

★ ★ ★
★  A Special Night



by Holly Melton ★ illustrated by Bob Dacey

HOUGHTON MIFFLIN

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HOUGHTON MIFFLIN HARCOURT
School Publishers

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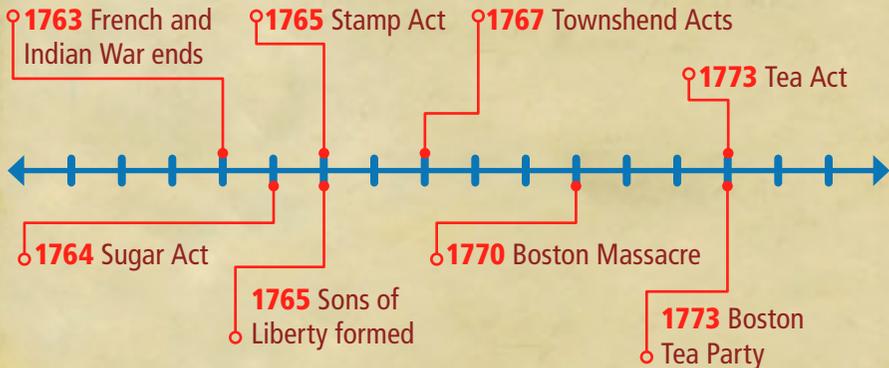
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Foreword

It was the night of December 16, 1773. A group of American Patriots dressed themselves as Mohawk Indians. The Patriots marched to Boston Harbor. They climbed onto three ships filled with a cargo of tea. The tea belonged to a British company. The Patriots didn't want the tea to be unloaded in America. If tea was unloaded, Americans would have to pay a high tax on it. That night, the Patriots had their own plan. They dumped the tea into Boston Harbor. That event was called the Boston Tea Party. Some people say that the American Revolution really began that night.

This story is a fictional retelling of the Boston Tea Party. It is written from the **viewpoint** of a young man who saw this important event.

Events Leading to the Boston Tea Party



November 28, 1773

My name is Henry Parker. I am 14 years old. These are exciting days for Patriots in Boston. I write so that I can remember these days. I believe that we colonists will soon form a new country. I believe that we will soon be free of British rule. The future might include war. The present includes protest.

We Patriots are angered by the British government. The British Parliament passes laws we do not agree with. The Parliament taxes us to raise money. Parliament has taxed sugar, glass, paper, tea, and more. Yet we are not allowed to send **representatives** to the British Parliament. I am just a schoolboy, but I know that this is unfair.

Henry Parker writes in his diary.





Most of the boys at my school are Patriots. During the day, we work at handwriting and mathematics. After school, we roam. Today, my friend Thomas and I walked home singing the Liberty Song: *“Come, join in hand, brave Americans all. And rouse your bold hearts at fair Liberty’s call...”*



As we passed the harbor, we saw the British ship *Dartmouth*. The ship carries more than one hundred crates of tea. Two other British tea ships will arrive soon.

The British government tries to control all the tea sold in America. The British choose only people loyal to the king to sell the tea. The Loyalist agents get the profits. We have to pay a high tax on the tea. There are only two ways to avoid paying this tax. The first is to send the ships away. The second is to refuse to unload the tea.



The Sons of Liberty want to stop the tax. They will tell us soon if we need to act.

The Sons of Liberty is a secret Patriot society. I believe my father is a member. Sometimes I hear rumors of nighttime meetings. On those nights, my father is gone from home. My sister, Sarah, says that she is a member of the Daughters of Liberty. She is only 10 years old. I tell her she is not old enough to be a member. Then she shouts at me, “You do nothing.

🔊 You just run through the streets with your friends. But I help Mother make Liberty Tea from herbs! I go to spinning bees and spin wool for cloth!”

American women *are* doing many important things. They make things so that we don’t have to buy those things from the British. Still, Sarah annoys me. She is too strong-willed in her **conduct**.

🔊 Henry’s mother spins wool for cloth.



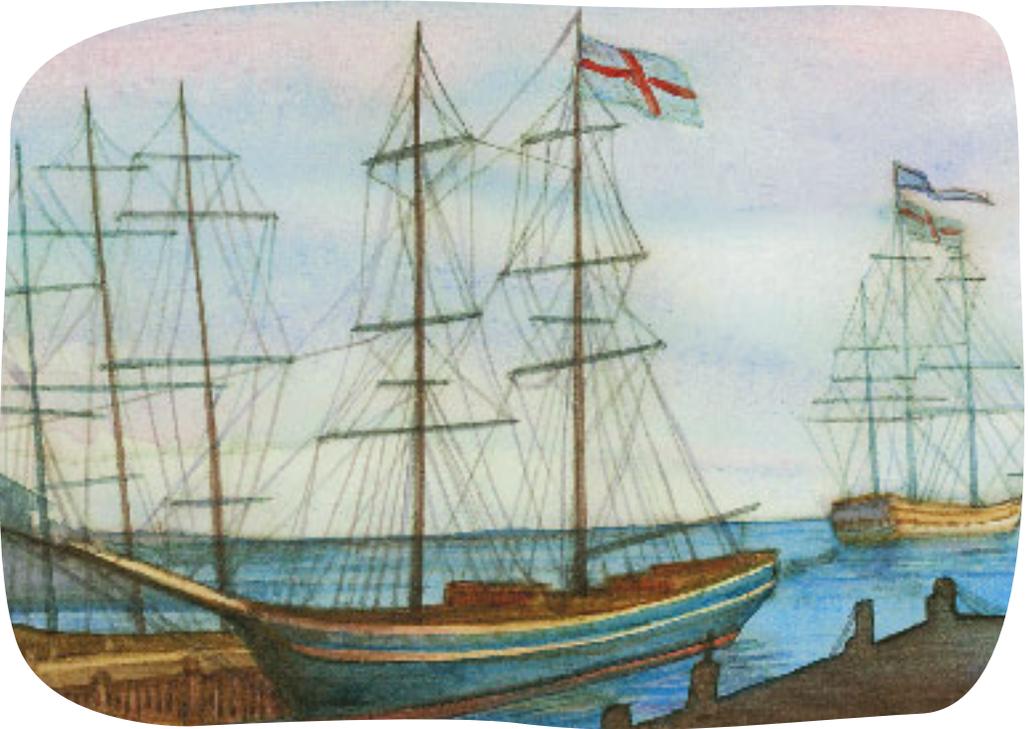
 *December 15, 1773*

A lot has happened in the past few weeks. All three tea ships are now docked at Griffin's Wharf—the *Dartmouth*, the *Eleanor*, and the *Beaver*. We have asked the British to send the tea ships away. But the British refuse. The Patriots of Boston say that the ships must not be unloaded. Every day, hundreds of people gather to look at the ships.

 At school, we talk a lot about the situation. Sometimes we are very **distracted**. We don't pay attention to our studies. Then the schoolmaster hits our hands with his ferule. He does not hit us too hard, though. The schoolmaster is also a Patriot.

 I am upset that I cannot join the Sons of Liberty. The men all say that schoolboys cannot control their feelings. The men think we will become violent when violence is not necessary. Not necessary? That thought makes me angry. I will never forget the Boston Massacre of 1770. The day after the massacre, I went to the place where it happened. The lobsterbacks had killed noble Patriots. I saw their frozen blood on the ground.

 At home, things are not calm—all because of the tea ships. More and more, my father is gone in the evenings. Thomas said the Sons of Liberty met at his house last night. He says he saw my father there. Thomas was not allowed to go to the meeting. But he served punch in



🔊 The three tea ships in Boston Harbor

🔊 another room. He could not hear everything. But he said that something important would happen on the night of December 16.

🔊 Sarah seems to get upset more easily each day. She thinks it is most unfair that girls do not go to school. She wishes she could walk around Boston like I do. Instead, she must stay home and do chores. She wants to see what is happening.



December 16, 1773, early afternoon

What a morning! At 10 o'clock, thousands of Patriots gathered at the Old South Meeting House. I stood at the back of the crowd. Our business was **pressing**. We needed to decide what to do about the tea ships.

 There was much discussion. Our leaders still want to send the tea ships away. They convinced Francis Rotch, owner of the tea ship *Dartmouth*, to visit the royal governor of Massachusetts. The Patriots told Rotch to ask Governor Hutchinson to send the tea ships out of the harbor. But the governor is a Loyalist. There is little hope that he will send the ships out of the harbor.

 Thousands of people are waiting for Rotch to return. I believe that today's events will change our future. I want to help. But for the moment, I will return home. Mother has prepared a delicious dinner. And I promised to tell Sarah about the meeting.

December 17, 1773

Last night, Boston Harbor became the world's largest teapot! This is how it happened.

Yesterday, after dinner, I got ready to go back to the Old South Meeting House. I had some problems leaving home. Sarah would not let go of my arm. "I want to come with you!" she said. Mother told her that young girls do not belong at such meetings. As I left, Sarah whispered, "I *will* see you later!" That worried me.

 At the meeting, people were nervous. Francis Rotch had not returned. Soon night came. Men lit candles. At last Rotch arrived. He reported that the governor would not agree to send the tea ships away. The ships would stay in the harbor.

Samuel Adams **surveyed** the huge crowd. "This meeting can do nothing more to save the country," he said.

 Samuel Adams, a Patriot leader, speaks to the other Patriots at the Old South Meeting House.



 Later, I learned that Adams's words were a secret signal. The words' real meaning was clear to the Sons of Liberty. They put their plan into action, shouting "Hurrah for Griffin's Wharf!" and "Boston Harbor a teapot tonight!"

 Some Patriots started to dress up like Mohawk Indians. Others appeared at the Old South Meeting House already in disguise. They wore feathers on their heads, old blankets, and ragged clothing. Their faces were smeared with coal dust and red paint. They carried hatchets, which they called "tomahawks." Their costumes did not make them look like real Mohawks. But the disguises served their purpose. The British soldiers would not know who the Patriots were.

 With whoops and hollers, the "Mohawks" left the meeting house. Most of us followed them. As I ran out the door, I saw my friend Thomas. We headed for Griffin's Wharf together. We were joined by men and boys from all over Boston. One "Indian" walked past me. I thought it was my father. But in a moment, he was gone.

 We arrived at Griffin's Wharf. It was already nighttime. Many lamps and torches lit up the sky, making it as bright as day. Hundreds of people were there. More kept coming. Soon there were thousands of onlookers.

Thomas and I watched as the “Mohawks” gathered near the tea ships. Three men were chosen as leaders. They divided the other men into groups of forty or fifty each. The three groups began to climb onto the *Dartmouth*, the *Eleanor*, and the *Beaver*.

“I wish we could join them,” said Thomas.

“I wish we could, too,” said a voice beside me.

It was Sarah. She had appeared out of nowhere. “I told you I’d see you later!” she said.

My sister can be so annoying sometimes. “How did you get here?” I asked.

“I climbed down a rope,” she said.

Thomas, Henry, and Sarah look out at the tea ships.





Sarah was not joking. Earlier that evening, Mother sent her upstairs to bed. Sarah heard all the activity in the street outside. So, she tied her blankets and sheets together and hung them out the window. She slid down to the street below. Then Sarah ran to the wharf.



“How did you know to come to the harbor?” I asked her.

“I heard Mother and Father talking last night,” she said. “I knew about the tea party before you did!”

Sometimes my sister makes me angry. “And why didn’t you tell me about it?” I said.

Thomas interrupted us. “Stop arguing. You’re missing the fun!”



We turned to look at the ships. The captains handed over the keys to the holds. The captains and crews did not try to stop the Patriots. The Patriots began to collect the tea. This was hard to do. Each tea chest weighed hundreds of pounds. Sailors on the wharf attached block and tackle to the chests. Then the men pulled the chests onto the decks.



▶ The colonists, dressed as Indians, dump crates of tea into the harbor.

▶ Next, the Patriots began to use their hatchets and axes. Thousands of us watched in almost total silence. The Patriots split open the chests and dumped the tea into the water. The tea began to fill the harbor. The tea leaves floated on the surface like thick seaweed.



Henry and Sarah watch Thomas run toward the tea ships.

I was excited when I saw the **shattered** chests and wet tea leaves. Others must have felt the same way. More people volunteered to help dump the tea.

Thomas could no longer just watch. “I’m going to throw some tea into the harbor myself!” he said. “Will you join me?”

I really wanted to go. But my younger sister was with me. Mother and Father would be angry if I left Sarah to **embark** a tea ship.

“You go,” I told Thomas unhappily. “I can’t leave Sarah alone here.”

A small hand slipped into mine. “I’m sorry, Henry,” said my sister.

Sarah and I watched as Thomas ran toward the *Dartmouth*. Then he climbed onto the ship. He was soon bracing himself against a mast. He helped a “Mohawk” tip over a heavy chest. When I saw this, I felt envious.

Sarah was excited by the events. “Imagine how many millions of cups of tea are in the water!” she said.

“That tea will never be drunk,” I said.

I had spoken too soon. At least one volunteer was not helping to dump the tea. He had come to take some tea for himself. Sarah saw him do it.

“Thief! Scoundrel!” she shouted. She ran after the man. I ran after Sarah. I could see that the man’s pockets were full of tea.

Sarah sees a man stealing tea.



 Sarah was fast, but the man was faster. He ran through the crowd. He headed away from the harbor. He went toward the **cramped**, dark alleys of the city.

“Help! Stop the tea-stealer!” yelled Sarah.

People watching the ships turned toward Sarah. They saw the man she was chasing. Instantly, two large men grabbed the thief. They dragged him back to the wharf. The men took the tea out of the thief’s pockets. They threw the tea in the water. Then they threw the thief into the water as well.

 The crowd cheered. “Well done, child!” they said to Sarah.

I was proud of my sister. She was very brave.

On the tea ships, the Patriots continued their work. More than three hours later, all the tea was dumped. Then the Patriots cleaned up the ships. They swept the decks and put everything back in its place. The ships’ officers were brought to the decks. The officers saw that no damage had been done to the ships. A fife began to play. Then the “Mohawks” got in a line and marched away.

 Sarah and I walked home slowly. We talked about what had happened. I had not expected Sarah to come. I was not happy when she arrived. But her Patriot spirit impressed me. Still, we decided not to tell our parents that she had left the house.

🔊 Sarah and I thought she could return to her room by climbing back up the knotted sheets. But as we got near our home, someone walked out from the shadows. It was Father. He was dressed as a Mohawk. Father was really surprised to see us. Perhaps that is why he did not scold Sarah too much. We all went inside together.

I will remember last night forever. When the Patriots got on the ships, it was the beginning of our country's voyage to freedom.

🔊 Father (dressed as a Mohawk) is surprised to see Henry and Sarah.



Glossary

block and tackle a system of pulleys and ropes used to lift heavy objects

cargo the goods, or freight, carried by a ship

ferule a wooden stick similar to a thick ruler, used to punish children in schools

hold the part of a ship, below the deck, where goods are kept

lobsterback an insulting nickname for British soldiers, who wore a red coat as part of their uniform

Loyalist an American colonist who supported the British

Old South Meeting House the largest meeting place in colonial Boston; Patriots held important meetings there

Patriot an American colonist who rebelled against the British

Sons of Liberty a secret society of Patriots formed in 1765 to fight against the Stamp Act

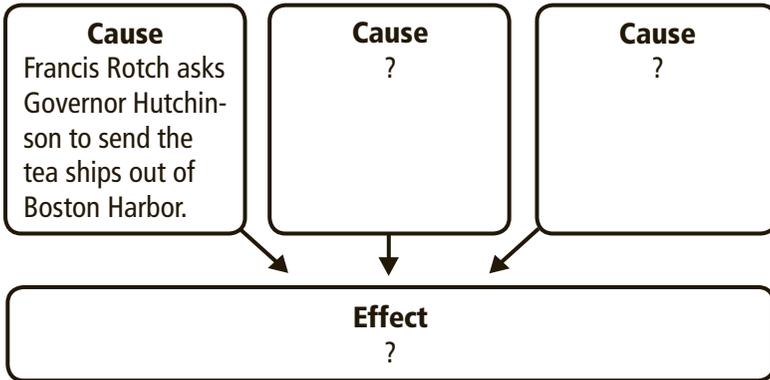
Responding



TARGET SKILL

Cause and Effect

Think about the events of December 16, 1773, described in *A Special Night*. How are the events related as causes and effects? Copy and complete the chart below.



Write About It

Text to Self Henry and his sister, Sarah, see a very important event. They know that this event will change their lives. Think of an important event you have seen. Write a paragraph about the event. Tell how the event changed your life.



TARGET VOCABULARY

bracing

conduct

cramped

distracted

embark

pressing

representatives

shattered

surveyed

viewpoint



TARGET SKILL

Cause and Effect Tell how events are related and how one event causes another.



TARGET STRATEGY

Visualize Use text details to form pictures in your mind of what you are reading.



GENRE Historical Fiction is a story whose characters and events are set in a real period of history.

Level: U

DRA: 44

Genre:
Historical Fiction

Strategy:
Visualize

Skill:
Cause and Effect

Word Count: 2,340

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