



NSDAR Educational Resources Committee

The Unhappy Disturbance on King Street (The Boston Massacre 1770)

Contributor: Virginia Howard Mullan **Grade Level:** 3-4

1. **Identify the standards to be addressed:**

Determine the relevance of the information: a. Assess the author's evidence to support claims and assertions, noting instances of bias and stereotypes in a variety of visual and audio materials. b. Evaluate sources for fact, opinion, propaganda, currency, and relevance.

2. **Statement of the objective and lesson outcomes:**

Students will understand that propaganda is not a modern technique of persuasion.

3. **Materials, resources, and technology to be used by teacher/students:**

Hauptman, Laurence M. "From Boston's Streets to Bunker Hill: Southern New England Indians in the American Revolution." *National Museum of the American Indian*, 2019. This is where students will learn that Cripus Attucks was not only Black but also American Indian. He was of mixed Indian and African ancestry and born around 1723. The Indians from Nantick were longtime allies of the colonists in wars against the French.

Hudgins, Bill "The Boston Massacre After 250 Years, Much Remains Uncertain About This Seminal Event" *American Spirit Magazine*, 2020 pp. 26-29. This article talks about trouble brewing for months between soldiers and townspeople.

Smith, Page. "The Boston Massacre." *A People's History of the United States*, vol. 1, McGraw-Hill, 1976. Pp.331-340. This book has lots of specifics about people's names and actions during the incident.

The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, *The Founding Era: People, Places, Politics: History in a Box*. 2005 page 16 This is where I learned Revere's historic engraving was probably the most important piece in war propaganda in American history. This also had James Woodall's eyewitness description of Captain Thomas Preston in it.

YouTube, A and E History, 31 Jan. 2017, www.youtube.com/watch?v=R6WHCeliJv4&t=15s. YouTube has several short videos on the Boston Massacre, find one that fits your needs.

4. **Introduction of the topic:**

Have students talk about a time they tried to talk someone into something. This generally takes 10 minutes in a class of 20. Analyze if they used force, exaggeration, promise of future benefits, or withholding of information.

5. **Procedure for instruction:**

First: Have students define what a massacre is. Have students generate numbers that they could expect of human deaths if there was a massacre. Write these numbers on the board (If teaching multiple subjects, this would be a great time to use these numbers to create a box and whiskers and establish what the outliers are).

Second: Define what propaganda is: information, especially of a biased or misleading nature, used to promote or publicize a particular political cause or point of view. Punctuate the definition with any examples of it that came forth when you asked students about how they got someone to do something they didn't want to do.

Third: Hand out, or have students look in their social studies books, at Paul Revere's engraving of the Boston Massacre. Have students explain what is happening. Who are the aggressors? What does it mean when someone like Captain Thomas Preston has his sword raised over his head (on the right of the engraving). What weapons, if any, are the colonists holding? Let the students know that, "produced just three weeks after the Boston Massacre, Paul Revere's historic engraving was probably the most effective piece of war propaganda in American history. Not an accurate depiction of the actual event, it shows an orderly line of British soldiers firing into an American crowd."(Gilder Lehrman, 2005)

Fourth: Tell students the story of the day: So many people think that the Boston Massacre started with Captain Thomas Preston giving the order to fire.....but March 5th 1770 was more than a culmination of Bostonians being tired of paying money for the quartering act, they were also tired of competing for jobs with the British soldiers who were trying to make ends meet since they were underpaid by the crown, and of course people of Boston were just tired of the British occupation. But the unfortunate incident on King Street on that particular day had to do with two boys.

The first boy was ten year old Christopher Seider who was killed by Ebenezer Richardson who was in the British Army on February 22, 1770- eleven days before the "Unhappy disturbance on King Street." Richardson was found guilty of murder, but never hanged. The colonists were outraged that Richardson didn't face immediate consequences for the death of the Christopher. Tensions were bubbling in Boston.

On March 2nd there was a conflict between some rope-makers and a British Soldier. The rope-makers used large sticks, like a small baseball bat, in their trade and after insults were exchanged a group of them beat a soldier with their sticks until he fled.

There was a feeling of tension in the air. Which brings us to Edward Garrick who is the second boy, Edward Garrick stood in the shadows on March 5, 1770 calling taunts and insults to a British Soldier or Lobster back, by the name of Hugh White, who stood guard in front of the Custom House. The Custom House was built at the end of the City docks, to facilitate inspection and registration of cargo, which was also an irritation to the merchants of Boston. Private White dared Garrick to come into the light and show himself. When Garrick did, White chased him down and hit him in the mouth with the butt of his musket. Garrick fled but was chased by another member of the guard who slashed him with a bayonet. Garrick cried out as White struck him again. The townspeople were outraged by the violence against the boy and started to gather on King Street. Someone went to ring the fire bell. Some boys started throwing snow balls at the British soldiers who were running back to the Custom House. Snowballs were easy to get since there was almost a foot of snow from the day before, but now some of it was ice.

The fire bell drew a crowd, some with buckets of water. Soon some rope-makers who worked by the docks joined the boys, Crispus Attucks was one of these. They threw snowballs, but some of the snowballs had rocks in them. Some of them threw ice, and some threw rocks without any pretense of snow. The citizens of Boston grew into a mob and Private Hugh White called for reinforcements. Some other British soldiers came running. A few men like Johnathan W. Austin and Captain Thomas Preston were trying to calm people down. Soldiers came running out of nearby barracks and aimed their guns, officers knocked their guns to the side and put them on report. The British army was under standing orders not to fire at any people in Boston.

Rope-makers used their tools to club soldiers. There was much swearing, yelling, and taunting from both sides. Some people started ripping up picket fences and throwing the pieces at the soldiers. One soldier, Montgomery was pushed down by the surging crowd. He continued to swear and when he regained his feet he shot over the head of the citizens, swearing and yelling, "fire." He didn't hit anybody and the crowd thought there were blanks in his gun and they surged forward again. The people in front were being pushed into the soldier's bayonets. In

the chaos a British soldier named Killroy was being taunted by some citizens who were asking, “Why don’t you shoot us?” by Sam Gray, who was drunk, and his friend. Killroy’s patience evaporated and he shot and killed Sam Gray. An unknown soldier shot a double barrel that entered Crispus Attucks chest and killed him instantly. But the mob was so big, most people didn’t know anyone had been seriously hurt and the soldiers were still being hit with rocks and sticks. Townspeople were using fence posts and sticks to hit soldier’s bayonets. Then two more shots were fired and Patrick Carr, an Irish immigrant and apprentice to a breeches maker who was retreating was shot in the hip and it took out most of his backbone. 17 year old Samuel Maverick had started to run home, when a bullet ricocheted and struck him in the chest, killing him. There were a few other wounds, The crowd finally realized that some people had died and drew back. Captain Preston was yelling at his men not to fire. Shock and incredulity paralyzed many people as they realized what had happened.

Preston finally got his men under control and the crowd retreated and took care of the three dead. Two more citizens would die of wounds suffered, for a total of five people who died from the exchange.

Sam Adams started calling the incident on King Street a massacre and got Paul Revere to create his engraving which was completely biased toward the towns people of Boston and not a representation of the days events. Sam Adams wanted to send copies made by the engraving to the other colonies to encourage them to join Boston in resisting the British.

The Gilder Lehrman Institution calls Paul Revere’s engraving the most successful piece of War Propaganda in America’s History.

6. Lesson closure:

Have students pretend to be a British private serving in front of the Common House on March 5, 1770. Students will write a five to seven minute journal entry about their day on King Street. If there was enough time, students could share their writing. Or if the teacher wanted to give this lesson more time they could have students share their writing and then discuss if the journal entries are a fair representation of the events of the day.

7. Assessment of student understanding:

Students will either:

- A. Use art to create a more factual depiction of the events of March 5, 1770 or
- B. Write about living in Boston and, after witnessing the events of March 5, describe their family’s discussion about the unfortunate events on King Street. or
- C. Conduct a class interview where they ask adults around school or in their homes about what happened during the Boston Massacre and see if Paul Revere’s propaganda persists today.