

Within Our Power

The Story of the Edenton Ladies' Tea Party

Learning Activities and Lesson Ideas

by Shae LaFountaine <https://www.lafountaineofknowledge.com>
with contributions by Cori Banks and Christie Norris

Background and Context:

Teachers should provide context for students regarding the changing roles and rights of women across time. Discuss with students that women of all races have always played a significant role in North Carolina's history, even when their opportunities and freedoms have been restricted.

In 1774, the roles and rights of the white women discussed in “Within Our Power” were largely defined by their relationships to men—whether as daughters, wives, or widows. Women were typically expected to manage the household, raise children, and support their husbands. While many women engaged in economic activities such as farming, weaving, and small-scale trading, their contributions were often informal and undervalued. Education for women was limited, focusing mainly on domestic skills, and women had little access to professional or political power.



Legally, women had few rights. Married women were considered to fall under the authority of their husbands, leaving them without rights such as owning property, signing contracts, or suing in court. Women were excluded from voting and formal political participation. However, some women found ways to engage in the political movements of the time, particularly through boycotts and other forms of resistance to British policies leading up to the American Revolution.

Before Reading:

Introductory Discussion

Before reading *Within Our Power: The Story of the Edenton Ladies' Tea Party* introduce key concepts and prompt critical thinking by asking students to consider the following (*Teachers: This is a suggestion, feel free to adjust the wording as needed*):

I want you to imagine something with me. Let's imagine that school is a little bit different. Let's pretend that every day when you come to school, you have to pay me \$5 to sit at your desk. If you need to use the bathroom, you have to pay \$3. It costs \$2 to sharpen your pencil and \$1 for a tissue. What do you think about that? Do you think that's fair? *Discuss.*

Well, here's something that may change how you feel. What if I promise to use all the money for the good of the class? We'll use it to make school more fun and enjoyable. What are some things we could spend the money on? *Discuss.*

You guys have some great ideas, but I changed my mind. I'm not going to let you decide how we spend the money. I'm going to decide how the money is spent instead. I think I'm going to use it to get a massage after school. I think that's the best way to spend the money. What do you think? *Discuss.*

Do you think you should get a say in how the money is spent? Why? *Discuss.*

It seems like many of you feel it would be unfair not to get a say in how the money is spent. Today we're going to read a story about a time in the history of our country when people were facing a similar situation. They were being forced to pay money, taxes, but they had no say in how that money was spent.

After Reading:

Whole Group Discussion Questions

1. What is the main challenge or problem the Americans face in this story? Why do you think this issue was so important to them?
2. Why were the Americans upset about the way they were being treated? Were they justified in the way they felt and why so? How do you imagine you might feel if you were in their situation?
3. The story talks about the men going to meetings to solve the problem. Why do you think the Edenton ladies weren't allowed to go?
4. Even though the Edenton ladies couldn't attend the meetings, they found a way to make their voices heard. What did they decide to do, and why was this important?
5. How would you describe the actions the Edenton ladies took? What risks were they taking by signing their names on the declaration?
6. If you were asked to give this book a different title, what might you title it and why?

After Reading the Author's Note:

7. The story explains how Americans were upset because they felt they were being treated unfairly by Great Britain. Even as they declared independence, what are some ways that life was still unfair and unjust for groups such as white women, African Americans, and Native Americans?
8. How have these same groups of people continued to stand up for their rights throughout history?
9. What are some of the challenges these groups still experience today? What actions can we take in today's society to combat unfairness and injustice?

Reading (ELA) Learning Activities

Small Group (Guided Reading) Discussion Questions:

1. Describe the setting. Where does this story take place? Why is the setting important in understanding the problem the characters face? What was happening in Edenton in 1774?
2. Does this story have a main character? Who would you say is the main character? Who are some other important characters?
3. How would you describe Penelope Barker? What adjective best describes her character? Why?
4. What is the main conflict in this story?

5. What did the Americans do to protest the unfair taxes? Can you find three actions from the story that were taken to solve the problem?
6. The author mentions several female characters and discussions they had with their husbands and friends about unfair taxes. Why do you think this was included in the story? What purpose does it serve?
7. What is the main idea of this story? What message is the author trying to tell the readers?
8. What types of connections were you able to make while reading (text to text, text to self, text to world)?
9. What is the purpose of the author's note? Why do you think that was included?

Reading Comprehension Questions (See page 14):

1. What was the job of the British Parliament?
 - A. To pay taxes to the government
 - B. To help the king make laws**
 - C. To deliver tea to the colonies
 - D. To print the newspapers
2. **True or False:** Each American colony had a representative in Parliament. **False**
3. What are taxes?
 - A. Laws that guarantee the rights of all citizens
 - B. People who help make laws
 - C. Money that is paid to help run a government**
 - D. How much it costs to buy something
4. What does the phrase "taxation without representation" mean?

Americans were forced to pay taxes (taxation) but they had no say in how the money was spent (representation).
5. What happened on December 16, 1773?
 - A. King George became king of Great Britain
 - B. North Carolina's First Provincial Assembly took place
 - C. The Boston Tea Party happened in Boston Harbor**
 - D. The Edenton ladies signed their declaration
6. Why did the government declare that no ships could enter or leave Boston's harbor?
 - A. Americans had thrown hundreds of chests of tea into the harbor
 - B. The ruined tea had not been paid for yet
 - C. The harbor was unsafe for ships because of all the tea
 - D. Both A and B are correct**

7. What was decided at North Carolina's First Provincial Assembly? List **three** things that the men agreed on.
1. They agreed they were loyal subjects of King George
 2. Americans were not being treated fairly
 3. Taxation without representation was unfair
8. How did Americans decide to protest Great Britain's unfair treatment?
- A. They would stop buying goods that came from Great Britain
 - B. They would dump more tea Boston's harbor
 - C. They would stop paying taxes
 - D. They would no longer be loyal subjects of King George
9. What made the Edenton ladies' declaration different from the letters in the newspapers written by other American women?
- A. They supported taxation without representation
 - B. They signed their names at the bottom
 - C. They thought people should keep buying British goods
 - D. They didn't send their declaration to be printed in newspapers
10. Why did the Edenton ladies want their declaration printed in British newspapers?
- To let British women know that American men and women were in agreement about Great Britain's unfair treatment.

Writing Prompt:

Fifty-one women in Edenton signed their names at the bottom of their declaration, something no other woman had done. This action was considered "ground-breaking." What does it mean to be ground-breaking? Write about a time in your life when you did something you consider ground-breaking. What pushed you to take action? How did it make you feel?

Reading/ELA Standards Addressed

N.C. Standard Course of Study

Third Grade

- RI.3.1 Ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding of a text, referring explicitly to the text as the basis for the answers
- RI.3.3 Describe characters in a story and explain how their actions contribute to the sequence of events.

RI.3.4 Determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases in a text relevant to a grade 3 topic or subject area.

RI.3.2 Determine the main idea of a text; recount the key details and explain how they support the main idea.

RI.3.3 Describe the relationship between a series of historical events, scientific ideas or concepts, or steps in technical procedures in a text, using language that pertains to time, sequence, and cause/effect.

RI.3.5 Use text features and search tools to locate information relevant to a given topic efficiently

RI.3.7 Use information gained from illustrations and the words in a text to demonstrate understanding of the text.

RI.3.8 Describe how the author connects ideas between sentences and paragraphs to support specific points in a text.

W.3.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.

SL.3.1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 3 topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

Fourth Grade

RI.4.1 Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

RI.4.3 Describe in depth a character, setting, or event in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text.

RI.4.4 Determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words or phrases in a text relevant to a grade 4 topic or subject area.

RI.4.2 Determine the main idea of a text and explain how it is supported by key details; summarize the text.

RI.4.3 Explain events, procedures, ideas, or concepts in a historical, scientific, or technical text, including what happened and why, based on specific information in the text.

W.4.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.

SL.4.1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 4 topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

Fifth Grade

RI.5.1 Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

RI.5.2 Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text, including how characters in a story or drama respond to challenges or how the speaker in a poem reflects upon a topic; summarize the text.

RI.5.3 Explain the relationships or interactions between two or more individuals, events, ideas, or concepts in a historical, scientific, or technical text based on specific information in the text.

RI.5.4 Determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases in a text relevant to a grade 5 topic or subject area.

W.5.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.

SL.5.1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 5 topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

Social Studies Learning Activities (See page 10)

Analyzing primary sources:

Have a discussion about the difference between primary and secondary sources.

- **Ask** - Is *Within Our Power: The Story of the Edenton Ladies' Tea Party* a primary source or a secondary source? (*it's a secondary source*)
- Now turn to the page showing the newspaper clipping from the *Virginia Gazette* and ask—Is the declaration as it appeared in the newspaper a primary source or a secondary source? (*it's a primary source*)
- **Discuss** - Why is it important to include primary sources when learning about an event in history?
- After discussing the importance of primary sources, hand out a worksheet with the text from the Edenton declaration and space for students to “translate” it into easier to understand, modern language (See **page 10**).
- **Ask** student volunteers to share their “translations” with the class. Come up with an updated version as a whole group and record it somewhere that everyone can read (write it on a white board, chart paper, or type it while projecting your screen).

Suggested Updated Version:

We can't ignore events that hurt our country. Our leaders have decided to take action to protest these events. It is our duty to support the decisions made by the men who lead us. We owe it to them and to ourselves. We will do everything we can to speak up and take action. We sign this paper to show that we are determined to support their protests.

Modified Version of this Activity (See page 11):

This activity may be difficult for younger students, English language learners, or students with learning disabilities. Consider offering this modified matching version. Students

read each section of the declaration and match it to the correct “translation” by cutting and gluing them side by side.

Discussion Questions to Follow this Activity:

- What was the purpose of the declaration signed by fifty-one women in Edenton? What were they trying to achieve?
- At this time, women did not have a say in government. What is significant about the Edenton declaration? What makes it important?
- In what ways did the Edenton declaration help lead to American independence from Great Britain? What impact did it have?
- How would you describe the women who signed the declaration? What adjectives would you use? Why?
- What risks were these women taking in signing their names?
- What might the consequences have been?
- Do you think the risks were worth it? Can you think of a time you took a risk and it paid off?
- Why didn't any African Americans, Native Americans, or women sign the Declaration of Independence? What work still had to be done to ensure fairness for all?

Exploring Events in North Carolina History (See pages 12–13):

Read through the timeline of North Carolina history included with the book *Within Our Power: The Story of the Edenton Ladies' Tea Party*. Use the information in the timeline to complete a research project.

- Choose one event listed on the timeline to research further (using books or the internet).
 - Write a paragraph (at least 5 sentences) explaining key details about the event. The paragraph should include:
 - When it happened
 - Where it happened
 - Who was involved
 - What happened
 - Why it's important (how did it impact N.C. history?)
 - Draw an illustration to go along with your paragraph
- It would be helpful to include a planning page and worksheet similar to this:

* For older students or as a modification, consider asking students to write a 5 paragraph essay about their event as opposed to a single paragraph.

Social Studies Standards Addressed (N.C. Standard Course of Study):

Inquiry (Third–Fifth grade)

- I.1.6 Organize relevant information from primary and secondary sources using the origin, authority, structure, credibility, reliability, and context of the sources to guide the selection.
- I.1.8 Accurately use information from sources when making claims.
- I.1.9 Make inferences from information in sources.

Third Grade

- 3.B.1 Understand how values and beliefs of individuals and groups influence communities.
 - 3.B.1.1 Explain how the values, beliefs, and cultures of various indigenous, religious, racial and other groups contribute to the development of local communities and the state.
- 3.H.1 Understand how various people and historical events have shaped local communities.
 - 3.H.1.1 Explain how the experiences and achievements of women, indigenous, religious, and racial groups have contributed to the development of the local community.
 - 3.H.1.2 Explain the lasting impact historical events have had on local communities.
 - 3.H.1.3 Use primary and secondary sources to compare multiple interpretations of various historical symbols and events in local communities.

Fourth Grade

- 4.B.1 Understand ways in which values and beliefs have influenced the development of North Carolina's identity as a state.
 - 4.B.1.2 Explain how the values and beliefs of various indigenous, religious, and racial groups have contributed to the development of North Carolina
- 4.C&G.1 Understand the role of citizens in local and state government.
 - 4.C&G.1.2 Summarize the ways in which women, indigenous, religious, and racial groups influence local and state government
- 4.H.1 Understand the role of various people, events, and ideas in shaping North Carolina.
 - 4.H.1.1 Explain how the experiences and achievements of minorities, indigenous groups, and marginalized people have contributed to change and innovation in North Carolina.
 - 4.H.1.2 Summarize the changing roles of women, indigenous populations and racial groups throughout the history of North Carolina.
 - 4.H.1.3 Explain the ways in which revolution, reform, and resistance have shaped North Carolina.
 - 4.H.1.4 Summarize the role North Carolina has played in major conflicts and events throughout the history of America.
 - 4.H.1.5 Use primary and secondary sources to compare multiple perspectives of various historical events in North Carolina.

Fifth Grade

- 5.B.1 Understand ways in which values and beliefs have influenced the development of the United States.
 - 5.B.1.2 Explain how the values and beliefs of various indigenous, religious, and racial groups have contributed to the development of American identity.
- 5.H.1 Understand the role of various people, events, and ideas in shaping the United States.
 - 5.H.1.1 Explain how the experiences and achievements of women, minorities, indigenous groups, and marginalized people have contributed to change and innovation in the United States
 - 5.H.1.2 Summarize the changing roles of women, indigenous, racial and other minority groups in the United States.
 - 5.H.1.3 Explain the ways in which revolution, reform, and resistance have shaped the United States.
 - 5.H.1.4 Explain the impact of major conflicts and events on the development of the United States.
 - 5.H.1.5 Compare multiple perspectives of various historical events using primary and secondary sources

Project Based Learning

Create Your Own Declaration (See pages 8–9):

This activity serves as a follow up to the introductory discussion in which students imagine a scenario in which they must pay “taxes” to their teacher but have no say in how the money is spent.

It seems like many of you feel it would be unfair not to get a say in how the money is spent. The women in the story we read were facing a similar situation. They were being forced to pay money—taxes—but they had no say in how that money was spent. What did they do about it? *Discuss.*

The Edenton women wrote a declaration to tell everyone how they felt and let them know what actions they would take. We’re going to write our own declarations!

Your declaration must have 4 things:

1. Your location (city, state) and the date (month, date, year) at the top
2. State what you think is unfair and why and explain what you are going to do about it (for example, maybe you’ll choose to sit on the floor instead of paying \$5 to sit at your desk)
3. Write a final statement (something like “we sign this paper to . . .”)
4. Sign the bottom and get signatures of classmates who support it (you’ll need to get your classmates to sign, so keep that in mind when writing your declaration. If you declare something too extreme, they may not support it and they may not want to sign their names)

Students will plan and write a rough draft of their declarations using a worksheet similar to **page 8**.

After completing the planning page, students will use a pen to write a final draft of their declaration on a blank piece of paper. You may also choose to have students type these. They will sign their name at the bottom and then collect signatures from classmates. Urge students to read each declaration before signing. They shouldn’t sign unless they are in agreement.

When the declarations are written and signed, you may opt to “antique” them. This increases student interest in the activity and makes for a fun final product. Mix brown tempera paint with water and use a sponge to spread it over the declarations. (You can also fill a cookie sheet with cold coffee and some loose coffee grounds to age the paper.) While the paper is still damp, carefully tear pieces off the edges (being careful not to tear off any writing). Finally, crumple up the paper and then carefully unfold it and lay it flat to finish drying. **See page 9.**

Standards addressed (N.C. Standard Course of Study):

Third Grade

Reading/ELA

RF.3.2 Create readable documents with legible handwriting (manuscript and cursive).

W.3.1 Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons.

Social Studies

I.1.10 Construct responses to compelling questions with specific claims and information from teacher-provided sources.

I.1.11 Identify ways to address problems related to the compelling question.

3.B.1 Understand how values and beliefs of individuals and groups influence communities.

Fourth Grade

Reading/ELA

RF.4.2 Create readable documents through legible handwriting (cursive).

W.4.1 Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information

Social Studies:

I.1.10 Construct responses to compelling questions with specific claims and information from teacher-provided sources.

I.1.11 Identify ways to address problems related to the compelling question.

4.B.1 Understand ways in which values and beliefs have influenced the development of North Carolina’s identity as a state.

Fifth Grade

Reading/ELA

RF.5.2 Create readable documents through legible handwriting (cursive).

W.5.1 Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information.

Social Studies

I.1.10 Construct responses to compelling questions with specific claims and information from teacher-provided sources.

I.1.11 Identify ways to address problems related to the compelling question.

5.B.1 Understand ways in which values and beliefs have influenced the development of the United States in terms of lasting impact.

7.H.1.2 Summarize the influence women, indigenous, racial, ethnic, political, and religious groups have had on historical events and current global issues.

8.H.1 Understand the role of conflict and cooperation in the development of North Carolina and the nation.

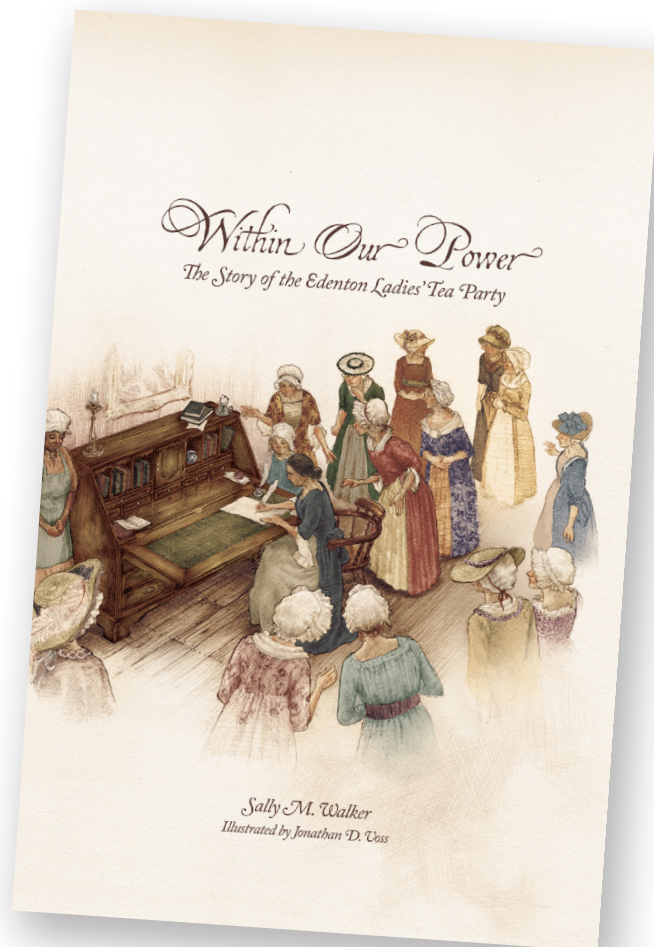
AH.H.1 Understand the reasons for American involvement in conflicts and the domestic and foreign impacts.

AH.H.3 Analyze various turning points in American history in terms of perspective, causation, and change.

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My Declaration Planning Page

Answer the questions below in **complete sentences** to plan your declaration.

Your teacher is requiring you to pay taxes but isn't letting you decide how the money will be spent. Why do you think this is unfair?

What will you do to protest this unfair treatment? Come up with at least three actions you will take.

1. Write your location and the date at the top of a blank piece of paper (city, state, month, date, year).
2. Write your answers to the questions above to create a declaration.
3. Write a final statement (something like "we sign this paper to...").
4. Sign your name at the bottom and then find classmate who are willing to sign as well.

Finished Example of Declaration

Raleigh, North Carolina, April 3, 2024

We think it is unfair that we have to pay taxes in our class but we don't get to help decide how the money is spent. This isn't right because the money is supposed to be for all of us but only our teacher is getting to use it. We should all vote to decide what we spend the money on. Until this is fixed, we will protest. We will sit on the floor instead of paying taxes to sit at our desks. We will bring our own tissues from home. We will also write in pen instead of pencil to avoid the pencil sharpener tax. We sign this paper to declare how we feel and what we will do to stop the unfair treatment.

Leah LaFountaine

Hannah Smith

John Allen

Nadya Brown

Adrian MacDonald

Stella Lewis

The Edenton Declaration

The women of Edenton, North Carolina wrote their declaration in 1774. Because it was written so long ago, it is a little hard to understand. Read the declaration carefully and rewrite it in your own words.

As we cannot be indifferent on any occasion that appears nearly to affect the peace and happiness of our country, and as it has been thought necessary, for the public good, to enter into several particular resolves by a meeting of Members deputed from the whole Province it is a duty which we owe, not only to our near and dear connections who have concurred in them, but to ourselves who are essentially interested in their welfare, to do everything as far as lies in our power to testify our sincere adherence to the same; and we do therefore accordingly subscribe this paper, as a witness of our fixed intention and solemn determination to do so.

Rewrite the declaration in your own words:

The Edenton Declaration

The women of Edenton, North Carolina wrote their declaration in 1774. Because it was written so long ago, it is a little hard to understand.

Read each part of the Edenton declaration below. Find the matching meaning at the bottom of the page and cut it out. Glue the meaning of each part in the space next to it.

<p><i>“As we cannot be indifferent on any occasion that appears nearly to affect the peace and happiness of our country,”</i></p>	<p>Glue meaning here</p>
<p><i>“and as it has been thought necessary, for the public good, to enter into several particular resolves by a meeting of Members deputed from the whole Province”</i></p>	<p>Glue meaning here</p>
<p><i>“it is a duty which we owe, not only to our near and dear connections who have concurred in them, but to ourselves who are essentially interested in their welfare,”</i></p>	<p>Glue meaning here</p>
<p><i>“to do everything as far as lies in our power to testify our sincere adherence to the same;”</i></p>	<p>Glue meaning here</p>
<p><i>“and we do therefore accordingly subscribe this paper, as a witness of our fixed intention and solemn determination to do so.”</i></p>	<p>Glue meaning here</p>

<p>It is our duty to support the decisions made by the men who lead us. We owe it to them and to ourselves.</p>	<p>We sign this paper to show that we are determined to support their protests.</p>	<p>Our leaders have decided to take action to protest these events.</p>
<p>We can't ignore events that hurt our country.</p>	<p>We will do everything we can to speak up and take action.</p>	<p>Cut out and glue in the correct spaces above.</p>

Exploring North Carolina History

Choose an event from the timeline of North Carolina history included in the book "Within Our Power." Use books or the internet to learn more about the event. Answer the questions below to prepare for writing.

Come up with a title that sums up the event you chose:

When did this event take place?

Where did this event take place?

Who was involved? List anyone who was part of this event:

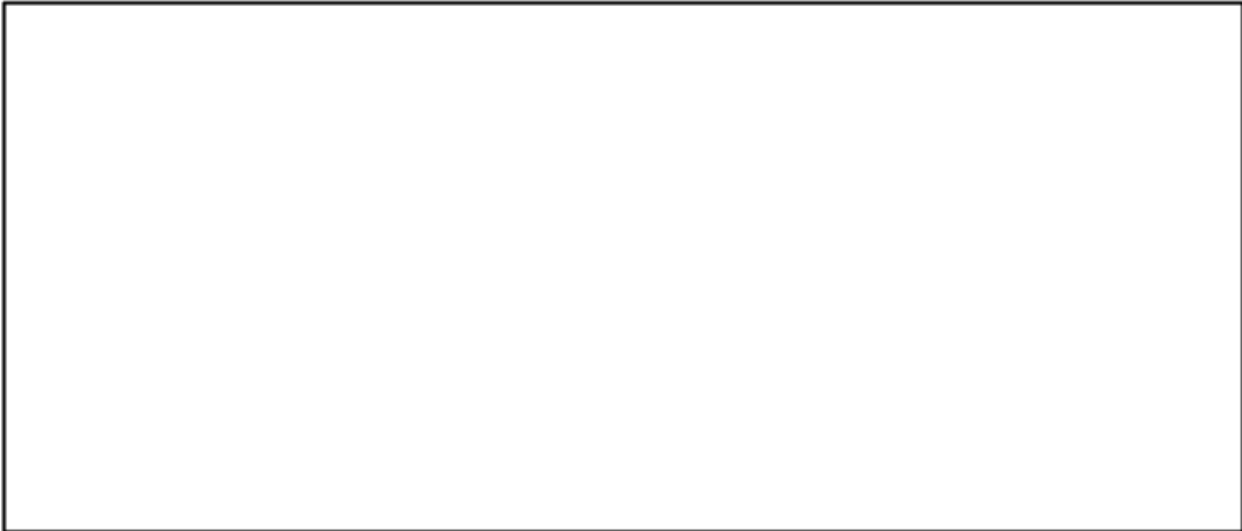
What happened? Describe what happened in detail:

Why is this event important? What impact did it have on North Carolina's history?

Exploring North Carolina History

Use the space below to write a paragraph (at least 5 sentences) about the event you chose. Draw an illustration in the box to go with your writing.

(Title)



1. What was the job of the British Parliament?

- A. To pay taxes to the government
- B. To help the king make laws
- C. To deliver tea to the colonies
- D. To print the newspapers

2. True or False: Each American colony had a representative in Parliament.

3. What are taxes?

- A. Laws that guarantee the rights of all citizens
- B. People who help make laws
- C. Money that is paid to help run a government
- D. How much it costs to buy something

4. What does the phrase “taxation without representation” mean?

5. What happened on December 16, 1773?

- A. King George became king of Great Britain
- B. North Carolina’s First Provincial Assembly took place
- C. The Boston Tea Party happened in Boston Harbor
- D. The Edenton ladies signed their declaration

6. Why did the government declare that no ships could enter or leave Boston’s harbor?

- A. Americans had thrown hundreds of chests of tea into the harbor
- B. The ruined tea had not been paid for yet
- C. The harbor was unsafe for ships because of all the tea
- D. Both A and B are correct

7. What was decided at North Carolina’s First Provincial Assembly? List three things that the men agreed on.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

8. How did Americans decide to protest Great Britain’s unfair treatment?

- A. They would stop buying goods that came from Great Britain
- B. They would dump more tea in Boston’s harbor
- C. They would stop paying taxes
- D. They would no longer be loyal subjects of King George

9. What made the Edenton ladies’ declaration different from the letters in the newspapers written by other American women?

- A. They supported taxation without representation
- B. They signed their names at the bottom
- C. They thought people should keep buying British goods
- D. They didn’t send their declaration to be printed in newspapers

10. Why did the Edenton ladies want their declaration printed in British newspapers?