

Crispus Attucks: Critical Thinking & Discussion Questions K-8

Themes: Historical Records, Protest, and Memorials/Honor

Grades K-2

Why is it hard to know facts about someone who lived in the 1700s?

What are some ways that historians use to collect information about someone from this time period?

Are there any family stories of ancestors lives that you've been told? Do you think the stories are 100% accurate? How could you find out?

Why didn't the Boston residents and the British soldiers get along?

Why do people protest? What are ways to protest so that no one gets hurt? Have you ever seen a protest?

Both the "Red Coats" and patriots sometimes harassed each other. Why do some people harass or bully other people? What can we do when we are bullied or harassed?

Is there a building or street in your community that is named after someone? Maybe it is your school. Who are they and what did they do?

We honor people in many ways. The Lincoln Memorial was built to honor Abraham Lincoln. Which do you like best – honoring someone through a ceremony, framing them in a picture, or telling stories about them?

Why did some people not want to memorialize Crispus Attucks? How did he become a symbol for Black America? Can you name other Black Americans that have been memorialized or become symbols for good? (see Woodson Lessons: 54th Massachusetts Infantry or 1936 Olympics)

Grades 3-5

When people tell different versions of an event, how can students of a future era know the truth?

What is a primary source? What is a secondary source? Do we have any primary sources on Attucks' life? How about secondary sources?

Are there any family stories of ancestors lives that you've been told? Do you think the stories are 100% accurate? How could you find out?

What are some of the reasons why tensions were so high leading up to the Boston Massacre?

How was the behavior of the "Red Coats" or the mob of patriots (slide 9) like the actions of people who we call "bullies"? Why do some people harass or bully other people? What can we do when we are bullied or harassed?

Was the Boston Massacre avoidable? Why or why not?

John Adams, a lawyer who went on to become President of the United States, defended the British soldiers who were charged with murder after the Boston Massacre. Why do you think he did that?

Describe a situation where you and someone you know had an argument and told an adult two different stories about what happened.

There are conflicting stories of Attucks actions during the events of the Boston Massacre. How close do you think we can come to the truth of the situation? Which account do you believe, and why?

Describe how these events in Boston led to the idea of patriotism?

Why did some people not want to memorialize Crispus Attucks? How are people used as symbols, such as Crispus Attucks who became a symbol of Black equality and civil rights?

Can you name other Black Americans that have been memorialized or become symbols for good? (see Woodson Lessons: 54th Massachusetts Infantry or 1936 Olympics) What streets or buildings in your community are named after people? What did they do?

Grades 6-8

The lesson states that “British officials scrambled to control how the story of the bloody incident would be told,” while The Sons of Liberty “used the incident to further incite people against British rule by falsely telling the story that the British soldiers deliberately attacked peaceful, unarmed people, massacring them.” Have you ever seen an incident where different people described the same incident in different ways? Why might people do this?

How can you discern the truth in a situation when you 1) hear different versions, or 2) see different camera angles or 3) listen to misinformation campaigns such as the false story that the Sons of Liberty used to incite the colonists?

Are there any family stories of ancestors lives that you’ve been told? Do you think the stories are 100% accurate? How could you find out?

Review the art depictions of the massacre. Are artists accountable to accurate depictions of events and the people involved in these events, or is “creative license” a legitimate rationale for differences?

Can public displays of anger be appropriate? When do they cross a line into crime or personal endangerment?

Both the “Red Coats” and patriots sometimes harassed each other. Why do some people harass or bully other people? What can we do when we are bullied or harassed?

Why do unjust laws lead to criminal behavior by normally upstanding citizens? Smuggling was illegal, as was hiding a runaway slave. How should we judge actions of people that are done to oppose a manmade law or rule? What actions are justifiable crimes?

What was the outcome of the “blood of Boston’s martyrs” for the nation?

Why would some people be dissatisfied with the verdicts of the court—the acquittal of six soldiers and the branding and removal of the soldiers who fired without orders?

Describe how these events led to the idea of patriotism?

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