

## Unit 6, Lesson 14: Battle of Lexington - Who Fired First?

---

### Lesson Overview

In this lesson, students analyze conflicting primary source accounts of the first shots fired at the battle of Lexington - what would become the War for Independence. The main focus of the lesson is Delaware History Standard 3 and the expectation that students will be able to explain why there might be different accounts of the same event.

### Delaware Content Standards

- History Standard 1, 4-5 [Chronology]: Students will study historical events and persons within a given time frame in order to create a chronology and identify related cause-effect factors.
- 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:** chronology, cause-effect, competing accounts, point of view, sourcing.

### Essential Question:

- Why might there be different accounts of the same event?

### Enduring Understandings:

Students will understand that there might be competing accounts of the same event due to different points of view of those who create accounts or the evidence they used to support their accounts.

### Resources:

- [Google Slides](#)
- [Resource 1: Warm-Up](#)
- [Resource 2: Background Information](#)
- [Resource 3: Battle of Lexington Chronology](#)
- [Resource 4: Accounts of the Battle of Lexington](#)
- [Resource 5: Recording Conclusions](#)
- [Resource 6: Paul Revere's Ride by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow](#)
- [Resource 7: Concord Hymn by Ralph Waldo Emerson](#)

### Procedures:

1. **Warm-Up:** Distribute copies of [Resource 1 - Point of View Warm-Up](#) to the students. Go over the directions then have students complete the two activities.
2. **Debrief the Warm-up:** review questions and responses to the activities. Tell students to keep "point of view" in mind as they go through today's lesson.
3. **Introduce the Inquiry - Who fired First?** Explain to the students that the battle of Lexington is commonly viewed as the first battle of the war between the colonies and their mother country - Great Britain. The war is not yet one for independence. Rather, it is a war being fought in defense of what the colonists view as their rights. This lesson is

one in which they will address the question *who fired the first shot at the battle of Lexington?* They will read about why this is an important question. Students will have two primary sources and two video clips as resources to help them answer the question.

4. **Building Context:** Distribute copies of [Resource #2: Background Information](#). Project a copy of the map on Resource 2 for all to see. Have students read the background information, taking time to pause and check for understanding after each section (can students answer the Section header questions), then have them do a paired summary.
  - a. Student 1 summarizes the reading with details
  - b. Student 2 listens to Student 1's summary then enhances it by filling in important details.
5. **Create a Horizontal Timeline:** distribute copies of [Resource 3: Battle of Lexington Chronology](#). Have students create a horizontal timeline using the events that are bulleted above the blank timeline on Resource 3.
  - a. Then, have them analyze their timelines and identify one CAUSE and one EFFECT based on the information, writing answers at the bottom of the page.
6. **Developing the Ability to Source:** project the following information for students to see.
  - a. George Doe - British Soldier
  - b. George Roe - Colonist
  - c. Ask - if these two men were asked who started the problems between the colonies and their mother country, what can we reasonably infer each man would say and why?
  - d. Explain that they just "sourced." Historians always source documents. Sourcing involves looking at who wrote or created something to try to get a better understanding of why they may have written or created what they did. This is an important skill to have, and it is important that students learn to source information. In fact, historians source a document before they ever begin reading it. Keep this in mind as you do the next activity.
  - e. See [Resource 4](#). It offers two accounts of the opening shots fired at Lexington on April 19, 1775. Give one student Source 1 and the other Source 2. Their purpose for reading is to use primary source evidence to try to figure out who fired the first shot at Lexington that led to the deaths of 8 colonists. Students are to read their document and underline the sentence that BEST identifies who allegedly fired the first shot. This is important because whoever fired first can be blamed for starting the battle, causing the deaths, and possibly for starting war. This increases the probability that the "victims" can rally their people behind the cause.
7. **Share and Record Findings:** Distribute copies of [Resource 5](#), have students share what they uncovered in the documents and record their findings on the resource's chart.
8. **Whole Group Discussion:**
  - a. Did you source your document before reading? Were you able to predict what the source would say based on the sourcing strategy? [\[they could have if they did not\]](#)
  - b. Do we know who fired the first shot after reading the accounts of people who witnessed the battle of Lexington? [\[no\]](#)
  - c. Why might there be two different accounts of the same event? **[VERY IMPORTANT QUESTION to develop mastery of History standard 3. The learning**

target - students can explain that there might be two different accounts because of the authors' points of view, just as they learned from the Warm-Up]

9. **History Goes to Hollywood.** Research has shown that students often acquire their “knowledge” of the past from movies. There are two video clips that focus on the battle of Lexington. They appear below. Show the video clips and ask the students to pay close attention to how the movies answer the question - who fired the first shot. Questions you should ask after viewing either or both of the videos include:

- a. According to the movie, who fired the first shot - the colonists or British soldiers?
- b. Does it appear that the people who made the movie read the same primary source documents that you read? Explain.
- c. Which primary source document is each movie clip based on?

10. **Hollywood Clips - Battle of Lexington**

- a. April Morning is available free on YouTube [here](#) or <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZsB6e2sTFy4> [video clip is 9:22 in length]
- b. **Johnny Tremain** - purchase required. Available on Amazon for \$8.99 or to rent for \$3.99 but the clip from April Morning is fine by itself. The Tremain video offers a slightly different account and will allow for comparing and contrasting while also adding another layer to the question - why might there be different accounts? In this instance, it can be tied to the use of different evidence (or primary sources that the students analyzed).
- c. Things to draw attention to as students watch the video:
  - i. the video offers a nice illustration of what a “green” or “Commons” looked like in the Colonial era
  - ii. help students visualize what a “militia” looked like - not full-time soldiers but a military force that is used to supplement or substitute for a professional army
  - iii. the manner in which the British and other European armies fought - standing across from their enemy like on a chessboard. This was the manly, honorable way to fight. The colonists learned how to fight “Indian style” during the French and Indian war and will use that strategy to help win their War for Independence.
  - iv. drummers - many ask why have a drummer among the soldiers. Different drum beats were used to inform soldiers what they should do - march slowly, charge, retreat etc. - at a time when it was difficult for a commanding officer’s voice to be heard at distances or during battles when guns and cannons were booming.

11. **Debrief:**

- a. Revisit the essential question for the lesson i.e., Why might there be different accounts of the same event?
- b. Highlight the importance of the battle of Lexington, a battle many view as the opening conflict of the American Revolution and soon to be War for Independence.

12. **Extensions:**

- a. Excerpts or copies of Paul Revere’s Ride by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and Concord Hymn by Ralph Waldo Emerson appear below as [Resources 6](#) and

[Resource 7](#). Worth reading to the students, and they are embedded icons in American culture.

- b. It is also worth asking students - what did Emerson mean by “the shot heard round the world?” [one interpretation - the American Revolution inspired a series of revolutions around the world by people motivated to overthrow oppressors and live free and equal. Revolutions in other places occurred not long after the American Revolution e.g., French Revolution, Haitian Revolution etc. That shot is still being heard.]