

Fact or Fiction?

Name: _____

Below is a biography on the Boston Massacre. On the following page is a chart with ten statements. Indicate whether each statement is fact or fiction.

The situation in Boston grew more tense by the day. Local skirmishes between townspeople and British soldiers (Redcoats) increased in frequency as did belligerence toward British soldiers. Rumors abounded throughout the city about possible attacks by soldiers or by the Sons of Liberty.

The Cause

On Monday night March 5, 1770, an American (patriot) began harassing a Redcoat named John Goldfinch standing guard. Another Redcoat nearby, named Hugh White, joined Goldfinch to defend him. White became agitated with the harassment and struck the patriot in the face with his musket. As the patriot cried out in pain, a mob of fifty or so Bostonians gathered. Goldfinch retreated to the nearby Custom House and pointed his musket toward the angry crowd.

The Situation Escalates

The mob began throwing chunks of ice at White and shouted "Kill him!" Meanwhile, other mobs were forming on Boston's streets. Those mobs began pelting other Redcoats with chunks of ice. British officers on the scene ordered soldiers back to their barracks, and several had to be subdued by officers to prevent them from firing into the angry crowd. The mob surrounding Hugh White, however, grew until he was surrounded by over 400 angry Bostonians. White's shouts for reinforcements were answered by British Captain Thomas Preston and several other soldiers who entered the emotional mob.

Preston tried to march the British soldiers from the Custom House back to the Main Guard, but his path was blocked by the mob of patriots. Despite his demands for the dispersal of the crowd, the mob responded with more insults and ice chunks. When the British justice of the peace tried to read the Riot Act, which would subject all members of the mob to prosecution once it was read, the mob forced him to retreat by throwing snowballs and ice chunks at him.

The Unthinkable!

The mob continued to provoke the soldiers and challenged them to fire. Members of the mob grew more and more violent and began striking the muskets and bayonets of the Redcoats with clubs. Despite his attempts to prevent bloodshed, Captain Preston was losing control of his soldiers who were growing increasingly threatened by the angry mob. Suddenly, someone in the crowd hurled a club which hit British soldier Hugh Montgomery and knocked him to the ground. Montgomery rose and fired into the crowd. Hearing the shot, the mob lunged at Preston and his men, wielding their

clubs at them. For the next few minutes, the scene became a chaotic battle in which Preston's men fired into the crowd to avoid being beaten. The soldiers were able to fend off the mob which soon dispersed. When it did disperse, the bodies of several patriots lay dead or wounded on the ground. Preston and his soldiers formed a defensive line with guns drawn to protect themselves from another assault.

The Aftermath, Trial, and Surprising Effect

Later that evening, Preston and his soldiers were arrested and accused of murder. In the ensuing trial almost all were acquitted (judged not-guilty), as the deaths had occurred in self-defense. Additionally, Parliament repealed the Townshend Act, and removed all taxes except for the tax on tea. Despite the anger in Boston over the massacre, American merchants began importing British goods again and the push for independence seemed to fizzle.

	FACT	FICTION
The Boston Massacre started when American John Goldfinch assaulted a Redcoat standing guard.		
The number of Bostonians that surrendered to the Redcoats numbered 400 or more.		
Several Redcoats were found dead when the crowd dispersed.		
Even before the massacre, tensions were high in Boston because of rumored attacks.		
Many Redcoats were judged guilty of murder.		
Following the Boston Massacre, Parliament issued the Townshend Act.		
Hugh Montgomery seemed to be the first to fire into the crowd.		
Following the Boston Massacre, Americans were more eager than ever to achieve independence.		
After the Boston Massacre, Americans began importing British goods again.		
Even the justice of the peace was assaulted by ice chunks and snowballs.		
The Redcoats tried to diffuse the situation several times, but ultimately could not.		

Answers:

	FACT	FICTION
The Boston Massacre started when American John Goldfinch assaulted a Redcoat standing guard.		X
The number of Bostonians that surrendered to the Redcoats numbered 400 or more.		X
Several Redcoats were found dead when the crowd dispersed.		X
Even before the massacre, tensions were high in Boston because of rumored attacks.	X	
Many Redcoats were judged guilty of murder.		X
Following the Boston Massacre, Parliament issued the Townshend Act.		X
Hugh Montgomery seemed to be the first to fire into the crowd.	X	
Following the Boston Massacre, Americans were more eager than ever to achieve independence.		X
After the Boston Massacre, Americans began importing British goods again.	X	
Even the justice of the peace was assaulted by ice chunks and snowballs.	X	
The Redcoats tried to diffuse the situation several times, but ultimately could not.	X	