

Guiding Question: How did Patriot leaders use the media of the time to influence colonists and persuade them to support the protests against the British government?

Document-based Writing Activity

The Bloody Massacre and Patriot Propaganda

Leaders, groups and governments sometimes use propaganda to get people to support a cause. *Propaganda* is ideas and statements that are often exaggerated, emotional, and/or false, and are spread in order to help a cause, a political leader, or a government gain popular support.

Document and Image Analysis

Analyze Paul Revere's engraving "The Bloody Massacre," and a historians' account of the event, using the questions and the chart below.

Writing

Once you have completed the document analysis, write *three short paragraphs*:

- **Paragraph 1:** Describe one way in which Paul Revere's depiction of the Boston Massacre differs from what historians believe actually happened.
- **Paragraph 2:** Describe a second way in which Paul Revere's depiction of the Boston Massacre differs from what historians believe actually happened.
- **Paragraph 3:** Explain how Revere's engraving was propaganda that helped gain support to the Patriot cause throughout the colonies.

Document 1

The Bloody Massacre

Creator: Paul Revere

Date: March 28, 1770

Published in: Prints advertised and sold by Paul Revere

Source type: Colorized Engraving

Introduction: In Boston, tensions between colonists and British soldiers led to a confrontation that left five Boston workers dead when British troops fired into a crowd. Paul Revere, a well-known silversmith and a Patriot leader, published this illustration titled "The Bloody Massacre" three weeks after the incident. The event quickly became known as the Boston Massacre.

Time: At least 60 minutes

Instructions

Goal/Intent: In this activity students analyze Paul Revere's engraving "The Bloody Massacre," and a historian's account of the event, using analysis questions and a graphic organizer. They then write two paragraphs that explain two ways that Revere's engraving "The Bloody Massacre" was propaganda for the Patriot cause.

Activity Introduction (5 min):

Ask students if they can generate a definition of *propaganda*. Help them with this definition — propaganda is ideas or statements that are often exaggerated or false and are spread in order to help a cause, a political leader, or a government, gain support.

Document Analysis (20 min)

This activity presents two sources—Paul Revere's famous engraving depicting the Boston Massacre and a historian's account of what happened written in 2014.

The analysis questions that follow the documents guide students through a close reading of each source.

Optionally, after analyzing each source, students can complete the graphic organizer to help them prepare for the writing task.

Essay Writing (40 min)

Have students use their analysis questions, responses and the graphic organizer to write three short paragraphs explaining how Paul Revere's engraving manipulates and exaggerates what happened at the Boston Massacre in order to gain support for the Patriot cause.

Teaching Suggestions

- Use class time to begin the



Caption: The bloody massacre perpetrated in King Street Boston on March 5th 1770 by a party of the 29th Regt.

“The Bloody Massacre” Analysis Questions

1. How does Revere help the viewer tell apart the colonists and the British soldiers?

2. How does Paul Revere portray the **COLONISTS** and their role in this event?

A. **Circle** some colonists and write a note about what you see. For example:

- What positions are their bodies in?
- What objects, if any, are they carrying?
- What are they doing?

B. Based on your observations, how did Paul Revere want people to **think about** the colonist’s role in the Boston Massacre?

Document Analysis; display the image of Revere’s engraving for the classroom so that students can share observations and analysis as a whole group.

- Allow students to complete the **Document Analysis** activities with partners. After completing the graphic organizer, they can switch partners to share their analysis.

Additional Scaffolding

If your students need support in completing this activity, consider the following suggestions for scaffolding the task:

- Require a shorter written response. You may decide to reduce the volume of writing you ask your students to complete to one paragraph or three sentences.
- Provide students with sentence starters or a model outline to help complete their paragraphs. Consider adapting the following outline:

Intro: Propaganda is exaggerated, emotional, and often false statements that are spread in order to help a cause, a political leader, or a government gain popular support. Paul Revere’s engraving “The Bloody Massacre” is propaganda in two ways.

First, Revere shows colonists to be _____.

Examples and details are:

But according to historians, the colonists were actually _____.

Examples and details are:

Second, Revere shows soldiers to be _____.

Examples and details are:

3. How does Paul Revere portray the **SOLDIERS** and their role in this event?

A. **Circle** some soldiers and write a note about what you see. For example:

- What positions are their bodies in?
- What objects, if any, are they carrying?
- What are they doing?

B. Based on your observations, how did Paul Revere want people to **think about** the soldiers' role in the Boston Massacre?

Document 2

Boston, March 5, 1770 — A Historian's Account

Creator: American Social History Project, City University of New York

Date: 2014

Source type: Historical Essay (secondary source)

Introduction:

After the Boston Massacre, the British soldiers and Bostonians had very different views about what had happened. The excerpt below, written in 2014, describes what historians know about that night and the days that followed.

Document Text:

In the winter of 1770, the residents of Boston were protesting British policies and clashed frequently with the British soldiers stationed in their city. On March 5th, feelings were still running high from the funeral of an 11-year old boy killed by a British customs official a few days earlier. Around 9 p.m., a group of young men **confronted** a British **sentry** guarding the **customs house** on King Street. As the crowd grew, the lone soldier was joined by Captain Thomas Preston and seven more soldiers, who tried to persuade the crowd to **disperse**.

Instead, the crowd (made up of about 300 people) taunted the British soldiers and threw snowballs and **brickbats** at them. Amid the confusion, the soldiers opened fire in a random way. In all, 11 Bostonians were hit by bullets; three died instantly, one died the next day, and one more died two weeks later. That night, Massachusetts governor Thomas Hutchinson could only convince the crowd to go home by promising that there would be a fair

But according to historians, the soldiers were actually

_____.

Examples and details are:

Conclusion: I think Revere's engraving helped gain support for the Patriot cause throughout the colonies because _____.

inquiry into the shootings. The next morning, Captain Preston and all eight of the soldiers were arrested.

Word Bank

confronted - approached in a hostile way

sentry - a soldier standing guard at an entrance

customs house — a place where taxes are paid or collected

disperse - to break up

brickbats - a piece of hard material (such as a brick); usually used to throw at a target

inquiry - official government investigation, or a study of an event

Historian's Account Analysis Questions

1. Why were there tensions between colonists and British soldiers before the night of March 5th, according to historians?

2. What actions did colonists *really* take on the night of the Boston Massacre, according to the historians?

Underline *two passages* that describe colonists' actions, and write what they mean in your own words:

3. How would you summarize the colonists' role in the Boston Massacre?

4. What actions did soldiers *really* take on the night of the Boston Massacre, according to the historians?

Underline *two passages* that describe soldiers' actions, and write what they mean in your own words:

5. How would you summarize the soldiers' role in the Boston Massacre?

“The Bloody Massacre” Analysis Graphic Organizer

Paul Revere's Engraving	Historians' Account
How Paul Revere portrays the colonists :	What colonists' actual roles were:
How Paul Revere portrays the soldiers :	What soldiers' actual roles were:
What elements of Revere's engraving make it propaganda (false, exaggerated, emotional persuasion)?	