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**MISSION 1: “For Crown or Colony?”**  
**Part 2: A Death in Boston (February 22, 1770)**  
**Document-Based Activity:**  
**Translating a Newspaper Account of Christopher Seider’s Murder**

**A NOTE TO THE EDUCATOR:**

*Goals of the activity:*

- *To practice paraphrasing or translating period language into contemporary language*
- *To develop a recognition of propaganda in a journalistic piece by identifying emotive language and bias in the relating of a story*

*There are two main parts to this activity: 1) reading/paraphrasing the documents, and 2) reflecting and analyzing them.*

*For the first part, if, after you read this piece yourself, you decide if it is too complicated for your class, you can accommodate your students in a variety of ways:*

- *Project the pieces on a screen or whiteboard. Ask students to follow along as you read aloud. Pause every few lines to ask what your students think the passage means. Direct them to the notes in the margin. Recapitulate as you go along.*
- *Divide the piece into chunks. Distribute them to different groups. Read the entire piece aloud without stopping to paraphrase. Then ask each group to paraphrase their part. When that work is done, have one person from each group read the original and another their paraphrase.*
- *Select the part or parts of the document you feel are most important and that satisfy the goals of the activity. Base your choice on the skills level of your students. Read that aloud, or ask the students to read by themselves. Discuss the meaning.*

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## Document 1:

### A Newspaper Account of the Death of Christopher Seider

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• a murder made even more horrible by the surrounding circumstances</li><li>• The article had it wrong: the boy's name was Christopher Seider.</li><li>• enjoying themselves</li><li>• watching a demonstration</li><li>• at this time, we would be exercising our best manners by referring to him as an Importer</li><li>• Richardson was a professional snitch; he tattled on colonists whom he felt were breaking English tax or trade laws; he also had a very bad reputation morally.</li><li>• A rod is a measure of length that is no longer used. 1 rod = 5 1/3 yards.</li><li>• Hateful, critical</li><li>• Lying under oath (This remark of Richardson's doesn't make any sense.)</li><li>• he had justification, a reason</li><li>• broken pieces of any kind of hard material</li><li>• a large kind of shot (balls) used in shooting fowl</li></ul>	<p>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. 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.-- One Ebenezer Richardson, who has been many years employed as an under Officer of the Customs, long known by <u>the Name of an INFORMER</u>, and consequently a Person of a most abandoned <u>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. 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>, &amp;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. 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 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—During this tragical scene, one George Wilmot, who was a Seaman or an officer on Board the Liberty Sloop lately in the service of the Commisioners was present in the House and an Abettor to Richardson, and appears by the Evidence to have</p>
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Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## A Newspaper Account of the Death of Christopher Seider: Discussion Questions

1. In general, how does the writer create the impression that the boys were completely innocent? What words does he use? How does he tell those parts of the story?


2. In general, how does the writer create the impression that Richardson is a villain?


3. Consider this sentence:

*“On Thursday last in the Forenoon, a barbarous Murder extended with many aggravating Circumstances, was committed on the Body of a young lad of about eleven Years of Age, Son to Mr. \_\_\_ Snider of this Town. ”*

Try to remove the emotional language and change some of the words around so the sentence tells plain facts with no coloring. Write your sentence.


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4. This writer calls the demonstration at Lillie’s place of business a “Pageant,” an “Exhibition.” In what ways are those words usually used? In your opinion, was the demonstration either of those? Explain.


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


6. How can you tell that the writer of this article is probably not a Loyalist?


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**Document 2:**  
**A Reaction to Christopher Seider's Death by a Loyalist**

Directions:

Thomas Hutchinson was the Loyalist governor of the Massachusetts Bay, the colony that included the city of Boston, when Christopher Seider was killed by the customs informer Ebenezer Richardson. The following is an excerpt from his diary.

“...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....”

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## A Reaction to Christopher Seider's Death by a Loyalist: Discussion Questions

1. What does Governor Hutchinson mean here? Paraphrase this quotation.


2. Based on what you overheard in the meeting in the Long Room, what reasons do you have to believe that the governor was exaggerating? Would the Sons of Liberty have brought him back to life if they could have? What point is the governor making here?


3. Are the Patriots planning to *use* Christopher's death to their advantage? Do you feel that it's wrong to use the death of an innocent person to advance a cause that you believe is right? Is it respectful of the memory of the dead person? Of that person's family? Explain.


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4. Can you think of a time you know about when a person's death has been used to advance a cause? Tell about it.
