

The Boston Tea Party,
Dec. 16, 1773



PROTEST NATION

From the Boston Tea Party to the modern-day Tea Party and the Women's March, America has been shaped by protest movements

BY BRYAN BROWN

It was a gray January Saturday in Washington, D.C., but nobody was resting. Just one day after Donald Trump had been inaugurated as president, the streets were jammed with people participating in the Women's March.

Near the U.S. Capitol, they cheered speeches defending the rights of women and minorities—whom they believed the incoming president had shown disrespect for during his campaign. Then, as if to make sure Trump would hear them, many of them marched to the gates of the White House.

The crowd in Washington was estimated to have been at least half a million people. Including the participants of more than 600 other “sister marches” around the country, the Women's March was likely the nation's largest single-day demonstration ever.

The massive gathering was part of a deep history of protest in the U.S., according to David Meyer of the University of California, Irvine. It all goes back, he says, to the first major American protest, the Boston Tea Party in 1773, when a band of American colonists boarded three British ships and dumped 342 chests of tea into Boston Harbor. The act of defiance was part of a struggle over taxes and control by Great Britain, but it also set

the stage for a larger struggle: the fight for independence from Britain in the American Revolution (1775-83).

“Protests seize [the country's] attention and force figures like presidents to respond to them,” Meyer says. The tradition is protected by the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution as “the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government.” For the nation's Founders, who had helped lead it from resistance to independence, Meyer says, this was a sign of how much they valued dissent.

“America was born from protest,” says Meyer.

Many of the most influential American protests have been big marches, like the Women's March, often in the streets of the nation's capital. A 1913 rally in Washington for women's suffrage, for example, helped lead to ratification of the 19th Amendment (1920), giving women the right to vote. The 1963 March on Washington focused the nation's attention on civil rights for African-Americans and helped lead to passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which outlawed discrimination in voting, schools, and the workplace.

During the long fight for equality for African-Americans,

Download an excerpt from John Adams's diary at UPFRONTMAGAZINE.COM



The March on Washington,
led by Martin Luther King Jr.
(second from right), Aug. 28, 1963



The Women's March
in Washington, D.C., Jan. 21, 2017

many smaller acts of civil disobedience, such as boycotts of segregated buses and sit-ins at whites-only lunch counters throughout the South, also helped end discriminatory laws and practices, and the success of the movement as a whole helped prove how important protests were to social change.

Sit-ins & Burning Draft Cards

In the mid-1960s, U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War and a military draft ignited a new wave of resistance among liberal Americans, particularly young people. They believed the nation was needlessly meddling in another country's civil war—one that ended up costing more than 58,000 American lives.

Inspired by civil rights campaigns, activists engaged in different forms of protest, including staging sit-ins at universities and burning draft cards. Marches were crucial as well. On Oct. 15, 1969, about 2 million people rallied across the country to show their opposition to the war. Historians say the protests were a major reason the U.S. withdrew its troops from Vietnam in 1973.

Conservatives have also used protest as a tool to bring about change. In 2009, following the election of President Barack Obama, groups of concerned citizens began showing up at town hall meetings. Many objected to the Affordable Care Act (also called Obamacare), which they believed would burden them with higher taxes and healthcare costs. Protesters also voiced long-held grievances over gun rights, undocumented immigrants, and the government's expanding role in Americans' lives.

This new movement soon called itself the Tea Party, a tribute to the original American protest against government control. What made it especially effective, experts say, is that Tea Partiers didn't just demonstrate; they also got involved in their communities and voted for members of Congress who supported

their views. Many believe that the dissent the Tea Partiers stirred up among conservatives helped contribute to the election of President Trump last year.

Today, experts say, we may be in the most active time for protest since the 1960s. Meyer says a new surge of resistance began in 2011 with the Occupy Wall Street movement, an outcry against economic inequality in America. For months, thousands of people in New York City staged a sit-in near Wall Street, a symbol of banking and wealth. The movement spread to other cities, energizing a new generation of young activists.

Then, in 2013, a movement known as Black Lives Matter formed in response to a series of high-profile shootings of African-Americans by police. The protests fueled a national conversation about racial discrimination in the criminal justice system.

Trump's election last year has only intensified protests, as it has sparked passionate public debate among Americans. While many liberals believe Trump's policies are a threat to civil liberties, his supporters think Trump will bring jobs and pride back to working people. Both sides have demonstrated to show their points of view.

Just since January, scores of protests have opposed Trump's attempts to ban travel from some Muslim-majority nations and defended immigrants' rights. Meanwhile, conservatives have held pro-Trump rallies and town hall meetings seeking to pressure lawmakers to repeal Obamacare.

No one knows exactly what will result from this moment in history. But one thing is certain, Meyer says: People will not stop reaching back to the spirit of the Boston Tea Party to try to shape the future of the nation.

"Protest is what we started with," Meyer says. "It is an essential thing" for our democracy. •

**Protest
is essential
for our
democracy.**

THE ART OF PROTEST

When it comes to swaying public opinion, a provocative image can be a powerful tool

BY BRYAN BROWN

Art is for art's sake, goes an old expression. The artists represented on these pages might disagree. They have created works with a message—each image in its own way an act of protest.

These artworks are meant to critique the people and institutions that wield power in our society, such as political parties and corporations. The art tackles a number of issues, from the environment to war to the right to bear arms.

Sometimes protest images are tied to particular movements (see "Protest Nation," p. 16). Other times they reflect the particular concerns of their creators. Artists making social statements use a variety of methods to grab the public's attention. But many start with a simple concept: taking a familiar image or idea, then making it surprising by changing it.

For example, "We Need More Party Animals" (facing page) doesn't include the Republican elephant and Democratic donkey. The artist seems to be saying that Americans need more choices when it comes to political parties.

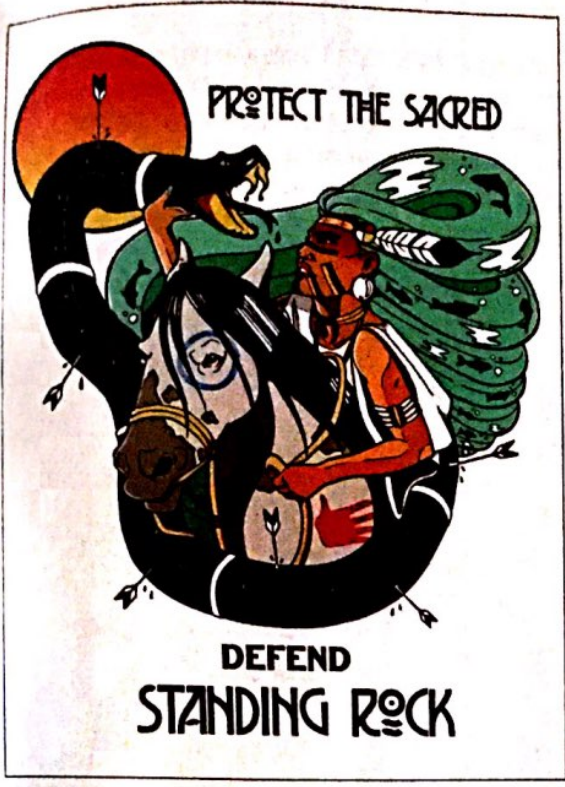
These unique images were all created to plead, to argue, and maybe to provoke. Some of them may upset or even offend you. As acts of protest, their purpose is to make you react—and think about the world in a new way.

nuclear emergency



▲ NUCLEAR EMERGENCY

The dangers of potential meltdowns at nuclear power plants are well known. This art raises its own alarm by using a familiar symbol for nuclear power to evoke an image from a famous painting—*The Scream*, by Norwegian artist Edvard Munch. (Małgorzata Bedowska, Poland, 2009)



STANDING ROCK
 In 2016, members of the Standing Rock Sioux tribe in North Dakota protested construction of an oil pipeline running through Indian land. This art shows a Native American warrior in battle with a serpent that looks like an oil pipeline. (Jackie Fawn, U.S., 2016)

CHILDREN AT WAR
 Protest images often imitate road signs because their symbols are so widely recognized. In this case, the art comments on young people being forced to serve as soldiers, a horror that most commonly occurs in conflict-ridden African countries. (Woody Pirtle and Chris Dunn, U.S., 1999)



NIKE VICTIM
 Part of a series called "Fashion Victims," this piece comments on both our love for designer labels and the horrible labor conditions in some Third World factories, where many brand-name products are made. (M. Zargarinejad, Germany, 1999)

WE NEED MORE PARTY ANIMALS
 This artist playfully alludes to the mascots of the major U.S. political parties—the Republican elephant and Democratic donkey—without showing them. He seems to believe that the choices our two-party system gives us are too limited. (Thomas Porostocky, U.S., 2004)



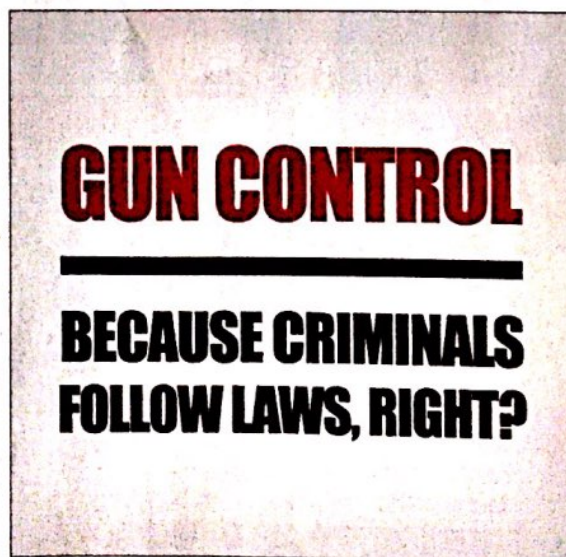
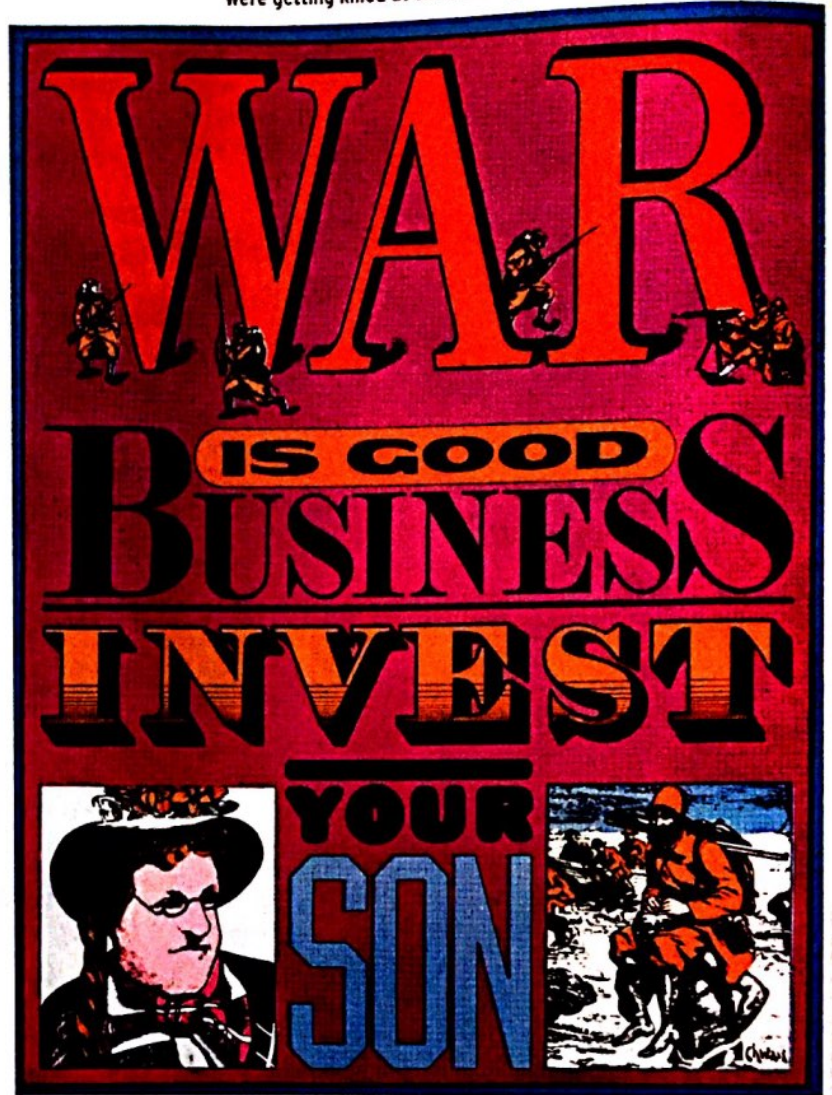
I AM A MAN

▲ **I AM A MAN** Sometimes the most effective statements are the simplest. In 1968, black sanitation workers on strike in Memphis, Tennessee, carried this sign to assert that they were human beings with rights, not faceless trash haulers. (Unknown, U.S., 1968)

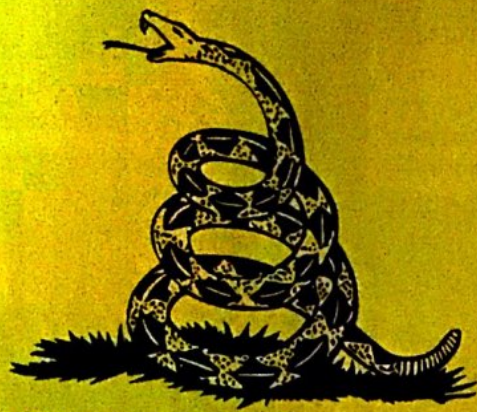


▲ **GIVE MOTHER THE VOTE** Before the 19th Amendment gave them the right to vote in 1920, women took to the streets. Here, America's babies insist on doing the right thing for mother. (National Women's Suffrage Publishing Company, U.S., 1915)

▼ **WAR IS GOOD BUSINESS** Using a slogan he saw on an anti-Vietnam War button, this artist added 19th-century engravings of a mother and soldier to emphasize his message: that some businessmen were profiting from the war while young Americans were getting killed at an alarming rate. (Seymour Chwast, U.S., 1968)

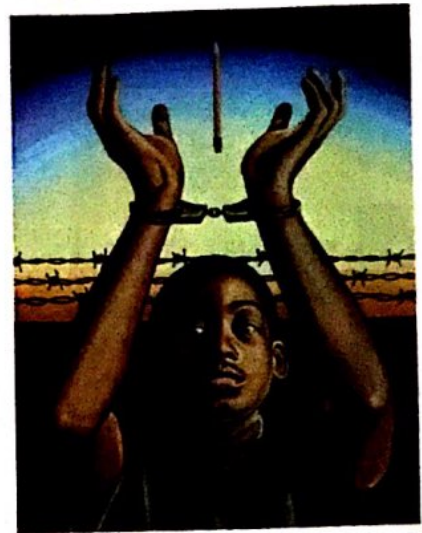


◀ **GUN CONTROL** Gun control supporters often say that good laws keep guns out of the hands of bad guys. This art by an opponent of gun control uses a simple design, bold lettering, and a surprising punch line to make a different point. (Zazzle.com, U.S.)



DONT TREAD ON ME

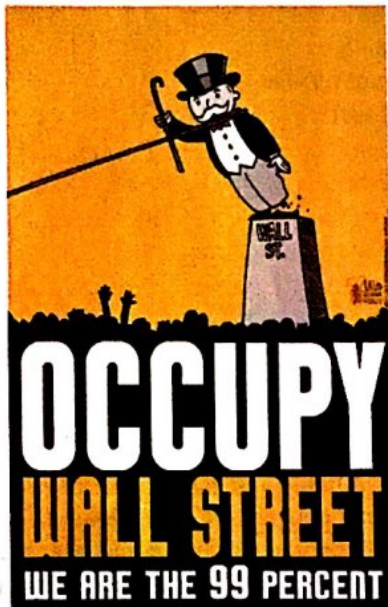
▲ **DON'T TREAD ON ME** The flag with a coiled rattlesnake and the slogan "Don't Tread on Me" was widely used by patriots during the Revolutionary War (1775-83). More recently, the Tea Party movement, a faction of Republicans that emerged after President Barack Obama's election in 2008, has embraced the symbol and motto as an expression of its resolve to protect individuals' rights from government overreach. (Christopher Gadsden, U.S., 1775)



▲ **SCHOOL OR PRISON?** This poster—titled "How Can I Write My Own Future With My Hands Bound?"—tackles a complex subject: how so many young African-American males end up in prison. The image may suggest that education is the key to freeing this young black man. (Mata Ruda, U.S., 2016)

► **OCCUPY WALL STREET**

In 2011, thousands of people staged a sit-in at a park near New York City's Wall Street. They were protesting against greed in the U.S. financial system and the influence of the "1 percent"—meaning the richest Americans—here symbolized by a figure from the Monopoly game. (Lalo Alcaraz, U.S., 2011)



▲ **WE THE PEOPLE** This image of a Muslim woman in an American flag hijab (head scarf) was created for the Women's March as a symbol of diversity and inclusiveness in the U.S.—which many marchers saw as threatened by President Trump's proposals. (Shepard Fairey, U.S., 2017) ●



▲ **GMO FOOD** Many people are worried about genetically modified crops—known as GMOs—in our food supply. This unpleasant image is a warning about the unknown consequences of messing with Mother Nature. (Jarek Bujny, Poland, 2004)

Protest Nation

Choose the best answer for each of the following questions. For the analysis section, refer to the article as needed.

CHECK COMPREHENSION

1. The article describes the Women's March as
 - a conservative-leaning.
 - b massive.
 - c chaotic.
 - d all of the above

2. According to the article, the first major American protest was the
 - a Boston Tea Party.
 - b Constitutional Convention.
 - c push among some Founders to add the Bill of Rights to the U.S. Constitution.
 - d 1913 rally for women's suffrage.

3. According to the article, what do the civil rights movement and the Occupy Wall Street movement have in common?
 - a Both began in the 1950s and '60s.
 - b Both were unsuccessful.
 - c Both were centered in New York City.
 - d Both employed sit-ins.

4. According to the article, the protests against the Vietnam War in the 1960s and '70s were ___ the civil rights protests of that period.
 - a inspired by
 - b more effective than
 - c in competition with
 - d more violent than

ANALYZE THE TEXT

5. The overall purpose of the article is to
 - a explain why the Women's March made history.
 - b explore the long history of protests in the U.S.
 - c describe what the U.S. Constitution says about protests.
 - d compare today's protests with major protests of the 1960s.

6. Which of these is used in the article to show that conservatives—not just liberals—use protests?
 - a the Tea Party movement
 - b the Occupy Wall Street movement
 - c protests against the Vietnam War
 - d none of the above

7. In paragraph 5 of the article, David Meyer says that one important function of a protest is to
 - a gather information on an issue.
 - b assess public opinion on an issue.
 - c let people in other parts of the world know about current U.S. issues.
 - d pressure leaders to take action on an issue.

8. Which detail from the article illustrates the function described in question 7?
 - a "The 1963 March on Washington . . . helped lead to passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 . . ."
 - b ". . . [Vietnam War] protests were a major reason the U.S. withdrew its troops from Vietnam . . ."
 - c "A 1913 rally in Washington . . . helped lead to ratification of the 19th Amendment . . ."
 - d all of the above

IN-DEPTH QUESTIONS Please use the other side of this paper for your responses.

9. Why does David Meyer call protest "an essential thing" for the United States? Do you agree? Explain.
10. What do you think compels someone to take part in a protest? What issue or issues would you consider protesting about? Why?

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LESSON PLAN 4: PAIRING A PRIMARY & SECONDARY SOURCE

TIMES PAST PAGES 16-17
Lexile level: 1240L

Protest Nation

From the Boston Tea Party to the modern-day Tea Party and the Women's March, America has been shaped by protest movements.



Before Reading

1 Set Focus: Pose an essential question to guide discussion: *What role do public protests play in a democratic society?*

2 List Vocabulary: Share some of the challenging vocabulary for this article (see right). Encourage students to use context to infer meanings as they read.

3 Engage: Ask students why someone might call the U.S. the "Protest Nation." Do they think the description fits?

dissent (p. 16)
suffrage (p. 16)
ratification (p. 16)
liberal (p. 17)
conservatives (p. 17)
repeal (p. 17)

Additional Resources upfrontmagazine.com

Print or project:

- Article Quiz (online and on p. T10)
- 'Most Magnificent Movement' (primary source; online and on p. T14)
- Organizing Ideas (outlining; online only)
- What's the Message? (analyzing a protest poster; online only)

Videos:

- Women's March
- Tea Party movement

Analyze the Article

4 Read and Discuss: Ask students to read the *Upfront* article about the history of protests in the U.S. Review why the article is a secondary source. (*It was written by someone who didn't personally experience or witness the events.*) Then pose these critical-thinking questions:

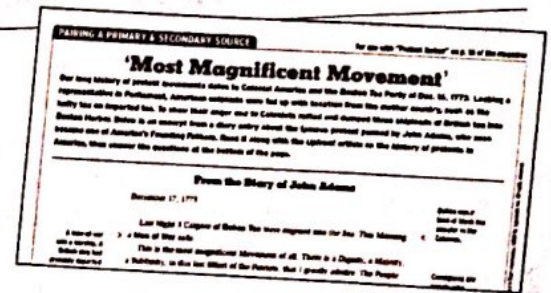
► **What indications are there that the nation's Founders thought dissent was important?** (*The nation's Founders had led America's movement for independence from Britain. They clearly valued dissent because they ultimately included in the First Amendment to the Constitution "the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government."*)

► **What do you think protesters typically set out to accomplish? Which protests in American history do you think have been particularly successful?** (*Protesters seek to bring attention to an issue to pressure leaders to take action. Examples of successful protests include the 1913 women's suffrage march and the 1963 March on Washington for civil rights. Student selections will vary.*)

▶ **Based on the article, what is civil disobedience?**
(The article notes two examples of civil disobedience that African-Americans used to fight for equality—boycotts of segregated buses and sit-ins at whites-only lunch counters. They show that civil disobedience is a form of protest in which people refuse to comply with unjust policies or laws.)

▶ **What has made the modern Tea Party protest movement particularly effective?** *(In addition to holding protests, the Tea Party movement has gotten involved in the political process. It has supported candidates for Congress who share its views and managed to get several elected.)*

5 Integrate the Primary Source: Project or distribute the PDF 'Most Magnificent Movement' (p. T14), which features a diary entry written by John Adams after the Boston Tea Party. Discuss what makes it a primary source. *(It provides direct, firsthand evidence concerning the topic.)* Have students read the diary entry and answer the questions below (which appear on the PDF without answers).



▶ **Why does Adams call the Boston Tea Party uprising a "magnificent movement"?** *(Adams admires the bravery of the Patriots who dumped the British tea and predicts that their effort will change history. He writes, "This Destruction of the Tea is so bold, so daring, so firm, intrepid and inflexible, and it must have so important Consequences, and so lasting, that I cant but consider it as an Epoque in History.")*

▶ **How does he see the two sides in the uprising?** *(On one side, Adams sees the Patriots living in the Colonies. On the other side, he sees Britain, the British governor of Massachusetts, and other officials who support the importation of taxed British tea into the Colonies.)*

▶ **Why does Adams argue that there was "no other alternative" to dumping the tea into the harbor?** *(Adams writes that the dumping of the tea was "absolutely and indispensably" necessary. He points out that officials would not let the colonists send the tea back to Britain and*

that allowing the tea to be sold in the Colonies would have meant giving in to taxation without representation, something "against which the Continent have struggled for 10 years."

▶ **What retaliation from the British government does Adams fear? Do you think modern-day U.S. protesters fear government backlash? Explain.** *(Adams speculates that the British government might force the colonists to quarter British troops, annul Massachusetts's colonial charter, impose even more taxes, restrict colonial trade, or even target individual colonists. Students will have varying thoughts on the possible fears today's protesters have.)*

▶ **Based on the Upfront article and Adams's diary entry, what do you think Adams might say about the long history of protests in this country?** *(Answers will vary but should include evidence from the two texts. It is likely that Adams would admire our nation's history of protests just as he admired the Boston Tea Party.)*

Extend & Assess

6 Writing Prompt
 What do you think are the key ingredients for an effective political protest? Explain in a brief essay, using evidence from the *Upfront* article and Adams's diary entry to support your response.

7 Quiz
 Use the quiz on p. T10 to assess comprehension.

8 Classroom Debate
 Did the Women's March in Washington, D.C., and other cities in January 2017 accomplish its goals?

9 Make It a Unit
 Link the Times Past article, Adams's diary entry, and the article "The Art of Protest" on pages 18-21 for a compelling thematic unit on protests. For a creative assignment, have students design protest posters for the Boston Tea Party.

Find all activity sheets and other support materials at upfrontmagazine.com

'Most Magnificent Movement'

Our long history of protest movements dates to Colonial America and the Boston Tea Party of Dec. 16, 1773. Lacking a representative in Parliament, American colonists were fed up with taxation from the mother country, such as the hefty tax on imported tea. To show their anger, colonists rallied and dumped three shiploads of British tea into Boston Harbor. Below is an excerpt from a diary entry about the famous protest penned by John Adams, who soon became one of America's Founding Fathers. Read it along with the *Upfront* article on the history of protests in America, then answer the questions at the bottom of the page.

From the Diary of John Adams

December 17, 1773

Last Night 3 Cargoes of **Bohea Tea** were emptied into the Sea. This Morning → a **Man of War** sails.

→ A man-of-war was a warship. A British ship had probably departed for Britain to deliver news of the uprising.

This is the most magnificent Movement of all. There is a Dignity, a Majesty, a Sublimity, in this last Effort of the Patriots, that I greatly admire. The People should never rise, without doing something to be remembered—something notable And striking. This Destruction of the Tea is so bold, so daring, so firm, intrepid and inflexible, and it must have so important Consequences, and so lasting, that I cant but consider it as an **Epocha** in History. . . .

→ An epoch, or epocha, is a distinctive or important period in history.

The malicious Pleasure with which Hutchinson the Governor, the **Consignees** ← of the Tea, and the officers of the Customs, have stood and looked upon the distresses of the People, and their Struggles to get the Tea back to London, and at last the destruction of it, is amazing. Tis hard to believe Persons so hardened and abandoned.

← Bohea was a kind of black tea popular in the Colonies.

← Consignees are people who are financially responsible for a shipment. They sign a form when the shipment is delivered.

What Measures will the Ministry take, in Consequence of this? Will they resent it? will they dare to resent it? will they punish Us? How? By **quartering** ← Troops upon Us? By annulling our Charter? By laying on more duties? By restraining our Trade? By Sacrifice of Individuals, or how.

← This means forcing the colonists to provide lodging for British soldiers.

The Question is whether the Destruction of this Tea was necessary? I apprehend it was absolutely and indispensably so. They could not send it back, the Governor, Admiral and Collector and Comptroller would not **suffer** it. . . . ← Then there was no other Alternative but to destroy it or let it be landed. To let it be landed, would be giving up the Principle of Taxation by Parliamentary Authority, against which the Continent have struggled for 10 years.

← Here, suffer means to allow.

NOTE: The capitalization in this diary entry has been left as Adams wrote it.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why does Adams call the Boston Tea Party uprising a "magnificent movement"?
2. How does he see the two sides in the uprising?
3. Why does Adams argue that there was "no other alternative" to dumping the tea into the harbor?
4. What retaliation from the British government does Adams fear? Do you think modern-day U.S. protesters fear government backlash? Explain.
5. Based on the *Upfront* article and Adams's diary entry, what do you think Adams might say about the long history of protests in this country?