THE CONSTRUCTION OF HISTORICAL KNOWLEDGE

An Investigation into How We Learn About a Historical Event

Problem: To Understand What Happened on Lexington Green on the morning of April 19, 1775.

Process:
(1) Read the five documents about Lexington.

(2) In a group of four or five, appoint a recorder to summarize the conclusions of the group.

(3) In forming a sense of what happened, think about:
   (i) who fired the first shot
   (ii) whether the colonists fled or stood their ground
   (iii) whether the events unfolded as they were intended
   (iv) who was most responsible for what happened
   (v) any other information you think is relevant

*Each group should come to a unanimous consensus about what happened.

(4) Once you have figured out what happened, rank order each of the five documents according to its trustworthiness as a historical source. What are the strengths and weaknesses of each document? What critical questions did you ask about each document as you considered its reliability? Why did you rank order the documents in the way you have?

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