The Sons and Daughters of Liberty

By Cindy Grigg

Caption: A depiction of the tarring and feathering of Commissioner of Customs John Malcolm, a Loyalist, by five Patriots on 5 January 1774 under the Liberty Tree in Boston, Massachusetts. Tea is also being poured into Malcolm's mouth. The print shows the Boston Tea Party occurring in the background, though that incident had in fact taken place four weeks earlier. Note the noose in the tree and the Stamp Act posted upside-down.

After Britain began taxing the colonies in 1765, the colonists were angry. They had no representatives in the British Parliament. In Boston, there were public demonstrations. People flooded the streets to protest what they felt were unfair taxes. Angry mobs went to the home of the king's agent who was supposed to collect taxes in the colony. Colonists who fought the tax called themselves the "Sons of Liberty." The name came from a speech made by a member of Parliament. He also opposed the tax.

Some of the Sons were common laborers. Some were merchants. Some were lawyers. Some were artists. Some were newspaper publishers and writers. All of them were Patriots. They supported political freedom in the colonies. These men often held public protests against British taxes and laws. They rallied around "Liberty Trees", "Liberty Poles", or other public meeting places. In Boston, two prominent leaders were Paul Revere and Samuel Adams.

In 1773, the tax on tea led the Sons of Liberty to make a public statement. "It is essential to the freedom and security of a free people that no taxes be imposed on them but by their own consent or that of their representatives." They declared that as long as tea was taxed, anyone who brought tea into the colony "shall be deemed an enemy to the liberties of America."

The Sons of Liberty planned and carried out the Boston Tea Party in December 1773. The Sons of Liberty was a secret organization. It was feared by the British, who called it the "Sons of Violence." The Sons sometimes attacked British authorities and those who supported them.

Some women Patriots formed a group called the Daughters of Liberty. They chose to boycott British goods. They stopped buying cloth and tea from Britain to avoid paying the taxes on them. Instead, they made their own cloth, called homespun, and other goods. The Daughters also tried to convince other colonists to give up tea. In all the colonies, the Sons and Daughter of Liberty helped shape the debate about America's rights.

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Questions

1. What was a Patriot?
   A. a war veteran
   B. a person who was loyal to the British king
   C. a person who supported political freedom in the colonies
   D. a missile system
2. What is a synonym for "demonstration"?
   A. angry
   B. loyalty
   C. protest
   D. praise

3. What is the main idea of the statement made by the Sons of Liberty in paragraph 3?
   A. Taxes should only be imposed with the consent of the colonists or their representatives.
   B. taxation without representation
   C. join together or die
   D. all of the above

4. Who were two leaders of Boston's Sons of Liberty?

5. According to the story, what did the Daughters of Liberty do?
   A. encouraged colonists to not buy tea and cloth from Britain
   B. threw tea into Boston Harbor
   C. made their own tea
   D. all of the above

6. Who were the Sons of Liberty?

The colonists wanted a voice in government. Write a letter to the king as if you were one of the Sons of Liberty. Tell the king how the colonists feel. Be persuasive! Let the king know that his taxes without representation may lead to war.
The Sons of Liberty, or the Sons of Violence? How do you feel about this secret group plotting against the government? What would have happened to these men if they were caught? Why did they feel their activities were worth the possible punishment? Today, they might be called terrorists. Discuss your opinion of this group.