

## Tea—the drink that made a nation

1. You may have heard the saying 'a good cup of tea can work wonders', but can you believe that tea was the spark that eventually led to the American War of Independence?
2. In the 18th century, much of North America was still a colony of Great Britain and controlled by the British Government. The colonists were unhappy because they had no say in the laws that were made about life in their colony. All the laws were made by people who lived in Britain.
3. The government wanted to increase taxes in the colony to pay for a war that Britain had just fought. The colonists thought that because they had no voice in the government, they should not have to pay money to Britain.
4. Some colonial businessmen started importing tea from countries not controlled by Britain so they wouldn't have to pay taxes to Britain. To try to stop this, Britain allowed one British company to sell its tea directly to the colony without charging any tax. This meant that its tea would cost less. The British Government expected people to buy this cheap tea and that the colonists who were importing tea from other countries would go out of business. But the people of the colony wanted to support colonial businesses.
5. On the evening of 16 December 1773, three ships laden with tea arrived in Boston Harbour. Crowds of people waited on the quayside knowing that something important was about to happen. Suddenly, a mob of 150 men disguised as Mohawk Native Americans ran through the crowd. They jumped into small boats and paddled out to the waiting ships.
6. Armed with tomahawks, 50 men climbed aboard each ship. Using their weapons, they split open every tea chest they could find and threw the tea overboard. Soon the water was covered with a cloak of black tea leaves.
7. To make sure none of the tea could be saved and sold, the men thrashed the water with their oars as they rowed back to the harbour. Every trace of tea sank beneath the surface.
8. This act of defiance, known as the Boston Tea Party, united the colony against the British Government. The first step on America's road to independence had been taken.

