MISSION 1: "For Crown or Colony?" Part 2: A Death in Boston (February 22, 1770) Document-Based Activity:

Translating a Newspaper Account of Christopher Seider's Murder

A NOTE TO THE EDUCATOR:

Goals of the activity:

- To practice paraphrasing or translating period language into contemporary language
- To develop a recognition of propaganda in a journalistic piece by identifying emotive language and bias in the relating of a story

There are two main parts to this activity: 1) reading/paraphrasing the documents, and 2) reflecting and analyzing them.

For the first part, if, after you read this piece yourself, you decide if it is too complicated for your class, you can accommodate your students in a variety of ways:

- Project the pieces on a screen or whiteboard. Ask students to follow along as you read aloud. Pause every few lines to ask what your students think the passage means. Direct them to the notes in the margin. Recapitulate as you go along.
- Divide the piece into chunks. Distribute them to different groups. Read the entire piece aloud without stopping to paraphrase. Then ask each group to paraphrase their part. When that work is done, have one person from each group read the original and another their paraphrase.
- Select the part or parts of the document you feel are most important and that satisfy the goals of the activity. Base your choice on the skills level of your students. Read that aloud, or ask the students to read by themselves. Discuss the meaning.



Document 1:

A Newspaper Account of the Death of Christopher Seider

- a murder made even more horrible by the surrounding circumstances
- The article had it wrong: the boy's name was Christopher Seider.
- enjoying themselves
- watching a demonstration
- at this time, we would be exercising our best manners by referring to him as an Importer
- Richardson was a professional snitch; he tattled on colonists whom he felt were breaking English tax or trade laws; he also had a very bad reputation morally.
- A rod is a measure of length that is no longer used. 1 rod = 5 1/3 yards.
- Hateful, critical
- Lying under oath (This remark of Richardson's doesn't make any sense.)
- he had justification, a reason
- broken pieces of any kind of hard material
- a large kind of shot (balls) used in shooting fowl

On Thursday last in the Forenoon, a barbarous Murder extended with many aggravating Circumstances, was committed on the Body of a young lad of about eleven Years of Age, Son to Mr. Snider of this Town. A Number of Boys had been <u>diverting themselves</u> with the <u>Exhibition of a Piece of</u> Pageantry near the House of *Theopolis Lillie* who perhaps at this <u>Iuncture of Affairs may with the most Propriety be described</u> by the Name of an IMPORTER—This exhibition naturally occasioned Numbers to assemble, and in a very little Time there was a great Concourse of Persons, especially the younger sort.--One Ebenezer Richardson, who has been many years employed as an under Officer of the Customs, long known by the Name of an INFORMER, and consequently a Person of a most abandoned <u>Character</u>, it seems, took Umbrage at the supposed Indignity offered to the Importer, and soon became a Party to the Affair--He first attempted to demolish the Pageantry, and failing in the attempt, he retired to his House, which was but a few Rods from the Exhibition. Several Persons passing by the House, Richardson, who seemed determined to take this Occasion to make a Disturbance, without the least Provocation, gave them the most opprobrious Language, charging them with Perjury, &c., which raised a Dispute between them—This, it is supposed, occasioned the boys to gather nearer Richardson's House, and he, thinking he had now a good Colouring to perpetuate the Villainy, threatened to fire upon them, and Swore by GOD that he would make the Place too hot for some of them before Night, and that he would make a Lane through them if they did not go away. Soon after, a Number of Brickbats or Stones were thrown among the People from Richardson's House, but the Witnesses, who were sworn before the Magistrates, declared that it did not appear to them that till then any Sort of Attack was made by the People on the House. This, however, brought on a Skirmish, and Richardson discharged his Piece, loaded with Swan Shot, at the Multitude, by which the unhappy young Person abovementioned was mortally wounded, having since died of his Wounds—A Youth, Son to Captain John Gore, was also wounded in one of his Hands and in both his Thighs, by which his life was endangered, but he is likely to soon recover of his Wounds—During this tragical scene, one George Wilmot, who was a Seaman or an officer on Board the Liberty Sloop lately in the service of the Commisioners was present in the House and an Abettor to Richardson, and appears by the Evidence to have



- muskets (long guns) and swords
- goal- a misspelling of *gaol*, the English spelling of *jail*

- terrible
- will be a historic figure, a predictor of things to come
- John Wilkes, a popular British radical was imprisoned in 1768. A demonstration on his behalf was staged at the King's Bench prison.
 Seven people, including an innocent bystander named Allen, were killed by soldiers. The people responsible were taken into custody, but were treated leniently.

· miserably sad

been very active in the Affair—As soon as they could be taken, for they made all possible Resistance, being armed with Musquets and Cutlasses, they were carried to Faneuil Hall; and upon Examination by four of His Majesty's Justices of the Peace, a Cloud of Witnesses appearing against them, they were committed to the County Goal under close Confinement, for a legal Trial before the Superior Court of the Province to be held here next month.

This Innocent Lad is the first whose Life has been a victim to the Cruelty and Rage of Oppresors! Young as he was, he died in his Country's cause by the Hand of an execrable Villain, directed by others who could not bear to see the Enemies of America made the Ridicule of Boys. The untimely Death of this amiable Youth will be a standing Monument to Futurity, that the Time has been that Innocence itself was not safe. The blood of young Allen may be covered in Britain. But a thorough Inquisition will be made in America for that of young Snider; which crieth for Vengeance like the Blood of righteous Abel. And surely, if Justice has not been driven from its Seat, Speedy Vengeance awaits his Murderers and their Accomplices, however secure they may think themselves at present. For whoso sheddeth or procureth the shedding of Man's Blood, BY MAN SHALL HIS BLOOD BE SHED.

We are assured that not less than eleven Shot were found in the Body of the unfortunate Boy, who was inhumanly murdered by the infamous Informer on Thursday last.

It is hoped the unexpected and <u>melancholy</u> Death of young Snider will be a Means for the future of preventing any, but more especially the Soldiery, from being too free in the Use of their Instruments of Death.



Name:	Date:
	A Newspaper Account of the Death of Christopher Seider: Discussion Questions
1.	In general, how does the writer create the impression that the boys were completely innocent? What words does he use? How does he tell those parts of the story?
2.	In general, how does the writer create the impression that Richardson is a villain?
3.	Consider this sentence:
	"On Thursday last in the Forenoon, a barbarous Murder extended with many aggravating Circumstances, was committed on the Body of a young lad of about eleven Years of Age, Son to Mr Snider of this Town. "
	Try to remove the emotional language and change some of the words around so the sentence tells plain facts with no coloring. Write your sentence.



4.	This writer calls the demonstration at Lillie's place of business a "Pageant," an "Exhibition." In what ways are those words usually used? In your opinion, was the demonstration either of those? Explain.
5.	Write five things the writer tells you that you believe are facts. Try to include all the important information you are given about the incident.
6.	How can you tell that the writer of this article is probably not a Loyalist?



Document 2: A Reaction to Christopher Seider's Death by a Loyalist

Directions:

Thomas Hutchinson was the Loyalist governor of the Massachusetts Bay, the colony that included the city of Boston, when Christopher Seider was killed by the customs informer Ebenezer Richardson. The following is an excerpt from his diary.

"...when the boy was killed by Richardson, the sons of liberty in Boston, if it had been in their power to have brought him to life again, would not have done it, but would have chosen the grand funeral...."



Name:	Date:
-	r Seider's Death by a Loyalist: on Questions
1. What does Governor Hutchinson mean her	e? Paraphrase this quotation.
· ·	ng in the Long Room, what reasons do you have to Would the Sons of Liberty have brought him back overnor making here?
	r's death to their advantage? Do you feel that it's to advance a cause that you believe is right? Is it Of that person's family? Explain.



4. Can you think of a time you know about when a person's death has been used cause? Tell about it.	to advance a

