

**Joseph Warren, "Account of the Battle of Lexington" (1775)**

*In April 1775, following the battles at Lexington and Concord, Dr. Joseph Warren of Boston, a zealous champion of American liberty and president of the Massachusetts Provincial Congress, wrote an open letter to the British people giving the colonists' view of the events. It had been Warren who dispatched William Dawes and Paul Revere by separate routes to warn John Hancock, Samuel Adams, and other patriot leaders of the impending British march on Lexington.*

MASSACHUSETTS. IN PROVINCIAL CONGRESS Watertown, April 26, 1775

TO THE INHABITANTS OF GREAT BRITAIN.

*Friends and fellow subjects,*

Hostilities are at length commenced in this colony, by the troops under command of general Gage; and it being of the greatest importance, that an early, true, and authentic account of this inhuman proceeding should be know to you, the congress of this colony have transmitted the same, and for want of a session of the hon. continental congress, think it proper to address you on this alarming occasion.

By the clearest depositions, relative to this transaction, it will appear, *that*, on the night preceding the 19<sup>th</sup> of April, instant, a body of the king's troops, under command of colonel Smith, were secretly landed at Cambridge, with an apparent design to take or destroy the military and other stores, provided for the defence of this colony, and deposited at Concord; that some inhabitants of the colony, on the night aforesaid whilst travelling peaceable on the road between Boston and Concord, were seized and greatly abused by armed men, who appeared to be officers of general Gage's army; that the town of Lexington, by these means, was alarmed, and a company of the inhabitants mustered on the occasion; that the regular troops, on their way to Concord, marched into the said town of Lexington, and the said company, on their approach, began to disperse; that notwithstanding this, the regulars rushed on with great violence, and first began hostilities, by firing on the said Lexington company, whereby, they killed eight, and wounded several others; that the regulars continued their fire until those of the said company, who were neither killed nor wounded, had made their escape; that colonel Smith, with the detachment, then marched to Concord, where a number of provincials were again fired on by the troops, two of them killed and several wounded, before any of the provincials fired on them; and that these hostile measures of the troops produced an engagement that lasted through the day, in which many of he provincials, and more of the regular troops, were killed and wounded.

To give a particular account of the ravages of the troops, as they retreated from Concord to Charles Town, would be very difficult, if not impracticable; let it suffice to say, that a great number of the houses on the road were plundered, and rendered unfit for use; several were burnt; women in child-bed were driven by the soldiery naked into the streets; old men, peaceably in their houses, were shot dead, and such scenes exhibited, as would disgrace the annals of he most uncivilized nations.

These, brethren, are marks of ministerial vengeance against this colony, for refusing, with her sister colonies, a submission to slavery; but they have not yet detached us from our royal sovereign we profess to be his loyal and dutiful subjects; and so hardly dealt with as we have been, are still ready, with our lives and fortunes, to defend his person, family, crown and dignity; nevertheless, to the persecution and tyranny of his cruel ministry, we will not tamely submit; appealing to Heaven for the justice of our cause, "we determine to die, or be free."

We cannot think that the honor, wisdom, and valor of Britons, will suffer them to be longer inactive spectators of *measures*, in which they themselves are so deeply interested; measures pursued in opposition to the solemn protests of many noble lords, and expressed sense of conspicuous commons, whose knowledge and virtue have long characterized them as some of the greatest men in the nation; *measures*, executing, contrary to the interest, petitions, and resolves of many large, respectable counties, cities, and boroughs, in Great Britain; *measures* highly incompatible with justice, but still pursued with a specious pretence of easing the nation of its burthens; *measures* which, if successful, must end in the ruin and slavery of Britain, as well as the persecuted American colonies.

We sincerely hope, that the Great Sovereign of the Universe, who hath so often appeared for the English nation, will support you in every rational and manly exertion with these colonies, for saving it from ruin, and that, in a constitutional connection with our mother country, we shall soon be altogether a free and happy people.

Signed by order, JOS. WARREN, president

### **Document Analysis**

Who are the primary aggressors according to this account? Describe some of the actions detailed in this account as evidence of this aggression.  
What appeal does Warren make to the people of Britain? What is the goal of this document?