

Young America

Comparing Accounts

Overview: After completing this activity, students will have a better understanding of the Boston Massacre by examining it from both Patriot and Loyalist viewpoints.

Age Group/Grade Level: 9-11 years, grades 4-6

Subject Area: Social Studies

Duration: approximately 30 min.

Background

The image of the Boston Massacre at right can be found in virtually every American history textbook in the country. It is an image that has come to symbolize a significant catalyst that directly led to the American Revolution. Although Paul Revere might have been an eyewitness to the confrontation between British soldiers and the colonists, he copied an inaccurate engraving originally made by Henry Pelham, who was likely not at the scene. The print espoused Patriot views and fanned the flames of revolution, becoming an extremely effective piece of political propaganda.

Discussion

Share Paul Revere's *Bloody Massacre* with students. Consider beginning your conversation with the following questions:

- What do you think is happening in this picture? What do you see that makes you say that?
- Three weeks after the massacre, Revere advertised this engraving as for sale in the *Boston Gazette*. Why might he have wanted it in the newspaper?
- Continue your discussion with the "Circle of Viewpoints" Artful Thinking routine (<http://tinyurl.com/CircleViewpoints>). Encourage students to take on the viewpoint of the artist, the Patriots, and the British soldiers.

Activity

Seven months after the Boston Massacre, Captain Thomas Preston, leader of the British 29th Regiment of Foot Soldiers, was tried for murder by a colonial court. Share Capt. Preston's account of the Boston Massacre (at right), written while he awaited trial, with students.

- How is Capt. Preston's version of the event similar to or different from Revere's visual interpretation?

Have students draw a picture of the Boston Massacre from Capt. Preston's description.



Paul Revere, *The Bloody Massacre*, n.d., Museum purchase, 1976.24.4.

Close with a quick discussion:

- Which version do you think is accurate? Based on what evidence?
- Why would Paul Revere want to depict his version?
- How could we figure out what actually happened?

"The mob still increased and were more 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 . . . 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. . . . While I was thus speaking, one of the soldiers having received a severe blow with a stick, stepped a little on one side and instantly fired, on which turning to and asking him why he fired without orders, I was struck with a club on my arm, which for some time deprived me of the use of it, which blow had it been placed on my head, most probably would have destroyed me."

Captain Thomas Preston's Account of the Boston Massacre (<http://www.bostonmassacre.net/trial/acct-preston2.htm>)

For a full-size image of Paul Revere's *The Bloody Massacre*, visit: http://americanart.si.edu/images/1976/1976.24.4_1a.jpg