

## Concord DBQ

William Murphy, Debra Savage, Thomas Barry, and James Aitken

This DBQ (Document-Based Question) has five parts. Teachers can use whatever parts they deem useful, depending on the age and ability of the students. Part I (Outside Information) is a list of background terms. Part II provides the historical context for the events referred to in the documents. Part III (the Query) is the essay prompt that the students must answer in writing. Part IV is the collection of documents or primary sources that the students will use to construct their response to the query. Part V is some advice and suggestions for the implementation and application of the lesson.

I. Outside Information: A List of Preliminary Terms (Students can be given this list to investigate before they respond to the query or they can be asked to generate their own list from the readings and textbooks available).

Powder Alarm  
Continental Association  
Albany Plan  
Provisional Congresses  
Boston Massacre

Lexington Tea Bonfire  
Rev. Jonas Clark  
Committees of Correspondence  
Sons of Liberty  
Colonial Militia

Minutemen  
Samuel Adams  
John Adams  
John Hancock  
Jonathan Buttrick

Joseph Warren  
Paul Revere  
William Dawes  
Old Lights and New Lights  
Braintree Resolves

Suffolk Resolves  
Samuel Prescott  
Solemn League and Covenant  
Spinning Bees  
Stamp Act

Townshend Act  
Coercive Acts/Intolerable Acts  
Sugar Act  
Boston Tea Party  
James Barrett

Thomas Hutchinson  
Thomas Gage  
Meliscent Barrett

II. Historical Context: In response to the Boston Tea Party (December 16, 1773), the English Parliament passed a series of bills called the Coercive Acts, whose ostensible goal was to suppress colonial rebellion and restore order to Massachusetts. These bills included the Port Bill that closed Boston Harbor until the dumped tea was paid for, the Administration of Justice Act, the Massachusetts Regulating Act, the Quebec Act, and the Quartering Act. Parliament also sent 4,000 troops under General Thomas Gage to Boston and appointed him the new governor. On April 18, 1775, under the orders of General Gage, seven hundred British Regulars were sent to Lexington and Concord to secure a rebel arsenal and arrest Samuel Adams and John Hancock, the patriot ringleaders. But the Minutemen, warned by Paul Revere and William Dawes, were ready for them. Early on the morning of April 19<sup>th</sup>, the British Regulars were met on Lexington Green by a small band of Minutemen. An unordered shot was fired—"the shot heard 'round the world"—and in the ensuing chaos eight colonial militiamen were killed. The British Regulars then proceeded to Concord where a pitched battle occurred at the North Bridge, and, as the British tried to return to the safety of Boston, they were harassed all the way by colonial snipers and thus suffered heavy losses.

III. Query: In what ways and to what extent do the following documents from January to April, 1775, reveal the clash of cultures that culminated in the American Revolution? Consider the social, political, and religious conflicts between the American colonies and the English aristocracy.

IV.

Document A. "It is the opinion of the King's servants, in which his Majesty concurs, that the first and essential step to be taken towards reestablishing government, would be to arrest and imprison the principal actors and abettors of the Provincial Congress whose proceedings appear in every light to be acts of treason and rebellion . . . Keep the measure secret until the moment of execution, it can hardly fail of success . . . Any efforts of the people, unprepared to encounter with a regular force, cannot be very formidable . . . The King's dignity, and the honor and safety of the Empire, require, that, in such a situation, force should be repelled with force."

--Confidential letter from the Earl of Dartmouth to General Gage, commander in chief of the British forces in America and the Crown's appointed governor of Massachusetts, January 27, 1775

\*\*\*

Document B. "We may all be soon under the necessity of keeping Shooting Irons."

--Samuel Adams to Stephen Collins, January 31, 1775

\*\*\*

Document C.

In truth, it's judged by men of thinking,  
That GAGE will kill himself a drinking.  
Nay, I'm informed by the inn keepers,  
He'll bung with shoe-boys, chimney sweepers.

--*Essex Journal* (Newburyport), February 22, 1775

\*\*\*

Document D. "The most natural and eligible mode of attack on the part of the people is that of detached parties of bushmen who from their adroitness in the habitual use of the firelock suppose themselves sure of their mark at a distance of 200 yards. Should hostilities unhappily commence, the first opposition would be irregular, impetuous, and incessant from the numerous bodies that would swarm to the place of action, and all actuated by an enthusiasm wild and ungovernable . . . [I am] firmly persuaded that there is not a man amongst [them] capable of taking command or directing the motions of an army."

--Letter from General Gage in Boston to the Earl of Dartmouth in London, March 4, 1775

\*\*\*

Document E. "I saw, and heard, a gun fired, which appeared to be a pistol. Then I could distinguish two guns, and then a continual roar of musketry."

--Paul Revere's 1775 Deposition concerning the start of the fight on Lexington Green

View this document online at the Massachusetts Historical Society's website:

<http://www.masshist.org/database/98>



Document G.

The groans of wounded, dying men,  
Would melt the stoutest soul,  
O! how it strikes thro' every vein,  
My flesh and blood run cold.  
May all prepare to meet their fate  
At God's tribunal bar,  
And may war's terrible alarm,  
For death us now prepare.  
Your country calls your far and near,  
*America's* sons awake,  
Your helmet, buckler, and your spear,  
The Lord's own arm now make.  
His shield will keep us from all harm,  
Tho' thousands 'gainst us rise,  
His buckler we must sure put on,  
If we would win the prize.

--From the bottom section of the Russell "Coffin Broadside" (above), "A Funeral Elegy to the Immortal Memory of those Worthies who were slain in the Battle of Concord, April 19, 1775"

\*\*\*

Document H. "We then saw the hull body acoming out of town we then was orded to lay behind a wall that run over a hill and when they got ny anuff mager buttrick said he would give the word fire but they did not come quite so near as he expected before tha halted. The commanding officers ordered the hull battalion to halt and officers to the frunt march and the officers then marched to the front thair we lay behind the stone wall expecting every minnit to have the word fire. Our orders was if we fired to fire 2 or 3 times and then retreat . . . If we had fird I be leave we could kild all most every officseer thair was in the front, but we had no orders to fire and their want a gun fird."

--Narrative of Amos Barrett, Concord minuteman

\*\*\*

Document I. "When Captain Parsons returned with the three companies over . . . [Concord's North] Bridge, they observed three soldiers on the ground one of them scalped, his head much mangled, and his ears cut off, tho' not quite dead; a sight which struck the soldiers with horror."

--From "A Circumstantial Account of an Attack that happened on the 19<sup>th</sup> of April 1775, on his Majesty's Troops," a broadside, printed by John Howe in Boston in 1775.

View this document online at the Massachusetts Historical Society's website:

<http://www.masshist.org/database/498>

\*\*\*

Document J. "We retired for 15 miles under an incessant fire, which like a moving circle surrounded and followed us wherever we went . . . Whoever dares to look upon them as an irregular mob, will find himself much mistaken. They have men amongst them who know very well what they are about."

--Brigadier Lord Percy, April 20, 1775

\*\*\*

Document K. "It is supposed their object was to seize on Messrs. Hancock and Adams, two of our deputies to the General Congress. They were alarmed [by Paul Revere in Lexington] just in time to escape . . . I would only ask, if in all your reading of history, you have found an instance of irregular troops, hurried together at a moment's warning, with half the number at first, attacking and driving veterans, picked men, 17 miles, and continually firing the whole way, and not losing one third the number they killed? I view the hand of God in it, a remarkable interposition of Providence in our favour."

--"A Letter from a Gentleman of Rank in New England April 25, 1775"

## V. Lesson Implementation and Application

Document Based Questions (DBQs) are most commonly utilized as a tool to prepare Advanced Placement students for the AP exam each year. Yet as most teachers are well aware, DBQ activities can be used to teach students at all levels. It was clear from this group's first discussion that we teach a wide variety of students who have massive differences in ability. The range of students stretches from AP to classes comprised entirely of students with severe learning disabilities and from English language learners to standard levels. Regardless of student ability it is the teacher's responsibility to find ways to make this information assessable and 'learnable' to all students. For this reason our group wished to add a short list of some of the ways that the chosen documents can be used or modified to suit various levels.

- Most teachers have strict time constraints in which to cover material. For teachers under these constraints the documents could be given as homework assignments (or partially) depending on the amount of time a teacher has to work with.
- The length of documents can be abbreviated into shorter and more manageable for students with reading and comprehension problems.
- Word banks can be provided since several of the primary sources include words and sentence structures that are no longer used in common English as well as difficult vocabulary.
- Students can work in small groups to complete the document analysis during class time.
- Teachers can provide additional resources for higher achieving students to supplement these documents and help prepare for standardized tests.
- English Language Learners (ELL) students can work in small groups with dictionaries to first translate the documents and then attempt to analyze them with the guidance of the teacher.

There are certainly several additional ways for teachers to adapt these resources to suit the learning abilities of their students. In general, document based questions concerning primary sources can also help students continue to work on their writing skills, skills that are necessary to be a successful history or English student.