

Battles of Lexington and Concord
What Really Happened?
By: Virginia Viteri

Grade –5

Length of class period – 2 periods (45 Minutes)

Inquiry – What really happened on April 19th 1775? Who fired first?
Students will examine and analyze multiple accounts of the Battles of Lexington and Concord in order to gain a better understanding of the multiple perspectives that surround this historic event.

Objectives- Students will work in groups and use a graphic organizer to compare and contrast patriot and loyalist perspectives on the Battles of Lexington and Concord.

Each group will examine and critically evaluate one account of the Battles of Lexington and Concord and present that viewpoint to the class. Students will then form judgments about the quality of the information that has been presented in each text.

Materials-

- Loyalist accounts of the Battles of Lexington and Concord (attached)
- Patriot accounts of the Battles of Lexington and Concord (attached)
- Let Me Tell You How It Happened Graphic Organizer
- Chart Paper
- White Lined Paper

Activities-

Day 1:

- Background knowledge: Students will be familiar with the events surrounding the Battles of Lexington and Concord (textbook account for example).
- Have a brief discussion about how and why people's perspectives

on an event might be different? What factors influence perspective? Examples: Proximity to the event, impact of the event, emotional state at the time of the event. (You may want to refer back to the Boston Massacre and Paul Revere's engraving or perhaps simulate an event in the classroom and have different members of the class share their accounts).

- Explain that today they will be examining multiple accounts of the Battles of Lexington and Concord.
- Place the students in groups and give each group one account of the event. Note: you may want to take excerpts from the longer accounts in order to differentiate.
- Give each group a copy of the Let Me Tell You How It Happened graphic organizer. Review the graphic organizer and address questions.
- Have students examine their account and work through the graphic organizer. Explain that they will be presenting their account to the class on day #2.

Day 2:

- Each group will present their findings to the class. The teacher will highlight important points on large chart paper. The class can raise questions about the quality of the account during the discussion
- After sharing, each group (or student) will construct a 2-3 paragraph essay on what they believe happened at the Battles of Lexington and Concord.

Assessment:

- Graphic Organizer (30 points)
- Oral Presentation (30 points)
- Judgment Essay (40 points)

Connecticut Framework Performance Standards-

- 1:3:8- Compare the perspectives of England and the Colonies relative to the events preceding the American Revolution.
- 2:2:4- Compare and contrast information provided by primary and secondary sources.
- 2:3:7- Organize information in outlines and graphic organizers.
- 3:1:1- Identify and explain different points of view about an historical event.
- 3:1:2- Make and support judgments about the quality of information in text.

Loyalist Accounts of the Battles of Lexington and Concord

This account of events was written by Ann Hulton, the sister of one of the customs' commissioners, to her friend Mrs. Lightbody in Bristol.

On the 18th instant at 11 at night, about 800 grenadiers and light infantry were ferried across the bay to Cambridge; from whence they marched to Concord, about 20 miles. The congress had been lately assembled at that place, and it was imagined that the general had intelligence of a magazine being formed there and that they were going to destroy it.

The people in the country (who are all furnished with arms and have what they call minute companies in every town ready to march on any alarm) had a signal, it's supposed, by a light from one of the steeples in town, upon the troops embarking. The alarm spread through the country so that before daybreak the people in general were in arms and on their march to Concord. About daybreak a number of the people appeared before the troops near Lexington. They were called to, to disperse, when they fired on the troops and ran off. Upon which the light infantry pursued them and brought down about fifteen of them. The troops went on to Concord and executed the business they were sent on, and on their return found two or three of their people lying in the agonies of death, scalped and their noses and ears cut off and eyes bored out, which exasperated the soldiers exceedingly, a prodigious number of people now occupying the hills, woods, and stone walls along the road. The light troops drove some parties from the hills but all the road being enclosed with stone walls served as a cover to the rebels, from whence they fired on the troops still running off whenever they had fired, but still supplied by fresh numbers who came from many parts of the country. In this manner were the troops harassed in their return for seven [or] eight miles. They were almost exhausted and had expended near the whole of their ammunition when to their great joy they were relieved by a brigade of troops under the command of Lord Percy with two pieces of artillery. The troops now combated with fresh ardour and marched in their return with undaunted countenances, receiving sheets of fire all the way for many miles, yet having no visible enemy to combat with, for they never would face em in an open field, but always skulked and fired from behind walls and trees, and out of windows of houses, but this cost them dear for the soldiers entered those dwellings and put all the men to death. Lord Percy has gained great honour by his conduct through this day of severe service; he was exposed to the hottest of the fire and animated the troops with great coolness and spirit. Several officers are wounded and about 100 soldiers. The killed amount to near so; as to the enemy we can have no exact account but it is said there was about ten times the number of them engaged and that near 2,000 of 'em have fallen.

The troops returned to Charlestown about sunset after having some of 'em marched near fifty miles, and being engaged from daybreak in action, without respite or refreshment, and about ten in the evening they were brought back to Boston. The next day the country poured down its thousands, and at this time from the entrance of Boston Neck at Roxbury

round by Cambridge to Charlestown is surrounded by at least 20,000 men, who are raising batteries on three or four different hills. We are now cut off from all communication with the country and many people must soon perish with famine in this place. Some families have laid in store of provisions against a siege. We are threatened, that whilst the outlines are attacked, with a rising of the inhabitants within, and fire and sword, a dreadful prospect before us, and you know how many and how dear are the objects of our care. The Lord preserve us all and grant us an happy issue out of these troubles.

For several nights past I have expected to be roused by the firing of cannon. Tomorrow is Sunday and we may hope for one day of rest. At present a solemn dead silence reigns in the streets, numbers have packed up their effects and quitted the town, but the general has put a stop to any more removing and here remains in town about 9,000 souls (besides the servants of the Crown). These are the greatest security; the general declared that if a gun is fired within the town, the inhabitants shall fall a sacrifice. Amidst our distress and apprehension I am rejoiced our British hero was preserved. My Lord Percy had a great many and miraculous escapes in the late action. This amiable young nobleman with the graces which attracts admiration, possesses the virtues of the heart and all those qualities that form the great soldier - vigilant, active, temperate, humane, great command of temper, fortitude in enduring hardships and fatigue, and intrepidity in dangers. His lordship's behaviour in the day of trial has done honour to the Percys. Indeed, all the officers and soldiers behaved with the greatest bravery, it is said.

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Major John Pitcairn's Report to General Gage

Boston Camp,
26th April, 1775
To: General Thomas Gage

Sir,

As you are anxious to know the particulars that happened near and at Lexington in the 19th Inst agreeable to your desire, I will in as concise a manner as possible state the facts, for my time at present is so much employed, as to prevent a more particular narrative of the occurrences of that day.

Six companies of Light Infantry were detached by Lt Colo Smith to take possession of two bridges on the other side of Concord, near three in the Morning, when we were advanced within about two miles of Lexington, intelligence was received that about 500 men in arms were assembled, determined to oppose the Kings troops, and retard them in their march. On this intelligence, I mounted my horse, and galloped up to the six Light Companies. When I arrived at the head of the advance Company, two officers came and informed me, that a man of the rebels advanced from those that were assembled, had presented his musket and attempted to shoot them, but the piece flashed in the pan. On this I gave directions to the troops to move forward, but on no account to fire, or even attempt it without orders; when I arrived at the end of the Village, I observed drawn up upon a Green near 200 rebels; when I came within about 100 yards of them, they began to file off towards some stone walls on our right flank. The Light Infantry, observing this, ran after them. I instantly called to the soldiers not to fire, but surround and disarm them, and after several repetitions of those positive orders to the men, not to fire, etc. some of the rebels who had jumped over the wall fired four or five shots at the soldiers, which wounded a man of the Tenth and my horse was wounded in two places, from some quarter or other, and at the same time several shots were fired from a meeting house on our left. Upon this, without any order or regularity, the Light Infantry began a scattered fire, and continued in that situation for some little time, contrary to the repeated orders both of me and the officers that were present. It will be needless to mention what happened after, as I suppose Colo Smith hath given a particular account of it..

I am, Sir, Your Most Obedt
Humble Servant
John Pitcairn

Source: www.digitalhistory.uh.edu

Lord Percy, who commanded the relief column, reported to General Gage April 20th.

In obedience to your Excellency's orders I marched yesterday morning at 9 o'clock with the 1st brigade and 2 field pieces, in order to cover the retreat of the grenadiers and light infantry in their return from their expedition to Concord. As all the houses were shut up, and there was not the appearance of a single inhabitant, I could get no intelligence concerning them till I had passed Menotomy, when I was informed that the rebels had attacked his Majesty's troops who were retiring, overpowered by numbers, greatly exhausted and fatigued, and having expended almost all their ammunition - and at about 2 o'clock I met them retiring rough the town of Lexington - I immediately ordered the 2 field pieces to fire at the rebels, and drew up the brigade on a height.

The shot from the cannon had the desired effect, and stopped the rebels for a little time, who immediately dispersed, and endeavoured to surround us being very numerous. As it began now to grow pretty late and we had 15 miles to retire, and only 36 rounds, I ordered the grenadiers and light infantry to move of first; and covered them with my brigade sending out very strong flanking parties which were absolutely very necessary, as there was not a stone wall, or house, though before in appearance evacuated, from whence the rebels did not fire upon us. As soon as they saw us begin to retire, they pressed very much upon our rear guard, which for that reason, I relieved every now and then.

In this manner we retired for 15 miles under incessant fire all round us, till we arrived at Charlestown, between 7 and 8 in the evening and having expended almost all our ammunition. We had the misfortune of losing a good many men in the retreat, though nothing like the number which from many circumstances I have reason to believe were killed of the rebels. His Majesty's troops during he whole of the affair behaved with their usual intrepidity and spirit nor were they a little exsperated at the cruelty and barbarity of the rebels, who scalped and cut off the ears of some of the wounded men who fell into their hands.

Source: www.digitalhistory.uh.edu

Patriot Accounts of the Battles of Lexington and Concord

Twenty-three-year-old Sylvanus Wood was one of the Lexington militia who answered the call that spring morning. Several years after the event he committed his recollection to paper in an affidavit sworn before a Justice of the Peace which was first published in 1858:

"I, Sylvanus Wood, of Woburn, in the county of Middlesex, and commonwealth of Massachusetts, aged seventy-four years, do testify and say that on the morning of the 19th of April, 1775, I was an inhabitant of Woburn, living with Deacon Obadiah Kendall; that about an hour before the break of day on said morning, I heard the Lexington bell ring, and fearing there was difficulty there, I immediately arose, took my gun and, with Robert Douglass, went in haste to Lexington, which was about three miles distant.

When I arrived there, I inquired of Captain Parker, the commander of the Lexington company, what was the news. Parker told me he did not know what to believe, for a man had come up about half an hour before and informed him that the British troops were not on the road. But while we were talking, a messenger came up and told the captain that the British troops were within half a mile. Parker immediately turned to his drummer, William Diman, and ordered him to beat to arms, which was done. Captain Parker then asked me if I would parade with his company. I told him I would. Parker then asked me if the young man with me would parade. I spoke to Douglass, and he said he would follow the captain and me.

By this time many of the company had gathered around the captain at the hearing of the drum, where we stood, which was about half way between the meetinghouse and Buckman's tavern. Parker says to his men, 'Every man of you, who is equipped, follow me; and those of you who are not equipped, go into the meeting-house and furnish yourselves from the magazine, and immediately join the company.' Parker led those of us who were equipped to the north end of Lexington Common, near the Bedford Road, and formed us in single file. I was stationed about in the centre of the company. While we were standing, I left my place and went from one end of the company to the other and counted every man who was paraded, and the whole number was thirty-eight, and no more.

Just as I had finished and got back to my place, I perceived the British troops had arrived on the spot between the meeting-house and Buckman's, near where Captain Parker stood when he first led off his men. The British troops immediately wheeled so as to cut off those who had gone into the meeting-house. The British troops approached us rapidly in platoons, with a general officer on horseback at their head. The officer came up to within about two rods of the centre of the company, where I

stood, the first platoon being about three rods distant. They there halted. The officer then swung his sword, and said, "Lay down your arms, you damned rebels, or you are all dead men. Fire!" Some guns were fired by the British at us from the first platoon, but no person was killed or hurt, being probably charged only with powder.

Just at this time, Captain Parker ordered every man to take care of himself. The company immediately dispersed; and while the company was dispersing and leaping over the wall, the second platoon of the British fired and killed some of our men. There was not a gun fired by any of Captain Parker's company, within my knowledge. I was so situated that I must have known it, had any thing of the kind taken place before a total dispersion of our company. I have been intimately acquainted with the inhabitants of Lexington, and particularly with those of Captain Parker's company, and, with one exception, I have never heard any of them say or pretend that there was any firing at the British from Parker's company, or any individual in it until within a year or two. One member of the company told me, many years since, that, after Parker's company had dispersed, and he was at some distance, he gave them 'the guts of his gun.'"

Source: "Battle at Lexington Green, 1775," EyeWitness to History, www.eyewitnesstohistory.com (2001).

This Joseph Warren letter to the Inhabitants of Great Britain was written immediately after the events of April 19, 1775, the beginning of the American Revolution. The letter is written by Dr. Joseph Warren, one of Boston's patriot leaders, on behalf of the Massachusetts Provincial Congress. Dr. Warren was killed a few months later at the Battle of Bunker Hill.

Massachusetts Provincial Congress

To the Inhabitants of Great Britain.

Friends and Fellow-Subjects:

Hostilities are at length commenced in this colony by the troops under the command of General Gage, and it being of the greatest importance that an early, true and authentic account of this inhuman proceeding should be known to you, the Congress of this colony have transmitted the same and from want of a session of the honourable Continental Congress, think it proper to address you on this alarming occasion.

By the clearest depositions relative to this transaction, it will appear that on the night preceding the 19 of April instant, a body of the king's troops, under the command of Colonel Smith, were secretly landed at Cambridge with an apparent design to take or destroy the military and other stores provided for the defence of this colony, and deposited at Concord that some inhabitants of the colony on the aforesaid, whilst travelling peaceably on the road between Boston were seized and greatly abused by armed men who appeared to be Gage's army; that the town of Lexington by these means was alarmed, and a company of the inhabitants mustered on the occasion; that the regular troops on their way to Concord marched into the said town of Lexington and the said company, on their approach, began to disperse that notwithstanding this, the regulars rushed on with great violence and first began hostilities by firing on said Lexington Company, whereby they killed eight and wounded several others; that the regulars continued their fire until those of said company who were neither killed nor wounded had made their escape; that Colonel Smith with the detachment then marched to Concord, where a number of provincials were again fired on by the troops and two were killed and several wounded, before the provincials fired on them and that these hostile measures of the troops produced an engagement that lasted through the day in which many of the provincials, and more of the regular troops, were killed and wounded.

To give a particular account of the ravages of the troops as they retreated from Concord to Charlestown, would be very difficult, if not impracticable. Let it suffice to say that a great number of the houses on the road were plundered and rendered unfit for use; several were burnt; women in childbed were driven by the soldiery naked into the streets; old men, peaceably in their houses were shot dead; and such scenes exhibited as would disgrace the annals of the most uncivilized nation.

These, brethren, are marks of ministerial vengeance against this colony for refusing, with her sister colonies, submission to slavery, but they have not yet detached us from our royal sovereign. We profess to be his loyal and dutiful subjects, and so hardly dealt with as we have been, are still ready with our lives and fortunes to

defend his person, family, crown, and dignity. Nevertheless, to the persecution and tyranny of his cruel ministry, we will not tamely submit. Appealing to Heaven for the justice of our cause, we determine to die or be free.

We cannot think that the honour, wisdom, and valour of Britons will suffer them to be longer inactive spectators of measures in which they themselves are so deeply interested: measures pursued in opposition to the solemn protests of many noble lords and [the] expressed sense of conspicuous commoners whose knowledge and virtue have long characterized them as some of the greatest men in the nation measures executing contrary to the interest, petitions, and resolves of many large, respectable, and opulent counties, cities, and boroughs in Great Britain, measures highly incompatible with justice, but still pursued with a specious pretence of easing the nation of its burdens, measures which, if successful, must end in the ruin and slavery of Britain, as well as the persecuted American colonies.

We sincerely hope that the great Sovereign of the universe who hath so often appeared for the English nation, will support you in every rational and manly exertion with these colonies for saving it from ruin, and that in a constitutional connection with the mother country we shall be altogether a free and happy people.

Source: www.digitalhistory.uh.edu

LET ME TELL YOU HOW IT HAPPENED...

The date is _____ The place is _____

My name is _____

The event I am describing is _____

About me: (Facts you learned from the text)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

What I said about this event: (Quotes from the text)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

How I am feeling about the event? (Emotions expressed in the text)

What I believe- Summarize your viewpoint regarding this event in a few sentences.

Other questions to consider...

1. Were you a participant in the event? If not, how might this affect your perspective?
2. When was this text written? How might this affect your perspective?