

Lesson 5: The Boston Massacre

Concept Questions

What was the American colonists view of events and what happened during the Boston Massacre?

What was the British commander's view of the events and how did it differ from the colonists' view of events?

Topical Essential Questions

Why do people who experience the same event have different views of what happened?

How did Paul Revere's engraving of the Boston Massacre influence the colonists' reaction to the event?

Overarching Essential Questions:

What are the causes of the American Revolution?

Learning Objectives

Students will be able to develop a claim about the Boston Massacre using evidence from their reading to support the American colonists or the British military.

Students will be able to explain their claim in front of the class and respond to questions from the judge.

Do Now:

What was happening in the American colonies before March 5, 1770? Develop a timeline to respond to the question

Why was Boston, Massachusetts the place with the most political unrest?

What does the phrase “No taxation without representation mean”?

What happened on March 5, 1770?

Why does no one know exactly who was responsible for the Boston Massacre?

What is an example in our current events where people who experienced the same event, such as during a protest, have different views of what happened?



Sourcing:

Contextualizing:

Analysis:

Who is the subject of the painting?

What do you notice about the British soldiers in the painting?

What do you notice about the colonists in the painting?

What do you think the message of this painting is?

Is this painting biased?

The Colonists' Perspective:

Document B: Samuel Drowne (Modified)

On March 12, 1770, Boston residents held a town meeting, which was how local government decisions were made. At the meeting, the colonists appointed a committee to produce an account of what happened March 5th to send to officials in London because they wanted to influence the way the events of March 5th were portrayed. Drowne was one of 96 residents of Boston to give sworn testimony to justices of the peace about what happened between the British soldiers and residents of Boston. These accounts were taken by ship to London on April 1, 1770.

Samuel Drowne of Boston, of lawful age, testified that about nine o'clock of the evening of the fifth day of March he saw about 14 or 15 soldiers of the 29th regiment, some were armed with swords or bayonets, others with clubs or fire-shovels. They came upon the people of the town and abused some and violently assaulted others. Most of the townspeople did not even have a stick in their hands to defend themselves.

Most of the soldiers went to King Street. Drowne followed them, and saw them fighting with people there. Drowne thought that there were no more than a dozen people there. When the soldiers arrived, most of the people left. Some of them were first assaulted by the soldiers. Then the soldiers went towards the main guard house. At the same time, five soldiers and a corporal armed with guns came out of the guard house. By this time, there were two hundred people on King Street.

Drowne saw Captain Preston, whom he knew well, with a number of soldiers armed with guns near the Custom House. Drowne believed that most of the crowd left after seeing the armed soldiers. No more than twenty or thirty remained on King Street. Those who remained were mostly sailors and other persons who were poorly dressed.

Several of them dared the soldiers to fire. Drowne then heard Capt. Preston say to the soldiers, "Damn your bloods! Why don't you fire?" The soldiers did not listen and Preston immediately said "Fire." The soldiers fired randomly.

Source: *Summary of the sworn testimony of Samuel Drowne, March 16, 1770.*

Sourcing:

Contextualizing:

Analysis:

According to Samuel Drowne, what happened the night of March 5, 1770?

What did the British do?

What did the colonists do?

The British Perspective:

Document A: Thomas Preston (Modified)

Captain Thomas Preston was an officer in the British army. While in jail, he wrote this narrative. A British tax collector brought this account to London on a ship that left Boston on March 16, 1770. The account was then re-printed in Boston newspapers in June 1770 after copies of the London newspaper were brought to Boston.

At about 9 some of the guards informed me that people were gathering to attack the troops. On my way there, I heard the crowd threaten the troops. About 100 people went towards the Custom House where the king's money is kept. They immediately surrounded the soldier there and threatened him. I was told that they were going to carry off the soldier and probably murder him. I immediately sent an officer and 12 men to protect both the soldier and the king's money. I followed them to prevent, if possible, any problems. I feared that the officer and soldiers might be **provoked** by the insults of the rioters. I told the troops to go out without loading their weapons and I never gave orders to load them.

The mob still increased, striking their clubs together, and calling out, "Come on you rascals, you bloody backs, you lobster scoundrels, fire if you dare." At this time I was between the soldiers and the mob, trying to **persuade** them to leave peacefully. Someone asked me if I was going to order the men to fire. I answered no, saying that I was in front of the guns, and would be shot if they fired. While I was speaking, one of the soldiers was hit with a stick, stepped a little to one side, and instantly fired. When I turned to ask him why he fired without orders, I was struck with a club on my arm.

The soldiers were attacked by a great number of heavy clubs and snowballs were thrown at them. All our lives were in danger. At the same time, someone from behind called out, "**Damn your bloods** — why don't you fire?" Instantly three or four of the soldiers fired and then three more fired in the same confusion. The mob then ran away, except three unhappy men who instantly died. When I asked the soldiers why they fired without orders, they said they heard the word fire and thought it came from me. This might be the case as many of the mob called out fire, but I told the men that I gave no such order. My words were, don't fire, stop your firing.

Source: *The Case of Capt. Preston of the 29th Regiment*, Public Advertiser (London), April 28, 1770

Sourcing:

Contextualizing:

Analysis:

According to Captain Thomas Preston, what happened the night of March 5, 1770?

What did the British do?

What did the colonists do?

Opening Statement:

Do Now:

What was happening in the American colonies before March 5, 1770? Develop a timeline to respond to the question.