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| **Grade Level:**  5th Grade |

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| **Essential Question:**  What happens when two witnesses disagree about an event that ends in death?  **Supporting Questions:**   1. Was the Boston Massacre really a “massacre”? 2. Why did American colonists and British soldiers end up fighting in Boston in 1770? 3. How might British violence against colonists lead to a revolution? |

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| **Source 1:** [**Boston Massacre Drawing from 1855**](https://cdm.bostonathenaeum.org/digital/collection/p13110coll5/id/4158/rec/7)  Boston Massacre drawing  **By William Champney in 1855**  DIRECTIONS: Select 6 characters (3 British soldiers and 3 colonists) and add a thought bubble within the picture that describes the character’s thoughts and feelings. You may use one of the words in the below word bank to help:     |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | **King of England** | **Loyalist (loyal)** | **Taxes** | | **Sons of Liberty** | **Boston** | **Patriot** | |
| **Source 2:** [**1770 Deposition of Captain Thomas Preston (British Perspective)**](http://law2.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/bostonmassacre/prestontrialexcerpts.html)  …I saw the people in great commotion and heard them use the most cruel and horrid threats against the troops. They immediately surrounded the sentry…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 non-commissioned officer and 12 men to protect both the sentry and the king’s money…They soon rushed through the people, and by charging their bayonets in half-circles, kept them at a 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…,” At this time I was between the soldiers and the mob, parleying with, and endeavoring all in my power to persuade them to retire peaceably, but to no purpose…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.    British Captain Thomas Preston shared this in his deposition on March 12, 1770  Questions:   1. What did the colonists do to the British troops? 2. Why did the soldiers fire? 3. Who wrote this source? 4. What is the author’s perspective? 5. Why was this source written? |
| **Source 3 - Newspaper Account from March 12, 1770**  …Thirty or forty persons, mostly lads, being by this means gathered in King Street, Capt. Preston with a party of men with charged bayonets, came from the main guard to the commissioner’s house, the soldiers pushing their bayonets, crying, make way! They took place by the custom house and, continuing to push to drive the people off pricked some in several places, on which they were clamorous and, it is said, threw snow balls. On this, the Captain commanded them to fire; and more snowballs coming, he again said, fire, be the consequence what it will! One soldier then fired…the soldiers continued the fire successively till seven or eight or, as some say, eleven guns were discharged.    Boston Gazette and Country Journal posted this on the Old State House in Boston on Monday, March 12, 1770    Questions:   1. What did the troops do to the colonists? 2. Why did the soldiers fire? 3. Who published this source (the exact author is unknown)? 4. What is the author’s perspective? 5. Why was this source written? |
| **Source 4** [**Anonymous Account of the Boston Massacre (American Colonists Perspective)**](http://law2.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/bostonmassacre/anonyaccount.html)  *Note: Some believe that Sam Adams, a friend of Paul Revere’s and an anti-British protester, helped write this report soon after March 5, 1770.*  …the boys mistook the sentry for one of the [soldiers and]... there was much foul language between them, and some of them, in consequence of [the sentry] pushing at them with his bayonet, threw snowballs at him, which occasioned him to knock hastily at the door of the Custom House. From [inside] 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 fire-arms 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 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.  The said party 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.  Questions:   1. What did Thomas Preston do, according to this anonymous account? 2. Who was responsible for the violence, in this version? 3. What should we do if this version and Preston’s version disagree? |

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| **Background Knowledge / Contextual Paragraph for Teachers:**  The Boston Massacre often appears as a fundamental milestone on the road to American revolution. If students dig into competing accounts of what actually happened on that fateful date, the details are not in fact all that clear. Who started the fight? Who should be blamed for the deaths of colonists? How unjustly did the British soldiers behave? Why might colonists like Paul Revere choose to represent the events of that date in such anti-British terms? These are just some of the important questions that students can begin to investigate with these sources. |

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| **Building Background Knowledge for the Student:**  In 1770 Boston was an important trading city in the British empire. When the British government began imposing taxes on colonists to help repay debts from a recent war with France, Boston colonists began to organize protests. They boycotted imported products that the British had taxed in 1767 and even rioted when the British seized a ship that was suspected of violating British trade rules. The King sent royal soldiers to Boston to prevent future riots, but they were very unpopular in town. On March 5, 1770, a crowd of Bostonians began yelling and throwing snowballs at British soldiers in the center of town. This confrontation somehow became more violent until five Bostonians were killed. One of those who died was an African American named Crispus Attucks. The commanding officer and eight soldiers faced a trial, and they were defended in court by John Adams. Seven were found not guilty but two were convicted of manslaughter, the crime of killing a human being without planning to. Some Boston residents like Paul Revere claimed that this confrontation had ended in a “massacre” of deliberate and widespread murder by British soldiers. Your job here is to decide if that really did happen. |

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| **Strategy Instruction:**   1. After the background introduction, share with students the illustration from 1855. Students could first describe what they see. They then can create thought bubbles for various figures in the image, using the terms from the Word Bank as makes sense. 2. Next ask students to read Thomas Preston’s account of what happened. 3. Then consider the account published in the Boston Gazette, a local newspaper, about a week afterward. 4. Last, guide students to explore the similarities and differences between these sources. 5. For an extension, students could consider the Anonymous eye-witness source, or the Paul Revere image included as an Extra Source. How do they fit with or challenge the other three sources? 6. Another extension option: compare the various images of the Boston Massacre, including the third one included below as an Extra Source. How are the images similar? How are they different? |

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| **Strategy Instruction Differentiation:**  The images included in this collection of sources could help students who are struggling readers engage in the interpretive project. |

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| **Discussion:**   1. The William Champney image from 1855 illustrates a lot of action. Who appears to be the aggressor in the image? Who are the victims? Whom did the artist want us to empathize with? How did your thought bubbles convey these ideas? 2. When was that image created? How long after the events of March 5, 1770 was that? Could the artist have been an eyewitness? Where might he have learned about what happened on that date in Boston? 3. Thomas Preston was an eyewitness to the events. He participated on that day. How is the story different from the Champney illustration? Can we trust the Champney illustration, if it doesn’t fit with what Preston said he saw? Can we trust the Preston version? Why or why not? 4. Now, let’s turn to the Boston Gazette story. This appeared one week after the events on March 5. Can we trust this version of the story? Does it support either Preston’s version or the Champney illustration? 5. If time, consider the anonymous eye-witness version. How does it compare? 6. As you review the accounts of what happened in Boston that day in 1770, answer these questions: What happened, according to each source? How reliable is this account? How could we find more information to decide which source to accept as the more accurate one? 7. Additional sources are available here to extend this investigation. The Paul Revere drawing is often pictured in textbooks, yet how does the Preston version of these events disagree with that image? |

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| **Assessment:**   1. Create a T-Chart to compare the different versions of what happened on March 5, 1770. In the left column, note the key details according to Preston or the British perspective. Then in the right column, write down the key details according to the images and the American colonist perspective. 2. Write a paragraph in your own words that describe what happened on March 5, 1770, between the Boston colonists and the British soldiers. Be sure to support your ideas with evidence from the primary sources. |

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| **Colorado Academic Standards for Social Studies:**   * SS.5.1.1a: Recognize how historical context can affect the perspective of historical sources. * SS.5.1.2b: Identify and describe the contributions of significant individuals and groups of Indigenous Peoples, enslaved individuals, and European colonists through the American Revolution. For example: Crispus Attucks, Sybil Luddington, Benjamin Banneker, Thomas Jefferson, and Patrick Henry. * SS.5.1.2e: Investigate causes and effects of significant events in early United States history. |

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| **Sample Activities:**   1. Creating Thought Bubbles for an image 2. Comparing sources to assess reliability 3. Comparing different images of the event to assess reliability |

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| **Extra Source 1**  Paul Revere illustration of the Boston Massacre  [Paul Revere illustration of the Boston Massacre, 1770](https://www.gilderlehrman.org/sites/default/files/inline-pdfs/The%20Bloody%20Massacre_0.pdf) | **Extra Source 2**  Alonzo Chappel engraving of the Boston Massacre  [Alonzo Chappel engraving of the Boston Massacre, 1878](https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47da-e8e9-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99) |