sympathetic to England) were appointed by the crown to collect taxes. They made money on each collection. They were so despised that they were often "tarred and feathered" or "hung in effigy."

**JAMES WARREN** — He married Mercy Otis and would have been content to be a farmer except for the revolution. They had four children.

**GEORGE WASHINGTON** — Father of our country and our first President, it is interesting that his first military action was fighting with the British during the French and Indian War.

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## ANSWER KEY

### **GEOGRAPHY ANSWERS:**

1.
  1. New Hampshire
  2. New York
  3. Massachusetts
  4. Connecticut
  5. Rhode Island
  6. Pennsylvania
  7. New Jersey
  8. Delaware
  9. Maryland
  10. Virginia
  11. North Carolina
  12. South Carolina
  13. Georgia
2. Georgia, S. Carolina, N. Carolina, Virginia  
secede from the Union - the rest remain Northern.

3. The South was primarily agricultural.
4. Northern ports:  
A. Boston B. New York C. Philadelphia  
Southern port: D. Charleston

### **MATH ANSWERS:**

1. 30,000 lbs
2. 90,000 lbs
3. \$33,000
4. \$180

### **ART ANSWERS:**

1. Abbreviations for the Thirteen Colonies
2. The only way to fight British tyranny was to  
become United States.