

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Boston Massacre</b>
<b>Lesson Title:</b>	<b>Who's to Blame for the Boston Massacre?</b>
<b>Objectives:</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Students will understand the importance of determining bias within a document.</li> <li>2. Students will use sources from multiple perspectives to gain a more holistic understanding of the Boston Massacre.</li> <li>3. Students will write a newspaper article that proves their understanding of both the British soldiers and Boston colonists' perspective of the Boston Massacre.</li> </ol>
<b>Mississippi Social Studies Framework Connections</b>	<b>SS 8.1: Understand the major events, actors and ideas that precipitated the founding of the nation and relate their significance to the development of American constitutional democracy.</b>
<b>NCSS Theme (2)</b>	<b>Individuals, Groups, and Institutions Power, Authority and Governance</b>
<b>CCSS ELA or CCSS ELA SS</b>	<b>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH: 6-8.1, 6-8.2, 6-8.6, 6-8.7, 6-8.8, 6-8.9</b>
<b>Assessment</b>	<p><b>Formative:</b> Student ability to analyze and identify biases within primary sources; student ability to group sources by perspective; student ability to identify more credible sources</p> <p><b>Summative:</b> Student article will be evaluated for completeness, effort, creativity, and correctly identifying source purpose and perspective.</p>

**Procedures:**

**1. Before**

Class will begin by watching a short video clip of the Boston Massacre Defense Closing Trial from the HBO series *John Adams* (which lines up closely to actual historical accounts of the trial). Students will be asked to write down statements that stand out to them. In this clip, John Adams's name is never mentioned. The teacher will then ask: "Does anybody know the name of the lawyer speaking?" Students will not likely guess that the patriot John Adams is the lawyer defending the British soldiers. The teacher will then reveal that the lawyer is John Adams.

Students will then be asked to recall some of the things that stood out to them from the video. Students should note that Adams was defending British soldiers. Some may recall Adams says people have the right to rebel, that it is the duty of the court to give everyone a free trial, and students should eventually discuss Adams's argument for why the soldiers are not guilty. Students will be asked if this challenges what they knew previously about the Boston Massacre. Most students will answer yes, and this will lead into dimension 1.

Students will be asked to write down what they have learned in previous classes about the Boston Massacre. Student responses will likely include that British soldiers shot into a crowd and killed Bostonians, that Crispus Attucks was the first murdered, and that it led to the American Revolution. Some students may also mention that the British soldiers were quartered in the colonies and that the colonists were upset with King George and the British Parliament.

After students have shared this with the class, the teacher will then explain the definitions of compelling and supporting questions to the students. The teacher will then tell students to compare the video and their previous knowledge of the Boston Massacre. Given the disparity between what they just watched and what they knew beforehand, students will question, "Who's to blame for the Boston Massacre?" The teacher will ask whether this is a compelling or supporting question. The students will respond that this is an overarching, compelling question. Students will then come up with several other supporting questions.

The teacher will ask the students what they need to solve their questions. Students will say they need more information or evidence. The teacher will then explain that she will be providing students with documents from different perspectives. Students will analyze these primary documents. Students will use the documents to write a balanced newspaper article (reporting as an eyewitness of the event) reporting both the Boston citizens' view and the British soldiers' perspective of the Boston Massacre.

## **2. During**

The teacher will split the class into five groups. Each group will start with a primary source and analyze its meaning and whether it may have British or Colonial bias. Before starting the activity, the class will come up with a collective definition of bias to use to evaluate the sources. The primary sources will be rotated until each group has had access to all of them. Each group will share the purpose and perspective about the last document they examined. Other groups will be asked to either agree or challenge the analysis of each document.

Students may have trouble classifying the John Adams document-Adams was a historically clear supporter of the colonies, but he is proud of his defense of the British in this document. The teacher will then ask what the John Adams document was saying. Students should talk about fairness and justice.

The teacher will ask students to recall the definition of bias. The teacher will ask students: "Which perspective they would have guessed before this lesson John Adams would have taken?" Students should respond with the colonists' view. The teacher will then ask, "What does this tell us about the legitimacy of his document? Does his document show as much bias as the others?" Students should give a variety of responses generally saying that because Adams did not have anything to gain from his document and defense of the British, his document has the potential to be more reliable and less bias than the others they examined.

The students will then be instructed to individually write a newspaper article acting as an eyewitness to the event. Students will use the primary sources they just evaluated to formulate an article that contains both the colonial and British perspective of the Boston Massacre. Therefore, the teacher will encourage the students to incorporate the analysis of the documents and biases into their article. At the end of each student's article, after they have provided evidence for both sides, they will have to either side with the British or the Boston colonists. Students will be reminded that by taking a side their article should attempt to answer the class's compelling question (Who's to blame for the Boston Massacre?). Students should also answer some of the supporting questions the class listed earlier throughout the article.

## **3. After**

Next, students will be given the opportunity to read their articles to the class. Students will repeatedly hear the account of both sides of the Boston Massacre. The teacher will then ask, "So if both sides have evidence of misconduct against them, who is to blame?"

Some may say the British are innocent because of the John Adams document. But then the teacher will provide a secondary source that includes the information that two of the nine soldiers were convicted of manslaughter (though not murder) for shooting into the crowd. The teacher should take this time to talk about the importance of having full information and not relying on a single document.

Some students may then change their answer and say the British were at fault. The teacher will then remind the students of Captain Preston's account which accused the Bostonian mob of carrying clubs, throwing snowballs, and hurling provocative insults.

Students may again say then the colonists are at fault, but the teacher will point out the Paul Revere article with the coffins reminding students that British guns still produced death.

Students may become frustrated and ask the teacher, “Well, who’s to blame then?” The teacher will then guide the class to the conclusion that it all depends on perspective.

The teacher will review the main points of the lesson: 1. History must be examined from all perspectives, 2. Students must find sources from the perspective of all parties involved, 3. Students must look for and identify potential bias in sources, 4. Students must rely on evidence, not previous knowledge, 5. History does not usually have simple answers (for questions like “Who’s to blame?” or “Who won or lost?”).

The teacher will then review the evidence gathered about the Boston Massacre. Students will be given the opportunity to ask more questions about the Boston Massacre, primary sources, and/or bias. Students will be encouraged to keep thinking about what they have learned, and the class will make a list of other commonly-known historical events that they could challenge by gathering and examining sources for further evidence.

#### **4. Assessment**

Students will be evaluated on their narrative on the following criteria:

- a. Students correctly grouped sources into those that support either the British or Colonial perspective within their article.
- b. Students attempted to answer the compelling question and some supporting questions.
- c. Students created articles that incorporated in-depth analysis.
- d. Students created engaging articles.
- e. Students created an article that was free of grammar and spelling errors.