

## Unit 6, Lesson 11: Was it a “massacre”?

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### Lesson Overview

In this lesson students will examine engravings of the Boston Massacre to draw conclusions about whether they are credible or examples of propaganda. The lesson draws attention to the use of propaganda during the American Revolution.

*\*Note: This lesson should follow Unit 6, Lesson 10: Scripted Mock Trial - Boston “Massacre” or after the teacher builds students’ background knowledge of the Boston Massacre.*

### Delaware Standard(s)

- **History Standard 2a, 4-5 [Analysis]:** Students will draw historical conclusions and construct historical accounts from primary and secondary source materials
- **History Standard 3, 4-5 [Interpretation]:** Students will explain why historical accounts of the same event sometimes differ and relate this explanation to the evidence presented or the point-of-view of the author.

**Big Ideas:** Propaganda

### Essential Questions

- Was it a “massacre”? If not, why is it called that?

### Enduring Understandings

- Students will understand that most historians do not view the events of March 5, 1770, as a massacre. Both the term and engravings of the event were examples of propaganda used to achieve goals such as making the British appear guilty, rallying colonists to the side of the patriots, and getting the soldiers removed from the city of Boston.

### Resources

- [Google Slides](#)
- [Resource 1: Evidence Analysis Tool](#)
- [Teacher Resource 1b: Evidence Analysis Tool](#)
- [Resource 2: Draw the Scene](#)
- [Resource 3: Paul Revere’s Drawing of What Happened on March 5, 1770](#)
- [Resource 4: Boston Massacre by William L. Champney](#)
- [Resource 5: Venn Diagram](#)
- [Resource 6: About Crispus Attucks](#)
- [Resource 7: Letter from Henry Pelham to Paul Revere](#)
- [Resource 8: Did Paul Revere Plagiarize](#)

## Procedures

1. **Reviewing Details:** Distribute copies of [Resource 1: Evidence Analysis Tool](#). Describe how the tool is to be used. Read the questions aloud to the students. Make sure they understand what each question is asking. Then, ask students to work independently and fill in Column 2 of this tool - **ONLY COLUMN 2**. Their answers at this time should be based exclusively on the conclusions that they arrived at based on what they learned previously from readings and what witnesses said during the mock trial of Captain Preston.
2. **Small Group Discussion:** After students have filled in Column 2 independently, have them discuss answers with a partner or in small groups. They should not change their answers. Simply discuss similarities and differences. [see plausible answers on [Teacher Resource 1b: Evidence Analysis Tool](#) - not to be shared with students at this time]
3. **Orchestrate a Whole Group Discussion:** While students are writing down and discussing their answers, listen in for interesting or competing answers. For example, some might not be based on anything witnesses said. Be sure to emphasize that answers should be based on what was said at the mock trial. Call on students with interesting responses. Compare those answers with others grounded in witness statements. Or take polls to see how the majority answers each question. There is no absolutely correct answer but there are plausible answers based on evidence. The information presented by witnesses at the mock trial is based on what witnesses actually reported.
4. **Extend the Discussion:** Ask the following...
  - a. Did all of the witnesses who testified at the trial give similar answers?
  - b. Why do you think different people gave different answers?
5. **Mapping the Scene:** Distribute copies of [Resource 2: Draw the Scene](#). Have students use Resource 2 to draw what the scene from the Boston Massacre looked like at the moment that the shootings took place in as much detail as possible. Requirements include:
  - a. Showing how the soldiers were lined up and where.
  - b. Correct number of soldiers that were there.
  - c. Where Captain Preston was standing at the moment that they shots were fired.
  - d. Approximate number of colonists and where they stood in relation to the soldiers.

Students can draw human or stick figures, or use letter symbols such as:

S = soldier

P = Captain Preston

C = Colonist

Given the large number of colonists present, it will be best to use the "C" symbol to show their estimated numbers and locations.

6. **Present Mapped Conclusions:** Students will likely have very different conclusions about all of this. Invite some students with different conclusions to present and explain their conclusions while projecting their drawings on something like an Elmo. Ask them - what information from Resource 2 supports their conclusions? Why might there be different conclusions?
7. **Document Analysis:** Project or distribute copies of [Resource 3: Paul Revere's Drawing of What Happened on March 5, 1770](#). Have students work with a partner to answer the same questions

on Resource 1 but, this time, their answers should be based on Resource 3 - Paul Revere's "engraving." In this section of the lesson, students should record their responses in Column 3 of Resource 3.

8. **Debrief with the Class:** See answers for Column 3 based on the drawing on [Teacher Resource 1b: Evidence Analysis Tool](#). Have them compare their answers in Columns 2 and 3. Are they the same...different?
9. **Deeper Dive Discussion:** Ask the students the following questions in the whole group...
  - a. Does the drawing seem to be accurate?
  - b. Who created this? Does anyone know anything about the person who distributed this drawing? Why might this matter?
  - c. Does the drawing appear to be biased? Explain.
  - d. Why did the artist show Captain Preston raising his sword?
  - e. Why does the artist only show approximately 20 people in the crowd?
  - f. Why does the artist include a puppy dog in the crowd?
  - g. Notice the woman in the crowd wearing a black shawl and clasping her hands. Why might the artist have included her in this drawing?
  - h. Why do you think the artist labeled the Customs House - "Butchers Hall?"
  - i. Why do you think the artist included someone firing a gun out of "Butchers Hall?"
  - j. What title did the artist give to the drawing? Why do you think he chose this title?
10. **Vocabulary Development (Part 1):** Focus students' attention to the title of Paul Revere's engraving - "The Bloody Massacre". Project or display the word "Massacre." The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines a "massacre" as "an instance of killing a number of usually helpless or unresisting human beings under circumstances of atrocity or cruelty."
  - a. **Think-Pair-Share:** Have students discuss the following question in small groups - Were the events of March 5, 1770, a massacre? Emphasize that they should base their conclusions on the definition and use evidence from the readings and mock trial to support their conclusions.
  - b. **Debrief:** Most students of the massacre agree that the events of March 5, 1770, do not qualify as a massacre. Say, "so, if it was not a massacre, why did the person who created the drawing label it a massacre?"
11. **Vocabulary Development (Part 2):** Project or display the word "propaganda." Share the following definition - "propaganda" is inaccurate or partially inaccurate and misleading information that is used to try to make people believe what someone wants them to believe. Propaganda is used to make people believe something that is false or inaccurate so that someone or something is made to look better or worse than they are."
  - a. Ask students to think of examples of propaganda.
  - b. Ask students - do you think Paul Revere's drawing of the events of March 5, 1770, an example of propaganda? Why or why not?
  - c. What, if anything, seems to be misleading in the "Bloody Massacre" drawing?
  - d. What does Paul Revere want the people who look at his drawing to believe?
  - e. What can we assume about Paul Revere based on this drawing? Was he for the English or against the English in the revolution?

12. **Close Read Slideshow of the Engraving:** The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American history offers a brief and effective slideshow that highlights notable elements of the Boston Massacre engraving. Visit [here](#) to preview then share with students.
13. **Compare and Contrast Images:** distribute or project copies of [Resource 4: Boston Massacre by William L. Champney](#) and [Resource 5: Venn Diagram](#). Have them work in small groups or with a partner to identify similarities and differences in the works of Paul Revere and William Champney. Review students' responses.

For the Teacher: Read more about Champney's painting [here](#).

14. **Discussion**

- a. Which drawing of the events of March 5 seems more accurate given the evidence that you heard during the mock trial?
  - b. When were each of the images drawn? Why might this matter? Is one of them more or less credible because of when it was drawn?
  - c. Why might William Champney's 1856 drawing center Crispus Attucks? *[students will probably have no idea, but their thinking may be worth hearing. Recall that 1856 is just a few years before the Civil War. The anti-slavery movement is in high gear. Champney's drawing centers Attucks as a first martyr of American freedom. His sacrifice centered in the drawing highlights an emotional reason why the enslavement of Black Americans should be ended]*
15. **Spotlight on Famous People:** Distribute copies of [Resource 6: About Crispus Attucks](#) and have students read about Crispus Attucks or communicate the information via a mini lecture.
  16. **Optional Extension: Did Paul Plagiarize?** Distribute a copy of [Resource 7: Letter from Henry Pelham to Paul Revere](#). Tell students that Henry Pelham and Paul Revere were friends at the time of the "Boston Massacre." Shortly after March 5th, Revere visited Pelham. Pelham showed Revere a copy of a drawing (engraving) that he was creating. Set a purpose for reading the letter by asking students to focus on the question - *why is Pelham writing to Revere?* Have students read the letter and discuss their answers with a partner.
  17. **Analyzing Evidence:** Write the word "plagiarize" for all to see. Ask if anyone can explain what the word means *[to take the work or ideas of someone else and pass them off as one's own]*. Explain how serious plagiarism is and that Henry Pelham was accusing Paul Revere of plagiarizing.
  18. Project a copy of [Resource 8: Did Paul Revere Plagiarize](#) for students to see. It shows Henry Pelham's engraving on the left and Paul Revere's on the right. Discuss - does the evidence support Henry Pelham's claim that Paul Revere plagiarized his work.

This offers a teachable moment during which you can discuss the dishonor associated with plagiarizing and other consequences of doing it.

19. **Debrief:** revisit the essential question for the lesson.

**Video Extension:** You might consider the 45 minute edition of *Unsolved History: The Boston Massacre* [here](#). Bear in mind that videos often have a considerable impact on what students take away from a lesson so, if you want them to walk away with their own evidence-based conclusions, the video might not be a good idea.