



The American Revolution: The Boston Massacre, “Yankee Doodle,” and the Declaration of Independence

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UNIT OVERVIEW

Over the course of three lessons, students will explore the Revolutionary era through three primary sources: an image of the Boston Massacre, the song “Yankee Doodle,” and the preamble to the Declaration of Independence. These primary sources provide three ways to understand the ideals of the founders. Students will closely analyze these sources and use visual and textual evidence to draw conclusions. They will demonstrate their knowledge by answering critical thinking questions, restating ideas in their own words, and participating in class discussion.

UNIT OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to

- Read, explain, and evaluate visual and textual primary sources
- Analyze and assess the historical circumstances, events, and/or situations that are depicted in images and texts
- Explain and evaluate the extent to which a song reflects the history and culture of a society
- Evaluate the extent to which Revolutionary era ideas have shaped the nation and the government

ESSENTIAL QUESTION

How have Revolutionary era ideas shaped the nation and its government?

NUMBER OF CLASS PERIODS: 3

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.4.1 and RI.5.1: Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.4.2 and RI.5.2: Determine the main idea of a text and explain how it is supported by key details; summarize the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.4.4 and RI.5.4: Determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words or phrases in a text relevant to a grade 4 or 5 topic or subject area.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.5.9: Integrate information from several texts on the same topic in order to write or speak about the subject knowledgeably.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.4.1D: Review the key ideas expressed and explain their own ideas and understanding in light of the discussion.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.5.1.D: Review the key ideas expressed and draw conclusions in light of information and knowledge gained from the discussions.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.5.1: Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher led) with diverse partners on grade 5 topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.5.2: Summarize a written text read aloud or information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.5.5: Include multimedia components (e.g., graphics, sound) and visual displays in presentations when appropriate to enhance the development of main ideas or themes.

LESSON 1

OVERVIEW

Students will gain a clear understanding of the content and message of Paul Revere's print "The Bloody Massacre Perpetrated in King-Street." Students will analyze the components of the image, draw logical inferences, and demonstrate understanding by completing an activity sheet, explaining their responses, and comparing their responses to the historical interpretation provided.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

By the beginning of 1770, there were 4,000 British soldiers in Boston, a city with 15,000 inhabitants. Tensions were running high because of the Quartering Act, (which forced colonists to take British soldiers into their homes), labor unrest, and a lack of jobs in the city. On the evening of March 5, crowds of day laborers, apprentices, and merchant sailors began to pelt British soldiers with snowballs and rocks. A shot rang out, and then several soldiers fired their weapons. When the skirmish was over, five civilians lay dead or dying, including Crispus Attucks, an African American merchant sailor who had probably escaped from slavery more than twenty years earlier.

Produced just three weeks after the Boston Massacre, Paul Revere's "The Bloody Massacre Perpetrated in King-Street" was probably the most effective piece of war propaganda in American history. Not an accurate depiction of the event, it shows an orderly line of British soldiers firing into an American

crowd and includes a poem that Revere probably wrote himself. Revere based his engraving on one by the artist Henry Pelham, who created the first illustration of the episode—and who was neither paid nor credited for his work.

MATERIALS

- “The Bloody Massacre Perpetrated in King-Street” by Paul Revere (Boston, 1770), The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, GLC01868.
- “Analyzing the Image”
- Teacher’s Resource: “A Guide to Paul Revere’s “The Bloody Massacre.”” Source: “Paul Revere’s engraving of the Boston Massacre, 1770,” Spotlight on Primary Sources, *History Now*, The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, gilderlehrman.org.
- Magnifying glass (optional)
- Chart paper, overhead projector, Elmo, or other method of display

PROCEDURE

Note: Students should know about the disagreements between the colonists and Great Britain that led up to the Boston Massacre.

1. Divide the class into critical thinking groups of five to six students. Give careful consideration to how students are grouped in order to encourage maximum interaction. You may choose to keep them in the same groups for Lesson 2.
2. You may read the first paragraph of the Historical Background to the students, but do not reveal additional information, so that the students base their work on the image itself.
3. Distribute Paul Revere’s “The Bloody Massacre Perpetrated in King-Street.” The image may also be displayed in a large format at the front of the class. Ask the students to study the image for five minutes.
4. Distribute the “Analyzing the Image” activity sheet. Using a magnifying glass and/or a large-screen display will help the students focus on the details in the image.
5. Tell the students that they will examine the image in detail, excluding the poem below the image. The students should consider Revere’s audience and what message he was trying to convey to them.
6. Explain that art is often used to shape a person’s opinion about events or people, and may not be an accurate depiction. Complex prints such as this one require a careful “reading” to decipher the message.

7. Quickly review all three questions and then model the first activity by identifying the people depicted in the print. You may continue to model the questions or direct the students to work on the rest of the questions within their groups and record their findings on the activity sheet. Circulate around the room to monitor discussions and responses to the three questions.
8. Reconvene the class to discuss the answers and examine the various elements students noticed. Elicit different interpretations of the event depicted in the print.
9. Use the bullet point list on the teacher's resource, "A Guide to Paul Revere's 'The Bloody Massacre,' 1770," to help point out hidden elements that students may have overlooked. Throughout the discussion, ask students, "Why do you think Paul Revere included that in the image?"
10. Ask the following questions to guide the discussion:
 - What do you see that shapes your understanding of the era or strikes you as being interesting?
 - Examine the faces of the people in the image. How would you describe the British soldiers? How would you describe the colonists?
 - How many signs can you read in the print? What do they say? Where are they located?
 - Are there any unexpected figures in the print (i.e., the dog, the woman)? Why do you think they are there?
 - Based on your interpretation of the engraving, who is at fault for this "massacre"? How do you know?
11. To conclude the lesson and check for comprehension, ask the students to note how closely their group analysis compares to the historical evidence about the Boston Massacre.

LESSON 2

OVERVIEW

In this lesson the students will examine “Yankee Doodle,” the song most associated with the American Revolution. They will read and answer questions about the origins of the song and use critical thinking skills to demonstrate their understanding of the relationship between the song and its historical context. They will then restate each of the verses in their own words.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Legend places the origin of the lyrics to “Yankee Doodle” in a nursery rhyme that ridiculed the English Civil War leader Oliver Cromwell as a “Nankee Doodle.” The melody comes from European (English, Irish, or Dutch) folk music. The term *doodle* is probably from the Dutch or German word *dodel*, meaning “fool” or “simpleton.” It is believed that during the French and Indian War (1754–1763) the original lyrics of “Yankee Doodle” were written by a British army surgeon, Dr. Richard Shuckburgh (or Schackburg). According to tradition, Dr. Shuckburgh was so taken aback when he saw the poorly dressed Americans fighting alongside the British troops that he changed the words of the original Cromwell nursery rhyme and added new verses, substituting “Yankee” for “Nankee” in the title and referring to the colonists in a derogatory manner as “doodles” (“fools” or “simpletons”).

With words like “dandy” and “macaroni,” Shuckburgh derided the uncultured, unsophisticated, and ragtag colonists, who supposedly thought they could be the height of fashion simply by putting a feather in their caps (“stuck a feather in his cap and called it macaroni”). The Italian macaroni wig and fancy style of clothing were adopted in Great Britain by young men who displayed eccentric mannerisms and extravagant dress. Therefore, the original song was a British parody of American colonists who believed they were just as sophisticated and stylish as Europeans. “Yankee Doodle” became a very popular song with British troops, who enjoyed serenading the American colonists as uncouth country bumpkins. Reportedly, British fifers and drummers teased the colonists with “Yankee Doodle” after their military confrontations at Lexington and Concord.

During the American Revolution, the colonists adopted “Yankee Doodle” as an expression of patriotism and pride. Numerous versions emerged and new verses (nearly two hundred) were added, while other verses were changed or removed as the song evolved. For example, a verse about George Washington was added when he took command of the Continental Army in June 1775. After the Americans defeated the British at the Battle of Saratoga (1777) and the Battle of Yorktown (1781), the Continental Army played and sang “Yankee Doodle” in celebration of their victories. Thus, “Yankee Doodle” began as a mockery of American colonists by the British, became an anthem of military victory among the colonists, and emerged as a humorous and upbeat celebration of American patriotism and pride.

MATERIALS

- “The Origins of ‘Yankee Doodle’”
- “The Origins of ‘Yankee Doodle’”: Critical Thinking Questions
- “Selected Verses from ‘Yankee Doodle’”
- “‘Yankee Doodle’ in Your Own Words”

PROCEDURE

1. Divide the class into critical thinking groups of three to five students.
2. Distribute the reading, “The Origins of ‘Yankee Doodle.’”
3. “Share read” the text with the students. To share read, have the students follow along silently while you begin to read aloud, modeling prosody, inflection, and punctuation. Then ask the class to join in with the reading after a few sentences while you continue to read aloud, still serving as the model for the class. This technique will support struggling readers as well as English language learners (ELL).
4. Distribute the critical thinking questions for “The Origins of ‘Yankee Doodle.’” Ask the students the first question. Demonstrate how to support answers with evidence taken directly from the text of “The Origins of ‘Yankee Doodle.’”
5. The students should work together in their groups to develop an evidentiary answer for each question.
6. Distribute the “Selected Verses from ‘Yankee Doodle’” and either listen to a performance of the song or have the students sing the song with you.
7. Distribute “‘Yankee Doodle’ in Your Own Words.”
8. Students will close read “Yankee Doodle,” one verse at a time, and restate each verse in their own words. For instance, the last verse could be restated as “Captain Davis grabbed his gun and attached a bayonet.” Some of the vocabulary will be unfamiliar, and it will take some interpretation to come up with the meaning.
9. Wrap-up: You may use the following question as a guide for a class discussion or a written assignment: How did the colonists turn an insulting song into a patriotic one?

EXTENSION

Students may research other songs used to build soldiers’ morale, such as “When Johnny Comes Marching Home,” “Dixie,” “Battle Hymn of the Republic,” or a similar song of their choosing.

LESSON 3

OVERVIEW

Students will read and analyze the preamble to the Declaration of Independence, the second of the five sections of the Declaration. They will demonstrate their understanding by restating in their own words each central concept of the Declaration’s preamble.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

During the spring of 1776, colonies, localities, and groups of ordinary Americans—including New York mechanics, Pennsylvania militiamen, and South Carolina grand juries—adopted resolutions endorsing independence. These resolutions encouraged the Continental Congress to appoint a five-member committee to draft a formal declaration of independence. Thomas Jefferson wrote the initial draft of the document, which was then edited by other members of the committee and by Congress as a whole. The most radical idea advanced by the American revolutionaries was the proposition set forth in the Declaration of Independence that “all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.”

The Second Continental Congress, which represented the thirteen British North American colonies, approved the Declaration of Independence, a document that stated governing principles, enumerated a list of grievances, and proclaimed the states’ independence from Great Britain. The preamble (second paragraph) of the Declaration of Independence enumerates five principles of human rights and democracy that served as a “blueprint” for the creation and development of the new:

- Equality: All men are created with equal rights.
- Unalienable rights: All men possess certain natural God-given, inviolable rights—life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.
- Purpose of government: Governments are established to protect these natural, unalienable rights.
- Consent of the governed: Governments receive their authority and powers from the people and their purpose is to serve the people.
- Right of revolution: Whenever governments become unjust and no longer serve the public interest, the people have the right to overthrow such governments and establish new ones.

Since the colonists believed such “a long Train of Abuses” had occurred under the rule of George III, they had the right to revolt against Great Britain and establish a new country, the United States of America.

MATERIALS

- “The Preamble to the Declaration of Independence”
- “Summarizing the Preamble to the Declaration of Independence”

PROCEDURE

1. You may choose to have the students work individually, as partners, or in small groups of three to five students.
2. Discuss the information in the Historical Background. Explain that Thomas Jefferson wrote the Declaration in five parts: the introduction, preamble, grievances against the king, appeals to the king, and conclusion, in which he declared the country’s right to be free and independent of Great Britain.
3. Distribute the reading, “The Preamble to the Declaration of Independence.”
4. Share read the text with the students as described in Lesson 2.
5. Distribute “Summarizing the Preamble to the Declaration of Independence.” You may choose to display the activity sheet for the entire class. This activity is designed to build critical thinking skills and help the students develop effective strategies for reading difficult texts. The vocabulary will be the most difficult barrier. Let students discuss possible meanings for the unfamiliar words, and only provide definitions or synonyms when they are truly stuck.
6. If necessary, show the students how to use the answers to the questions to construct a summary. For example, “It’s obvious that people were created equal and that God gave them the right to live free and pursue their dreams. Governments were made by people to protect their rights, and if the government won’t protect those rights, then the people can make a new government. This new government must make sure that people are safe and happy. But don’t throw out the government without a really good reason. People will put up with bad things just because they don’t like to change what they’re used to; but if the government keeps abusing people’s rights, then you need a new government that can provide security for the future.”
7. Lead a class discussion on how the ideas in the preamble to the Declaration of Independence have shaped the United States and its government, even to this day. Make sure that students use quotations from the text to illustrate or support their points.
8. Based on the knowledge that the students acquired from the lessons, assign a brief essay response to the Essential Question: How have Revolutionary era ideas shaped the nation and its government? The students should support their ideas and views with evidence from the documents.