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Period 3

The Shot Heard 'Round the World

I believe that the colonial militia fired the first shot of the Revolutionary War. By one account, when the colonists were ordered to disperse, they fired on the British while the British Major had his back turned (2.8). The seeming reliability of this account comes from the fact that the soldier giving it remembers exactly who the one British casualty was, and how many colonists they killed or wounded. The Major, who by all accounts was a good and honorable man, also believes that he was fired upon by the colonists while his back was turned. He did not pretend to have seen who fired first, but swore that it was not the British to his dying day (2.6).

One argument for the British firing first, made by the colonists, is hardly tenable, as they say that the British fired as the colonists' backs were turned in retreat; the fact that their backs were turned means that anyone at the rear of the retreat could have fired on the British without the knowledge of the rest of the group (2.5). Another source saying that the British fired first seems unreliable to due its excess of patriotism, as well as its excessive use of the word “patriot” itself. The overbearing quality of the source, along with the fact that it is from a high school textbook, prevents it from being a credible source (2.7).