

## SOURCE 2.4: BARKER DIARY (ADAPTED)

19th. At 2 o'clock in the morning we began our march by wading through a river that came up to our middles; after going a few miles we came to a town called Lexington. We heard there were hundreds of people gathered there who planned to oppose us. At 5 o'clock we arrived and saw a number of people, between 200 and 300, formed in a field (Lexington Green) in the middle of the town.

We continued marching, keeping prepared against an attack though without intending to attack them. On our coming near, they fired one or two shots. As soon as that happened, our men without any orders, rushed in upon them, fired and put them to flight.

We regrouped, but with some difficulty because our men were so wild they could hear no orders.

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*Source:* Entry for April 19, 1775, from the diary of Lieutenant John Barker, an officer in the British army; R. H. Dana, Jr., A British Officer in Boston. *The Atlantic Monthly*, 39, 1877, 389–401.

**(Original)**

19th. At 2 o'clock we began our march by wading through a very long ford up to our middles; after going a few miles we took three or four people who were going off to give intelligence; about five miles on this side of a town called Lexington, which lay in our road, we heard there were some hundreds of people collected together intending to oppose us and stop our going on; at 5 o'clock we arrived there and saw a number of people, I believe between 2 and 300, formed on a common in the middle of the town; we still continued advancing, keeping prepared against an attack th'o without intending to attack them; but on our coming near them they fired one or two shots, upon which our men without any orders, rushed in upon them, fired and put them to flight; several of them were killed, we cou'd not tell how many, because they were got behind walls and into the woods; We had a man of the 10th light Infantry wounded, nobody else hurt. We then formed on the Common but with some difficulty, the men were so wild they cou'd hear no orders; we waited a considerable time there, and at length proceeded on our way to Concord.

SOURCE 2.5: MINUTEMEN'S DEPOSITIONS (ADAPTED)

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We Nathaniel Mulliken, Philip Russell (followed by the names of 32 other men present on Lexington Green on April 19, 1775) All of lawful age, and inhabitants of Lexington, do testify and declare, that on April 19th, at about 1 or 2 am, we were told that British soldiers were marching from Boston towards Concord.

We were ordered to meet at the field at the center of town [Lexington Green], where we were told by our captain to go back home, but to be ready to come back when we heard the beat of the drum. We further testify and declare that about 5 o'clock in the morning, hearing our drumbeat, we returned, and soon found a large body of troops marching towards us.

At that point, some of our group was making its way toward Lexington Green, and others had reached it. Our men began to disperse [leave]. While our backs were turned on the [British] troops, we were fired on by them, and a number of our men were killed and wounded. To our knowledge, not a gun was fired by any person in our group on the British soldiers before they fired on us. The British continued firing until we had all made our escape.

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*Source:* Lexington, April 25, 1775, Nathaniel Mulliken, Philip Russell, [and the 32 men] [Duly sworn to by 34 minutemen on April 25 before three justices of the peace]; C. C. Sawtell. *The Nineteenth of April, 1775: A Collection of First Hand Accounts* (Lincoln, MA: Sawtells of Somerset, 1968).

**(Original)**

We Nathaniel Mulliken, Philip Russell, (Followed by the names of 32 other men present on Lexington Green on April 19, 1775) . . . all of lawful age, and inhabitants of Lexington, in the County of Middlesex . . . do testify and declare, that on the nineteenth of April instant, about one or two o'clock in the morning, being informed that . . . a body of regulars were marching from Boston towards Concord . . . we were alarmed and having met at the place of our company's parade, were dismissed by our Captain, John Parker, for the present with orders to be ready to attend at the beat of the drum, we further testify and declare, that about five o'clock in the morning, hearing our drum beat, we proceeded towards the parade and soon found that a large body of troops were marching towards us, some of our company were coming up to the parade, and others had reached it, at which time, the company began to disperse, whilst our backs were turned on the troops, we were fired on by them, and a number of our men were instantly killed and wounded, not a gun was fired by any person in our company on the regulars to our knowledge before they fired on us, and they continued firing until we had all made our escape.

## SOURCE 2.6: STILES LETTER (ADAPTED)

Descriptions of the beginning of the firing are relatively unclear. Major Pitcairn, who was a good man fighting for a bad cause, insisted to the day he died that the colonists fired first. . . . He does not say that he saw the colonists fire first. Had he said it, I would have believed him, because he is a man of integrity and honor. He expressly says he did not see who fired first; but he believed the American peasants began the shooting.

His account is that he rode up to the peasants and ordered them to disperse. Because they did not do so instantly, he ordered his troops to spread out and surround the colonists and disarm them. As he turned, he saw a gun in a peasant's hand from behind a wall. The gun misfired without firing a bullet; and instantly two or three guns went off, wounding Major Pitcairn's horse and also a man near him. He did not see those guns, but he believed they could not have been from British troops and that it must have been the American colonists who began the attack.

The British troops were so eager and impulsive that they began shooting without orders and Major Pitcairn could not keep them from shooting. Pitcairn struck his staff or sword downwards with all seriousness as a signal to his men to stop firing.

Major Pitcairn told this story to Mr. Brown of Providence who went to Boston a few days after the battle and told Governor Sessions, who then told it to me.

*Source:* From the diary of Ezra Stiles, president of Yale College, entry for August 21, 1775; In F. B. Dexter, ed., *The Literary Diary of Ezra Stiles* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1901).

**(Original)**

There is a certain sliding over and indeterminateness in describing the beginning of the firing. Major Pitcairn, who was a good man in a bad cause, insisted upon it to the day of his death, that the colonists fired first. . . . *He does not say that he saw the colonists fire first.* Had he said it, I would have believed him, being a man of integrity and honor. *He expressly says he did not see who fired first;* and yet believed the peasants began. His account is this—that riding up to them he ordered them to disperse; which they not doing instantly, he turned about to order his troops so to draw out as to surround and disarm them. As he turned, he *saw* a gun in a peasant's hand from behind a wall, *flash in the pan without going off*, and instantly or very soon two or three guns went off by which he found his horse wounded and also a man near him wounded. These guns he did not see, but believing they could not come from his own people, doubted not and so asserted that they came from our people; and that thus they began the attack. The impetuosity of the King's Troops were such that a promiscuous, uncommanded but general fire took place, which Pitcairn could not prevent; though he struck his staff or sword downwards with all earnestness as a signal to forbear or cease firing. This account Major Pitcairn himself gave Mr. Brown of Providence who was seized with flour and carried to Boston a few days after the battle; and Gov. Sessions told it to me.

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**SOURCE 2.7: TEXTBOOK VERSION OF LEXINGTON**

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In April 1775, General Gage, the military governor of Massachusetts, sent out a body of troops to take possession of military stores at Concord, a short distance from Boston. At Lexington, a handful of "embattled farmers," who had been tipped off by Paul Revere, barred the way. The "rebels" were ordered to disperse. They stood their ground. The English fired a volley of shots that killed eight patriots. It was not long before the swift-riding Paul Revere spread the news of this new atrocity to the neighboring colonies. The patriots of all of New England, although still a handful, were now ready to fight the English.

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*Source:* From a high school textbook: Samuel Steinberg, *The United States: Story of a Free People* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1963).

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**SOURCE 2.8: LISTER'S ACCOUNT**

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To the best of my recollection about 4 o'clock in the morning being the 19th of April the 5 front companies was ordered to load which we did. . . . It was at Lexington when we saw one of their companies drawn up in regular order. Major Pitcairn of the Marines second in command called to them to disperse, but their not seeming willing he desired us to mind our space which we did when they gave us a fire then run off to get behind a wall. We had one man wounded of our Company in the leg, his name was Johnson, also Major Pitcairn's horse was shot in the flank; we returned their salute, and before we proceeded on our march from Lexington I believe we killed and wounded either 7 or 8 men.

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*Source:* Ensign Jeremy Lister, youngest of the British officers at Lexington, in a personal narrative written in 1782. Reprinted in J. Lister, *Concord Fight* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1931).

### TOOL 2.1: IMAGE ANALYSIS WORKSHEET

Directions: Look at the three images of the Battle at Lexington Green (Sources 2.1, 2.2, 2.3) and consider these questions.

A) What details do you notice in each image?

Image	Artist/ Date	What people do you see?	What objects do you see?	What actions do you see?
2.1				
2.2				
2.3				

B) What details are the same in each image?

C) What details are different?

**TOOL 2.1: IMAGE ANALYSIS WORKSHEET (continued)**

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D) How are the British troops portrayed in each image?

E) How are the patriots portrayed?

F) Based on these images, do you think the "Battle at Lexington" was really a battle?  
What details lead you to your conclusion?

G) What new questions do you have after looking at these images?

H) Read Sources 2.4 and 2.5. What details in the images do these sources support?

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**TOOL 2.2: SOURCING WORKSHEET**

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Refer to the diary entry of John Barker and the deposition of Nathaniel Mulliken and the other Minutemen (Sources 2.4 and 2.5).

1. What do we know about the author(s) of each of these documents?
2. How does this information influence whether or not we believe the authors?
3. Explain the difference between the genres of these two documents: How is a diary different from a sworn deposition?
4. Regarding Barker's diary, provide one reason that you might trust it. What is one reason you might *distrust* it?
5. On what day was Barker's diary entry written? How much time elapsed between Barker writing in his diary and the event he describes? Is there any way to be absolutely sure? Could this entry have been written days later?
6. Regarding Mulliken's deposition, provide one reason that you might trust it. What is one reason you might distrust it?
7. How does knowing that this deposition was sent to the colonial representative in Parliament, Benjamin Franklin, inform your judgment of its trustworthiness?