

Guiding Question: How did Patriots and Loyalists understand and respond to the conflict between colonists in Boston and the British colonial government?

Document Analysis

Text Analysis: A Newspaper Account of the Death of Christopher Seider

Below are excerpts from a newspaper story published in Boston on February 26, 1770, about Christopher Seider's death. Because the style of English written and spoken in colonial Boston is different from our English today, the article can be challenging to read. Take your time and use the notes provided to translate each excerpt into your own words. Then answer the questions that follow the article.

	<u>Newspaper Text</u>	<u>Notes</u>	<u>Translation</u>
1	On Thursday last in the Forenoon, <u>a barbarous Murder extended with many aggravating Circumstances</u> , was committed on the Body of a young lad of about eleven Years of Age, Son to Mr. ___ <u>Snider</u> of this Town.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a murder made even more horrible by the surrounding circumstances The article had it wrong: the boy's name was Christopher Seider. 	
2	A Number of Boys had been <u>diverting themselves</u> with the <u>Exhibition of a Piece of Pageantry</u> near the House of <i>Theopolis Lillie</i> who perhaps <u>at this Juncture 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.--	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> enjoying themselves Participating in a Patriot demonstration at this time, we would be using our best manners if we called him an Importer 	
3	One Ebenezer Richardson, who has been many years employed as an under Officer of the Customs, long known by <u>the Name</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Richardson was a professional 	

Time: At least 40 minutes

Instructions

Goal/Intent: Students work in groups to continue practicing interpreting passages from a document written in period grammar and using vocabulary that is unfamiliar.

Building on their game knowledge and their interpretation of the document, students then discuss a series of questions exploring the perspective and biases of the document's author.

A. Document Analysis (15 min)

This document is an excerpt from *The Boston Gazette* about the death of Christopher Seider. The newspaper is not named on the student activity because they are asked to determine whether the article represents the perspective of a Patriot or a Loyalist based on their analysis of the text. If the paper is named, students may recognize from the game that the *Gazette* as the newspaper published by Loyalist Benjamin Edes.

Divide students into pairs or trios and assign one of the six parts of the article to each group. Their task is to use the text, the notes provided, and their knowledge from the game to translate their part of the article into their own words. Remind students that they should continue to use the strategies for interpreting the text that they practiced in the document activity for the Prologue / Part 1.

B. Sharing (10 min)

When all the groups are ready, have them share out their summaries in turn and see if the class can reach consensus about the most important details in the newspaper's account.

C. Discussion (15 min)

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<p>of an <u>INFORMER</u>, and <u>consequently a Person of a most abandoned 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 <u>Rods</u> from the Exhibition.</p>	<p>snitch; he tattled on colonists whom he felt were breaking English tax or trade laws; he also had a very bad reputation morally.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A rod is a measure of length that is no longer used. 1 rod = 5 1/3 yards. 		<p>As a whole class or in small groups, discuss the Document Analysis Questions. Prompt students to consider how people with different perspectives and biases may tell the story of the same event differently, and why historians must examine multiple perspectives to fully understand events in the past.</p> <p>D. Extension (10 min) Consider sharing with students the following statement from the diary of Thomas Hutchinson, Loyalist governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1770:</p> <p><i>“...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....”</i></p> <p>You can follow up with the these questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Based on what you may have overheard in the meeting in the Long Room, do you have any evidence that the governor was exaggerating? • Even if he was exaggerating, are the Patriots using Christopher’s death to their advantage? How do you feel about that? • Can you think of any other examples of when an event—like a person’s death—was used to advance a cause?
<p>4 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 <u>opprobrious</u> Language, charging them with <u>Perjury</u>, &c., which raised a Dispute between them—This, it is supposed, occasioned the boys to gather nearer Richardson’s House, and he, thinking <u>he had now a good Colouring</u> 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.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hateful, critical • Lying under oath (This remark of Richardson’s doesn’t make any sense.) • he had justification, a reason 		
<p>5 Soon after, a Number of <u>Brickbats</u> 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</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • broken pieces of any kind of hard material 		

<p>made by the People on the House. This, however, brought on a Skirmish, and Richardson discharged his Piece, loaded with <u>Swan Shot</u>, at the Multitude, by which the unhappy young Person above-mentioned 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.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a large kind of shot (balls) used in shooting fowl 	
<p>6 ...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.</p> <p>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.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • miserably sad 	

Document Analysis Questions

1. Do you think the writer of this article is a Patriot or a Loyalist? How can you tell?

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2. List five things the writer tells you that you believe are facts. Try to include all the important information you are given about the incident.

3. If you were a historian investigating this event, what other kinds of documents would you look for to make sure you understood the whole story of what happened?

4. How can you detect the perspective of the creators of news media today? How does the perspective of the creator of a news article or video impact the extent to which you believe it?