

The Boston Massacre

March 5, 1770 | Supported reading · Words first

Teacher note: this topic includes loss, violence, discrimination, or criminal allegations. Preview and choose a suitable reading together. No reenactment of harm is needed.

Words to know

account — a description of what happened

evidence — information that helps support or question a claim

persuade — try to convince someone

Talk before you read

Point, speak, draw, or write. Use your home language first if it helps.

Take one word at a time with a teacher or partner.

The teacher page at the end gives all seven steps of the vocabulary routine. These everyday and general academic words are teaching choices, not an official WIDA word list.

Look closely



A hand-colored 1770 print shows British soldiers in a row firing at Bostonians, with people falling in the foreground.

Read the story

British soldiers fired during a tense clash in Boston.

Five people died, including Crispus Attucks.

Pictures and stories spread.

Different accounts did not describe every detail in the same way.

Think, talk, and show evidence

1. What happened in this reading? Tell one fact.
2. Who or what is this reading mostly about?
3. Choose a word from the word bank. Explain it in your own words.
4. Look at the picture and its caption. What does it help you notice? Is it from the time of the event?

Try these starters: "This happened in _____. I learned _____. The picture shows _____. My word is _____. It means _____."

Follow-up reading: The Boston Tea Party

December 16, 1773

Protesters boarded ships and dumped 342 chests of tea into Boston Harbor. They opposed British tea policy and taxation. This was a protest, not a party with cups and cakes. Britain answered with restrictions.

How are the two readings alike or different? Tell a partner one connection. Which event came first?

Teacher guide & source trail

Original classroom adaptation. Suggested reading levels are instructional choices, not standardized readability certifications. Use professional judgment and learner feedback.

ELA practice: RI.2.1: ask and answer questions; RI.2.2: identify a main topic; RI.2.7: use images and words; W.2.2 and SL.2.1: explain and discuss.

These tasks support selected skills in the [Massachusetts 2017 ELA framework](#); they do not establish mastery of an entire standard.

Answer guidance

Factual anchor: British soldiers fired during a tense clash in Boston. Five people died, including Crispus Attucks. Pictures and stories spread. Different accounts did not describe every detail in the same way. John Adams helped defend the soldiers at trial. Paul Revere's engraving promoted the Patriot cause. Its arrangement of people and labels makes it evidence of persuasion, not a neutral photograph.

Accept accurate main ideas and explanations supported by the text. Vocabulary meanings are in the opening word bank. For picture questions, use the caption and credit below; distinguish what is visible from what is inferred. For comparison, accept a specific connection supported by both readings. Do not require personal accounts of trauma.

Calderón's seven-step vocabulary routine

1. Say and show each selected word. Invite learners to repeat it three times.
2. Place the word in a meaningful sentence connected to this event. Read the sentence aloud and point to the word.
3. Give a precise definition. Clarify which meaning fits this context.
4. Restate it in friendly language using an example, object, gesture, or picture.
5. Briefly highlight a useful sound, spelling pattern, word part, or verified home-language connection. Do not invent cognates.
6. Partners practice the word aloud in a complete sentence. Listen, prompt, and provide feedback before asking for writing.
7. Explain how learners will use the word in the reading and final explanation. Revisit it and check that each learner can use or explain it.

Adapted for this lesson from Margarita Calderón's seven-step vocabulary handout. The routine is a teaching adaptation, not a reproduced worksheet.

Offer oral rehearsal, a bilingual glossary, extra processing time, text-to-speech, and a choice of spoken, drawn, dictated, or written response. Consult [WIDA Can Do Descriptors](#) for language scaffolds. Clear type and spacing can aid access but are not a dyslexia treatment.

Continue the inquiry

[Research source for this event ↗](#)

[Research source for follow-up ↗](#)

[Event page, accessible HTML reading, and vocabulary game ↗](#)

Image: Paul Revere Jr., after Henry Pelham. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Mrs. Russell Sage, 1910. Public domain.

[Image source and rights record ↗](#)

The PDF contains selectable English text and embedded fonts. For adjustable text and browser reading tools, use the event's HTML page. External sources may need adult guidance.