

Past, Told Differently

Examine how historians use evidence and explain the past.

SS.6.W.1.5 "Describe the roles of historians and recognize varying historical interpretations (historiography)."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline each type of source historians examine. Then number the two different interpretations of the Boston Massacre described in the passage.

Investigating the Boston Massacre

- ① Historians investigate the past by asking questions and examining evidence. To study the Boston Massacre of 1770, they read court testimony, newspaper reports, letters, and a famous engraving by Paul Revere. Each source was made by a person with a purpose and point of view. Historians ask who created it, when, and why. They compare sources instead of trusting only one. They also check details against facts such as the place, people, and events named in other reliable records.
- ② Sources about the shooting do not tell one simple story. In his engraving, Revere showed British soldiers firing together at a crowd. The image helped Patriots argue that the soldiers had acted cruelly. At the soldiers' trial, several witnesses described a noisy crowd that threw snowballs, ice, and sticks. Defense lawyer John Adams argued that the soldiers felt threatened. Historians do not treat either account as the final word. They consider what each creator saw, knew, and wanted readers to believe.
- ③ Because evidence can be incomplete or biased, historians may reach different interpretations. One historian may emphasize the soldiers' fear in a tense crowd. Another may emphasize the power British troops held in Boston and the harm caused when they fired. These interpretations are not just guesses. Historians must support claims with evidence and explain how that evidence fits. As new sources are found or new questions are asked, interpretations can change. Studying more than one interpretation helps people understand the past more fully.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 What are two actions historians take to check whether information is reliable?

2 How did Revere's engraving and the trial witnesses describe the shooting differently?

3 Why do historians consider what a source creator saw, knew, and wanted readers to believe?

4 What must historians do when they offer an interpretation of the past?

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Imagine historians are studying a town strike in 1925. Write four sentences that name two sources with different points of view, give two interpretations of the strike, and state which source supports each interpretation.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline each type of source historians examine. Then number the two different interpretations of the Boston Massacre described in the passage. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What are two actions historians take to check whether information is reliable?	They compare sources instead of trusting only one, and they check details against other reliable records.
2	How did Revere's engraving and the trial witnesses describe the shooting differently?	Revere showed British soldiers firing together at a crowd, which supported the idea that they acted cruelly. Several witnesses described a crowd throwing snowballs, ice, and sticks.
3	Why do historians consider what a source creator saw, knew, and wanted readers to believe?	A creator's point of view and purpose can affect how the source tells about an event.
4	What must historians do when they offer an interpretation of the past?	They must support their claims with evidence and explain how the evidence fits the claim.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

A factory owner's letter says the strike hurt business, while a worker's diary says wages were too low. One historian might argue that the strike damaged the town's economy, using the owner's letter. Another might argue that workers needed fair pay, using the diary. Both historians should compare these sources with other records before deciding.

Accept answers that accurately identify source types, explain how point of view can shape accounts, and distinguish evidence-based interpretations. For the open response, accept varied fictional sources and interpretations if each interpretation is connected to a source.