

Boston Massacre DBQ

Background Information: In the 1700s, tensions were growing between Britain and America thanks in part to the taxes placed by the British Parliament on certain goods bought by American colonists. The colonists felt the taxes were unfair and began organizing their efforts to resist the increased intrusion by England into colonial affairs.

Tensions were especially high in busy seaports like Boston, Massachusetts, where taxes on imports would hurt the trade-based economy and impact colonists at all levels of society. As protests against the taxes began to spread, the British sent additional troops to America to enforce the laws. Tensions reached their peak on March 5, 1770, when British soldiers fired into a crowd of unhappy taxpayers, killing five of the colonists. The event would become known as the Boston Massacre.

This small DBQ explores the question: Who was responsible for the Boston Massacre?

Source 1: Thomas Preston, Captain British of the army, account of the Boston Massacre, 1770, deposition for trial

"On Monday night about 8 o'clock two [British] soldiers were attacked and beat. The guard informed me the town inhabitants were assembling to attack the troops. I saw the people in great commotion, and heard them use the most cruel and horrid threats against the troops... So far was I from intending the death of any person that I suffered the troops to go to the spot where the unhappy affair took place without any loading in their pieces (weapons); nor did I ever give orders for loading them.

The mob still increased and were more outrageous, striking their clubs or bludgeons one against another, and calling out, 'come on you rascals... you lobster scoundrels, fire if you dare... we know you dare not,' and much more such language was used. At this time I was between the soldiers and the mob. They advanced to the points of the bayonets, struck some of them and even the muzzles of the pieces, and seemed to be endeavouring to close with the soldiers.... 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, and [while] asking him why he fired without orders, I was struck with a club on my arm...

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 whole of this melancholy affair was transacted in almost 20 minutes. I assured the men 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. I am, though perfectly innocent, to expect but the loss of life in a very ignominious [disgraceful] manner."

(turn over)

Analysis Questions: Answer in at least two sentences per question.

- (1) Who is most responsible for the attack according to the author? Use TWO pieces of evidence from the source to support your opinion.

- (2) What event in Thomas Preston's account do you think "started" the "massacre"? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

- (3) Does Preston think he is to blame for this? How does he deflect or deny blame? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

Document 2: Paul Revere's engraving of the Boston Massacre, 1770

Directions: Use the image on the power point to respond to the following questions.

Analysis Questions: Answer in at least two sentences per question.

- (1) How might Paul Revere's status as a rebel/patriot influence your view of his engraving?

- (2) Compare and Contrast this engraving with Thomas Preston's account in Document 1. What are two similarities? What are **two** differences?