**Were Sacco & Vanzetti Really Guilty of Murder?**

**Background Information:** In May 1920, Nicola Sacco – a shoemaker -- and Bartolomeo Vanzetti – a fish salesman -- were arrested and charged with robbery and the murder of a factory employee and guard. Both were Italian immigrants, atheists (they did not believe in God), draft dodgers (they had evaded the draft in World War I), and critics of the American government. Their trial received worldwide attention in the 1920s, and eventually both Sacco and Vanzetti received the death penalty and were executed.

**Part A.** 10 pieces of evidence used against Sacco and Vanzetti are listed below. Examine each piece of evidence. Then imagine that you were Sacco and Vanzetti’s lawyer. In the right column, explain how you would criticize this evidence. Use the model provided as a guide.

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| **Evidence** | **If You Were Sacco and Vanzetti’s Lawyer, How Would You Respond?** |
| 1. The killers were identified as Italians by some witnesses, and Sacco and Vanzetti were Italians. | It could have been OTHER Italians. |
| 1. A similar crime was committed before this one, in Bridgewater, Massachusetts. There were gangs involved in both crimes. Each gang had a car, and in both cases the gang members were identified as Italians. |  |
| 1. Sacco and Vanzetti were part of a gang and one of the gang members, named Boda, had a car. |  |
| 1. When arrested, Sacco and Vanzetti were very nervous and they were armed with guns. |  |
| 1. Sacco and Vanzetti lied to the police about why they went to get Boda’s car and why they were armed when they were arrested. |  |
| 1. The gang to which Sacco and Vanzetti belonged believed in anarchism, that is, the radical idea that the government should be abolished. |  |
| 1. Vanzetti had already been convicted of a similar crime (armed robbery) in Bridgewater, Massachusetts. |  |
| 1. Captain John Proctor of the State Police fired 14 test bullets through Sacco’s gun and compared them to Bullet III – the bullet that killed Berardelli. The captain was asked if Bullet III was fired from Sacco’s gun, he replied “My opinion is that it is consistent with being fired by that pistol.” |  |
| 1. A cap of roughly the same size as one found in Sacco’s kitchen was found at the scene of the crime. |  |
| 1. At the trial, 7 witnesses positive identified Sacco and 4 positively identified Vanzetti of having committed the crime. |  |

**Part B. Big Questions**

1. Are you 100% sure that Sacco and Vanzetti were innocent? Why/why not?

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1. Are you 100% sure that Sacco and Vanzetti were guilty? Why/why not?

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1. If you were the judge in a court of law, would you have found Sacco and Vanzetti guilty or innocent? Why?

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1. What additional evidence would be useful to know before making a final decision about this case? (List 2+ examples).

a.

b.