

Civics in the Triangle: 4th Grade Lesson 1

Historical Reasoning: The Difference Between Primary and Secondary Sources

Name: _____

Directions: Rewrite the definitions below in your own words.

Primary—not made or coming from something else; original

Firsthand—coming directly from the original source

Source—a person, publication, or object that gives information

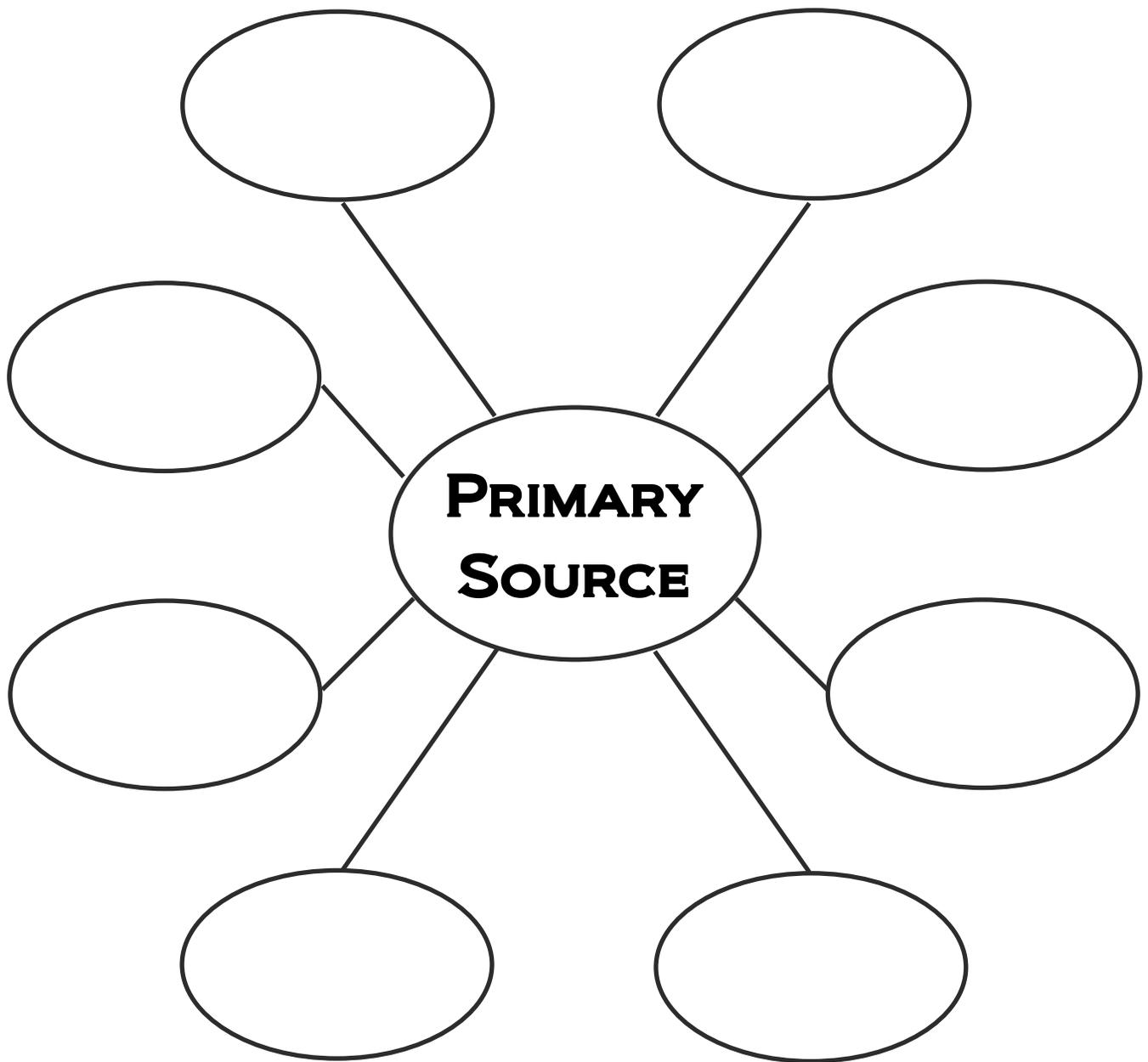
Secondary—coming from or created using an original source

Secondhand—not original; taken from someone or something else



Definitions compiled from *Webster's for Kids* online dictionary

Directions: Using your definitions, brainstorm examples of Primary Sources in the web diagram below. Draw more circles if you need to.



On March 5, 1770, there was a violent confrontation between British soldiers and colonists in Boston. British soldiers killed the five colonists in an event that came to be known as the Boston Massacre. The events leading up to the Boston Massacre were chaotic, and there are many conflicting accounts of what took place. Here is one secondary source.



Analysis Questions:

1. Who looks like bad guys in this engraving by Paul Revere? Who looks innocent?
2. Where is Captain Preston, the British commander? What is he doing?
3. Describe the crowd—its size, composition, and location.
4. What is the crowd doing?
5. What time of day is it?

Activity 1 – You are viewing an image of the engraving of the Boston Massacre, by Paul Revere. Here are a few notes on what really happened at the Boston Massacre:

- October 1, 1768: British regulars arrived in Boston, MA to maintain order and enforce the taxes the colonists were asked to pay after the French and Indian War, such as the Townshend Acts.
- The elite/wealthy people of Boston resented the British soldiers and considered them a foreign presence.
- The common people of Boston resented their presence because they competed for jobs with the “Lobster backs.” They taunted them and prevented them from carrying out their duties.
- March 5, 1770: The Twenty-Ninth Regiment came to the relief of the soldiers on duty at the Customs House in Boston. They were met by an unruly gang of civilians, many of them drunk after having left a local tavern.
- It was dark, and the crowd threw snowballs, ice balls, horse manure, and anything else lying on the street at the soldiers. The crowd also taunted the soldiers by yelling and calling them names.
- Captain Preston could not control the crowd as they taunted the soldiers. He ordered his troops "Don't fire!" but with the commotion the troops fired and killed three men instantly; another two died later. The first man to die was **Crispus Attucks**, a black man.
- This was not a massacre in the sense that a lot of people died -- only five died.
- The funerals of the dead were great patriotic demonstrations.
- Preston and six of his men were acquitted (Robert Treat Paine as Prosecutor, and John Adams and Josiah Quincy as defense lawyers), but two of his men were found guilty of manslaughter, punished, and discharged from the army.
- The event and the propaganda surrounding it helped lead to the Revolutionary War.

You will now be asked to look at the engraving of the Boston Massacre and, keeping in mind what you just learned, come up with ways in which the picture is misleading and how that may have contributed to the feelings of the colonists: This is an example of 'propaganda'. Propaganda is a type of message aimed to influence opinions and/or the behavior of people. Propaganda may provide partial information or may be purposefully misleading.

Misleading imagery:

Boston Massacre - March 5, 1770

The presence of British troops in Boston had long been a sore point among Boston's radical politicians. Paul Revere wasted no time in capitalizing on the Massacre to highlight British tyranny and stir up anti-British sentiment among his fellow colonists. As you will realize, Revere's historic engraving is long on political propaganda and short on accuracy or aesthetics.

Notice how the British soldiers are shown standing in a straight line shooting their rifles in a regular formation, whereas when the disturbance actually erupted both sides were chaotic, belligerent and riotous. Notice also that Revere's engraving shows a blue sky. Only a wisp of a moon suggests that the riot occurred after nine o'clock on a cold winter night.

Notice too the absence of snow and ice on the street. If the mob threw snow and ice at the British troops, did they transport from another location? Also of note, [Crispus Attucks](#) — a black man (also part native) lying on the ground closest to the British soldiers — is shown to be white. As an aside, it should be noted that as a result of his death in the Boston Massacre, Crispus Attucks would emerge as the most famous of all the black men to fight in the cause of the Revolution, and become its first martyr.

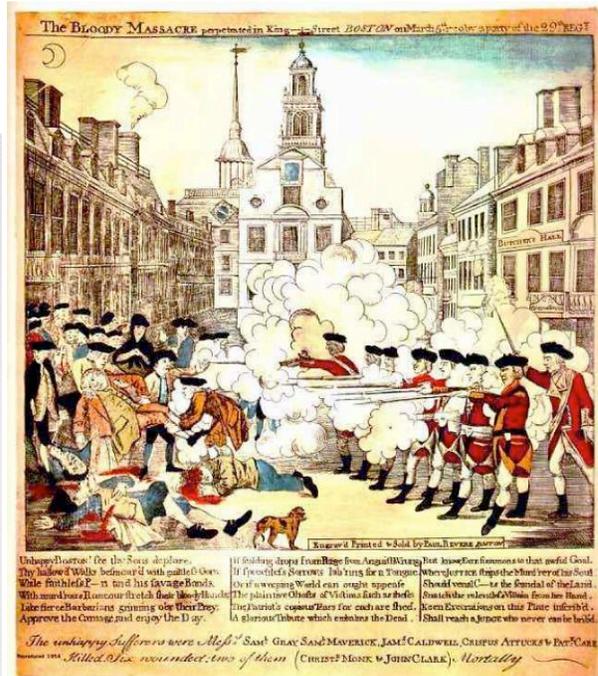
Documentation has come to light over the years indicating that Revere copied engraver **Henry Pelham's** drawings of the Massacre, produced his own engraving, and three weeks after the occurrence was advertising his prints for sale in Boston's newspapers. By the time Pelham's prints hit the street, Revere's print had flooded the market.

Other misleading imagery:

- The event in the engraving seems to be on the wrong street.
- The soldiers were lined up as if they had planned to shoot.
- Their Captain seems to be leading them on, when in fact he tried to stop them.

We never want to accept a single secondary source as evidence of exactly what happened in the past. So, let's look at a second depiction of the event.

The Boston Massacre, engraving based on a painting by **Alonzo Chappel**, 1868, National Archives, ARC 513326



1. List the main differences between the first picture (Alonzo Chappel's) and the second one (Paul Revere's).

2. Why did several people who witnessed the same event recall it differently? What does this phenomenon tell you about the study of history?

3. Do you think Alonzo Chappel's picture is more accurate? Why?

4. What other information would you want to know about the images to better understand the Boston Massacre?

It is very important to know who made these images, when they were made, and why they were made. Because they are secondary sources, these images show the author's perspective in it. This can lead to making propaganda that tries to influence people.