

Boston Massacre - Lexile 800

Name _____

In March 1770, tensions in Boston were high. There were many small fights between Bostonians and British soldiers (called Redcoats), and rumors of attacks filled the city.

On the night of March 5, a patriot started bothering a British soldier named John Goldfinch. Another soldier, Hugh White, tried to help and struck the patriot with his musket. The patriot screamed, and a crowd of about 50 Bostonians gathered. Goldfinch retreated to a nearby building and pointed his gun at the crowd.

The crowd grew angry and threw chunks of ice at the soldiers, shouting "Kill him!" Other mobs began to form, throwing ice at more soldiers. British officers told the soldiers to return to their barracks, but the crowd kept growing, now numbering over 400.

Captain Thomas Preston and other soldiers came to help, but the crowd blocked their way. They tried to march away, but the crowd kept throwing insults and ice at them. A British officer tried to read a law, called the Riot Act, but the crowd prevented him by throwing snowballs.

The mob grew angrier, hitting the soldiers' muskets with clubs. One patriot threw a club, hitting a soldier named Hugh Montgomery, knocking him down. Montgomery stood up and fired his gun. When the crowd heard the shot, they rushed at the soldiers. In the chaos, the soldiers fired back, fearing for their safety. When the crowd finally left, several patriots were dead or injured.

Later, Preston and his soldiers were arrested and put on trial. Most were found not guilty because the shooting was considered self-defense. The British government later repealed some of the taxes they had placed on the colonies, but they kept the tax on tea. Despite the Boston Massacre, many American merchants began buying British goods again, and the push for independence slowed down.

1) What caused the Boston Massacre to start?

- A) A British officer ordered the soldiers to fire on the crowd.
- B) A patriot began harassing a British soldier, which led to a fight.
- C) The crowd was protesting the high taxes.
- D) The British soldiers were afraid of the patriots.

2) What did the crowd do to the British soldiers during the incident?

- A) They threw snowballs and ice at them.
- B) They tried to make peace with the soldiers.
- C) They gave the soldiers food and supplies.
- D) They helped the soldiers escape from Boston.

3) Why did the British soldiers fire into the crowd during the Boston Massacre, and what does this reveal about the conflict between the British and the American colonists?

- A) The soldiers fired because they were ordered to by their commanders, showing that the British were trying to control the colonies by force.
- B) The soldiers fired in self-defense, revealing the deep tension and mistrust between the British and the American colonists.
- C) The soldiers fired because they were angry at the crowd's protests, showing that they were against the colonies' fight for independence.
- D) The soldiers fired because they feared for their lives due to the cold weather, showing that soldiers were poorly prepared for the conditions.

4) In what ways did the British government's response after the Boston Massacre (such as repealing some taxes) affect the colonists' attitudes toward independence?

- A) The British government's actions made the colonists feel heard and respected, slowing the movement for independence.
- B) Repealing some taxes made the colonists feel that their concerns were being ignored, strengthening their desire to break away.
- C) The British government's actions were seen as a sign of weakness, and the colonists pushed harder for independence.
- D) The colonists were satisfied with the changes and no longer felt the need to fight for independence.

5) What was the effect of the Boston Massacre on American merchants?

- A) They stopped importing British goods altogether.
- B) They only bought goods that were made in America.
- C) They began importing British goods again despite the protests.
- D) They started buying more tea from Britain.

Answers

1. B
2. A
3. B
4. B
5. C