

The Lizzie Borden case

1892 | Grade 4 · Explain with evidence

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

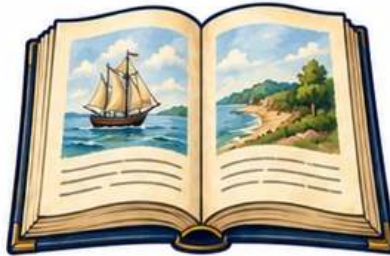
Words to know

accuse — say that someone did something wrong

evidence — information that helps support or question a claim

verdict — a court's decision about a case

Look closely



Modern topic illustration created for Massachusetts History Explorers. It is not a historical artifact.

Read the story

Lizzie Borden was accused of killing her father and stepmother in Fall River. The case drew great public attention. She was tried and acquitted in 1893. Being accused is not the same as being found guilty.

Newspaper coverage shaped public opinion. A rhyme or legend is not reliable evidence. Study the difference between accusation, testimony, verdict, and unresolved historical questions without graphic details.

Think, talk, and show evidence

1. State the main idea. Support it with two details from the reading.
2. Explain a change or challenge described in the text. Which words support your answer?
3. Use one vocabulary word in a new sentence about this event.
4. What can the image and caption help explain? What can they not tell you?

Follow-up reading: Volleyball begins in Holyoke

1895

William G. Morgan created a game in Holyoke. It was first called mintonette and later volleyball. Players sent a ball over a net. The game changed and spread to many countries.

Morgan developed it at the YMCA. Rules, equipment, and participation evolved. A sport's origin is only one chapter; later players and communities also shape its history.

Compare the two readings. Explain one similarity or difference using a detail from each. Their order does not prove that one caused the other.

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.4.1: refer to details; RI.4.2: main idea and summary; RI.4.3: explain events; RI.4.7: interpret visual information; W.4.2 and SL.4.1: 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: Lizzie Borden was accused of killing her father and stepmother in Fall River. The case drew great public attention. She was tried and acquitted in 1893. Being accused is not the same as being found guilty. Newspaper coverage shaped public opinion. A rhyme or legend is not reliable evidence. Study the difference between accusation, testimony, verdict, and unresolved historical questions without graphic details.

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.

Continue the inquiry

[Research source for this event ↗](#)

[Research source for follow-up ↗](#)

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

Image: Original site illustration.

[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.