



## Primary Source Lesson Plan-The Boston Massacre

### Name of Primary Source

The Boston Massacre: A British Officer's Point of View and A Patriot's Point of View

### How primary source ties into text

Qualifies: Captain Thomas Preston and an anonymous source give their accounts of The Boston Massacre.

Elaborates: Gives a detailed report of the events leading up to The Boston Massacre.

Raises questions: This primary source can be used to question the students on the idea of one event can be seen completely different by the opposing sides.

### Corresponding Lesson

This lesson ties into chapter 10 in the America's Past Textbook. It would be good to use it during a guided or shared reading lesson sometime that week.

### Colorado Standards

- Social Studies Standard 1 History: History develops moral understanding, defines identity, and creates and appreciation of how things change while building skills in judgment and decision making. History enhances the ability to read varied sources and develop the skills to analyze, interpret, and communicate. Grade level expectation: analyze historical sources from multiple points of view to develop an understanding of historical context.
- Reading and Writing 1: Read and understand a variety of materials
- Reading and Writing 3: Write and speak using conventional grammar, usage, sentence structure, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling

### Big Idea

Students will identify two similarities and two differences between the British and American point of views regarding what led to The Boston Massacre.

### Critical thinking

Why do you think the British officials and the Boston residents might have had different points of view? Why were they likely to see things differently?

### Mini-Lesson

#### Teaching

Begin by reading through the source as a shared or guided reading. This will take more than one class period. After you have read both accounts, have the students re-read both accounts.

#### Active Engagement

While reading through the accounts for the second time, have students use two different colored highlighters to identify parts that are similar and parts that are different. When they have highlighted both accounts, have them complete the graphic organizer that follows. Conduct a brief discussion about which point of view they think is most believable? Why? Have them answer the critical thinking question in their reader's notebooks.

## The Boston Massacre

### The British point of view:

Captain Thomas Preston

...In [sic] my way there I saw the people in great commotion, and heard them use the most cruel and horrid threats against the troops. In a few minutes after I reached the guard, about 100 people passed it and went towards the custom house where the king's money is lodged. They immediately surrounded the sentry posted there, 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 noncommissioned 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, fearing lest the officer and soldiers, by the insults and provocations of the rioters, should be thrown off their guard and commit some rash act. 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[sic] all in my power to

### The American Point of View:

An anonymous source:

THE HORRID MASSACRE IN BOSTON, PERPETRATED IN [sic] THE EVENING OF THE FIFTH DAY OF MARCH, 1770, BY SOLDIERS OF THE TWENTY-NINTH REGIMENT WHICH WITH THE FOURTEENTH REGIMENT WERE THEN QUARTERED THERE; WITH SOME OBSERVATIONS ON THE STATE OF THINGS PRIOR TO THAT CATASTROPHE

...Whether the boys mistook the sentry for one of the said party (a group of unruly soldiers who had been about the area earlier), and thence took occasion to differ with him, or whether he first affronted them, which is affirmed in several depositions, -however that may be, there was much foul language between them, and some of them, in consequence of his pushing at them with his bayonet, threw snowballs at him, which occasioned him to knock hastily at the door of the Custom House. From hence two persons thereupon proceeded immediately to the main-guard, which was posted opposite to the State House, at a small distance, near the head of the said street. The officer on guard was Capt. Preston, who with seven or eight soldiers, with firearms and charged bayonets, issued from the guardhouse, and in great haste posted himself and his soldiers in front of the Custom House, near the corner aforesaid. In passing to this station the soldiers pushed several persons with their bayonets, driving through the people in so rough a manner that it appeared they

persuade them to retire peaceably, but to no purpose. They advanced to the points of the bayonets, struck some of them and even the muzzles of the pieces, and seemed to be endeavouring[sic] to close with the soldiers. On which some well behaved persons asked me if the guns were charged. I replied yes. They then asked me if I intended to order the men to fire. I answered no, by no means, observing to them that I was advanced before the muzzles of the men's pieces, and must fall a sacrifice if they fired ...While I was thus speaking, one of the soldiers having received a severe blow with a stick, stepped a little on one side and instantly fired, on which turning to and asking him why he fired without orders, I was struck with a club on my arm, which for some time deprived me of the use of it, which blow had it been placed on my head, most probably would have destroyed me.

On this a general attack was made on the men by a great number of heavy clubs and snowballs being thrown at them, by which all our lives were in imminent danger, some persons at the same time from behind calling out, ...-why don't you fire. Instantly three or four of the soldiers fired, one after another, and directly after three more in the same confusion and hurry. The mob then ran away, except three unhappy men who instantly expired, in which number was Mr. Gray at whose rope-walk the prior quarrels took place; one more is since dead, three others are dangerously, and four intended to create a

disturbance. This occasioned some snowballs to be thrown at them which seems to have been the only provocation that was given. Mr. Knox (between whom and Capt. Preston there was some conversation on the spot) declares, that while he was talking with Capt. Preston, the soldiers of his detachment had attacked the people with their bayonets and that there was not the least provocation given to Capt. Preston of his party; the backs of the people being toward them when the people were attacked. He also declares, that Capt. Preston seemed to be in great haste and much agitated, and that, according to his opinion, there were not then present in King street above seventy or eighty persons at the extent [sic]. The said party (British soldiers) was formed into a half circle; and within a short time after they had been posted at the Custom House, began to fire upon the people. Captain Preston is said to have ordered them to fire, and to have repeated that order. One gun was fired first; then others in succession and with deliberation, till ten or a dozen guns were fired; or till that number of discharges were made from the guns that were fired. By which means eleven persons were killed and wounded, as above represented.

Source: Eyewitness Accounts of the 'Boston Massacre'

<http://historywiz.com/primarysources/eyewit-boston.htm>

slightly wounded. 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.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## The Boston Massacre—The British Versus The American Point of View

List two similarities between the different points of view.

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
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2. \_\_\_\_\_  
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\_\_\_\_\_  
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List two differences between the different points of view.

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
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2. \_\_\_\_\_  
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