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Seminar on Colonial America, the American Revolution and Early Republic

### Sharing Teaching Resources Project

This activity can be used as appropriate during the teaching of American History.

The goal is to make the students aware of differing viewpoints, reports and opinions held by people. Not everyone agreed about everything or even what actually happened in some instances.

The procedure is to locate at least two conflicting reports, using primary sources, about an event and have each of two teams (2 to 4 students each) report the event as it is in their primary source. After both teams have reported their events, they should defend their report and answer questions from the class.

At the end of this session, a moderator (initially the teacher) leads a discussion on what the class thinks actually happened. Points of agreement and disagreement should be noted and reasons why they differ.

The primary sources should be evaluated based on what the biases and viewpoints of the witnesses, participants and reporters might have been and how this might be useful to understand in order to evaluate the veracity of the report. Of consideration also might be the length of time elapsed between the event and each report.

This can be used to examine opinions, opposing sides of an argument, different causes of an event and even “what if” speculations also.

Examples:

The Boston Massacre:

As reported by British Captain Thomas Preston and as reported by colonial witness Samuel Drowne.

Should the Majority Rule?

James Madison in Federalist # 10, and

Thomas Jefferson in reference to Shay’s Rebellion.