The Boston Massacre

It's the evening of March 5, 1770 in Boston in the British colony of Massachusetts. British soldiers are changing the guard at the Customs House where British taxes are levied and collected. A confrontation occurs between colonists and the soldiers, shots are fired, and three colonists are dead on the spot; two more die the next day. The first man killed was an African American named Crispus Attucks. This event is called the Boston Massacre and it's easy to say that it was a cause of the American Revolution. What really happened and why?

Great Britain had spent huge sums of money waging the French and Indian War (1754-1763) in North America to gain control of more land. At the same time the British were fighting the related Seven Years' War in Europe. When the wars ended in 1763 Great Britain needed money and passed the Townsend Acts which heavily taxed everyday imported items like glass, paper and tea in the colonies. When these taxes caused unrest among the colonists, in 1768 Great Britain sent troops to Boston to maintain control and protect the tax collectors who collected the duties/taxes on imported products. These soldiers could be assigned to live in private homes with the colonists. There was one British soldier in Boston for every four residents. Boston was an occupied city and tensions were high between soldiers and residents. There were frequent riots.

The Boston Massacre began with a nighttime confrontation between a youth and a soldier in front of the Customs House. A crowd gathered and grew larger when church bells were rung to get the attention of more men. The British soldier yelled for help as well. Soon 400 men of Boston were throwing ice and snowballs at the soldiers defending the Customs House, daring them to fire their muskets into the crowd. Reports say that the officer in charge called out, "Don't fire!" In the confusion, shots were fired anyway. When the smoke cleared,

The British immediately removed the troops from Boston and repealed the Townsend Acts in April 1770 except for the tax on tea. The officer in charge and nine soldiers were brought to trial about eight months later. Two soldiers were found guilty of manslaughter and all the others were acquitted. Boston remained quiet for several years. The Boston Massacre was later used as a way to persuade patriots who wanted to gain independence from Britain.

1. In order to get money from the colonies Great Britain taxed
   a. Income
   b. Land
   c. Imported items
   d. Farm products

2. How many Redcoat soldiers were in Boston?
   a. 1 to every 4 colonists
   b. 1 to every 3 colonists
   c. 3 to every 1 colonist
   d. 4 to every 1 colonist

3. When the citizens of Boston protested against the heavy taxes Great Britain
   a. Raised the taxes higher
   b. Sent troops to Boston
   c. Both a and b above
   d. None of the above

4. One way that Bostonians protested was
   a. Riots in the streets
   b. Snipers
   c. Guerilla attacks
   d. All of the above

5. Where in town did the Boston Massacre occur?
   a. On the commons
   b. Along the Charles River
   c. At the courthouse
   d. None of the above

6. How many Boston citizens died as a result of the Boston Massacre?
   a. 3
   b. 5
   c. 7
   d. 9

7. What are imports?
   a. Goods brought into the country
   b. Goods produced and sent out to other countries
   c. Goods that are thrown away
   d. Goods that are illegal

8. One result of the Boston Massacre was
   a. Soldiers were withdrawn from Boston
   b. Soldiers were brought to trial
   c. It was later used to promote the cause of American Independence
   d. All of the above

9. Why do you think Paul Revere called his painting a massacre?

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10. Who was the first casualty of the Revolutionary War?
    a. A fugitive slave that had escaped his master
    b. A wig maker
    c. A congressman
    d. A redcoat soldier



Study the picture of Paul Revere's painting of "The Bloody Massacre perpetrated in King Street" as he called the event…List three inaccuracies in his painting based on the historical facts.

1._____

2._____

3._____