

Nicholas Miller Montera Middle School
Boston Tea Party
8th grade
Events leading up to the American Revolution

Objectives:

1. Students will analyze the events leading up to the American Revolution and understand why the American colonists were upset with the British government, with an emphasis on the Boston Tea Party.
2. Students will determine if/when violence and the destruction of private property is a morally justified way to protest what they consider to be unjust laws/taxes.
3. Students will move from an eye for an eye mentality towards fairness, equity and the common good.

Lesson Summary

This lesson is designed to engage students in the question of whether it is morally justified to destroy property in order to show that you disagree with a particular law/tax. This lesson builds on the idea that American colonists were taxed heavily but not fairly represented in British Parliament. The colonists destroyed 300 cases of English tea in protest of the Tea Act.

Procedure

1. Launch/Do Now: Students will look at pictures of the Occupy Wall Street movement in which people are destroying property in order to protest the inequality between the rich and poor in America. Ask students to describe what they see, why this happening, and what would motivate people to engage in this kind of behavior.
2. Round Robin: Students will get into groups and discuss whether they think it is justified to use violence and destroy property in order to restore justice to unjust system.
 - a. Are the Occupiers justified in breaking windows and destroying property to protest inequalities between rich and poor?
3. Students will read page 68 in Holt United States History: Independence to 1914 about the Boston Tea Party.
4. Students will be asked to summarize the main points of the Boston Tea Party.
5. Students will discuss issues surrounding morality and using violence to achieve a goal.
 - a. What happened on December 16, 1773?
 - b. Why were the colonists upset?
 - c. How does this fit into the larger idea of "taxation without representation"?
 - d. How is this situation similar to Occupy Wall Street protests?
 - e. Some people would argue that you cannot really cause harm to property, you can only cause harm to people. Therefore damaging property is all right. Do you agree with that? Why/ why not?

6. Students will then do an activity called “Four Corners”. Each corner of the room will have a sign: “Strongly Agree”, “Agree”, “Disagree”, “Strongly Disagree”. Students will position themselves in each corner based upon their opinion of question “d” above. Students will talk in their corners about why they choose that position and then will share out to the class. After each corner shares out, students will have an opportunity to change corners based upon the arguments of the other groups.
7. Homework assignment: Is it all right to destroy private property in order to protest something that is unfair? Why or why not? What is the best counter-argument to the position you took in your answer?