

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Period \_\_\_\_\_ US History 8/Mr. Tripodi

Breaking it down:

## Sacco and Vanzetti

You'll be reading a British scholar's account of the curious case of Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti. Beyond the prompts below, think of broader implications: First Amendment rights in war time, the political climate that could lead to such a miscarriage of justice, and the casual application of racist and anti-immigrant sentiments.

Your instructions (to be completed **as you read**):

1. **Circle** or **underline** every word you don't know, right on the sheet.
  2. **Note** the most important point of each paragraph **with a star**.
  3. After reading each paragraph, try to visualize what's being said. What do you see in your mind? Does what you're reading remind you of anything? What's confusing to you? Can you predict what you'll read next?
    - a. **Circle** one of the prompts below
    - b. **Write** what you're thinking. Sentence fragments and notes are OK here, but be sure to organize your thoughts.
  4. **Summarize** the paragraph **with a sentence** of your own.
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### Paragraph 1: "On 15<sup>th</sup> April..."

I predict / visualize / am reminded of / am confused by

This paragraph says...

### Paragraph 2: "Several eyewitnesses..."

I predict / visualize / am reminded of / am confused by

This paragraph says...

### Paragraph 3: "The trial started..."

I predict / visualize / am reminded of / am confused by

This paragraph says...

**Paragraph 4: "Vanzetti and Sacco"**

I predict / visualize / am reminded of / am confused by

This paragraph says...

**Paragraph 5: "Many observers believed..."**

I predict / visualize / am reminded of / am confused by

This paragraph says...

**Paragraph 6: "In 1925..."**

I predict / visualize / am reminded of / am confused by

This paragraph says...

**Paragraph 7: "By the summer..."**

I predict

This paragraph says...

## Sacco and Vanzetti: Civil liberties in uncertain times

1 On 15th April, 1920, Frederick Parmenter and Alessandro Berardelli, in South Braintree, were shot dead while carrying two boxes containing the payroll of a shoe factory. After the two robbers took the \$15,000 they got into a car containing several other men and were driven away.

2 Several eyewitnesses claimed that the robbers looked Italian. A large number of Italian immigrants were questioned but eventually the authorities decided to charge Bartolomeo Vanzetti and Nicola Sacco with the murders. Although the two men did not have criminal records, it was argued that they had committed the robbery to acquire funds for their anarchist political campaign.

3 The trial started on 21st May, 1921. The main evidence against the men was that they were both carrying a gun when arrested. Some people who saw the crime taking place identified Bartolomeo Vanzetti and Nicola Sacco as the robbers. Others disagreed and both men had good alibis. Vanzetti was selling fish in Plymouth while Sacco was in Boston with his wife having his photograph taken. The prosecution made a great deal of the fact that all those called to provide evidence to support these alibis were Italian immigrants.

4 Vanzetti and Sacco were disadvantaged by not having a full grasp of the English language. It was clear from some of the answers they gave in court that they had misunderstood the question. During the trial the prosecution emphasized the men's radical political beliefs. Vanzetti and Sacco were also accused of unpatriotic behaviour by fleeing to Mexico during the First World War. The trial lasted seven weeks and on 14th July, 1921, both men were found guilty of first degree murder and sentenced to death.



5 Many observers believed that their conviction resulted from prejudice against them as Italian immigrants and because they held radical political beliefs. The case resulted in anti-US demonstrations in several European countries; at one of these in Paris, a bomb exploded, killing twenty people.

6 In 1925 Celestino Madeiros, a Portuguese immigrant, confessed to being a member of the gang that killed Frederick Parmenter and Alessandro Berardelli. He also named the four other men, Joe, Fred, Pasquale and Mike Morelli, who had taken part in the robbery. The Morelli brothers were well-known criminals who had carried out similar robberies in area of Massachusetts. However, the authorities refused to investigate the confession made by Madeiros.

By the summer of 1927 it became clear that Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti would be executed. Vanzetti commented to a journalist:

7 *If it had not been for this thing, I might have lived out my life talking at street corners to scorning men. I might have died, unmarked, unknown, a failure. Now we are not a failure. This is our career and our triumph. Never in our full life can we hope to do such work for tolerance, justice, for man's understanding of man, as now we do by accident. Our words - our lives - our pains - nothing! The taking of our lives - lives of a good shoemaker and a poor fish peddler - all! That last moment belong to us - that agony is our triumph.*

On 23rd August 1927, the day of execution, over 250,000 people took part in a silent demonstration in Boston.