

Voices of Boston

Compare sources to build a supported explanation of the Boston Massacre.

SS.8.A.1 "Use research and inquiry skills to analyze American History using primary and secondary sources."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the names of sources in the passage. Circle words or phrases that show a source's point of view, purpose, or possible limit.

Investigating the Boston Massacre

- ① On March 5, 1770, a tense crowd gathered near the Customs House in Boston. British soldiers fired into the crowd, killing five colonists. Soon afterward, witnesses gave sworn depositions describing what they saw. These original eyewitness statements are primary sources about the event. Witnesses may emphasize different details. Some witnesses said colonists threw snowballs and clubs. Others focused on the soldiers' firing and the people who fell. Researchers must consider each witness's location and point of view.
- ② Paul Revere published an engraving of the event later that month. It shows British soldiers standing in a neat line and firing at colonists, while an officer appears to order them to fire. Revere based his print on a drawing by Henry Pelham. As an original political print from the time, it is a primary source about reactions to the event. However, the engraving strongly supports the Patriot cause. It presents the soldiers as deliberate attackers, so it is useful evidence of Patriot opinion, not a neutral picture of every action.
- ③ At the soldiers' trials, lawyers questioned witnesses under oath. Captain Thomas Preston and six soldiers were acquitted, while two soldiers were convicted of manslaughter. John Adams, who defended the soldiers, argued that they acted in self-defense. Later historians use trial records, depositions, and the engraving together. They ask who created each source, why it was made, and which details appear in more than one source. This comparison can produce a better-supported explanation, even when no single source tells the whole story.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE Use the passage

1 Name two primary sources from the passage. What makes each one a primary source?

2 How do the witness accounts differ in emphasis? Why should a historian compare them?

3 What point of view does Revere's engraving support? Give one detail from the passage that supports your answer.

4 According to the passage, what two kinds of questions do historians ask when they compare sources?

3 YOUR TURN Your own words

First examine the two identified witness-deposition excerpts and the reproduction of Revere's 1770 engraving supplied by your teacher. On separate paper, identify each witness and the print; record one actual detail from each and compare it with this secondary passage. Explain an agreement or difference and a possible source limitation. Then write exactly three sentences explaining what historians can conclude about the shooting and why they must compare sources. Use the witness depositions and Revere's engraving, and explain how each source helps or limits the investigation.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline the names of sources in the passage. Circle words or phrases that show a source's point of view, purpose, or possible limit. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Name two primary sources from the passage. What makes each one a primary source?	The original witness depositions provide firsthand testimony about the event. Revere's contemporary political engraving provides primary evidence of Patriot reactions and persuasion.
2	How do the witness accounts differ in emphasis? Why should a historian compare them?	Some emphasize objects thrown by colonists; others emphasize soldiers firing and people falling. Both can be true. Historians compare accounts to check details and understand different perspectives.
3	What point of view does Revere's engraving support? Give one detail from the passage that supports your answer.	It supports the Patriot point of view. It shows soldiers in a neat line firing and an officer who appears to order them to fire.
4	According to the passage, what two kinds of questions do historians ask when they compare sources?	They ask who created each source and why it was made. They also check which details appear in more than one source.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Historians can conclude that the shooting happened, but they should be careful about deciding who caused it. The sworn depositions offer eyewitness details, although witnesses remembered different actions and may have stood in different places. Revere's engraving shows the Patriot view, so it helps explain that viewpoint but cannot provide a neutral account of every action.

Accept equivalent source-based explanations that identify each source's perspective, purpose, or limitation. For the open response, look for a cautious claim and accurate use of both required sources. Before teaching, supply two readable, attributed Boston Massacre eyewitness-deposition excerpts (with witness names, dates and publication/page references) and a legible reproduction of Paul Revere's 1770 engraving. Use a documented archival or historical collection; identify any later reprint and explain unfamiliar language. Provide paper copies or a shared display; these source materials are required and are not printed in this packet. Check each recorded detail against the actual assigned sources and its comparison with this secondary summary. A primary source need not be neutral or accurate in every claim. The original three-sentence model remains a general synthesis; copying it does not replace the required source-specific evidence record.