Unrest in Boston

In 1767, the British government imposed the Townshend Acts on its American colonies. These placed a tax on many imported goods, including tea. Colonists protested these taxes, not just because they did not want to pay them, but because the taxes were imposed without colonial representation in Parliament. Many protests were centered in Boston.

The Boston Massacre

In 1768, in response to the protests about the new taxes, the British government sent soldiers to Boston to keep an eye on the Sons of Liberty. Because the British soldiers wore red uniforms, the colonists sometimes referred to them as "redcoats" or "lobster backs."

In March 1770, several Bostonians got into a tussle with a redcoat. The Bostonians surrounded the soldier and called him names. They threw snowballs at him, and some members of the crowd even threatened him with sticks and clubs.

More British soldiers arrived on the scene. They ordered the Bostonians to go home, but the angry protestors refused. The situation became more serious when even more people poured into the streets. Soon a crowd of 300 angry Bostonians was pressing in on the outnumbered British soldiers.

Some of the Bostonians shouted at the soldiers, daring them to fire their guns. One of the Bostonians threw something at the soldiers. It may have been a snowball. It may have been a rock. Whatever it was, it hit one of the soldiers and knocked him down. Perhaps thinking his life was in danger, the soldier fired his musket. One of the Bostonians fought back, attacking the soldier with a club. After that, the other British soldiers responded. They fired into the crowd. When it was over, five people were dead.

The Sons of Liberty were outraged. They began making speeches about the incident, which became

Paul Revere's engraving of the event that became known as the Boston Massacre
known as the Boston Massacre. They insisted that the Bostonians had been protesting peacefully and the British had no reason to fire on them. One of the Sons of Liberty, a man named Paul Revere, created an engraving that showed British soldiers firing into a crowd of peaceful protestors. It was not an entirely accurate picture of what had happened, but many colonists thought it was.

The World's Largest Tea Party

In December 1773, there was another incident in Boston. Three ships loaded with tea were docked in Boston Harbor. The captains had orders to unload the tea so it could be sold in Boston.

The Sons of Liberty refused to let this happen. They had spent a lot of time convincing the people of Boston not to buy or sell British tea. There was no way they were going to let the captains unload all that tea. The Sons of Liberty demanded the captains raise anchor and sail away.

The captains weren't sure what to do, so they did not do anything. The ships sat in the harbor until the Sons of Liberty finally decided to get rid of the tea once and for all. Dressed as Native Americans, they and other members of the patriot movement boarded the ships and threw the tea into Boston Harbor. They dumped approximately 340 chests of tea—worth hundreds of thousands of dollars in today's money—into the Atlantic Ocean. Later, this act of protest came to be known as the Boston Tea Party.
1. Why did American colonists protest the taxes imposed by the British government?

   A. because they had no representation in Parliament
   B. because they thought different items should be taxed
   C. because they felt the taxes were too low to raise money
   D. because they were looking for a reason to revolt against the British

2. In March 1770, British soldiers fired into a crowd of Bostonians in an event that became known as the Boston Massacre. What was one effect of this event?

   A. The British sent more soldiers to Boston to keep an eye on the colonists.
   B. The Sons of Liberty dumped 340 chests of British tea into Boston Harbor.
   C. The Sons of Liberty became outraged and spread word about the event to other colonists.
   D. The British imposed more new taxes on the American colonists as punishment.

3. The Sons of Liberty in Boston worked to get colonists to become angry with the British. What evidence from the text supports this conclusion?

   A. The Sons of Liberty decided to get rid of the taxed British tea sitting in Boston Harbor by throwing it all into the ocean one night.
   B. The Sons of Liberty made speeches about the Boston Massacre saying that the Bostonians had been protesting peacefully and the British had no reason to fire on them.
   C. In response to protests about the taxes, the British government sent soldiers to Boston to keep an eye on the Sons of Liberty.
   D. The Sons of Liberty refused to let the captains of ships with British tea unload the tea to be sold in Boston.

4. Why might the Sons of Liberty have dumped the British tea into Boston Harbor during the Boston Tea Party?

   A. to show other colonists that tea was not an important or necessary drink in the colonies
   B. to show how angry they were about the Boston Massacre
   C. to prove that they were able to protest against the British without using violence
   D. to stop people from buying and selling tea which had been taxed unfairly by the British
5. What is the main idea of this text?

A. Boston was a center of protest and tension between angry colonists and the British.

B. The Boston Tea Party was the main reason why the colonies revolted against British rule.

C. The Boston Massacre was the main reason why the colonies revolted against British rule.

D. The Boston Massacre was a main cause of the Boston Tea Party.