



Primary Source Lesson Plan-A Tea Party Volunteer

Name of Primary Source

A Tea Party Volunteer by Robert Sessions

How primary source ties into text

Qualifies: Robert Sessions describes his experience of the Boston Tea Party.

Elaborates: Gives specifics about what it was like to destroy the tea during the Boston Tea Party.

Raises questions: This primary source can be used to identifying unfamiliar words using a variety of methods.

Corresponding Lesson

This lesson ties into chapter 10 in the America's Past Textbook. It would be good to use it during a guided or shared reading lesson sometime that week or in the weeks that follow.

Colorado Standards

- Social Studies Standard 1 History: History develops moral understanding, defines identity, and creates and appreciation of how things change while building skills in judgment and decision making. History enhances the ability to read varied sources and develop the skills to analyze, interpret, and communicate. Grade level expectation: analyze historical sources from multiple points of view to develop an understanding of historical context
- Reading and Writing 1: Read and understand a variety of materials
- Reading and Writing 3: Write and speak using conventional grammar, usage, sentence structure, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling

Big Idea

The big idea is that Boston patriots destroyed the tea as a political or anti-tax protest. It was not wanton destruction or theft of British property or an act of rebellion to overthrow British control generally.

Critical thinking

Why were the tea party men so careful about destroying the tea, and only the tea, and about preventing anyone stealing tea?

Mini-Lesson

Teaching

Begin by reading through the source as a shared reading. Have students draw a box around words that are unfamiliar to them.

This lesson could also be used as a writing activity, such as a one-paragraph definition, in their own words, of the term Boston Tea Party. It would be a good assessment of their learning.

Active Engagement

Students will use graphic organizer, "Figuring It Out," to help them understand the meaning of new vocabulary words. They will write the word in the first column. The second column is for clues to meaning. The third column is to guess the meaning. The fourth column is the actual meaning from the dictionary. In the final column, students can put a plus or minus sign to say if their guess was close or not.

After the students have read the text, have in work in pairs to write a brief explanation (2 or 3 sentences) about the last two paragraphs. Why were the men who destroyed the tea so serious (“no clamor, no talking”) and why did they put everything back “in its proper place,” except for the tea? When they report out, try to help them reach a consensus about the colonists’ determination to keep their protest focused on what they considered an unfair tax. They did not want the protest to get out of control or to destroy British property. Can they imagine a protest in which they might be involved in today that might give them a bad reputation if it got out of control?

A Tea Part Volunteer by Robert Sessions

I was living in Boston at the time, in the family of a Mr. Davis, a lumber merchant, as a common laborer. On that eventful evening, when Mr. Davis came in from the town meeting, I asked him what was to be done with the tea.

“They are now throwing it overboard,” he replied.

Receiving permission, I went immediately to the spot. Everything was as light as day, by the means of lamps and torches--a pin might be seen lying on the wharf. I went on board where they were at work, and took hold with my own hands.

I was not one of those appointed to destroy the tea, and who disguised themselves as Indians, but was a volunteer, the disguised men being largely men of family and position in Boston, while I was a young man whose home and relations were in Connecticut. The appointed and disguised party proving too small for the quick work necessary, other young men, similarly circumstanced with myself, joined them in their labors.

The chests were drawn up by a tackle--one man bringing them forward in the hold, another putting a rope around them, and others hoisting them to the deck and carrying them to the vessel's side. The chests were then opened, the tea emptied over the side, and the chests thrown overboard.

Perfect regularity prevailed during the whole transaction. Although there were many people on the wharf, entire silence prevailed--no clamor, no talking. Nothing was meddled with but the teas on board.

After having emptied the hold, the deck was swept clean, and everything put in its proper place. An officer on board was requested to come up from the cabin and see that no damage was done except to the tea.

Source: Meltzer, Milton. *The American Revolutionaries: A History in Their Own Words 1750-1800*. New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1987.

Figuring It Out

Write the unfamiliar words from your reading in the first column, any clues you can find about their meaning in the second column, and your guess in the third column. Look up the word in the dictionary to check your guess and record the actual meaning in the fifth column. Give yourself a + if your guess was close and a - if it was not.

Title of passage: _____

Unfamiliar Word	Clues to Meaning	Guess Meaning	Actual Meaning	+/-