

Boston crimes and the search for evidence

1962–1964 | 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.

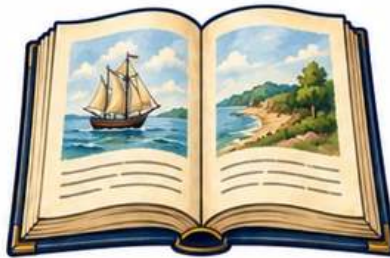
Words to know

evidence — information that helps support or question a claim

investigate — look carefully to learn what happened

compare — look for ways things are alike and different

Look closely



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

Read the story

A series of murders frightened people in the Boston area. Investigators tried to find who was responsible. Later DNA work helped resolve one case. Evidence matters more than a frightening nickname.

The label Boston Strangler can hide differences among cases. Later DNA evidence connected Albert DeSalvo to Mary Sullivan’s murder; it did not independently prove every crime attributed to that series.

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: Edward Brooke wins a Senate election

1966

Edward Brooke was elected a U.S. senator from Massachusetts. He was the first Black person popularly elected to the U.S. Senate. His election was an important political milestone.

Earlier Black senators had been chosen by state legislatures. Brooke's distinction concerns popular election, not being the first Black senator ever. Precision helps honor achievements without erasing earlier people.

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: A series of murders frightened people in the Boston area. Investigators tried to find who was responsible. Later DNA work helped resolve one case. Evidence matters more than a frightening nickname. The label Boston Strangler can hide differences among cases. Later DNA evidence connected Albert DeSalvo to Mary Sullivan's murder; it did not independently prove every crime attributed to that series.

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.