

Crossroads of Revolution: Choices
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Framing Question:

The people of Lexington had many choices of actions when the British army marched into their village. Some say the choice they made to stand up to the British started the American Revolution. What is one choice of action that you have made that has had a distinctive impact on you or your family?

Objectives:

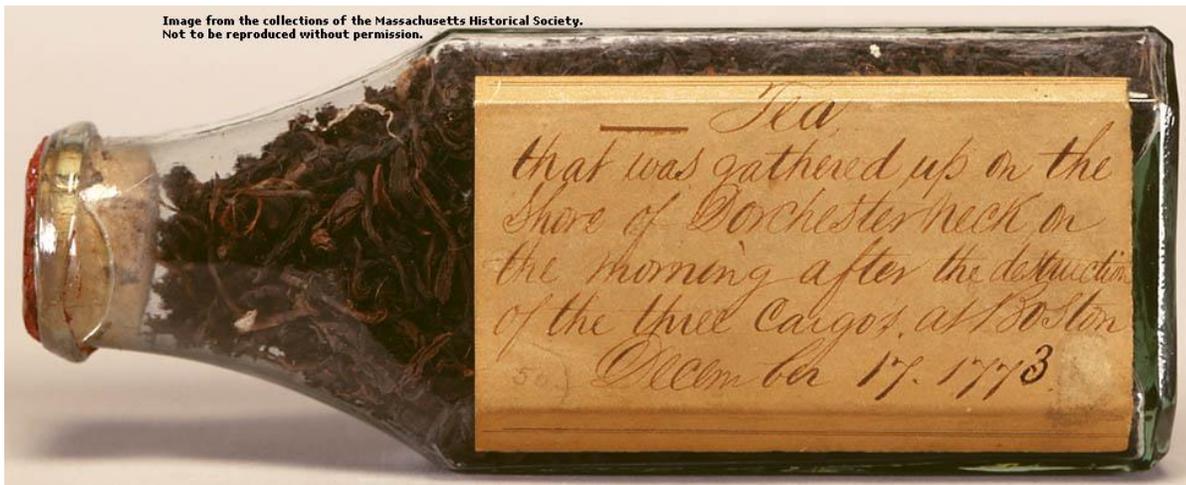
Through this lesson students will understand that....

1. choices people make may affect events beyond their own personal lives.
2. colonists had to decide what they would do when faced with the British army.
3. people have to live with their decisions and the choices they make.
4. people see events differently and make decisions based on their view of the world.
5. the people of Lexington did not have to choose to fight and start the Revolution.

Artifact: Tea leaves in glass bottle collected on the shore of Dorchester Neck the morning of 17 December 1773. View this artifact online at the Massachusetts Historical Society's website:

<http://www.masshist.org/database/231>

In 1767 the British Parliament passed on the Townshend Act which placed a tax on many items. One of these items was tea. The Townshend Acts were all repealed in 1768, except for the tax on tea, although the tax was not regularly collected until 1773, when the British East India Company sought the help of the government in selling more tea in the colonies. This forced monopoly of tea established by the government in England greatly upset the colonies eventually leading to the Boston Tea Party December 16, 1773. In response, Parliament punishes the city of Boston and much of Massachusetts by passing the Coercive or Intolerable Acts. These acts took away or suspended many of the basic rights of government that the colony had held since it was established, for example, the right to hold town meetings and elect the council. This greatly upset the colonists and caused them to reconsider their relationship with the King and Parliament.



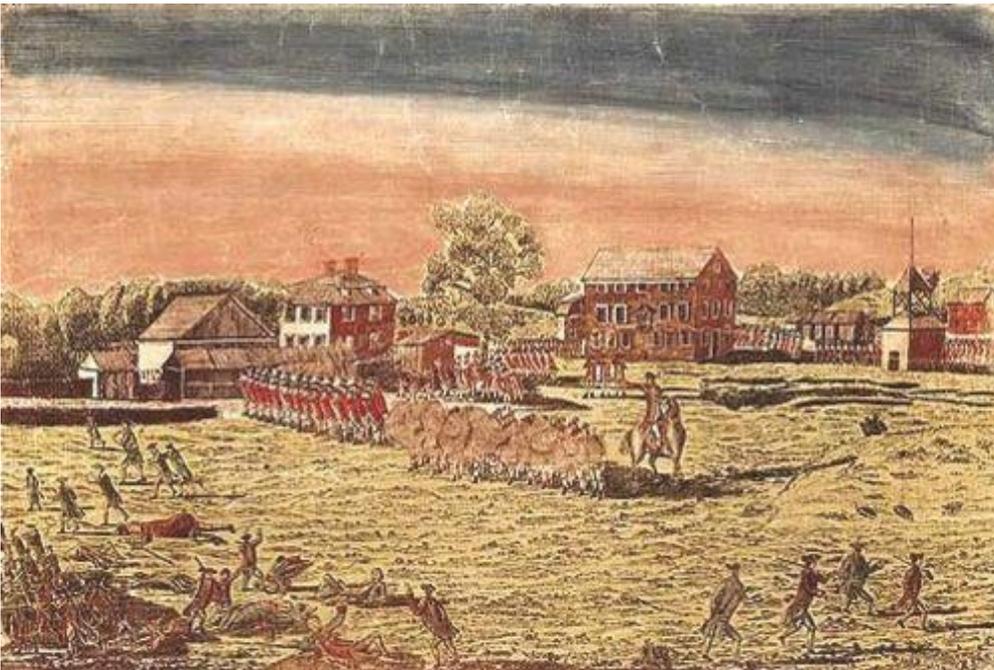
Critical Thinking Questions:

1. What is in this bottle and why is it significant?
2. Why would tea be a factor in your decision to fight your own army?
3. Did people in the colonies really like tea so much that they would choice to fight the British Army? Explain
4. Explain how sometimes things influence our decisions, but are not the main reason we make our decision.

Landscapes: Images of Lexington and Concord

View the Doolittle Prints online at the national Park Service's *American Revolution* website.

http://www.nps.gov/revwar/educational_resources/teachers.html (The images are located in Lesson One: Prelude to the American Revolution)



Amos Doolittle, Plate I, The Battle of Lexington.



Minute Man National Historical Park



Amos Doolittle, Plate III, Engagement at the North Bridge in Concord.

On the night of April 18, 1775, a detachment of British Regulars was sent from Boston to the town of Concord to confiscate weapons that were stored there by American colonists. On their way to Concord, the British had to pass through the small town of Lexington. Although outnumbered and under-equipped, members of the militia at Lexington stood on the town green and confronted the British. After an exchange of words, shots rang out. Eight colonists were dead. At this point, the rest of the militia ran from the field and the British continued their march to Concord. Later in the morning of April 19, the British arrived in Concord. The stores of weapons had, for the most part, been removed but the British burned what was left. Seeing smoke rising from the town, the militia from Concord and surrounding towns came down from outlying hilltops and met the Regulars at the North Bridge. The colonists were able to turn back the Regulars. As they marched back to Boston, the British army was harassed and attacked by members of minutemen from all over Massachusetts that used the landscape to hide behind stonewalls and tree lines to fire down on the British troops.

Critical Thinking Questions:

1. Describe 2 advantages the colonists had over the British, as far as the landscape was concerned.
2. Describe 2 disadvantages the colonists had against the British army, militarily.
3. What other considerations did the colonists have to take into account that influenced their decision to defend their town? (think of their homes, families, livelihood)
4. How do you think the colonists felt after April 19, 1775, and what factors caused some who were against the colonists, at first, to join in their effort for independence?

Document: Thomas Boynton journal, dated 19 April-26 April 1775.

View this artifact online at the Massachusetts Historical Society's website:

<http://www.masshist.org/database/517>

The events at Lexington and Concord on April 19, 1775 are widely regarded by historians as some of the most important battles of the Revolution. In an attempt to determine what happened on that fateful day, why shots were fired, who fired first, and what might have happened, scholars rely on historic documents from that period in an attempt to recreate the events that occurred.

An example of on such documents is a page from the journal of Thomas Boynton, dated 19 April-26 April 1775.

According to Boynton's journal, at 10:00 P.M. on the night of 18 April, approximately 800 British grenadiers begin making their way to the Back Bay. Once gathered there, they are ferried across the Charles River basin to Cambridge. At two o'clock in the morning they set out in the direction of Concord. At 4:30 A.M., when they reach Lexington Green the Regulars encounter resistance. Eight militiamen are killed and ten wounded, but the Regulars push on and reach Concord by 7 A.M. Along the way they hear more gunshots, church bells, and drum beats sounding the alarm throughout the countryside. In far-flung towns such as Andover, 17 miles northeast of Concord, militiamen like Thomas Boynton rally to assist their brethren.

Transcription (sic)

Andover April 19 1775 Thomas Boynton's journal.

This Morning being wednesday about the suns
Rising the Town was Alarmd with the News that
the Regulars was on their march to Concord upon
which the town musterd and a bout 10 oclock
marched on ward for Concord in Tewksbury news came
that the Regulars had fired on our men in Lexington
and had kild 8: in Bilrike News came that
the Enemy were killing and slaying our men
in Concord: Bedford we had News that the
Enemy had killed 2 of our men and had Retreated
Back we Shifted our Course and persued after
them as fast as possible but all in vain the Enemy
had the start 3 or 4 miles it is said that there
number were a bought 1500 men they were per
sued as far as Charlestown that night; the next
Day they past Charls River the loss number they
Sustained as we here were 500: our men a
bout 40: to return, after we came into [Concord?]
Rode we saw houses burning [and?] plundered
others plundred and Dead Bodies of the Enemy
Lying by the way others taken prisoners
about 8 at Night our Regiment Came to a
halt in Notime the next morning we came
into Cambridge and their abode

May 13 the hole

Armeý marched to Charlestown a long side the men of war which gave them great surprise

June 16 three Regiments were ordered to peraid at 6 oclock in the after noon namely Conl Frys & Conl Bridges & Conl Prescotts after which Being done we attended prayers & abought 9 at night we marchd to Charlestown with about a 1000 men and at about 11 oclock we began to Entrench in sight of Boston & the shiping at the suns Rising they Began to Fire upon us from the shiping the 3d or 4th Shot they kild one man and many others Escaped very narrowly at length they Ceased their fire our work went on Continually they Began Again about 8 or 9 oclock, from Corps

Hill, and Continued A hot Fire About 2 or 3 oclock the Enemy Landed and advanced toards us its thot: to the number of 2000 men and Soon planted their Cannon and began the fire & advancing up to our fort after they Came within gunshot we fird & then Ensud a very hot Engagement after a number of shots passed the Enemy Retreated & we Ceased our fire for a few minutes They advanced again & we Began A hot fire for A short time the Enemy Scaling our walls and the number of our men being few we was ordered to Retreat at which time the Enemy were allmost Round us & a Contin- inual Firing at our heals in the Engagement we lost William Haggot Joseph Chandler and [Philip ?] Abbot wounded Lieuts Isaac Abbot Sergt Joshua Lovjoy James Turner Jeremiah Wardwell Stephen Chandler and Israel Holts of our Company.

August 26 Saterdag night

A party of our men went on what is Cald the plowd hill and Entrenchd Sabath day the Enemy began to Fire they kild 2 men our Regt. was mustred and Marched down to winter hill, whare they continued all day at Night we marched down to sd. plowd hill & and Entrenched in the night there was a Smart Shower & very Sharp lightning & thunder the most of us wet to the Skin at About 7 oclock we was Releaved the Enemy fird not a gun at us

Based on the document above, consider the following questions:

1. Create a timeline of Boynton's journey with the minutemen. Which towns do they pass through, and at what time? For each town, make a note of what Boynton saw or heard there.
2. According to Boynton, how many British regulars were marching? What would be going through your mind if you had seen this spectacle? Would you have stayed and fought?
3. Imagine that you are Thomas Boynton. Write a letter to you friend in Charleston, South Carolina, describing your activities on April 19. Be sure to describe your reactions to the news you were hearing as you passed through different towns, and what made you want to fight or stay with Britain.

Assessment

- a. Students will use the documents to determine what influenced the colonists' decision to stand against the British Army and relate that to the events or things that have influenced their decision-making. They will use at least one document and one example from their own life to explain in a paper how they made the decision.
- b. Students will use comparing and contrasting skills in determining what things influenced decision-making in 1775 as compared to how we make decisions today. Create a list of similarities and differences.
- c. Explain whether you think that the colonists were justified (right with good reason) in their decision to stand up to the British Army.

Other Resources

1. *The Lexington-Concord Battle Road: Hour by Hour Account of Events Preceding and on the History-Making Day, April 19, 1775.* Republished in 2010 by Eastern National for Minute Man National Historical Park. www.eParks.com
2. Massachusetts Historical Society, *Coming of the American Revolution* - Lexington and Concord resources: <http://www.masshist.org/revolution/lexington.php>
3. Selected films: *April Morning*, a made-for-TV movie about the Battle of Lexington. Selected scenes include the mustering of the militia, the arrival of the British army, scenery of what Lexington green might have looked like at the time of the battle, and the afternoon of April 19, as the British were trying to make their way back to Boston and the use of guerilla warfare by the Colonial militias.