

1770
The
B O S T O N
MASSACRE



The CHARACTERS (in order of appearance)

FIRST NARRATOR • SECOND NARRATOR

BOSTON CITIZENS 1-8

ENGLISH SOLDIERS 1-8 (*nonspeaking roles*)

ENGLISH SENTRY

CRISPUS ATTUCKS: *Sailor*

LORD GEORGE GRENVILLE: *Member of English Parliament*

LORD CHARLES TOWNSHEND: *Member of English Parliament*

MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT 1-8 (*nonspeaking roles*)

JOHN GREY: *Boston shopkeeper*

CAPTAIN THOMAS PRESTON: *English officer*

RICHARD PALMES: *Boston merchant* • JOHN ADAMS: *Boston lawyer*

NEWSBOY

*Act 1***THE TIME AND PLACE***March 5, 1770; Boston, Massachusetts***THE SETTING***Outside the Customs House*

FIRST NARRATOR: The American Revolution might have never happened. Not everyone in the 13 American colonies wanted independence, and almost no one imagined that the colonists, who had no standing army and no navy, could defeat the strongest military power in the world since the Roman Empire.

SECOND NARRATOR: And when we look back across the centuries, great events of history sometimes seem neat and orderly, planned out in advance, but many times the small events that led to great ones were disorderly and accidental. The Boston Massacre was one of those.

FIRST NARRATOR: Neither side meant for there to be bloodshed that day—

SECOND NARRATOR: March 5, 1770—

FIRST NARRATOR: In Boston, Massachusetts.

SECOND NARRATOR: A wet snow had fallen overnight—

FIRST NARRATOR: Perfect for making snowballs.

SECOND NARRATOR: Look. A crowd is gathering around the Customs House.

FIRST NARRATOR: That is where the money from the hated taxes is stored.

SECOND NARRATOR: A single sentry stands guard.

CITIZEN 1: Lobsterback!

CITIZEN 2: Go home, lobsterback!

FIRST NARRATOR: They called the British soldiers lobsterbacks because of their red coats.

SECOND NARRATOR: In those days, lobsters weren't considered a delicacy. Lobsters were everywhere along the shore, and in minutes, you could pick up more than you could carry. Only the very poor people ate them, and others used them for fertilizer.

CITIZEN 3: The British are thieves!

CITIZEN 4: Tyrants!

CITIZEN 5: Invaders!

CITIZEN 6: Tar and feather them!

CITIZEN 7: Lobsterbacks!

FIRST NARRATOR: Actually, the common British soldier wanted to be friendly with the American colonists.

SECOND NARRATOR: The British soldiers did not want to be here, so far away from their homes, but the colonists saw them as an occupying army, which they were.

FIRST NARRATOR: It was an impossible situation.

SECOND NARRATOR: The current of events was moving too quickly for anyone to control.

SENTRY: Go away, you thugs!

CITIZEN 8: Thugs? He calls *us* thugs?

CRISPUS ATTUCKS: If *we* had invaded London, then he might rightly call us thugs!

FIRST NARRATOR: Uh-oh, now they're starting to throw snowballs at the sentry.

CITIZEN 1: Down with British tyranny!

ATTUCKS: Down with the Townshend Acts!

SECOND NARRATOR: See that man who just shouted "Down with the Townshend Acts!"? That's Crispus Attucks, a black sailor.

FIRST NARRATOR: Most of the facts about his life have been lost in time, but he's about to pay a big price for his views.

SECOND NARRATOR: The Townshend Acts provoked all this.

FIRST NARRATOR: The Townshend Acts were import duties, in other words, taxes on goods imported from England.

SECOND NARRATOR: England taxed goods such as paper, glass, paint, and tea. The colonists didn't object to paying *all* taxes. Every English person paid taxes. It's just that the colonists wanted to be consulted about it.

FIRST NARRATOR: The men who wanted independence—patriots such as Sam Adams, Paul Revere, and Ben Franklin—needed a cause around which to rally the people to their side. Lofty talk and beautiful language about the rights of people wouldn't do it. They needed something concrete, something everyone could understand. With the Townshend Acts, the British handed the patriots a cause.

SECOND NARRATOR: Coincidentally, there was a political battle going on back in England between two competing parties, and one party used the issue of colonial taxes to taunt the other side. Neither really cared about the issue itself, but they should have.

FIRST NARRATOR: To see how this happened, let's shift the scene back to the English Parliament in London.