Overview
The “Boston Massacre: A Picture is Worth a Thousand Words, But is it The Truth?” lesson will investigate the influence of images on society. Students will critically analyze Paul Revere’s “The Bloody Massacre” and compare their observations to eyewitness accounts of the event. As a final assignment, students will write a comparative essay on the image and eyewitness accounts.

This lesson is a good introduction to the colonists reactions to the Townshend Acts of 1767 and the events that lead to the Revolutionary War. It will also guide students on how to critically analyze primary sources.

Author
Tara Thornton
Lincoln Junior High School

Target Audience
Grades 6-8
American History
Pre-Revolutionary War

Instructional Time
Two 45 Minute Class Periods

Big Ideas
Analyze the causes and effects of the Revolutionary War including the ideas from the Declaration of Independence, the enactment of the Articles of Confederation and the Treaty of Paris

Concepts & Key Terms
- Boston Massacre
- Paul Revere
- Revolutionary War
- Townshend Acts of 1767
Rationale
In an effort to maintain control and enforce the Townshend Acts of 1767, King George III stationed military troops among colonists. The troops’ presence made the colonists fearful and uneasy, leading to resentment and outbreaks towards the troops. On March 5, 1770, a small handful of boys began taunting a British Sentinel. As more British troops were sent out to protect the British Sentinel, the crowd grew and began throwing objects at the troops. Eventually, a soldier would fire upon the mob and an all out riot would occur, later becoming known as the Boston Massacre. The news of the riot quickly spread amongst the colonists, garnering support to fight back against the British, leading to the Revolutionary War.

This event acted as a linchpin in the colonists’ fight for freedom. The use of media, images, and word of mouth played a huge role in gathering support and unity among colonists. This lesson will investigate the possible biases in images and stories in an effort to help students think more critically about the news and images they see on a daily basis.

Objectives
- Students will be able to compare and contrast multiple primary sources to judge which ones do an accurate job of portraying an event in history
- Students will be able to cite evidence from primary sources to prove their opinions about the Boston Massacre

Assessment
Students will be assessed on their primary source analysis, as well as their response to the following essay questions:

How is the picture different from the eyewitness accounts? Why do you think Revere choose to misrepresent what actually happened at the Boston Massacre?
Day 1: Paul Revere Challenges our Perceptions of the Past

I. Bell Ringer Activity | 5 minutes
When the students enter the room, have Paul Revere’s image of “The Boston Massacre” showing on the overhead screen. Have the Library of Congress Primary Source Analysis Tool and copies of the image at their desk. Ask these questions: What do you notice in this picture? What are the soldiers doing? What is the crowd doing? Have the students fill out the “Observe” section of the primary source analysis tool and circle the evidence they see in the image that proves their ideas.

II. Discussion | 15 minutes
Lead the students in a discussion about what they see in the image. Try to get every student involved in the discussion. See the Bell Ringer Activity Guide for some possible answers. Try to guide the conversation to every part of the image. Now, have the students fill out the “Reflect” section of the primary source analysis tool. Ask the students to reflect on what they think the people in the image could be saying.

III. Assessment | 20 minutes
Have the students fill out the “Question” section of the primary source analysis tool. Tell them to write down what questions they still have about the image. Have them write down questions they would ask the artist, Paul Revere. Ask the students to Think-Pair-Share their questions and then have them choose two questions to share with the class.

IV. Teaser | 5 minutes
Finish the day by asking your students if they can believe everything they see and hear on the news or on the internet. Their answers should be an overwhelming “no.” Then ask the students if we should trust Paul Revere’s picture.

Big Ideas
- Analyze how images use structure to emphasize key points or advance one side of an argument or idea
- Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions
- Identify aspects of a text that reveal an author's point of view or purpose

Materials
- “The Boston Massacre” Included pg. 7
- Library of Congress Primary Source Analysis Included pg. 9
- Bell Ringer Activity Guide Included pg. 8

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Day 2: Eyewitnesses Share their Stories

I. Bell Ringer | 5 minutes
As the students enter the room, have this question posted: *How can altering a picture change how we view an event?* After the students have taken the time to answer the question, discuss their answers as a group.

II. Direct Instruction | 15 minutes
Now that the students have had some exposure to the Boston Massacre, take the time to teach them about the background to this event. I use an interactive lecture format for my direct teaching. It is filled with discussion questions that lead the students to predict outcomes and participate in “what if” scenarios. Take some time to examine the events leading to the Boston Massacre, why they were ringing the fire bell, and the facts of that event.

III. Reading Activity | 20 minutes
Have students read *Eyewitness Accounts of the Boston Massacre* from that evenings events. This could either be an individual, group, or whole-class reading activity. After each account, ask the students to underline text that does not support what they see in the picture.

IV. Assignment/Assessment | 5 minutes
Pass out the “*Boston Massacre: A Picture is Worth a Thousand Words, But is it The Truth?*” *Essay Sheet*. Take the last five minutes of class to explain the requirements and expectations for the essay.
The Library of Congress

The mission of the Library of Congress Teaching with Primary Sources (TPS) program is to: build awareness of the Library’s educational initiatives; provide content that promotes the effective educational use of the Library’s resources; and offer access to and promote sustained use of the Library’s educational resources. The Library achieves this mission through collaborations between the Library and the K-12 educational community across the United States. The program contributes to the quality of education by helping teachers use the Library’s digitized primary sources to engage students, develop their critical thinking skills and construct knowledge. Learn more about the Library’s TPS program and other resources available to teachers at:

www.loc.gov/teachers

Teaching with Primary Sources
Vivian Awumey, Program Manager
The Library of Congress
101 Independence Ave., S.E.
Washington, DC 20540-1320
http://www.loc.gov/teachers/tps/
202.707.8740; vawu@loc.gov

Indiana Standards: | Common Core: | C3 Framework: |
---|---|---|
SS. 8.1.4 | RH.6-8.1 | D2.Civ.13.6-8. |
USH.9.2 | RH.6-8.2 | D2.Civ.14.6-8 |
USH.9.3 | RH.6-8.6 | D2.His.2.6-8 |
USH.9.4 | WHST.6-8.10 | D2.His.3.6-8 |

Day 1: Paul Revere Challenges our Perceptions of the Past

Day 2: Eyewitnesses Share their Stories

Indiana Standards: | Common Core: |
---|---|
SS. 8.1.5 | RH.6-8.1 |
USH.9.2 | RH.6-8.2 |
USH.9.3 | RH.6-8.4 |
USH.9.4 | RH.6-8.5 |
USH.9.5 | RH.6-8.6 |
| RH.6-8.7 |
| RH.6-8.8 |
| RH.6-8.9 |
| WHST.6-8.1 |
| WHST.6-8.1.A |
| WHST.6-8.8 |

C3 Framework: |
---|
| D2.Civ.10.6-8 |
| D2.Civ.12.6-8 |
| D2.His.1.6-8 |
| D2.His.6.6-8 |
| D2.His.4.6-8 |
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202.707.8740; vawu@loc.gov

Teaching with Primary Sources
Charlene Volk, Teaching with Primary Sources Implementation Manager
Indiana University
1315 E. Tenth Street, Suite 320
Bloomington, IN 47405-1701
812.856.4706; cvolk@indiana.edu


"The Bloody Massacre" by Paul Revere
Bell Ringer Activity Guide

These are a few of things that my students have noticed about the picture:

1. The soldiers are standing in a line facing the crowd. It appears that they are standing in a battle stance.
2. The captain is standing behind the soldiers and it looks like he is commanding them to shoot.
3. The building behind the men is labeled as “Butcher's Hall.”
4. This man on the ground looks to be dead. Also, there is a dog at his feet. It looks like he was out walking his dog.
5. This man also appears to be dead.
6. It looks like this man has been injured and the other men are picking him up to take him to a doctor.
7. This man is holding his hand out like he is trying to say, “Stop!”
8. The people are all grouped together.
9. This looks like a church in the background. Maybe the colonists were just leaving a church service.
10. This is happening at night.
11. This picture is called “The Bloody Massacre.”
12. This picture was done by Paul Revere.

*There are more things that your students will notice in this picture. I am always surprised at what my students see in this picture.*
TEACHER’S GUIDE
ANALYZING PHOTOGRAPHS & PRINTS

Guide students with the sample questions as they respond to the primary source. Encourage them to go back and forth between the columns; there is no correct order.

OBSERVE
Have students identify and note details.
Sample Questions:
- What do you notice first?
- What people and objects are shown?
- How are they arranged?
- What is the physical setting?
- What do you see?
- What other details can you see?

REFLECT
Encourage students to generate and test hypotheses about the image.
- Why do you think this image was made?
- What’s happening in the image?
- When do you think it was made?
- Who do you think was the audience for this image?
- What tools were used to create this?
- What can you learn from examining this image?
- What’s missing from this image?
- If someone made this today, what would be different?
- What would be the same?

QUESTION
Have students ask questions to lead to more observations and reflections.
- What do you wonder about...
  - who?
  - what?
  - when?
  - where?
  - why?
  - how?

FURTHER INVESTIGATION
Help students to identify questions appropriate for further investigation, and to develop a research strategy for finding answers.
Sample Question: What more do you want to know, and how can you find out?

A few follow-up activity ideas:
Beginning
Write a caption for the image.

Intermediate
Select an image. Predict what will happen one minute after the scene shown in the image. One hour after? Explain the reasoning behind your predictions.

Advanced
Have students expand or alter textbook or other printed explanations of history based on images they study.

For more tips on using primary sources, go to http://www.loc.gov/teachers
Eyewitness Accounts of the Boston Massacre

Boston Citizens

Daniel Usher, Boston citizen
Saw several persons, mostly young folks, gathered between the Town House and Coffee House, some of whom were talking to the sentinel at the Commissioners’ or Custom-house. After some time, the boys at a distance began to throw light snow-balls at him, which he seemed much enraged at and appeared to have charged his gun, giving it a heavy stamp upon the door step, as if to force down the lead... and swore to the boys if they came near him he would blow their brains out.

About ten minutes after this, the deponent saw Captain Preston leading seven or eight men from towards the Town House, and placed them between the Custom-house door, and the sentinel box. About four or five minutes after they were posted, the snowballs now and then coming towards the soldiers, the Captain commanded them to fire. Upon this, one gun quickly went off; and afterwards he said “Fire by all means!” others succeeding, and the deponent being utterly unarmed, to avoid further danger, went up round the Town House till the fray was over.

William Sawyer, Boston citizen
The people kept huzzaing. Damn’ em. Daring’ em to fire. Threw snow balls. I think they hit ‘em. As soon as the snow balls were thrown, and a club, a soldier fired. I heard the club strike upon the Gun and the corner man next the lane said fire and immediately fired. This was the first gun. As soon as he had fired he said “Damn you, fire”. I am so sure that I thought it was he that spoke. That next gun fired and so they fired through pretty quick.

Daniel Cornwall, Boston citizen
Captain Preston was within two yards of me and before the men and nearest to the right and facing the Street. I was looking at him. Did not hear any order. He faced me. I think I should have heard him. I directly heard a voice say “Damn you, why do you fire? Don’t fire”. I thought it was the Captain’s then. I now believe it.

Eyewitness accounts taken from the Alpha History website. See the bibliography for more information.
Eyewitness Accounts of the Boston Massacre

**British Soldier**

**Captain Thomas Preston, British soldier**

The mob still increased and were outrageous, striking their clubs or bludgeons one against another, and calling out “Come on you rascals, you bloody backs, you lobster scoundrels, fire if you dare, God damn you, fire and be damned, we know you dare not”, and much more such language was used. At this time I was between the soldiers and the mob, parleying with and endeavouring all in my power to persuade them to retire peaceably, but to no purpose.

They [the civilians] advanced to the points of the bayonets, struck some of them and even the muzzles of the pieces, and seemed to be endeavouring to close with the soldiers. On which some well behaved persons asked me if the guns were charged. I replied yes. They then asked me if I intended to order the men to fire. I answered no, by no means, observing to them that I was advanced before the muzzles of the men’s pieces, and must fall a sacrifice if they fired; that the soldiers were upon the half cock and charged bayonets, and my giving the word fire under those circumstances would prove me to be no officer.

While I was thus speaking one of the soldiers, having received a severe blow with a stick, stepped a little to one side and instantly fired… On this a general attack was made on the men by a great number of heavy clubs and snowballs being thrown at them, by which all our lives were in imminent danger… some persons at the same time from behind calling out “Damn your bloods, why don’t you fire”. Instantly three or four of the soldiers fired… On my asking the soldiers why they fired without orders, they said they heard the word ‘fire’ and supposed it came from me. This might be the case as many of the mob called out fire, fire, but I assured the men that I gave no such order… that my words were “don’t fire, stop your firing”…

Eyewitness accounts taken from the Alpha History website. See the bibliography for more information.
Boston Massacre: A Picture is Worth a Thousand Words, But is it The Truth?

Before writing this essay, please have the following papers ready to use:
- The Primary Source Analysis Tool that you already filled out
- The Eyewitness Accounts of the Boston Massacre, 1770
*Please reference these papers and cite evidence to explain your thoughts.

**Question:** The picture does not match the personal accounts of the Boston Massacre. Paul Revere drew the picture and this was what people all across the colonies saw in their newspapers. How is the picture different from the eyewitness accounts? Why do you think Revere choose to misrepresent what actually happened at the Boston Massacre?

**Be sure to include:**
- Correct grammar, punctuation, and spelling
- Several examples of how the picture is different from the eyewitness accounts
- The reason why you think Revere choose to draw the picture incorrectly
- The impact this picture could have on the colonists of America

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