

Massacre Through Lenses

Compare how sources explain the Boston Massacre.

SS.8.A.1.6 "Compare interpretations of key events and issues throughout American History."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline details that support the Patriot interpretation, and circle details that support the defense interpretation. Number the sentence that shows how the court's verdicts add another interpretation.

Different Views of a Deadly Night

- ① On March 5, 1770, a crowd gathered outside Boston's Custom House after a boy complained that a British soldier had struck him. Townspeople shouted at the soldiers and threw snowballs, ice, and other objects. Captain Thomas Preston brought more soldiers to guard the building. In the confusion, soldiers fired into the crowd. Five colonists died, including Crispus Attucks. The event soon became known as the Boston Massacre, but people disagreed about what had happened and who was responsible.
- ② Many Patriots interpreted the shooting as proof that British troops were cruel oppressors. Paul Revere published an engraving, copied from a design by Henry Pelham, that showed soldiers firing together at orderly, unarmed civilians. Its title called the event a "Bloody Massacre." The image did not show colonists throwing objects or the tense crowd around the soldiers. Patriots used this interpretation to build anger against British rule and to argue that troops should leave Boston.
- ③ At the soldiers' trial, defense witnesses described a threatening crowd that cursed the soldiers and threw clubs, sticks, and snowballs. John Adams, who defended the soldiers, argued that they had acted in self-defense. Preston had been acquitted in a separate trial. In the soldiers' trial, the jury acquitted six soldiers. Two soldiers were convicted of manslaughter after the court found they had fired without sufficient legal justification. The verdicts suggest that jurors considered the crowd's actions while also holding some soldiers responsible for the deaths.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 How did Revere's engraving and the defense witnesses describe the crowd differently?

2 What details did Revere's engraving leave out? Explain how leaving them out supported the Patriot interpretation.

3 How did the trial verdicts make the Patriot interpretation less simple?

4 Which details did John Adams use to support the interpretation that the soldiers acted in self-defense?

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Write a five- or six-sentence comparison of the Patriot and defense interpretations. Use one detail from Revere's engraving and one detail from the trial testimony, then explain how the verdicts make the event more complex than either single view.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline details that support the Patriot interpretation, and circle details that support the defense interpretation. Number the sentence that shows how the court's verdicts add another interpretation. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did Revere's engraving and the defense witnesses describe the crowd differently?	Revere showed orderly, unarmed civilians. Defense witnesses described a threatening crowd that cursed the soldiers and threw objects.
2	What details did Revere's engraving leave out? Explain how leaving them out supported the Patriot interpretation.	It left out colonists throwing objects and the tense crowd. Without those details, the soldiers appeared to be attacking peaceful civilians, supporting the view that British troops were cruel oppressors.
3	How did the trial verdicts make the Patriot interpretation less simple?	Preston was acquitted in a separate trial. The soldiers' jury acquitted six and convicted two of manslaughter. These verdicts held some soldiers responsible while also considering the crowd's actions.
4	Which details did John Adams use to support the interpretation that the soldiers acted in self-defense?	Defense witnesses said the crowd threatened and cursed the soldiers and threw clubs, sticks, and snowballs.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Patriots portrayed British troops as cruel oppressors who attacked orderly, unarmed civilians. Revere's engraving supported that view by showing the soldiers firing together. Defense witnesses instead described colonists cursing the soldiers and throwing objects. Adams used those details to claim self-defense. Preston's acquittal in a separate trial and the acquittal of six soldiers supported part of the defense view. However, the manslaughter convictions of two soldiers showed that the court still held some soldiers responsible.

Accept comparisons that accurately connect evidence to each interpretation. In the open response, accept clear wording that explains the Patriot view, the defense view, and the mixed meaning of the verdicts.