

Document Section 1

A Taste for Tea

GOAL: Students will comprehend the various strategies that the colonists used to put pressure on England in the face of rising taxes. In particular, students will assess the practicality of changing consumer tastes to meet political and economic goals.

FOCUS:

1. Imagine that your favorite food is ice cream (not too difficult to imagine) and that the government, in an effort to raise money, is adding a tax to your favorite dessert.
 - a. Who do you think will bear the brunt of the tax? (First, think about who the possibilities are.) Why?
 - b. If your pocketbook is affected, what kind of things would you do? What are the options? Brainstorm. Put ideas on the board. Give examples (substitute another dessert, lose weight, make more money, etc.).

DOCUMENT ANALYSIS:

1. Distribute documents to students, if you have not already done so, and place students in document groups.
2. For time-management, it may make sense to allow students within one group to divide the documents (or, alternatively, assign reading at home).
3. Students are to read documents and use a document analysis sheet (see appendix) to help them peruse the documents.
4. Students will discuss the “consider” questions that appear before several of the documents. One student or more should record possible answers.
5. After discussion, students will complete preparation for debate (see below.)

DEBATE QUESTION:

Students will divide into two groups. Each side will prepare one debate question and present it to the class.

Imagine that you are a famous merchant of 1767. Your peers respect your knowledge so much that they have asked you to give them some advice on how to boycott British goods.

1. Argue in favor of a merchant boycott of English goods over a consumer boycott of English goods (make certain you know the difference . . . ask for help if you need it).
2. Argue that no boycott would work.

A Taste for Tea: Documents

Document #1

“Address to the Ladies” *Boston Post-Boy*, 16 November 1767.

View a digital image of this document at: http://www.masshist.org/database/onview_full.cfm?queryID=413

CONSIDER: As you read the following document, consider the audience of this message. How does this “audience” correspond to the Tea Market? What tactics are used to try to change demand? How effective do you think they might be?

Address to the LADIES

Young ladies in town, and those that live round,
Let a friend at this season advise you:
Since money’s so scarce, and times growing worse
Strange things may soon hap and surprize you:
First then, throw aside your high top knots of pride
Wear none but your own country linnen;
Of Economy boast, let your pride be the most
To show cloaths of your own make and spinning.
What, if homespun they say is not quite so gay
As brocades, yet be not in a passion,
For when once it is known this is much wore in town,
One and all will cry out, ’tis the fashion!
And as one, all agree that you’ll not married be
To such as will wear London Fact’ry
But at first sight refuse, tell ’em such you do chuse
As encourage our own Manufact’ry.
No more Ribbons wear, nor in rich dress appear,
Love your country much better than fine things,
Begin without passion, ’twill soon be the fashion
To grace your smooth locks with a twine string.
Throw aside your Bohea, and your Green Hyson Tea,¹
And all things with a new fashion duty;
Procure a good store of the choice Labradore,²
For there’ll soon be enough here to suit ye:
These do without fear and to all you’ll appear
Fair, charming, true, lovely and cleaver;
Tho’ the times remain darkish, young men may be sparkish.
And love you much stronger than ever.

¹ Bohea was one of the most popular teas among American tea drinkers. Bostonians imported most of this tea via England. (Benjamin Woods Labaree, *The Boston Tea Party*, New York, 1964: 8).

² Labradore tea was gathered from the banks of New England’s rivers. Labaree claims that its taste was very questionable. (Labaree, 27).

Document #2

Letter from Robert Harris to Caleb Davis, August 1768

CONSIDER – The Non-Importation agreements are signed in August 1768 to stop the import of certain English goods – like tea. Do you think Bostonians are willing to give up their favorite drink so easily? Are Merchants willing to give up a source of revenue? Why or why not?

Sr,

I don't know but I shall tire yr. patience
but I intend to make you easy as soon as I can
leave home. But must ask the [favor] of yr send[ing]
me 1 [barrel] best & 1 [barrel] midling sugar & 2 case
raisons and make up the rest of their loads in
Rock Salt. I have sent down 2 load cyder you
may have if you please at the comm. price. If I
cant gett 3 [barrels] for it, beg you'd store it for me.
Desire to know the extent of price for flax seed and
the lowest I can have tea by the chest and you'll
oblige yr. obliged Friend and Humble Servant,
Rob.t Harris

Robert Harris to Caleb Davis, August 1768, Caleb Davis Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society.

Document #3
Receipts and Accounts of Tea Purchases, 1768

Needs transcriptions and links to images? Work with Nancy on digital images – embed into page.

Receipts and accounts of tea purchases, 1768, Caleb Davis Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society.

Document #4

John Adams, Autobiography [excerpt]

The Physicians told me that close Application to a School and to Studies by night and by Day had [thickened?] and corrupted the whole Mass of my blood and juices, and that I must have recourse to a Milk Diet according to the Theory and Practice of Dr. Cheyne, at that time the height of the Fassion in Medicine. I had read the Writings of Dr. Cheyne and now read them again, renounced all Meat and Spirits and lived upon Bread and milk, Vegetables and Water. I found my head more at Ease and thought I pursued my Studies to more Advantage: but was tormented with a heart burn every afternoon, which nothing but large potions of Tea at Evening could extinguish. I pursued this course for Eighteen months, six or seven of which passed at my fathers house, with the Advice of Dr. Savil and Dr. Hearsey [Hersey], who were both unqualified Admirers of Cheyne's in Theory, though not in their own practice. My excellent Father at last by his tender Advice at sometimes and a little good humoured ridicule at others converted me again to the Use of a little meat and more comforting Drink, but in both of these I was extreamly sparing for many Years after, and indeed untill I became a Member of Congress and a Traveller, when long journeys and Voyages made a more generous Regimen essential to my being[...]

John Adams, autobiography, part 1, "John Adams," through 1776, sheet 5 of 53 [electronic edition]. *Adams Family Papers: An Electronic Archive*, Massachusetts Historical Society, <http://www.masshist.org/digitaladams>

Document #5

John Adams, Diary, 29 June 1770

JUNE 29. 1770. FRYDAY.

~~Sat out on~~ Began my journey to Falmouth in Casco Bay. Baited my Horse at Martins in Lynn, where I saw T. Fletcher and his Wife, Mr. French &c. Dined at Goodhues in Salem, where I fell in Company with a Stranger, his Name I know not. He made a Genteell Appearance, was in a Chair himself with a Negro Servant. Seemed to have a general Knowledge of American Affairs, said he had been a Merchant in London, had been at Maryland, Phyladelphia, New York &c. One Year more he said would make Americans as quiet as Lambs. They could not do without Great Britain, they could not conquer their Luxury &c.

Oated my Horse and drank baume Tea at Treadwells in Ipswich, where I found Brother Porter and chatted with him 1/2 Hour, then rode to Rowley and lodged at Captn. Jewitts. -
- Jewitt had rather the House should sit all the Year round, than give up an Atom of Right or Priviledge. -- The Governor cant frighten the People, with &c.

John Adams, Diary, 29 June 1770 [electronic edition], *Adams Family Papers: An Electronic Archive*, Massachusetts Historical Society, <http://www.masshist.org/digitaladams/>

Document #6

Letter from Thomas Hutchinson to William Palmer, 28 April 1768

CONSIDER – Thomas Hutchinson, acting governor of Massachusetts from 1769-1774, writes to William Palmer about his business order. What role do you think tea has for him and his family? What sense of value of tea do you get from this document?

To: Palmer

Boston, 28 April 1768

Sir

I shall inclose Captain Bretts receipt for 350 Ounces Bullion and 2[] half Joannes which you will dispose of at the best prices and carry the proceeds to my Credit also Frances Lecams draft on Richard Forman for 13£ sterling. I am going out of Town and expect to be absent three or four weeks shall desire my sons to ship more by Scott unless they can procure bills. I design before the Fall to make 1500 £ more over and above the 1000£ last winter so that when Tea is at the lowest you will secure to the amount of 3000£ more on the joint account to be shipped between this and winter more or less on every Vessel. The profits of these adventures will depend on your buying on the best terms for then they will have a quick sale and you will have a quick return. About a third part of the smooth Tea if not inferior to what you have now shipped may go off, but the best customers know the difference. The half Chests if they are not dearer it will be well to have a few of. I am

Sir Your very humble Servant

Thomas Hutchinson to William Palmer, 28 April 1768, Thomas Hutchinson Letterbooks, Massachusetts Historical Society.

Document #7
Bromfield Family accounts, undated

CONSIDER – What role did tea play in the family budget? What in the budget would be considered “complements” to tea? What bearing would the price of tea have on the complements?

What are the expences of an ordinary family composed of six persons by the year?

	£	S	D
House rent	20	0	0
25 Cords of Wood at 12s a Cord	15	0	0
Six Barrells of Cyder at 10s	3	0	0
Seven Barrells of Flower at 31s	10	17	0
Three Bushells of Malt at 6s	0	13	6
Twelve Gallons of Molasses at 2s 6d	1	10	0
Ten Gallons of Spirit at 46	2	5	0
Ten Gallons of Wine at 6s 8d	3	6	8
25 lbs. Loaf Sugar 1s 6d	1	17	6
150 lbs. Brown Sugar	4	10	0
Half a hundred of Rice at 1s 6d	0	12	6
1 lb. Green Tea	0	12	0
4 lb. of sochong at 5s	1	0	0
6 lbs. of Chocolat	0	16	0
15 lbs. of Coffee at	0	18	0
50 lbs. of Candles at 8d per lb.	1	13	4
Ten Gallons of Vinigar at 1/	0	10	0
Two bushels of Salt	0	6	0
1 lb. pound of Pepper	0	3	9
Spices at 9/	0	9	0
12 bushells of sand at	0	6	0
Brooms brushes and mats at 12/	0	12	0
Repair of furniture	20	0	0
For cow and horse keeping	10	0	0
For Fruit	1	10	0
4 lbs. of Honey at 9d	0	3	0
150 lbs. of Butter 8d	5	0	0
50 lbs. of Cheese 2s	1	1	0
110 hundred lbs. of meat	15	12	0
Vegitables	1	10	0
Maids wages	6	10	0
A Mans [ditto]	6	0	0
Medicine and attendance	3	0	0
Travelling expentures	6	0	0