Tea and Trouble

Examine the arguments behind a choice in colonial Boston.

6.H.15 "Identify issues related to an historical event in Europe or the Americas, giving basic arguments for and against that issue utilizing the perspectives, interests, and values of those involved."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline one argument for dumping the tea, circle one argument against it, and write 1 and 2 beside two groups with different interests. Use your marks to compare how people viewed the same event.

A Choice at Boston Harbor

1 In 1773, tea ships arrived in Boston, a busy port in Britain's North American colonies. Parliament had kept a tax on tea, although colonists could not elect members of Parliament. The Tea Act let the East India Company sell tea directly in the colonies, which could make its tea cheaper than before. Some Boston residents saw the low price as a trap: buying the tea would still mean paying a tax they had no vote on. Others welcomed a less costly drink and wanted trade to continue.

2 On December 16, a group of colonists boarded three tea ships and threw 342 chests of tea into Boston Harbor. Protesters believed destroying the tea would send Parliament a message that petitions alone had not delivered. They valued a voice in decisions about taxes. Yet a Boston shopkeeper who hoped to sell imported tea might fear lost income. A ship worker might worry about delays at the docks. Neither had to approve of the tax to think that damaging someone else's cargo was the wrong way to protest.

3 The destroyed tea belonged to the East India Company, not to the protesters. British officials argued that the government had the right to make laws for the colonies and that the company deserved protection for its property. Parliament responded in 1774 with laws that closed Boston's port until the tea was paid for. The closure threatened work for people who loaded ships and sold supplies, including people who had not thrown any tea. The same act could look like a stand for political rights to one person and an unfair risk to another.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Why did some Boston residents think dumping the tea defended their rights? Use a detail about the tea tax.

2. How could a shopkeeper oppose the tea tax but still oppose dumping the tea?

3. What argument might a British official make against dumping the tea?

4. How could the port closure make ship workers view the protesters' choice differently from the protesters?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine you speak at a Boston town meeting before the tea is destroyed. In four sentences, propose a different way to challenge the tea tax, explain how a protester and a tea seller might each view your plan, and name the value guiding your choice.

ANSWER KEY

Tea and Trouble

GRADE 6 · 6.H.15

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline one argument for dumping the tea, circle one argument against it, and write 1 and 2 beside two groups with different interests. Use your marks to compare how people viewed the same event. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Why did some Boston residents think dumping the tea defended their rights? Use a detail about the tea tax.	**They could not elect members of Parliament, but buying the tea meant paying a tax Parliament had kept.**
2	How could a shopkeeper oppose the tea tax but still oppose dumping the tea?	**The shopkeeper might object to a tax colonists had no vote on but also fear losing income from tea sales.**
3	What argument might a British official make against dumping the tea?	**A British official might argue that the East India Company's property deserved protection, even when colonists disagreed with a law.**
4	How could the port closure make ship workers view the protesters' choice differently from the protesters?	**Protesters saw the act as a stand for a voice in tax decisions. Ship workers could see it as a risk to their jobs because the port closure threatened their work.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I would ask neighbors to post signs urging families not to buy tea until Parliament heard their complaints. A protester might support this plan because it challenges the tax without paying it. A tea seller might object because fewer customers would mean less income. I value protecting people's property while making our disagreement public.

Accept answers that connect an argument to a group's perspective, interest, or value, even if students use different wording. For Part 3, the proposed action must differ from destroying the tea.