

The first Boston Marathon

1897 | Grade 4 · Explain with evidence

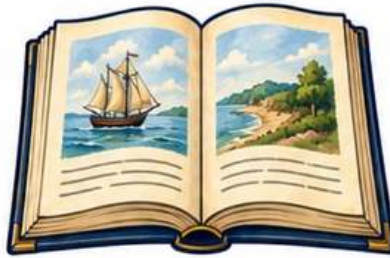
Words to know

race — a contest of speed; in other contexts, a social grouping based on perceived ancestry

access — a way to reach, enter, or use something

change — become different

Look closely



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

Read the story

The first Boston Marathon took place in 1897. John J. McDermott won. The race later grew into an international event. Who was allowed to run changed over time.

The original course and distance differed from today's. Women and other excluded athletes challenged limits in later decades. A race history should examine access alongside winning times.

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: Boston opens a subway

1897

Boston opened the Tremont Street Subway. Streetcars could travel below crowded streets. It was North America's first subway. Transportation changed how people moved through the city.

The original subway carried streetcars, not every kind of train used today. Engineering choices affected traffic, businesses, workers, and public space. Compare early routes with a current map.

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: The first Boston Marathon took place in 1897. John J. McDermott won. The race later grew into an international event. Who was allowed to run changed over time. The original course and distance differed from today's. Women and other excluded athletes challenged limits in later decades. A race history should examine access alongside winning times.

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.