

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Minute Man National Historical Park
Concord, MA

Who Shot First?

Examine the Evidence Where the Revolution Began



Program Guide



Connections to the Common Core

“Who Shot First?” is an interdisciplinary program designed to help students achieve state and national standards in History/Social Science and English/Language Arts.

GRADES 6-12 LITERACY IN HISTORY/SOCIAL STUDIES

Grades 6-8

Key Ideas and Details

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.2 Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.

Craft and Structure

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary specific to domains related to history/social studies.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.6 Identify aspects of a text that reveal an author’s point of view or purpose (e.g., loaded language, inclusion or avoidance of particular facts).

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.8 Distinguish among fact, opinion, and reasoned judgment in a text.

Grades 9-10

Key Ideas and Details

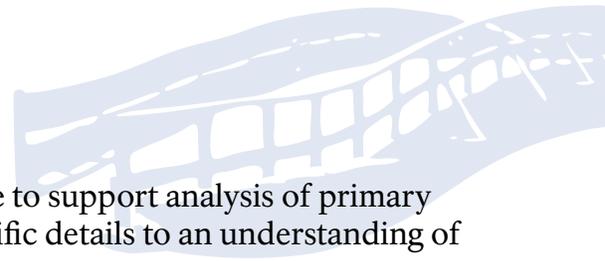
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.2 Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.

Craft and Structure

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary describing political, social, or economic aspects of history/social science.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.6 Compare the point of view of two or more authors for how they treat the same or similar topics, including which details they include and emphasize in their respective accounts.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.8 Assess the extent to which the reasoning and evidence in a text support the author’s claims.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.9 Compare and contrast treatments of the same topic in several primary and secondary sources.



Grades 11-12

Key Ideas and Details

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.2 Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.3 Evaluate various explanations for actions or events and determine which explanation best accords with textual evidence, acknowledging where the text leaves matters uncertain.

Craft and Structure

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.5 Analyze in detail how a complex primary source is structured, including how key sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text contribute to the whole.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.6 Evaluate authors' differing points of view on the same historical event or issue by assessing the authors' claims, reasoning, and evidence.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.7 Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.8 Evaluate an author's premises, claims, and evidence by corroborating or challenging them with other information.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.9 Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies among sources.

Connections to the Massachusetts Curriculum Framework Standards

HISTORY AND SOCIAL SCIENCE

Concepts and Skills, grades 8–12

6. Distinguish between long-term and short-term cause and effect relationships.
8. Interpret the past within its own historical context rather than in terms of present-day norms and values.
9. Distinguish intended from unintended consequences.
10. Distinguish historical fact from opinion.

U.S. HISTORY I LEARNING STANDARDS

- US1.4. Analyze how Americans resisted British before 1775 and analyze the reasons for the American victory and the British Defeat during the Revolutionary War.
- US1.5-C. Explain the role of Massachusetts in the Revolution, including important events that took place in Massachusetts and important leaders from Massachusetts. . . The Battles of Lexington and Concord and Bunker Hill.

Introduction

Minute Man National Historical Park is the site of the opening battle of the American Revolution on April 19, 1775. What had begun ten years earlier as political protest escalated as British soldiers clashed with colonial militia and “minute men” in a series of skirmishes at Lexington, Concord, and along a twenty-two mile stretch of road running from Boston to Concord. The events that occurred that day on what became known as the Battle Road profoundly impacted the people of Massachusetts and soon grew into a war for self-government and independence.



During their visit to the park, students will see the “real places” where these historical events unfolded. Hearing the story at the actual site, seeing the “witness” houses and agrarian landscape, and walking the Battle Road trail help the ideas and events come alive for students. Students learn that history can be fun as they gain a deeper understanding of the people, places, and events of the past. Participation in the program at the park helps them think about what causes are worth fighting for and why these events are important to our history as Americans.

PHOTO: Students enjoy the program.
Credit: Jim Higgins - above and inset photos on page 5.

Theme

Details of the fighting at North Bridge on April 19, 1775 are still subject to interpretation.

Program Description

How do we know what we know? History is often viewed as a parade of facts, names and dates laid out in a perfect and unchangeable order. History, or more correctly, how we perceive it, is constantly changing. Much of what we “know” about events of the past is based upon how different historians interpret these events through the study of primary resources. Primary resources, i.e. first-hand accounts, serve as the evidence that historians use to uncover the secrets of the past. During this one hour program, students will tour the North Bridge battlefield with a National Park Ranger who will lead a discussion of what happened there on April 19, 1775, using the landscape and other tangible resources to set the stage.



“Who Shot First?” engages students in critical thinking to analyze primary source materials and construct an evidence-based argument in answer to the question, “How do we know what we know?” At North Bridge, four students are selected to play the role of colonists who took part in the battle, each reading an excerpt from the historic person’s account. The ranger points out important details of each account. Crossing the bridge, four students are chosen to read four accounts by British soldiers. The ranger continues the discussion about the points on which these sources agree, where they differ, and why this might be?

At the conclusion, the students will be asked, based on the primary resource evidence they have heard, which side they believe fired the first shots at the North Bridge and what the question meant to each side. Students will be required to explain the reason for their choices and why it is important to know this information. They will talk about what effect who fired first had on the course of events.

The program ends with a brief musket firing demonstration to add yet another layer of reality to their experience and inspire their imaginations.

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Draw conclusions about the North Bridge fight and support those conclusions with historical evidence.
- Distinguish intended from unintended consequences.
- Describe how history is created.
- Discuss the impact of authorship, perspective, purpose, intended audience, and time on historical narrative.



PHOTOS: Park Rangers present this program in 18th century-style attire.

Preparing for Your Visit

BACKGROUND

Concord's North Bridge and the Opening of the American Revolution

April 19, 1775 was the first day of the American Revolutionary War. Known today as the Battles of Lexington and Concord, during the Revolution the event was often referred to as the Lexington Alarm; and that's what it was, an alarm, brought on by the British march to Concord and the bloodshed in Lexington. The colonial response to the alarm was massive and well planned. By nightfall, nearly 4,000 militiamen had seen combat. By April 21st, 20,000 militiamen had responded to the call to arms and were marching towards Boston to lay siege to the town and its garrison of British soldiers.

One of the key events of that memorable day was the fight at North Bridge where colonial militiamen were first ordered to fire upon British soldiers. This was an act of treason and marked the beginning of open and bloody rebellion in Massachusetts. Participants on both sides of the conflict had strong opinions about who and what they believed started the fight there.

The following pre-visit materials are designed to help students understand key concepts relative to April 19, 1775 and the challenges and rewards of analyzing primary source material. Before your visit, prepare the class by doing **Primary vs. Secondary Sources** with them and then assigning them to work on **Primary Source Analysis: The Battle of Lexington** and **Tyranny or Good Government**.



PRIMARY VS. SECONDARY SOURCES

Have the class write a brief history of the school year or your class so far this year. When students are finished writing, explain to them that the accounts they have just written are considered **primary source** accounts of the school year. Primary sources are first-hand accounts of an event or are produced at the time an event occurs. Primary sources are used by historians to determine what happened in the past.

Have a few students share the accounts they have created. Once they have shared, create a narrative of the class, so far, using components of the accounts provided. Explain that what you have just created is a **secondary source**. Secondary sources are the analysis and interpretation of primary sources. The history that the class created as a whole is the analysis and interpretation of the students' individual accounts.

Explain to the students that when historians are creating books, articles, and other materials about an historical event, they are analyzing and interpreting primary sources from the time period. The class just followed the same process that historians do when they helped to create their class history of the school year.

After creating the class history, consider as a group, the components of the individual student accounts:

- What activities are included in the student accounts? (Taking notes, going to assemblies, etc.)
- What are students leaving out of their accounts? (Eating lunch, the Pledge of Allegiance, etc.)



When examining primary sources it's important to keep in mind that authors may not include all of the details about an event or topic. How do we know that students ate their lunches in the cafeteria or performed the Pledge of Allegiance at the beginning of the school day if they are not written down in their accounts? Historians must also grapple with these types of questions when analyzing primary sources. In order to tackle this issue and complete the narrative, *inferences* are made about events. Inferences are logical conclusions based on clues in the source. Most secondary source material contains inferences made by the author to help complete the story.

Next, share your personal account of the class so far. Make your account truthful, but exaggerated positively or negatively. *Example: A beautiful teacher walked into the classroom on the first day of school. The minute she started talking the students were mesmerized by her historical content knowledge and witty jokes. When she passed out the syllabus for review, she could feel the excitement for history class that the students must have felt...* When you are finished sharing your account, consider the following questions with the class.

- How does your account of the class/school year so far differ from the accounts of the students?
- What factors are contributing to the differences in the accounts?

Explain to students that *bias* is one of the things that historians must address when they analyze primary sources. Bias is the author's prejudice/opinion about the event s/he is writing about. Even though people may experience the same event, each brings his/her own unique perspective to it based on past experiences and cultural beliefs. These can greatly affect what and how one writes about events. When reading sources it's important to consider...

- Who wrote the source?
- When did the author write the source?
- Who is the audience for the source?
- Why was the source written?

PRIMARY SOURCE ANALYSIS: THE BATTLE OF LEXINGTON

Reading primary source documents is one of the most enjoyable, rewarding and challenging ways to learn about historic events. It is *enjoyable* because the words are those of a *real person who was there* at the time of the event. It is *rewarding* because the conclusions one draws about the event are HIS/HER OWN, not the interpretation of another historian. It is *challenging* because people of the past, just as people today, had their own opinions, perspectives and motives for writing down what they saw, felt, and experienced. Like a detective, one must be able to sort through all of this to arrive at historical truth. Even then, the facts remain open to debate.

- ▶ **COPY PGS.10-12 TO DISTRIBUTE TO STUDENTS.** Provide students with the “Words to Know” on page 9 for reference as they work with the primary sources readings. Have students read the first-hand accounts of the Battle of Lexington on the morning of April 19, 1775 in **Primary Source Analysis: The Battle of Lexington** and fill out the chart on the corresponding **Worksheet** to assist in analyzing the sources. Review the worksheet when students are finished. As a group, consider the following questions about the sources.
 - Does it sound like the four sources are describing the same event?
 - Where do the four sources agree?
 - Where do the four sources disagree?
 - How do the earlier accounts of the battle differ from the later accounts?
 - Do these accounts seem to be trying to prove a point? If so, what?
 - Is one of these sources more credible than the others? Why or why not?
- ▶ As a group, create a narrative of the events of the Lexington Green on the morning of April 19, 1775 using the four sources. After constructing the narrative consider the following questions with the class.
 - What value judgments were made about the validity of the sources?
 - How important was the bias of each source to the decision to use it or not?
 - What inferences had to be made to complete the story?
- ▶ Wrap up by pointing out to students that they just completed the work that historians do when creating secondary sources, like their textbooks. This is the exact work that they will complete again when they visit the park.



TYRANNY OR GOOD GOVERNMENT?

Interpretation of the Coercive Acts

Just like when creating sources about an event, the reader of these sources brings their own biases and personal experiences to the table. These feelings and background can influence the way that we *interpret* source material, both primary and secondary.

After the Boston Tea Party in December 1773, the Parliament of Great Britain passed a collection of laws known as the Coercive Acts, also called the Intolerable Acts in the colonies. These acts closed down the port of Boston until the damage from the Tea Party was paid for, dissolved colonial self-government, and made General Thomas Gage the Royal Governor of Massachusetts. The colonists and General Gage, who all believed they were members of the British Empire and entitled to all the rights of Englishmen, reacted to these laws differently.



► **COPY PGS. 13-15 TO DISTRIBUTE TO STUDENTS.** Provide students with the “Words to Know” below for reference as they work with the primary sources readings. Have students read the two interpretations of the Intolerable (Coercive) Acts and reaction to it in **Tyranny or Good Government?: Interpretation of the Coercive Acts, Coercive Acts Source #1** and **Source #2** and answer **Questions to Consider** after each narrative. When students are finished, consider the following questions as a group:

- Does the colonial source and General Gage agree about the Intolerable Acts? How or how not?
- Why do you think the colonists feel justified in their reaction/response to the acts?
- Why do you think General Gage feels justified in his reaction/response to the acts?

Remind students that even though people read about or experience the same event, their opinion of it or reaction to it can vary greatly.

WORDS TO KNOW

Company, a military unit, numbering anywhere from 35-100 men, commanded by a captain.

Regiment (reg't), a military unit, made up of several companies, commanded by a colonel. Regiments are sometimes also referred to as battalions.

Regular, a full-time, professional soldier, as opposed to a part-time soldier in the militia hence the British soldiers were often referred to as the ‘Regulars.’

Infantry, all soldiers who march and fight on foot, whose principle weapon is the musket and bayonet.

Light Infantry, specially trained British soldiers who work in small groups, spread out, take cover, and skirmish with the enemy.

Militia, a part-time army. In Massachusetts, all able-bodied males aged 16 to 60 were required to serve.

Minute Man, a militiaman who has volunteered to serve in an elite company, better trained and equipped than the militia, which is ready to fight at a ‘minute’s warning.’

Muster, a gathering, usually for training purposes, of the local militia. This was done by company about once every two months, and by regiment, once, maybe twice per year.

Primary Source Analysis

The Battle of Lexington

CONTEXTUAL INFORMATION FOR SOURCES #1 & 2

Immediately after the Battle of Lexington and Concord on April 19, 1775, the Provincial Congress took depositions from eyewitnesses of the day's events. These depositions were published as *A Narrative of the Excursion and Ravages of the Kings Troops* and sent to London in late April of 1775. The Provincial Congress hired a schooner to deliver the depositions across the Atlantic. The collection of the colonial account of April 19, 1775, including Source #1 & 2 below, arrived in England two weeks before General Gage's account of the events. These accounts are cited in London newspapers and are the first accounts English citizens read about April 19, 1775. As you read, consider why the Provincial Congress would collect depositions and send them to the British government so quickly.

Source #1

"...there suddenly appeared a number of the King's Troops, about sixty or seventy yards from us, huzzaing and on a quick pace towards us, ... upon which said company dispersing, the foremost of the three officers ordered their men, saying 'Fire, by God, fire; at which moment we received a very heavy and close fire from them; at which instant, being wounded, I fell, and several of our men were shot dead by one volley. Capt. Parker's men, I believe, had not then fired a gun."

John Robbins, April 25, 1775

Source #2

"I ordered our Militia to meet on the common in said Lexington, to consult what to do, and concluded not to be discovered, nor meddle or make with said Regular Troops (if they should approach) unless they should insult us; and upon their sudden approach, I immediately ordered our Militia to disperse and not to fire."

John Parker, Captain, Lexington Militia, April 25, 1775



CONTEXTUAL INFORMATION FOR SOURCES #3 & 4

As the 50th anniversary of the Battles of Lexington and Concord approached, the town of Lexington created a commission to collect depositions about April 19, 1775 from the surviving veterans of the conflict on the Lexington Green. Elias Phinney published these depositions, including Sources #3 and 4 below, as the pamphlet *History of the Battle at Lexington* in 1825. In the introduction, Phinney cites three main reasons for collection the depositions. First, he calls into question the validity of the April 1775 depositions, claiming the men would have left details out in order to prevent incriminating themselves to the British government. Second, Phinney wanted to disprove claims that Concord was the site of the, “first forcible resistance” by the colonists and that, “the first blood was shed between the British and the armed Americans” at the North Bridge. These claims began appearing in print after the visit of the Marquis de Lafayette in September 1824 and proved to be a point of contention between the two towns for decades. Thirdly, the town wanted to give the veterans of April 19th the opportunity to share the true story of April 19, 1775 before they died and no eyewitnesses were left their experiences. As you read, consider the motivations the men might have when giving the following depositions.

Source #3

“...finding our company kept their ground, Col. Smith ordered his troops to fire...I thought, and so stated to Ebenezer Munroe, Jun. who stood next to me on the left, that they had fired nothing but powder; but, on the second firing, Munroe said, they had fired something more than powder, for he had received a wound in his arm; and now, said he... ‘I’ll give them the guts of my gun.’ We both took aim at the main body of the British troops...and discharged our pieces.”

John Munroe, December 28, 1824

Source #4

“When the regulars had arrived within about one hundred rods of our line, they charged their pieces, and then moved toward us at a quick step. Some of our men, on seeing them, proposed to quit the field, but Capt. Parker gave orders for every man to stand his ground, and said he would order the first man shot, that offered to leave his post. I stood very near Capt. Parker, when the regulars came up, and am confident he did not order his men to disperse, till the British troops had fired upon us the second time.

Joseph Underwood, March 7, 1825



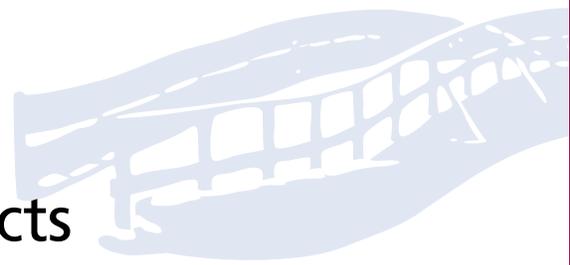
The Battle of Lexington

WORKSHEET

Use the chart below to record answers to each question as you read the sources about The Battle of Lexington.

	SOURCE #1	SOURCE #2	SOURCE #3	SOURCE #4
Who wrote the source?				
When did the author write the source?				
Who is the audience of the source?				
Why was the source written?				
What are the main points of the source? Identify at least 3 points.				

Tyranny or Good Government? Interpretation of the Coercive Acts

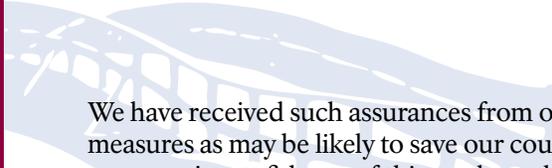


Coercive Acts Source #1: Circular Letter of the Boston Committee of Correspondence

GENTLEMEN,

THE evils which we have long foreseen are now come upon this town and province, the long meditated stroke is now given to the civil liberty of this country? How long we may be allowed the enjoyment of our religious liberty is a question of infinite moment. Religion can never be retained in its purity where tyranny has usurped the place of reason and justice. The bill for blocking up the harbour of Boston is replete with injustice and cruelty, thousands of innocent men, besides women and infants, are by it reduced to the indigence and distress; and though we in this town more immediately feel this distress, yet our brethren in the other towns of this province, and all the other colonies, must see that we suffer in the common cause, and that they themselves must soon realize the sufferings under which we now labour, if no means are discovered for our relief. But if any should think that this town alone is to groan under the weight of arbitrary power, we are now furnished by our enemies with a still more glaring evidence of a fixed plan of the British administration to bring the whole continent into the most humiliating bondage. A bill has been brought into parliament apparently for the purpose of taking away our charter rights, wherein it is to be enacted that the counsellors shall be appointed by mandamus from the king, that our justices of the superior court, justices of our inferior courts, and justices of the peace, shall be all appointed by the governor alone, without the advice of the council, and all of them, excepting the justices of the superior court be removeable by him at his pleasure, that our juries shall not be chosen by the freeholders, as they heretofore have been, but by the sheriff of the county, and that this sheriff shall not be appointed by the governor and council as heretofore, but by the governor alone, so that our lives and properties are to be decided upon by judges appointed by the governor alone, and by juries chosen by a sheriff who must be entirely under the influence of the governor as he is appointed by him, and is removeable by him alone, whenever he shall discover a reluctance to conform to the will of the governor. Surely if we suffer these things we are the most abject slaves. If a favorite of a perverse governor should pretend a title to our lands, or any other part of our property, we need not doubt but a very small degree of evidence in support of the claim, would be judged sufficient, especially as the bill makes provision, that upon the motion of either of the parties, it shall be lawful to try the cause in another country than that in which the action was brought, so that a man is to be carried into a distant part of the province, instead of having his cause tried in his own country, and to be tried by strangers with whom the good or bad characters of the parties or of the witnesses can have no weight, contrary to the very spirit of magna charta. Of what value are our lands or estates to us, if such an odious government should be established among us? Can we look with pleasure on the inheritance left by our ancestors, or on the fields cultivated by our industry? When we reflect that all our labours have made them only a more inviting prey to our enemies, will not the vineyard of Naboth be ever in our minds? But lest any thing should be wanting to compleat our misery, another bill is also prepared, which enables the governor to save any person or persons, who, under the pretext of supporting or carrying into execution the late or other acts of the British parliament, shall murder and destroy the people of this country, from being tried in this province (even if they should be indicted by such grand jurors as shall be chosen by the sheriff of the county in the same manner that we have mentioned that petty jurors are to be returned) but the person indicted with such witnesses as he and the prosecutor (which will be the crown) shall judge proper, shall be sent to either of the other colonies, or eve to Great Britain, to be tried for murdering the inhabitants of the Massachusetts-Bay. And provision is also made to prevent our meeting together in our corporate capacity as a town, unless it be once in the month of March for the election of the town officers, except the matter or business of the meeting is laid before the governor, and his leave in writing is obtained for a meeting of the town.

There is but one way that we can conceived of, to prevent what is to be deprecated by all good men, and ought by all possible means to be prevented, viz, The horrors that must follow an open rupture between Great Britain and her colonies; or on our part, a subjection to absolute slavery: And that is by affecting the trade and interest of Great Britain, so deeply as shall induce her to withdraw her oppressive hand. There can be no doubt or our succeeding to the utmost or our wishes if we universally come into a solemn league, not to import goods from Great Britain, and not to buy any goods that shall hereafter be imported from thence, until our grievances shall be redressed. To these, or even to the least of these shameful impositions, we trust in God, our countrymen never will submit.



We have received such assurances from our brethren in every part of the province of their readiness to adopt such measures as may be likely to save our country, that we have not the least doubt of an almost universal agreement for this purpose; in confidence of this, we have drawn up a form of a covenant to be subscribed by all adult persons of both sexes; which we have sent to every town in the province, and that we might not give our enemies time to counteract us, we have endeavoured that every town should be furnished with such a copy on or before the fourteenth day of this month, and we earnestly desire that you would use your utmost endeavours that the subscription paper may be filled up as soon as possible, that so they who are in expectation of over throwing our liberties may be discouragd from prosecuting their wicked designs; as we look upon this the last and only method of preserving our land from slavery without drenching it in blood, may God prosper every undertaking which tends to the salvation of his people. We are, &c.

Signed by order and in behalf of the
Committee of Correspondence for
Boston.

William Cooper Clerk

BOSTON, JUNE 8, 1774

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

Source #1: Circular Letter

How does the author interpret the closing of the port of Boston?

What charter rights does the author believe the new bill will deprive the colonists of?
What effect would this have on the colonists?

How does the author propose to prevent the negative effects of these new bills?



Coercive Acts Source #2: Excerpt General Gage Letter to Dartmouth

SALEM August 27th 1774

...My former Letter have acquainted your Lordship, that the Acts in Question have been published here, and People have had Leisure to consider Means to elude them, in doing which they are very expert. At a Town Meeting held at Boston in July, in order to avoid *Calling* a Meeting afterwards, they adjourned themselves to the 9th of August, and adjourned again on that Day to some Time in October. I assembled the Select Men in Boston, had the Clause read respecting Town-Meetings, told them I expected their Obedience to it, that I should put the Act in force, and they would be answerable for any bad Consequences; They replied, they had *called* no Meeting, that a former meeting had only adjourned themselves.

I laid the Affair of Adjournment before the new Council, and found some of opinion that the Clause was thereby cleverly evaded, and nearly the whole unwilling to debate upon it, terming it a Point of Law which ought to be referred to the Crown Lawyers, whose Opinion is to be taken upon it, and by which I must govern myself. ...

...By the Plan lately adopted, forceable Opposition and Violence is to be transferred from the Town of Boston to the Country, the Copy inclosed of a Letter from the Boston Committee of Correspondence to several Countys will sufficiently evince the Intention of those Leaders; who by said Letter proper Emissaries, and other Means, have contrived, while Boston affects Quiet and Tranquility, to raise a Flame not only throughout the Province, but also in the Colony of Connecticut. ... In Consequence of the new Plan, popular Rage has appeared at the Extremity of the Province, abetted by Connecticut, which the Extract from the Letter from Hampshire, read in Council, shews; it is very high also in Berkshire County, and make its Way rapidly to the rest. In Worcester they keep no Terms, openly threaten Resistance by Arms, have been purchasing Arms, preparing them, casting Ball, and providing Powder, and threaten to attack any Troops who dare to oppose them. Mr Ruggles of the new Council is afraid to take his Seat as Judge of the inferior court, which sits at Worcester on the 7th of next Month, and I apprehend that I shall soon be obliged to march a Body of Troops into that Township, and perhaps others, as occasion happens, to preserve the Peace.

The Delegates, as they are called, from this Province are gone to Philadelphia to meet the rest who are to form the General Congress, and it's thought it will be determined there, whether the Town of Boston is to comply with the Terms of the Port Bill. It is not possible to guess what a Body composed of such heterogeneous Matter will determine, but the Members from hence, I am assured, will promote the most haughty and insolent Resolves, for their Plan has ever been by Threats, and high-sounding Sedition to terrify and intimidate. ...

It is agreed that popular Fury was never greater in this Province than at present, and it has taken it's Rise from the old Source at Boston, tho' it has appeared first at a Distance. Those Demagogues trust their safety in the long Forbearance of Government, and an Assurance that they can't be punished here. They chicane, elude, openly violate, or passively resist the Laws of Opportunitys serve, and Opposition to Authority is of so long Standing that it is become habitual. In this Situation I find Things, and must do the best I can to put them in a better state. ...

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

Source #2: Excerpt General Gage Letter to Dartmouth

How does General Gage interpret the colonial defiance regarding Boston's town meeting?

What does General Gage propose he may need to do in Worcester?

On the whole, how does General Gage interpret the response of the colonists to the new laws?

Following Your Visit to the Park

PRIMARY SOURCE ANALYSIS: THE WAR OF WORDS

Now that your students are familiar with some of the primary sources about what happened at the North Bridge in Concord from their visit to the park, reflect with them on how the history of April 19, 1775 has been reported and preserved. The class made their narrative at the North Bridge with the ranger, but how does their narrative of the day compare to the narratives written immediately in the aftermath from each side? What motivations are driving these narratives and which one is the accepted truth?

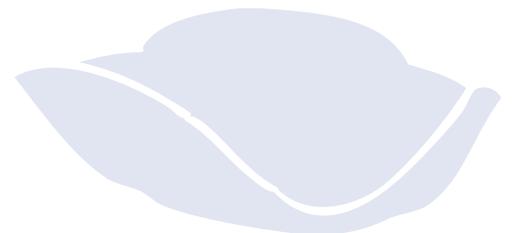
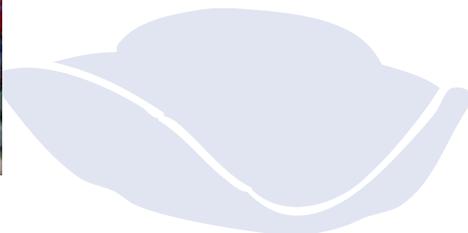
► **COPY PGS.17-19 TO DISTRIBUTE TO STUDENTS.** Have students read the two accounts of the events of April 19, 1775 that were written within days of the event, **War of Words Narrative #1** and **#2** and answer the **Questions to Consider** at the bottom of each narrative. As a group, consider the following questions:



- What points do the two sources agree on? Disagree on?
- What do you think is the motivation behind the creation of each source?
- Do the authors have bias that needs to be taken into consideration?
- How does each source interpret the events of April 19, 1775?
- Do these interpretations differ then the interpretation your class created while at the park?
- Are these sources a valid and reliable interpretation of April 19, 1775? Why or why not?

IN YOUR OWN WORDS

Have students write a letter or journal entry describing from their own perspectives, as if they were actually there (British, Colonial, Loyalist, man or woman), what happened on April 19, 1775 and its significance to their lives.





Primary Source Analysis

The War of Words

War of Words Narrative #1: Introduction letter to *A Narrative of the Excursion and Ravages of the King's Troops* by Joseph Warren. Published by the Provincial Congress

ON the nineteenth day of April one thousand, seven hundred and seventy five, a day to be remembered by all Americans of the present generation, and which ought and doubtless will be handed down to ages yet unborn, in which the troops of Britain, unprovoked, shed the blood of sundry of the loyal American subjects of the British King in the field of Lexington. Early in the morning of said day, a detachment of the forces under the command of General Gage, stationed at Boston, attacked a small party of the inhabitants of Lexington and some other towns adjacent, the detachment consisting of about nine hundred men commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Smith : The inhabitants of Lexington and the other towns were about one hundred, some with and some without fire arms, who had collected upon information, that the detachment had secretly marched from Boston the preceding night, and landed on Phip's Farm in Cambridge, and were proceeding on their way with brisk pace towards Concord (as the inhabitants supposed) to take or destroy a quantity of stores deposited there for the use of the colony; sundry peaceable inhabitants having the same night been taken, held by force, and otherwise abused on the road, by some officers of General Gage's army, which caused a just alarm to the people, and a suspicion that some fatal design was immediately to be put in execution against them : This small party of the inhabitants so far from being disposed to commit hostilities against the troops of their sovereign, that unless attacked were determined to be peaceable spectators of this extraordinary movement ; immediately on the approach of Colonel Smith with the detachment under his command they dispersed ; but the detachment, seeming to thirst for BLOOD, wantonly rushed on, and first began the hostile scene by firing on this small party, in which they killed eight men on the spot and wounded several others before any guns were fired upon the troops by our men. Not contented with this effusion of blood, as if malice had occupied their whole soul, they continued the fire, until all this small party who escaped the dismal carnage, were out of the reach of their fire : Colonel Smith with the detachment then proceeded to Concord, where a part of this detachment again made the first fire upon some of the inhabitants of Concord and the adjacent towns, who were collected at a bridge upon this just alarm, and killed two of them and wounded several others, before any of the Provincials there had done one hostile act : Then the Provincials (roused with zeal for the liberties of their country, finding life and everything dear and valuable at stake) assumed their native valour and returned the fire, and the engagement on both sides began : Soon after which the British troops retreated towards Charlestown (having first committed violence and waste on public and private property) and on their retreat were joined by another detachment of General Gage's troops, consisting of about a thousand men, under the command of Earl Percy, who continued the retreat, the engagement lasted through the day, many were killed and wounded on each side, though the loss on the part of the British troops far exceeded that of the provincials : the devastation committed by the British troops on their retreat, the whole of the way from Concord to Charlestown, is almost beyond description, such as plundering and burning of dwelling houses and other buildings, driving into the street women in child-bed, killing old men in their houses unarmed : Such scenes of desolation would be a reproach to the perpetrators, even if committed by the most barbarous nations, how much more when done by Britons famed for humanity and tenderness : And all this because these colonies will not submit to the iron yoke of arbitrary power.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

War of Words Narrative #1

What could be the motivation behind this account of April 19, 1775?

How are the British soldiers portrayed in this account?

How are the colonists portrayed in this account?

War of Words Narrative #2: *A Circumstantial Account of an Attack That Happened on the 19th of April 1775, on his Majesty's Troops, by a Number of the People of the Province of Massachusetts Bay by General Thomas Gage*

ON Tuesday the 18th of April, about half past 10 at Night, Lieutenant Colonel Smith of the 10th Regiment, embarked from the Common at Boston, with the Grenadiers and Light Infantry of the Troops there, and landed on the opposite Side, from whence he began his March towards Concord, where he was ordered to destroy a Magazine of Military Stores, deposited there for the Use of an Army to be assembled, in Order to act against his Majesty, and his Government. The Colonel called his Officers together, and gave Orders, that the Troops should not fire, unless fired upon; and after marching a few Miles, detached six Companies of Light Infantry, under the Command of Major Pitcairn, to take Possession of two Bridges on the other Side of Concord : Soon after they heard many Signal Guns, and the ringing of Alarm Bells repeatedly, which convinced them that the Country was rising to oppose them, and that it was a preconcerted Scheme to oppose the King's Troops, whenever there should be a favorable Opportunity for it. About 3 o'Clock the next Morning, the Troops being advanced within two Miles of Lexington, Intelligence was received that about Five Hundred Men in Arms, were assembled, and determined to oppose the King's Troops ;* and on Major Pitcairn's galloping up to the Head of the advanced Companies, two Officers informed him that a Man (advanced from those that were assembled) had presented his Musquit and attempted to shoot them, but the Piece flashed in the Pan : On this the Major gave directions to the Troops to move forward, but on no Account to fire, nor even to attempt it without Orders. When they arrived at the End of the Village, they observed about 200 armed Men, drawn up on a Green, and when the Troops came within a Hundred Yards of them, they began to file off towards some Stone Walls, on their right Flank : The Light Infantry observing this, ran after them ; the Major instantly called to the Soldiers not to fire, but to surround and disarm them ; some of [Handwritten reference mark, "#," in margin, refers to handwritten note at bottom of broadside] them who had jumped over a Wall, then fired four or five Shot at the Troops, wounded a Man of the 10th Regiment, and the Major's Horse in two Places, and at the same Time several Shots were fired from a Meeting-House on the left: Upon this, without any Order or Regularity, the Light Infantry began a scattered Fire, and killed several of the Country People; but were silenced as soon as the Authority of their Officers could make them. + After this, Colonel Smith marched up with the Remainder of the Detachment, and the whole Body proceeded to Concord, where they arrived about 9 o'Clock, without any Thing further happening; but vast numbers of armed People were seen Assembling on all the Heights: while Colonel Smith with the Grenadiers, and Part of the Light Infantry remained at Concord, to search for Cannon, &c. there ; he detached Captain Parsons with six Light Companies to secure a Bridge at some Distance from Concord, and to proceed from thence to certain Houses, where it was supposed there was Cannon, and Ammunition ; Captain Parsons in pursuance of these Orders, posted three Companies at the Bridge, and on some Heights near it, under the Command of Captain Laurie of the 43d Regiment; and with the Remainder went and destroyed some Cannon Wheels, Powder, and Ball; the People still continued encreasing on the Heights; and in about an Hour after, a large Body of them began to move towards the Bridge, the Light Companies of the 4th and 10th then descended, and joined Captain Laurie, the People continued to advance in great Numbers; and fired upon the Kings Troops, killed three Men, wounded four Officers, one Serjeant, and four private Men, upon which (after returning the fire) Captain Laurie and his Officers, thought it prudent to retreat towards the Main Body at Concord, and were soon joined by two Companies of Grenadiers; when Captain Parsons returned with the three Companies over the Bridge, they observed three Soldiers on the Ground one of them scalped, his Head much mangled, and his Ears cut off, tho' not quite dead; a Sight which struck the Soldiers with Horror; Captain Parsons marched on and joined the Main Body, who were only waiting for his coming up, to march back to Boston; Colonel Smith had executed his Orders, without Opposition, by destroying all the Military Stores he could find; both the Colonel, and Major Pitcairn, having taken all possible Pains to convince the Inhabitants that no Injury was intended them, and that if they opened their Doors when required, to search for said Stores, not the slightest Mischief should be done; neither had any of the People the least Occasion to complain, but they were sulky, and one of them even struck Major Pitcairn. Except upon Captain Laurie, at the Bridge, no Hostilities happened from the Affair at Lexington, until the Troops began their March back. As soon as the Troops had got out of the Town of Concord, they received a heavy Fire from all Sides, from Walls, Fences, Houses, Trees, Barns, &c. which continued without Intermission, till they met the first Brigade, with two Field Pieces, near Lexington; ordered out under the Command of Lord Percy to support them; (advice having been received about 7 o'Clock next Morning, that Signals had been made, and Expresses gone out to alarm the Country, and that the People were rising to attack the Troops under Colonel Smith.) Upon the Firing of the Field Pieces, the People's Fire was for a while silenced, but as they still continued to encrease greatly in Numbers, they fired again as before, from all Places where they could find Cover, upon the whole Body, and continued so doing for the Space of Fifteen Miles: Notwithstanding their Numbers they did not attack openly during the Whole Day, but kept under Cover on all Occasions.

The Troops were very much fatigued, the greater Part of them having been under Arms all Night, and made a March of upwards of Forty Miles before they arrived at Charlestown, from whence they were ferrued over to Boston. The Troops had above Fifty killed, and many more wounded: Reports are various about the Loss sustained by the Country People, some make it very considerable, others not so much. Thus this unfortunate Affair has happened through the Rashness and Imprudence of a few People, who began Firing on the Troops at Lexington.

* At this Time the advanc'd Light Companies loaded, but the Grenadiers were not loaded when they received their first Fire.

+ Notwithstanding the Fire from the Meeting House, Colonel Smith and Major Pitcairn, with the greatest Difficulty, kept the Soldiers from forcing into the Meeting-House and putting all those in it to Death.

the People say the Troops fired first & I believe they did

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

War of Words Narrative #2

What could be the motivation behind this account of April 19, 1775?

How are the British soldiers portrayed in this account?

How are the colonists portrayed in this account?

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Minute Man National Historical Park
Concord, MA

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