

Sacco and Vanzetti are arrested

1920 | 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

fair — treating people justly

Look closely



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

Read the story

Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti were arrested and accused of robbery and murder. Their trial became widely debated. People questioned evidence and whether prejudice affected justice.

Both men were Italian immigrants and anarchists. Their political beliefs and background shaped public reactions. Distinguish criticism of a trial's fairness from claims about guilt that require evidence.

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: Goddard's liquid-fuel rocket

1926

Robert Goddard launched a liquid-fuel rocket in Auburn, Massachusetts. Its short flight helped open a new path in rocket research. Many tests and failures had come before this success.

The March 16 flight used gasoline and liquid oxygen. Goddard's work depended on experiments and collaborators. This is historical study, not a project to copy with dangerous fuels.

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: Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti were arrested and accused of robbery and murder. Their trial became widely debated. People questioned evidence and whether prejudice affected justice. Both men were Italian immigrants and anarchists. Their political beliefs and background shaped public reactions. Distinguish criticism of a trial's fairness from claims about guilt that require evidence.

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.