

Document Section 5

The Profits of Patriotism: What are the opportunity costs of being a Patriot or a Loyalist? Who would you rather be?

BACKGROUND: Students will have studied opportunity costs at the beginning of economics. This mini unit will afford students a chance to predict certain outcomes based on opportunity cost analysis.

GOAL: Students will apply their understanding of opportunity costs to the events leading up to the Boston Tea Party.

FOCUS:

1. Define “opportunity costs.”
2. Imagine you are Richard Clarke of Clarke & Sons, a very notable merchant company. You have the opportunity to be a consignee for the East India Company. The East India Company allowed only a select few colonists to have rights to sell its tea in the colonies. You have been granted that privilege. However, you did not expect the intense negative reaction to the Tea Act of 1773, and now the Boston Patriots are talking about sending the tea back to England. They want you to resign as a consignee. Make a decision matrix that illustrates your choices and the effects that each choice will have on your business and personal life.

Resign as Consignee ----->----->----->
Stay as Consignee ----->----->----->

What do you think the Clarke family should have done? What do you think they did?

DOCUMENT ANALYSIS:

Read the following documents pertaining to the controversy over the East India Company and the Tea Act of 1773.

1. On a separate piece of paper answer the “Consider” question that corresponds with each document.
2. Discuss your answers with your group and come to some consensus over the meaning of the documents.

TASK: Split your group in half:

- a. Calculate the estimated opportunity costs for the Clarke family. You can list what the costs would entail (I do not expect you to know the actual cost – however, be prepared to explain the intrinsic value of that cost).
- b. Calculate the estimated opportunity costs for the Patriots. Follow the same directions as above.

Present your findings to the class.

Part I: THE PATRIOTS

Document #1

John Adams, Diary, 26 June 1770

CONSIDER –John Adams was not a merchant, but did he feel any of the pain of the merchants? Why or why not? What do you think he thought about the merchants and their cause?

JUNE 26.

Last of Service; very little Business this Court. The Bar and the Clerks universally complain of the Scarcity of Business. So little was perhaps never known, at July Term. The Cause must be the Non Importation agreement, and the Declension of Trade. So that the Lawyers loose as much by this Patriotic Measure as the Merchants, and Tradesmen. Stephens the Connecticut Hemp Man was at my Office, with Mr. Counsellor Powell and Mr. Kent. Stephens says that the whole Colony of Connecticut has given more implicit Observance to a Letter from the Select Men of Boston than to their Bibles for some Years. And that in Consequence of it, the Country is vastly happier, than it was, for every Family has become a little manufactory House, and they raise and make within themselves, many Things, for which they used to run in debt to the Merchants and Traders. So that No Body is hurt but Boston, and the Maritime Towns. -- I wish there was a Tax of 5s. st. on every Button, from England. It would be vastly for the good of this Country, &c. As to all the Bustle and Bombast about Tea, it has been begun by about 1/2 doz. Hollands Tea Smugglers, who could not find so much Profit in their Trade, since the Nine Pence was taken off in England. -- Thus He. Some Sense and some Nonsense!

John Adams diary 15, 30 January 1768, 10 August 1769 - 22 August 1770 [electronic edition], *Adams Family Papers: An Electronic Archive*, Massachusetts Historical Society.
<http://www.masshist.org/digitaladams/>

Document #2

John Adams, Diary, 2 June 1771

1771. Sunday June 2D

[. . .] Drank Tea at Mr. Putnams with Mr. Paine, Mrs. Paine, Dr. Holyokes Lady and Dr. Billy Paine. The Dr. is a very civil, agreable and sensible young Gentleman.

Went in the Evening over to G. Chandlers and chatted with him an Hour. He is very bitter vs. the Town of Boston. I hate 'em from my Soul says he. -- Great Patriots -- were for Non Importation, while their old Rags lasted, and as soon as they were sold at enormous Prices, they were for importing -- no more to be heard about Manufactures -- and now, there is a greater Flood of Goods than ever were known -- and as to Tea, those who were most strenuous against it are the only Persons who have any to sell.

Jno. Chandler Esqr. of Petersham came into P.s in the Evening from Boston Yesterday, and gave us an Account of Mr. Otis's Conversion to Toryism. -- Adams was going on, in the old Road, and Otis started up and said they had gone far enough in that Way, the Governor had an undoubted Right to carry the Court where he pleased, and moved for a Committee to represent the Inconveniences of sitting there, and moved for an Address to the Governor. He was a good Man -- the Ministers said so -- the justices said so and it must be so -- and moved to go on with Business, and the House voted every Thing he moved for. -- Boston People say he is distracted. &c.

John Adams diary 17, 16 April - 14 June 1771 [electronic edition]. *Adams Family Papers: An Electronic Archive*,. Massachusetts Historical Society, <http://www.masshist.org/digitaladams/>

Document #3

Article from the *Boston Post-Boy*, 6-13 December 1773

CONSIDER – *What were these merchants from Philadelphia willing to forgo? Do you think sacrificing one’s “pecuniary interests” have rewards in the end? What are the **opportunity costs** of political activism in this case? What do you think are the opportunity costs of political inaction?*

Philadelphia –Nov. 22

A correspondent observes, that at a time when almost every American pen seems to be drawn in defence of our violated rights, he is amazed that the judicious advocates for liberty should omit to give us their sage advice and opinion on the fatal consequences that must result from our large importations from Great-Britain, and our almost total neglect of our own manufactures, the most durable source of wealth and independence. He further observes, that the immense importation of London porter and English beer at this perilous crisis, is a glaring instance of the impolicy of his countrymen, who prodigally lavish their money for the emolument of a Country, at 3000 miles distance, a country that is now abridging us of our liberties, when they might have a variety of excellent beer, even porter itself, made in this city, that would not disgrace the celebrated Ben Kenten’s cellar. This he thinks an ungenerous return to the public spirit of our brewers, who have not only risked large sums for rendering their business of utility to their country as well as themselves, but have on a trying occasion sacrificed their pecuniary interest to promote public welfare.*

--He concludes by advising his countrymen not only to oppose the ministry of Great Britain and their auxiliaries, the East-India slave-makers, with regard to the article of tea—but also to forbear all unnecessary importations – for by saving our money we may preserve the remains of our Liberty – If not regain those that are last.

*At the time of the non-importation agreement, a vessel arrived here from England loaded with malt, and although the article was at that time very much wanted, the brewers met, and in a most spirited manner resolved not to purchase any part of the cargo.

“A correspondent observes. . .,” *Boston Post-Boy*, 6-13 December 1773.

Article from the *Boston Gazette*, 29 November 1773 [excerpt]

CONSIDER – In the days leading up to the Boston Tea Party, patriotic newspapers like the Boston Gazette became a battleground of resolutions not only submitted by Bostonians but by neighboring towns. What do you think it would have been like to be a consignee during the time? Would you want to change your decision that you made in the pre-reading exercise? Why or why not?

VOTED, That it is the Sense of this Body that Captain Bruce shall on his Arrival strictly conform to the Votes passed respecting Captain Hall's Vessel, as tho' they had been all passed in Reference to Capt. Bruce's Ship.¹

Mr. Timmins appeared and informed that Capt. Coffin's Brig expected with Tea was owned in Nantucket, he gave his Word of Honor that no Tea should be landed while she was under his Care, nor touched by any one untill the Owner's Arrival.

It was then Voted, That what Mr. Rowe and Mr. Timmins had offered was satisfactory to the Body.

Mr. Copley returned and acquainted the Body, that as he had been obliged to go to *the Castle*, he hoped that if he had exceeded the Time allowed him they would consider the Difficulty of a Passage by Water at this Season as his Apology: He then further acquainted the Body, that he had seen all the Consignees, and tho' he had convinced them that they might attend this Meeting with safety, and had used his utmost Endeavours to prevail upon them to give Satisfaction to the Body; they acquainted him, that believing nothing would be satisfactory short of re-shipping the Tea, which was out of their Power, they thought it best not to appear, but would renew their Proposal of storing the Tea, and submitting the same to the Inspection of a Committee, and that they could go no further, without incurring their own Ruin; the Tea, they should do nothing to obstruct the People in their Procedure with the same.²

It was then moved, and the Question put, Whether the return made by Mr. Copley from the Consignees be in the least Degree satisfactory to this Body; passed in the negative. Nem. Con.

Whereas a Number of Merchants in this Province have inadvertently imported Tea from Great Britain, while it is subject to the Payment of a Duty imposed upon it by an Act of the British Parliament for the Purpose of raising a Revenue in America, and appropriating the same without the Consent of those who are required to pay it:

RESOLVED, That in thus importing said Tea, they have justly incur'd the Displeasure of our Brethren in the other Colonies.

And Resolved further, That if any Person or Persons shall hereafter import Tea from Great-Britain, or if any Master or Masters of any Vessel or Vessels in Great-Britain shall take the same on Board to be imported to this Place, until the said unrighteous Act shall be repeal'd, he or they shall be deem'd by this Body, an Enemy to his Country; and

¹ Captain Bruce, Coffin and Hall were all British officers. The correspondence of Henry Broomfield (a Boston merchant) correspondence with Coffin and Hall is found in Henry Broomfield's letter book.

² John Singleton Copley married Susan Clarke, daughter of Richard Clarke, one of the consignees of the tea. The East India Company granted only a few consignees in each colony. In Boston the Clarkes, Hutchinsons and Mr. Fanueil were granted what was first thought to be a privilege. The Patriots claimed it was nothing more than a monopoly and wanted the consignees to agree to refuse to take the tea. In Philadelphia and eventually in New York, the consignees agreed to send the tea back. In Boston, however, the Patriots could not persuade them – thus leading to more difficulty.

we will prevent the Landing and Sale of the same, and the Payment of any Duty thereon. And we will effect the Return thereof to the Place from whence it shall come.

RESOLVED, That the foregoing Vote be printed and sent to England, and all the Sea Ports in the Province.

Upon a Motion made, Voted, That fair Copies be taken of the whole Proceedings of this Meeting, and transmitted to New York & Philadelphia,

And that
Mr. SAMUEL ADAMS,
Hon. JOHN HANCOCK, ESQ
WILLIAM PHILLIPS, ESQ
JOHN ROWE, ESQ
JONATHAN WILLIAMS, ESQ

Be A Committee to transmit the same [. . .]

At a Meeting of the Inhabitants of the Town of Brooklyn, legally assembled on Friday, the 26th Day of November, A.D. 1773, and by Adjournment to Wednesday the 1st of December following.

To consider what was proper for this town to do relative to the large quantities of tea belonging to the India Company arriv'd and expected to arrive in this province, subject to an American duty; the town came unanimously into the following Resolves, viz.

1. That the act of the British parliament imposing a duty on tea, payable in America, for the express purpose of raising a revenue, is unconstitutional, has a direct tendency to bring the Americans into Slavery, and is therefore an intolerable Grievance.
2. That this Grievance, which has been so justly complained of by the Americans, so far from being redressed, is greatly aggravated by another act passed in the last sessions of parliament for the benefit and relief of the India Company, permitting them to export their Teas to America, or foreign parts, free of all customs and duties usually paid in Great-Britain, but subject to the duty payable in America: Thus have the parliament discovered the most glaring partiality in making one and the same act to operate for the ease and convenience of a Few of the most opulent subjects in Britain on the one hand, and for the oppression of MILLIONS of Freeborn and most loyal inhabitants of America on the other.
3. That the last mentioned act can be considered no otherwise than as a subtle plan of the Ministry to ensnare and enslave the Americans, and that whoever shall be instrumental in carrying the same into execution, is in the judgment of this town, an inveterate enemy to his country.
4. That *Richard Clarke and Son*, and *Thomas and Elisha Hutchinson*, of Boston, (who brought themselves into contempt by their conduct in the non-importation time) and the other persons appointed Consignees of the India company's Teas in Boston, have, by their repeated refusal to resign their appointment, and send back the said Teas, manifested to the full conviction of this town, their utter disregard to the interest and welfare of this their native country, to which such unfeeling wretches are a disgrace, and have discovered the most sordid attachment to their private interest, and have incurred the highest displeasure of the good people of this province in general, and of the

inhabitants of this town in particular, who are determined to afford them not the least favor or protection, now that they are become Fugitives from the just resentment of their affronted townsmen.

5. That we fully approve of the proceedings and resolutions of the town of Boston, on this alarming occasion, and while we see them earnestly contending for the general liberty of America, should we fold our arms and calmly look on, we should be justly chargeable with the most shameful supineness, and criminal neglect. Therefore,
6. Resolved, That this town are ready to afford all the assistance in our power to the town of Boston, and will heartily unite with them and the other towns in this province, to oppose and frustrate this most detestable and dangerous tea scheme, and every other that shall appear to us to be subversive of the rights and liberties of America, and consequently dishonourary to the crown and dignity of our sovereign Lord the King.
7. That whoever shall hereafter presume to import any teas into this province, while subject to the odious duty, shall be considered and treated by this town as an enemy to this Country.

A true Copy, Attest,

Isaac Gardner, Town-Clerk.

"Voted, that it is the sense of this body. . .," *Boston Gazette*, 29 November 1773.

Part II: LOYALIST PERSPECTIVE

Document #5

Letter from Richard Clarke and Sons to the Gentlemen of the Merchants Committee of Boston, 11 August 1769

Boston Aug 11: 1769

Gentlemen,

We consent that the Teas that are come to our House in Capt: Scott and any other goods that we may receive from Great Britain this Summer or Fall may be shut up in an apartment in our Warehouse under Lock & Key. & that the Key may be kept by the Committee untill the first of Jan[uary]: next (at which time your agreement expires) if they shall judge it reasonable or for the public benefit to detain our goods till that time – And we will in addition to what we have already wrote further write our Friends in Great Britain not to send us any Goods till they receive orders from us dated after [Jan]:1st & if they send us any contrary to such advice we will not expose them to sale – We hope these concessions will be satisfactory as they are the utmost we can submit to consistently with Justice to our Friend & Honor to ourselves – We are

Gentlemen

Your most humble servant:

Richard Clarke & Sons

To

The Gentlemen of the
Merchant Committee

Richard Clarke and Sons to the Gentlemen of the Merchants Committee of Boston, 11 August 1769,
Bromfield and Clarke Family Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society.

Document #6

Letter from Andrew Oliver to his son, 18 January 1769

My sufferings are sufficiently known: they were unavoidable; but I have not till of late thought myself at liberty to make my case known in all its circumstances. When I was first attacked on the 14 June 1765 I stood alone, a single man against a whole people for 36 hours: I would have resisted when my house was first beset: my friends dissuaded me; they knew I could not oppose the Mob to effect; by their advice I retired. On the 15th the people were still up the whole day, and towards Evening began to make their signals for a second attack, which it was thought might have proved fatal: the Government did nothing for my support. I was then advised to resign. I did not however choose to make an absolute resignation; but allowed it to be given out, that I would not exercise the Functions of my Office till I had represented the matter home and could receive further Orders. On this the people dispersed. But what I principally intend by this recital is to acquaint you that on the 5th of November following, when the Pope and the Devil were exhibited as usual on the Stage, there were some other Figures with them, dangling on Giblets, and an inscription referring to one of these Figures to this purpose – the Devil take him who takes his Commission – This shew rested on the parade under the Windows of the Council of Chambers, the General Court then sitting. I thought that Government was by this insulted, & myself in particular. I was at that time of the Council, and applied myself to the Board, & told them that I thought it unbecoming the dignity of Government to see itself, and one of its Members that insulted. I saw no disposition to resent it, and inform'd them that I could not with honour sit there any longer, and withdrew. I called upon the Governor as I went home & told him what I had done; his Excellency was good enough to go to the Council Chamber to see if he could do anything in the case. He soon after sent a Messenger to me desiring I would attend in Council. I obeyed and went. The Governor then desired me to take my Seat at the Board, I told him I could not in honour do it, while such an Insult was suffered, and sat me down in a Window. His Excellency told me that he had been conferring with the Council on this matter, who were all of opinion that I had by my withdraw exposed myself to the Resentment of the Mob and had therefore agreed among themselves not to mention it abroad: that it was uncertain, whether the Figure & Inscription referred to me or not, and that if they did; the time were such that I must put up with it. I knew if they did not refer to Me, they referred to a Man of more importance, and hesitated; but at length finding that I could have no Support, I yielded & resumed my place [. . .]

Document #7

Letter from the *Boston Gazette*, 22 November 1773

Letter written to the Editors, Edes and Gill

There are various opinions concerning the real or principal design of the Governor of this Province in giving discretionary orders to Col. Hancock to be in readiness to aid the civil magistrate when and where he should think proper. If the governor thought there was reason to apprehend a tumult among the people, he could not be at a loss for the grounds of such an apprehension. He certainly knows that Messieurs. Clarkes, Mr. Faneuil, and his own two children, are the appointed instruments to prevent the good effects of the non-importation agreement, which his Excellency had endeavored to nip in the bud, and to put into execution the detested revenue act. The American merchants had so generally stopped the importation of English Tea in consequence of that agreement, as greatly to alarm the East India Company, and put them upon solliciting a repeal of the duty: The ministry, resolved against the repeal, have procured an act of parliament whereby that company is allowed to send their tea to America. Thus the company is eased, their teas are to be imported and sold, the duty consequently paid and the salutary resolution of the merchants frustrated. Mr. Clarke, and others before-mentioned, are the chosen men to receive and sell the tea, and pay the tribute. The people therefore look upon them to be as truly the men pitched up on to execute the revenue acts, as Mr. Oliver and others were to execute a former revenue –act, under the title of the Stamp-act, and the tea is considered as detestable as were the stamp- papers. Hence an equal necessity of preventing the scattering the dutied tea through the province, as there was of preventing that of the stamped papers. In short, the ministry appear to be playing the old game again, tho' with more art and subtlety, and the people see through it, and seem determined, as before, to put them to their trumps. To speak plainly, the people think this tea is as much the offspring of the ministry as the stamped papers were; and that as much is expected from the care and assiduity of Messrs. Clarkes and others, under the patronage and direction of Mr. Hutchinson, in nursing this second child and ushering it into life, as was expected before from Mr. Oliver and others, under the like patronage and direction of Mr. Bernard, in cherishing the first born, and fitting that for eminent service. Persons of all ranks are as much exasperated at this ministerial maneuver, as ever they were against the Stamp act; they detest the tea commissioners as thoro'ly as they did the stamp-officers [. . .]

“Letter written to the Editors. . .,” *Boston Gazette* 22 November 1773.

Document #8

Letter from Captain Coffin to Messrs. Hughes & Whitelock, 27 January 1774

27 January 1774

Gentlemen:

My last was from Captain Scott --- I have not received anything of Doctor Cobb for the goods sold him, but if I do not hear from him soon I shall oblige him to pay his ballance. He lives a considerable distance from here which makes it difficult to come at him -- I shall compell Mr. Kast to settle his account shortly -- Mr. Jonathan Clarke has taken Passage in Capt. Coffin for London and will Sail in a few days. In the Evening of the day on which he arriv'd his Fathers' House was attack'd by a mob and he with his Father and Brother have since been oblig'd to betake themselves to the Castle where they still remain. The People threaten all the Consignees with the loss of their ears if ever they are catch'd in Town again. These gentlemen have been cruelly treated & it grieves me to the Heart to think that so old a Gentlemen as Mr. Clarke, who has always born a respectable Character & been much esteem'd should at his time of life be oblig'd to quit his Family & Friends. Indeed I am fearful whether he will not be oblig'd to leave his native Country entirely. I dread the consequence of the present Dispute between Great Britain & the Colonies & what it will end in God only knows. The Spirit that now prevails farr exceeds what appear'd in the time of the Stamp Act.

I am Gentlemen, your etc.

Captain Coffin

Document #9

Letter from Jonathan Clarke to Edward Wheler, 17 November 1773

Boston, New England 17th November, 1773

Sir:

After a long detention in the English channel, and a pretty long passage, I arrived here this morning from England, and there being a vessel to sail for London within a few hours, gives me an opportunity of writing you a few lines on the subject of the consignment of tea, made to our house by the Honorable East India Company, in which I had your friendly assistance, and of which I shall always retain a grateful sense.

I find that this measure is an unpopular one, and before my arrival some measures have been taken to oblige my friends to make a resignation of the trust, which they have not thought fit to comply with. They have wrote to our friend, Mr. Abraham Dupuis, very particularly, respecting the measures that have been adopted, and to that account I must beg leave to refer you, as I have not time to repeat it by this opportunity, but I shall keep the Company fully advised in future.

I fully see that we shall meet with difficulty in executing this trust, but our utmost endeavors shall be exerted to fulfill the orders we may receive from the Company.

I am, very respectfully sir, your most obliged humble servant

Jonathan Clarke.

Edward Wheler, Esquire

Received from the Deputy Chairman, 5th January 1774

Francis S. Drake, *Tea Leaves: Being a Collection of Letters and Documents Relating to the Shipment of Tea to the American colonies in the Year 1773, by the East India Tea Company* (Boston, 1884), 278.