

NAME: _____

SECTION: _____

John Adams & Shaping the Narrative Around Crispus Attucks

DIRECTIONS: After reading the background historical overview, analyze *Source 2: Bailey discusses Attucks in his trial testimony (favoring the Defense)*, *Source 3: Brewer discusses Attucks in his trial testimony (favoring the Prosecution)*, and *Source 4: John Adams' Blames Crispus Attucks for the Boston Massacre in his Closing Argument for the Defense*. Then, consider the following diary entry written by John Adams on the third anniversary of the Boston Massacre. Finally, answer the five critical thinking questions.

1773. MARCH 5TH. FRYDAY. Heard an Oration, at Mr. Hunts Meeting House, by Dr. Benja. Church, in Commemoration of the Massacre in Kings Street, 3 Years ago. That large Church was filled and crouded in every Pew, Seat, Alley, and Gallery, by an Audience of several Thousands of People of all Ages and Characters and of both Sexes.

I have Reason to remember that fatal Night. The Part I took in Defence of Captn. Preston and the Soldiers, procured me Anxiety, and Obloquy enough. It was, however, one of the most gallant, generous, manly and disinterested Actions of my whole Life, and one of the best Pieces of Service I ever rendered my Country. Judgment of Death ~~would have been~~ against those Soldiers would have been as foul a Stain upon this Country as the Executions of the Quakers or Witches, anciently. As the Evidence was, the Verdict of the jury was exactly right.

This however is no Reason why the Town should not call the Action of that Night a Massacre, nor ~~against~~, is it any Argument in favour of the Governor or Minister, who caused them to be sent here. But it is the strongest of Proofs of the Danger of standing Armies.

GLOSSARY:

Commemorate / Commemoration - to show respect for someone or something. A commemoration is a ceremony, remembrance, or other memorialization of people or events from the past.

Gallant - brave or heroic

Obloquy - public criticism, disgrace, contempt

Oration - a formal speech. Throughout American history, orations and public speeches have been a common and effective way of communicating with large groups of people.

Rendered - delivered, provided as a service

Verdict - the decision reached by the jury at the end of a trial

NOTES:

- Spelling and grammar is transcribed exactly as they appeared in the original handwritten document, as are words / phrases that were crossed out for editing purposes when written by Adams.
- A scanned image of this entry can be found [here](#) on the MHS site and the full contents of Diary #19 can be found [here](#).

History SOURCE

CRITICAL THINKING QUESTIONS:

- 1) How would you summarize the way in which John Adams describes his defense of the British soldiers in the Rex v. Wemms et al. trial?

- 2) Do you agree or disagree with the way John Adams characterizes his defense of the British soldiers in this diary entry based on what you read in Sources 2, 3, and 4?

- 3) What text evidence from Sources 2, 3, and/or 4 defends your answer to question 1.

- 4) Why do we need to think critically about diary entries as primary sources and intentionally look for related sources to corroborate, contradict, or provide more information about the topic?

- 5) If you could ask John Adams a question about his defense of the British soldiers and the way in which he wrote about Crispus Attucks, what would it be?

CHALLENGE QUESTION: What additional types of sources produced between the Rex v. Wemms et al. trial and the third anniversary of the Boston Massacre when John Adams wrote this diary entry could provide even more insight into the ways people viewed the way in which John Adams used Crispus Attucks in his defense of the soldiers?

Applicable Standards:

MA History and Social Sciences Frameworks Practice / Skills-Based Standards

3. Organize information and data from multiple primary and secondary sources.
5. Evaluate the credibility, accuracy, and relevance of each source.
6. Argue or explain conclusions, using valid reasoning and evidence.

C3 Framework for Social Studies State Standards

- D1.5.9-12. Determine the kinds of sources that will be helpful in answering compelling and supporting questions, taking into consideration multiple points of view represented in the sources, the types of sources available, and the potential uses of the sources.
- D2.His.3.9-12. Use questions generated about individuals and groups to assess how the significance of their actions changes over time and is shaped by the historical context.
- D2.His.5.9-12. Analyze how historical contexts shaped and continue to shape people's perspectives.
- D2.His.12.9-12. Use questions generated about multiple historical sources to pursue further inquiry and investigate additional sources.