

THE BOSTON MASSACRE OF MARCH 5, 1770 IN DOCUMENTS

Primary Document Teaching Kit

This teaching kit was designed to provide primary sources about the Boston Massacre that can be incorporated into the classroom in a variety of ways and for a wide range of grade levels. These sources can be used, individually and collectively, to explore this important event leading to the American Revolution. This kit offers a multidisciplinary approach to teaching; it can be used to fulfill requirements in the History and Social Science and English Language Arts.

The teaching kit can help teachers and students studying: the American Revolution; famous American people such as Paul Revere and Crispus Attucks; issues of bias, propaganda and point of view in historical documents; art and artists; and Boston and Massachusetts local history.

The Kit includes:

- Background information- The Event and Aftermath
- Vocabulary
- Suggested readings for teachers and students
- Timeline: 1765-1776
- Documents:
 1. Excerpt from Captain Thomas Preston's Deposition from his Trial
 2. Excerpt from *Boston Gazette* article from March 12, 1770 (on display in the Old State House)
 3. Excerpt from *A Fair Account of the late Unhappy Disturbance at Boston in New England*
 4. Deposition of Benjamin Burdick, Witness to the Boston Massacre
- List of possible classroom activities using the documents

The occurrences on King Street the night of March 5, 1770 have had a profound influence on American history, politics, and mythology. The lessons and symbols, as well as the images and accounts, of the Bloody Massacre were used to foster other important movements and ideals. The event was echoed in the Declaration of Independence, the United States Constitution, and the Bill of Rights. It was mirrored in events such as the shooting of students by the National Guard at Kent State. Paul Revere's 1770 engraving of the Boston Massacre visually records this great historical event, while the articles and depositions offer different, and at times contradicting, interpretations of what happened and why. These sources raise questions, both challenging historical truths and providing insight into erroneous ideas and propaganda.

Connections to the Massachusetts Frameworks

Grade Level	Feature	History and Social Science Framework
5	Concepts and Skills	2. Interpret timelines of events studied. (H)
5	Concepts and Skills	3. Observe and identify details in cartoons, photographs, charts, and graphs relating to an historical narrative. (H, E, C)
5	Concepts and Skills	5. Explain how a cause and effect relationship is different from a sequence or correlation.
5	Concepts and Skills	6. Show connections, causal and otherwise, between particular historical events and ideas.
5	Concepts and Skills	7. Interpret the past within its own historical context rather than in terms of present-day.
5	Concepts and Skills	8. Distinguish intended from unintended consequences. (H, E, C)
5	Concepts and Skills	10. Distinguish historical fact from opinion. (H, E, C)
5	Learning Standards	5.11 Explain the importance of maritime commerce in the development of the economy of colonial Massachusetts, using the services of historical societies and museums as needed. (H, E) C. the port cities of New Bedford, Newburyport, Gloucester, Salem, and Boston
5	Learning Standards	5.14 Explain the development of colonial governments and describe how these developments contributed to the Revolution. (H, G, E, C) A. legislative bodies B. town meetings C. charters on individual freedom and rights
5	Learning Standards	5.18 Describe the life and achievements of important leaders during the Revolution and the early years of the United States. (H, C) A. John Adams
8-12	Concepts and Skills	6. Distinguish between long-term and short-term cause and effect relationships. (H, G, C, E)
8-12	Concepts and Skills	9. Distinguish intended from unintended consequences. (H, E, C)
8-12	Concepts and Skills	10. Distinguish historical fact from opinion. (H, E, C)
U.S. History I	Learning Standards	I.5 Explain the role of Massachusetts in the revolution, including important events that took place in Massachusetts and important leaders from Massachusetts. (H) the Boston Massacre

Standard	Feature	English Language Arts Framework
ELA 5.R	Craft and Structure	6. Analyze multiple accounts of the same event or topic, noting important similarities and differences in the point of view they represent.
ELA 6-8. RH	Key Ideas and Details	1. Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.
ELA 6-8. RH	Key Ideas and Details	2. Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.
ELA 6-8. RH	Craft and Structure	6. Identify aspects of a text that reveal an author's point of view or purpose (e.g., loaded language, inclusion or avoidance of particular facts).
ELA 6-8. RH	Craft and Structure	7. Distinguish among fact, opinion, and reasoned judgment in a text.
ELA 9-10.RH	Key Ideas and Details	1. Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information.
ELA 9-10.RH	Key Ideas and Details	2. Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.
ELA 9-10.RH	Key Ideas and Details	3. Analyze in detail a series of events described in a text; determine whether earlier events caused later ones or simply preceded them.
ELA 9-10.RH	Craft and Structure	6. Compare the point of view of two or more authors for how they treat the same or similar topics, including which details they include and emphasize in their respective accounts.
ELA 9-10.RH	Integration of Knowledge and Ideas	6. Assess the extent to which the reasoning and evidence in a text support the author's claims.
ELA 9-10.RH	Integration of Knowledge and Ideas	7. Compare and contrast treatments of the same topic in several primary and secondary sources.
ELA 11-12.RH	Key Ideas and Details	1. Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.
ELA 11-12.RH	Key Ideas and Details	2. Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.
ELA 11-12.RH	Key Ideas and Details	3. Evaluate various explanations for actions or events and determine which explanation best accords with textual evidence, acknowledging where the text leaves matters uncertain.
ELA 11-12.RH	Integration of Knowledge and Ideas	6. Evaluate an author's premises, claims, and evidence by corroborating or challenging them with other information.
ELA 6-8. WHST	Text Types and Purposes	1. Write arguments focused on <i>discipline-specific content</i> .
ELA 9-10. WHST	Text Types and Purposes	1. Write arguments focused on <i>discipline-specific content</i> .
ELA 11-12. WHST	Text Types and Purposes	1. Write arguments focused on <i>discipline-specific content</i> .

THE BOSTON MASSACRE OF MARCH 5, 1770

The Event and Aftermath

The Boston Massacre was a major event on the road to the American Colonies' violent break with the British government. John Adams, future President of the United States, said, "On that night the foundation of American independence was laid." Echoes of the Boston Massacre are evident in the Declaration of Independence (1776), the Constitution of the United States (1787), and the Bill of Rights (1791). Its memory has shaped American history and mythology for over two hundred years. Its legacy can be felt even today.

On October 1, 1768, two regiments of British troops—the 14th and 29th—arrived in Boston. Many Bostonians were no longer content to pay taxes to a country that did not allow them a say in the approval of those taxes. The troops had been sent to Boston to maintain order in an increasingly rebellious and violent town. The troops disembarked at the end of Long Wharf and marched up King Street (now State Street). As many as 4,000 soldiers would eventually be absorbed into a town of about 15,000 inhabitants. With soldiers encamped and posted throughout the town, disputes and fights broke out almost immediately.

Two such outbreaks occurred in the weeks prior to the Boston Massacre, and increasingly strained the relationship between the soldiers and Boston's inhabitants. On February 22, 1770, a rowdy and violent crowd gathered outside the shop of a known loyalist and informer. When a neighbor, Ebenezer Richardson, tried to break up the crowd, the crowd turned on him and began throwing rocks at his home. From his window, Richardson fired his gun the crowd and killed Christopher Seider, an 11 year old. Radical patriots turned the tragedy into a political rally, and over 2,000 people attended the boy's funeral. About a week later, on March 2, 1770, a fight broke out at the ropewalks between a soldier looking for work and the ropewalk workers. A large group of soldiers joined the fight, but the ropewalk workers ultimately drove them off. This conflict further escalated the already heightened tension in Boston.

Boston in 1770 had no street lamps. Monday, March 5th, was a cold and moonlit night. Snow covered the ground. Private Hugh White was the lone sentry on guard at the Custom House on King Street. What began as taunting between White and several young apprentices soon escalated to violence. After striking one of the young boys on the head with his musket, White found himself surrounded, pelted with curses, snowballs and chunks of ice.

At about the same time, bells began to ring throughout the town. Bells at night meant fire, a disaster for the wooden-built town. Men and boys poured into the streets as shouts of "Fire" were heard. As more colonists gathered on King Street, taunting the sentry and daring him to fight, White began to fear for his life and called for the main guard in the barracks beside the Town House (Old State House). Although the troops could not forcefully disperse the gathered townspeople without civilian authority, they could defend themselves. Captain Thomas Preston marched out a party of seven Grenadiers, the biggest men in the Regiment.

Preston, Corporal William Wemms, and six privates – Carroll, Kilroy, Warren, Montgomery, Hartigan, and McCauley – marched to the sentry box with fixed bayonets. White joined the ranks. Preston was unable to march the eight soldiers back to the barracks because of the threatening crowd, armed with sticks, swords, rocks, ice and snow. The troops formed a defensive semi-circle in front of the Custom House stairs. While some among the crowd pleaded with Captain Preston to keep his soldiers calm and not to fire, others dared the soldiers to fire. Sticks and bayonets dueled. The taunting colonists thought the soldiers would not fire.

Private Hugh Montgomery was hit with a stick and fell; on rising he fired his musket. Someone shouted, “Fire,” and more shots rang out in an uncontrolled volley. Private Kilroy fired and hit ropemaker Samuel Gray in the head. Crispus Attucks, a former slave of mixed African and Native American descent, was shot in the chest. Sailor James Caldwell was killed in the middle of King Street. Samuel Maverick, an apprentice to an ivory turner, was near the Town House when he caught a ricocheting bullet; he would die several hours later. Patrick Carr, an Irishman and maker of leather breeches, was shot in the hip. He would die on March 14th, the fifth person to die as a result of the Massacre. Six other colonists were wounded.

Rushing from his North End home, acting Royal Governor Thomas Hutchinson arrived and addressed the crowd from the balcony of the Town House. He urged everyone to go home, stating, “The law shall have its course; I will live and die by the law.” A warrant was issued for Captain Preston, who was immediately taken into custody. The eight soldiers surrendered the next morning and were sent to jail. Preston and the eight accused soldiers stayed in jail for almost nine months before their trials. Public opinion was against them and they struggled to find someone to represent them. John Adams, who accepted the case, said that “Council ought to be the very last thing an accused Person should want (lack) in a free country.”

The soldiers were tried before the Superior Court of Judicature, the highest court in Massachusetts. There were two trials, one for Preston, as the commanding officer, and one for his men. Captain Preston and most of the soldiers were found not guilty, but Privates Montgomery and Kilroy were found guilty of manslaughter. They escaped the death penalty by a practice called “benefit of clergy.” Through this archaic custom, the soldiers’ sentences were commuted to a branding on the thumb rather than execution because they were able to prove they could read from the Bible.

In the immediate aftermath of the trials, passions cooled. Colonial newspapers, broadsides, and public speeches, however, continued to reflect the opinion that the soldiers were to blame for the fatal events of March 5th. Anniversaries of the Massacre were remembered throughout the colonies with speeches, declarations, and public displays. A simplistic and erroneous view of the Massacre as an assault upon innocent citizens by wicked soldiers was used again and again. Today, the many questions raised by the Boston Massacre are as relevant as they were in 1770.

VOCABULARY

Apprentice	a person bound by a legal agreement to work for someone in return for learning a trade or job
Barracks	buildings used to house soldiers
Bayonet	a knife made to fit the open end of a musket
Bias	an opinion that is based on your own point-of-view instead of real evidence
Citizen	a person who owes loyalty to and who receives protection from a country
Colony	a territory subject to a parent country
Deposition	a statement under oath to be used in court
Engraving	an image made by cutting or carving a picture into a piece of metal or wood which is then used with ink to print
Massacre	the killing of a very large group of people at one time
Musket	a long gun like a rifle, held to the shoulder when fired
Primary Source	original materials written in an historical period (e.g. letters or newspapers)
Propaganda	information presented to convince people of one point of view
Regiment	a military grouping of soldiers
Secondary Source	materials written after a historical period or event (e.g. books or websites)
Sentry	a guard posted in one area to prevent unauthorized people from passing
Symbolism	the use of an object to represent something (e.g. a person, an idea) other than itself
Taunt	to make fun of someone in a disrespectful way
Taxes	money collected by a government from its people
Testify	to give evidence
Testimony	the account of the evidence given
Town House	the headquarters of Massachusetts colonial government; it is now called the Old State House
Witness	a person who tells at a trial what he has seen (eye-witness) or heard about an event

BOSTON MASSACRE SUGGESTED READINGS

Suggested readings for students

- Adler, David. *A Picture Book of Paul Revere*. New York: Holiday House, 1995.*
- Adler, David. *A Picture Book of Samuel Adams*. New York: Holiday House, 2005.*
- Beier, Anne. *Crispus Attucks, Hero of the Boston Massacre*. New York: Rosen Publishing Group 2003.*
- Bober, Natalie. *Countdown to Independence*. Atheneum Publishing, 2001.**
- The Boston Massacre. Cobblestone, March, 1980.
- Burgan, Michael. *Boston Massacre*. Capstone Press, 2005.*
- Decker, Timothy. *For Liberty: The Story of the Boston Massacre*. Honesdale, PA: Front Street Press, 2009.
- Draper, Allison Stark. *Headlines From History, the Boston Massacre*. New York: Rosen Publishing Group, Inc., 2002.*
- Fradin, Dennis B. *The Boston Massacre*. Turning Points in U.S. History. Salt Lake City: Benchmark Books, 2008.
- Fritz, Jean. *Why Don't You Get a Horse, Sam Adams?* New York: Scholastic, Inc., 1987.*
- Fritz, Jean. *And Then What Happened Paul Revere?* New York: Scholastic, Inc., 1973.*
- Harness, Chreyl. *The Revolutionary John Adams*. Washington, D.C: National Geographic, 2003.
- Lukes Bonnie. *The Boston Massacre*. Famous Trials Series. Lucent Books, 1998.**
- Mattern Joanne, *The Cost of Freedom: Crispus Attucks Dies in the Boston Massacre*. New York: Rosen Publishing Group, 2004.*
- McLeese, Don. *Crispus Attucks*. Rourke Publishing Co, 2004.
- Penner, Lucille Recht. *The Liberty Tree: The Beginning of the American Revolution*. New York:Random House, 1998.*
- Raum, Elizabeth. *The Boston Massacre: An Interactive History Adventure*. You Choose Books: An Interactive History Adventure. Mankato, MN: Capstone Press, 2009.
- Rausch, Monica. *Crispus Attucks*. Weekly Reader Learning Library, 2007.
- Ready, Dee. *The Boston Massacre*. Capstone Press, 2006.
- Rinaldi, Ann. *The Fifth of March: A Story of the Boston Massacre*. New York: Harcourt, 1993.**
- Rinaldi, Ann. *The Secret of Sarah Revere*. New York: Harcourt, 1995. **
- Santella, Andrew. *The Boston Massacre*. Cornerstones of Freedom Second Series. Danbury, CT: Children's Press, 2008.
- Stephens, Amanda. *Liberty's Kids: Freedom at Any Price*. New York: Grossett & Dunlop, 2003.
- Stephens, Amanda. *Liberty's Kids: Justice for All*, New York: Grossett & Dunlop, 2003.

* appropriate for use with younger children

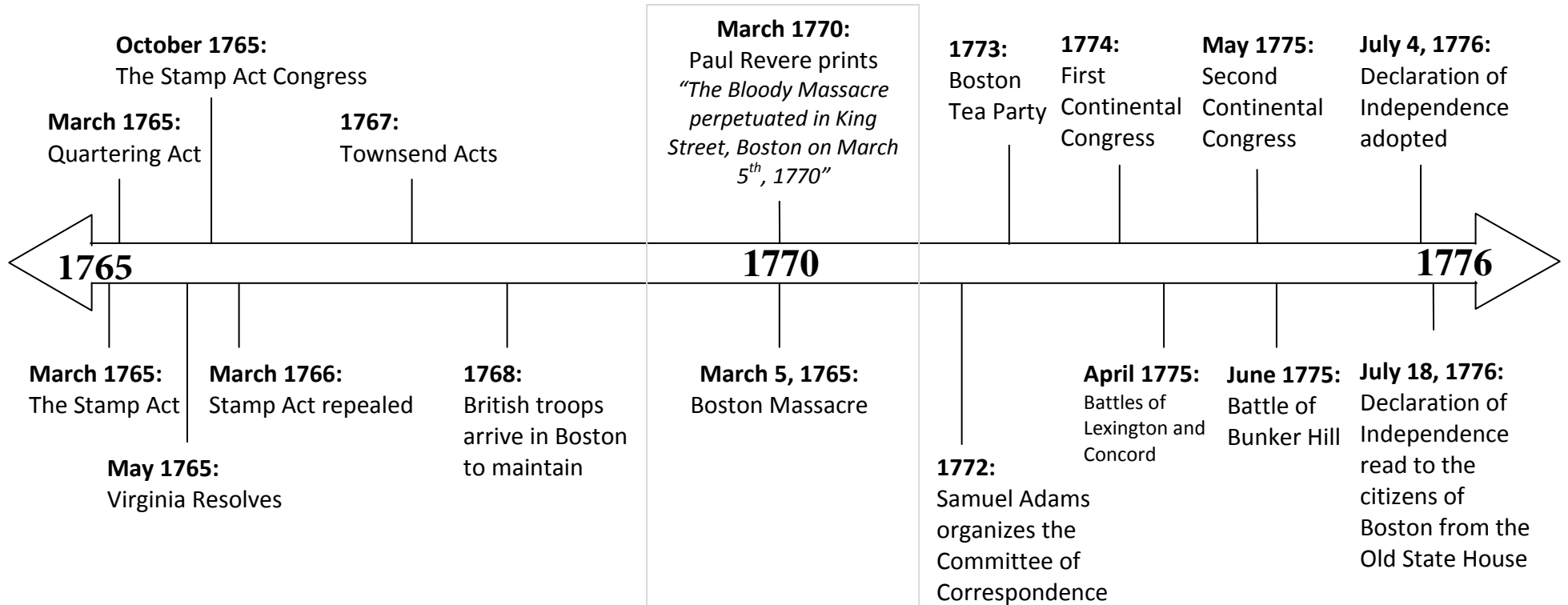
** appropriate for use with older children/adults

Suggested readings for teachers

- A Short Narrative of the Horrid Massacre in Boston: Perpetrated in the Evening of the Fifth Day of March, 1770, By Soldiers of the 29th Regiment.* Committee of the Town of Boston, 1770. (Available on Google books.)
- Allison, Robert. *The Boston Massacre.* Beverly, MA: Commonwealth Editions, 2006. Archer, Richard. *As If an Enemy's Country: The British Occupation of Boston and the Origins of Revolution.* New York: Oxford U Press, 2010.
- Bourne, Russell. *Cradle of Violence: How Boston's Waterfront Mobs Ignited the American Revolution.* Hoboken, NJ: Wiley and Sons, Inc., 2006.
- Ellis, Joseph J. *Passionate Sage: The Character and Legacy of John Adams.* New York: Norton, 1993.
- Forbes, Esther. *Paul Revere and the World He Lived In.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1942; Reprint 1992.
- Kidder, Frederic. *History of the Boston Massacre, March 5, 1770: Consisting of the Narrative of the Town of the Soldiers: And a Historical Introduction Containing Unpublished Documents of John Adams, and Explanatory Notes.* Albany, NY: Joel Munsell. (Available on Google books.)
- Langgouth, A.J. *Patriots: The Men who Started the American Revolution.* New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988.
- McCullough, David. *John Adams.* New York: Simon and Schuster, 2001.
- Paul Revere, Artisan, Businessman and Patriot: The Man Behind the Myth. Boston: Paul Revere Memorial Association, 1988. (Available at the Paul Revere House)
- Paul Revere in Primary Sources. Boston: Paul Revere Memorial Association, 1997. (Available at the Paul Revere House)
- York, Neil. *The Boston Massacre: A History with Documents.* New York: Routledge, 2010
- Zobel, Hiller. *The Boston Massacre.* New York: Norton, 1970.

TIMELINE 1765-1776: The American Revolution

Includes date of Paul Revere's engraving, 1770.



Document Excerpts

Source 1

Deposition of Captain Thomas Preston, March 12, 1770

...I saw the people in great commotion and heard them use the most cruel and horrid threats against the troops. They immediately surrounded the sentry...and with clubs and other weapons threatened to execute their vengeance on him. I was soon informed by a townsman their intention was to carry off the soldier from his post and probably murder him.... I immediately sent a non-commissioned officer and 12 men to protect both the sentry and the king's money, and very soon followed myself to prevent, if possible, all disorder... They soon rushed through the people, and by charging their bayonets in half-circles, kept them at a little distance. ... The mob still increased and were more outrageous, striking their clubs or bludgeons one against another, and calling out, "come on you rascals, you bloody backs, you lobster scoundrels, fire if you dare, G-d damn you, fire and be damned, we know you dare not," and much more such language was used. At this time I was between the soldiers and the mob, parleying with, and endeavouring all in my power to persuade them to retire peaceably, but to no purpose...

...The whole of this melancholy affair was transacted in almost 20 minutes. On my asking the soldiers why they fired without orders, they said they heard the word fire and supposed it came from me. This might be the case as many of the mob called out fire, fire, but I assured the men that I gave no such order; that my words were, don't fire, stop your firing. In short, it was scarcely possible for the soldiers to know who said fire, or don't fire, or stop your firing...

Source 2

Boston Gazette and Country Journal, Monday March 12, 1770

The Boston Massacre

(On display at the Old State House)

...Thirty or forty persons, mostly lads, being by this means gathered in King Street, Capt. Preston with a party of men with charged bayonets, came from the main guard to the commissioner's house, the soldiers pushing their bayonets, crying, make way! They took place by the custom house and, continuing to push to drive the people off pricked some in several places, on which they were clamorous and, it is said, threw snow balls. On this, the Captain commanded them to fire; and more snow balls coming, he again said, damn you, fire, be the consequence what it will! One soldier then fired, and a townsman with a cudgel struck him over the hands with such force that he dropped his firelock; and, rushing forward, aimed a blow at the Captain's head which grazed his hat and fell pretty heavy upon his arm. However, the soldiers continued the fire successively till seven or eight or, as some say, eleven guns were discharged.

Source 3

A Fair Account of the late Unhappy Disturbance at Boston in New England

...The people continued to insult and defy this party of soldiers...pelting them with sticks and balls of ice, and calling out to them “D—m you, you rescale, Fire! You dare not fire! Fire and be D—med.” These expressions were frequently repeated; during which time Captain Preston spoke often to the Mob, desiring them to be quiet and disperse; for that, if they continued their attack upon him and his party, he should be obliged to fire upon them. But his humane endeavors were to no purpose. The people continued their attack upon the soldiers till they were provoked beyond all patience. A large stick...or a piece of ice..., that was thrown at a grenadier on the right of the party, struck him with violence and made him stagger, upon which both he and the soldier next to him fired their pieces without any order from Captain Preston.

Source 4

Deposition of Benjamin Burdick, Barber

On Monday evening, the 5th instant, March, 1770, being at the south part of town between the hours of nine and ten o'clock, I heard the bells in the centre of town ring, and fire cried, ran immediately for King Street, where I supposed it was, and to my great astonishment, I saw a number of soldiers with presented bayonets, commanded by an officer whom I did not then know; the soldiers formed a semicircle round the sentinel box to the Custom-house door—I went immediately up to them, and spoke to the fourth man from the corner, who stood in the gutter, and asked him if the soldiers were loaded, he replied Yes! I then asked if they intended to fire, was answered positively, “Yes! By Eternal God!” Then I looked round to see what number of inhabitants were in the street, and computed them to be about fifty, who were then going off as soon as possible; at the same time I observed a tall man standing on my left hand, who seemed not apprehensive of the danger he was in, and before I had time to speak to him, I heard the word “Fire!” and immediately the report followed, the man on my left dropped. I asked him if he was hurt, but received no answer, I then stooped down and saw him gasping and struggling with death. I then saw another laying dead on my right, but further up the street. I then saw the soldiers loading again, and ran up the street to get some assistance to carry off the dead and wounded...

We carried off the dead without regarding the soldiers. I then saw an officer pass before the soldiers and [push] up their arms, and said “stop firing, don't fire anymore!” ... I then went close up to them, and addressing myself to the whole, told them I came to see the faces that I might be able to swear to another day. Capt. Preston, who was the officer, turned round and answered, “perhaps you may.” After taking a view of each man's face, I left them. They soon after ran up to the main guard house. I have nothing farther to say.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

Timeline:

1. Have your students study the timeline. The following are possible discussion questions or questions for students to answer in writing:
 - a. When did Paul Revere create “The Bloody Massacre perpetuated in King Street, Boston?”
 - b. What else was happening in the colonies around that time? What else was happening in Boston around that time? List these events.
 - c. What impact do you think these other events had on how Revere chose to depict the Boston Massacre? Think about:
 - i. The relationship between the colonists and the soldiers as a result of these events.
 - ii. The actions of the British government and the colonists’ reactions.

Documents:

1. Divide the class into groups and assign each group one of the four document excerpts. Have them discuss the following questions and write down their answers.
 - a. What took place?
 - b. How many people are described?
 - c. Do you think the writer of the account is sympathetic to either the patriots or to the British soldiers? Why do you think this?
 - d. How does the account describe or characterize the relationship between the colonists and the soldiers? What people or events does it identify as the reason for this relationship? What makes you think this?
 - e. Who is the intended audience for the piece?
 - f. What message/opinion do you think the author/artist is trying to express?
2. Have each group swap documents with another group. Ask them to consider the questions listed above for the new document and then compare the two documents.
 - a. In what ways do the accounts describe or characterize the event in the same way?
 - b. In what ways do the accounts describe or characterize the event differently?
 - c. Where the intended audiences the same?
 - d. Do you think one account is more trustworthy than the other? Why do you think this?

3. Have the class come back together for a larger discussion.
 - a. Ask each group to describe the first account they read and report their answers to the questions they were asked to consider.
 - b. As a group, review the differences between the authors of the accounts and discuss the different goals each author hoped to accomplish through his portrayal of the event.
 - c. Reexamine the events of March 5, 1770. Have students' views about what happened during the Massacre, and why it happened, changed? Why or why not?
4. **Persuasive Essay:** Ask your students to think of an issue that is significant to them or of a time where they felt that they were wrongly accused for something they did not do. Have them write a persuasive essay or speech about this topic.

THE BOSTON MASSACRE IN DOCUMENTS

Primary Document Teaching Kit- The Bostonian Society

Evaluation

1. Your school's city/town: _____ State: _____ Grade you teach: _____
2. In what way(s) did you use this kit in the classroom?
3. Was the kit helpful in meeting your state or local standards requirements? ____Y ____N
Why or why not?
4. What did you find most useful about the kit?
5. What would you change about the kit?
6. What topics would you like to see in future teaching kits?
7. How did you hear about the kit?
8. Additional comments and suggestions (use the back if necessary):

Please return to:

The Bostonian Society, 206 Washington Street, Boston, MA 02109 or education@bostonhistory.org