

The Ballad of Paul Revere

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Overview. This module is part of an interdisciplinary biography unit on Paul Revere, featuring Grant Wood’s painting, “The Midnight Ride of Paul Revere,” John Copley’s portrait, “Paul Revere,” and Longfellow’s literary ballad, “Paul Revere’s Ride.”



Prior to the lessons in this module, students constructed theories about Paul Revere’s ride based on multiple sources, including Grant Wood’s painting, Longfellow’s ballad, maps, timelines, and primary sources. They compared artistic and poetic representations of the ride with Revere’s own account, distinguishing fact from fiction and pondering the question—*Was Longfellow a poet or a historian?* During fieldwork at the Paul Revere House and the Old North Church, students discovered that there is more to remember about Paul Revere than his legendary ride. Revere was a messenger for the revolution, but he was also a bell ringer, a caring father, a skilled craftsman, a businessman, a dentist, a patriot, a spy, a bell ringer, a bell maker, and more.

During this module, students worked in pairs to research the many facets of Paul Revere’s life. After learning about the role of broadside ballads in colonial America and analyzing mentor ballads—noticing their structure, rhyming patterns, and use of language—students wrote their own ballad stanzas to tell Paul Revere’s story, set to the tune of the ballad “Revolutionary Tea.” They crafted facts and details from their research into rhyming stanzas, then worked to revise their lines to fit the meter of the song. The best stanzas from each pair were compiled to create the class “Ballad of Paul Revere.” Students then illustrated their stanzas using a scratchboard engraving technique, and published their ballad as a chapbook—a small booklet that was popular in the colonies and sold by peddlers or chapmen. The unit culminated with students performing their ballad at the Old North Church and donating their chapbook to the Paul Revere House.

Time Frame. 6 weeks, 1 hour per day

Grade Level. grade 3

Curricular Connections. history, language arts, music, visual arts

Guiding Questions

- *How do art, music, and literature shape our pictures of the past?*
- *Why do we remember Paul Revere?*

Learning Targets

(Learning targets are goals or objectives that guide instruction. They are written in concrete, student-friendly language, shared with students, and tracked carefully by students and teachers during the learning process.)

- *I can determine the main idea and supporting details in two different sources about Paul Revere.*
- *I can notice and identify the features and meter of a ballad.*
- *I can use rhyming words, alliteration, and other ballad features to compose stanzas that tell important facts about Paul Revere.*

Common Core Standards and Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks

Massachusetts Grade 3 Social Studies Frameworks

- Explain important political, economic, and military developments leading to and during the American Revolution. (the Boston Tea Party, the beginning of the Revolution at Lexington and Concord, revolutionary leaders such as Sam Adams, John Hancock and Paul Revere)
- After reading a biography of a person from Massachusetts, summarize the person's life and achievements, (Paul Revere)

Common Core English Language Arts & Literacy in History and Social Studies

- Identify elements of poetry (e.g. rhyme, rhythm, figurative language, alliteration, and onomatopoeia)
- Determine the main idea of a text; recount the key details and explain how they support the main idea.
- Use text features and search tools (e.g. key words, sidebars, hyperlinks) to locate information relevant to a given topic efficiently.
- Compare and contrast the most important points and key details presented in two texts on the same topic.
- Write poems in which figurative language and the sound of words (e.g. alliteration, onomatopoeia, rhyme) are key elements.
- Conduct short research projects that build knowledge about a topic.

Massachusetts Visual Arts Frameworks

- In the course of making and viewing art, learn ways of discussing it, such as by making a list of all of the images seen in an artwork (visual inventory); and identifying kinds of color, line, texture, shapes, and forms in the work.
- Create 2D and 3D artwork from direct observation.

Massachusetts Music Frameworks

- Sing from memory a variety of songs representing genres and styles from diverse cultures and historical periods.
- Sing in groups, blending vocal timbres, matching dynamic levels, and responding to the cues of a conductor.
- Demonstrate and respond to the beat, division of the beat, meter (2/4, 3/4, 4/4), and rhythmic notation.
- Use standard symbols to notate meter, rhythm, pitch, and dynamics in simple patterns performed by the teacher.

Materials

- enlarged reproduction of “Paul Revere” by John Singleton Copley from the Picturing America collection, along with several small copies
- chart paper and markers
- LCD projector, computer
- rhyming dictionaries
- mentor ballad: “Revolutionary Tea”
- mentor ballad: “John Henry”

Books

- *The Many Rides of Paul Revere* by James Cross Giblin
- *Paul Revere* by Jane Sutcliffe
- *Paul Revere and the Bell Ringers* by Jonah Winter
- *Paul Revere: Freedom Rider* by Rose McCarthy
- *Paul Revere: In Their Own Words Series* by George Sullivan
- *Paul Revere’s Midnight Ride* by Lucia Raatma
- *Paul Revere’s Ride* by Shana Corey
- *Teaching American History with Favorite Folk Songs* by Tracey West
- *Who Was Paul Revere?* by Roberta Edwards

Music

- “Songs of the Revolution” by Diane Taraz
- “Revolutionary Tea” and “John Henry” in *Teaching American History with Favorite Folk Songs* by Tracey West (CD)

Websites

- “The Music in Poetry.” *Smithsonian in Your Classroom*. Spring 2006. Smithsonian Center for Education and Museum Studies.
http://www.smithsonianeducation.org/publications/siycwinter_06.pdf

INSTRUCTIONAL PLAN

STEP 1: PAUL REVERE: A PORTRAIT

Display an enlarged copy of John Copley's portrait of Paul Revere from the Picturing America collection. Students turn and talk to a neighbor, noting their observations, questions, and inferences. *What do you see? What can you tell about Paul Revere from looking at the portrait? What is he doing? What kind of work do you think he does? What kind of man do you think he is? Why? How is this painting different from Grant Wood's painting about Paul Revere's ride.*



STEP 2: CHOOSE A RESEARCH TOPIC

Introduce the research and writing project—students will write their own ballad of Paul Revere that tells about the different aspects of his life and what students want people to remember about him. Students brainstorm the many different roles Paul Revere played during his life—from bell ringer to bell maker—and choose the top three topics they would like to research. Organize students into research pairs based on their preferences.

STEP 3: BIOGRAPHY SCAVENGER HUNT

Introduce students to the biography genre, and the different biographies they will use to research Paul Revere, with a biography scavenger hunt. Create a grid that contains features of nonfiction books (table of contents, index, glossary, photographs, captions, headings, etc.), including special features of biographies (timelines, family trees). Distribute copies of different Paul Revere biographies to partners. Partners search through their biographies and mark on the grid the features that they find.

STEP 4: PRIMARY SOURCES

Introduce students to primary sources that historians use to conduct research about the past. Have students examine and analyze several primary sources about Paul Revere and consider these questions: *Who created the source? When was it created? Why was it created? Who was the intended audience? What does the source tell us about Paul Revere?*

STEP 5. RESEARCH A LIFE

Create a research packet for each student topic that includes relevant excerpts from at least two sources on Paul Revere. Partners read the excerpts together, highlighting main ideas they feel are important for others to know about their topic. Using a research organizer, partners record three main ideas and supporting details about their topic.

STEP 6: INTRODUCE BROADSIDE BALLADS

Introduce broadside ballads. Explain that ballads are poems or songs that tell a story. Broadside ballads are ballads that were printed on one side of a sheet of paper and were a popular form of storytelling in England and the colonies during Paul Revere’s time. Read aloud the lyrics of the ballad “Revolutionary Tea.” Analyze the lyrics. *What story does it tell? What important event is it about?* Help third graders understand that the ballad is an allegory—the Island Queen represents England, and her rebellious daughter represents the protesting patriots. Play the song and invite students to sing along. Play the song throughout the module.



STEP 7: ANALYZE MENTOR BALLADS

Next, students look carefully at the structure and words of “Revolutionary Tea,” searching for patterns (e.g. the ballad is organized into stanzas; the stanzas have repeating lines; the words at the end of certain lines rhyme). List the ballad features on a chart. Follow the same procedure with “John Henry,” another ballad that tells a story about an American folk hero.

STEP 8: A CLOSE LOOK AT RHYMING WORDS: FULL AND NEAR RHYMES

Conduct one or more minilessons on identifying and generating rhyming words. Students identify the rhyming words in both “Revolutionary Tea” and “John Henry” and notice that in “John Henry,” the rhymes are not exact (“man/”hand”; “in/”wind”). Some are near or half rhymes—the ending consonant sounds are similar but not the vowel sounds (“hear/”air”). Half rhymes allow poets a wider range of rhyming possibilities and help avoid the sing-song sound of exact rhymes. Students take apart words, noticing how to create a rhyme by replacing the onset of a word with a different consonant sound, and how to create half rhymes by pairing words that end with the same consonant sound.

STEP 9: DRAFT RHYMING STANZAS

Students generate a list of interesting words they would like to use in their ballad stanzas and use a rhyming dictionary and other strategies to generate possible rhyming words. Working with the main ideas and supporting details partners identified during their research, they draft five-line stanzas, with rhyming word at the end of lines two and four. The last (5th) line of each stanza repeats the fourth line.

STEP 10: WORD CHOICE: ALLITERATION

Take another look at “Revolutionary Tea.” Circle the words “redden’d with rage.” Have students say the phrase aloud. What do they notice about how these two words sound? What if the poet chose the word “anger” instead of “rage?” Which word sounds better together? Why? Emphasize that poets often use alliteration—words that begin with the same consonant sound. Can students find another example of alliteration in the ballad? (“daughter’s door”) Ask students to include at least one alliterative phrase in their ballad stanzas.

STEP 11. WORD CHOICE: WORDS FROM LONG AGO

Look once again at “Revolutionary Tea.” Are there any words that students don’t recognize or look funny? Point out that these words and spellings (“countrie,” “quoth,” “threepence”) come from long ago—we don’t use them anymore or we spell them differently. Students can use words from long ago in their ballad stanzas to make them more authentic.

STEP 12: METER: STRESSED AND UNSTRESSED SYLLABLES

Map the meter of the “Revolutionary Tea” by identifying the pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables in each line. Begin by having students identify and mark the stressed and unstressed syllables in familiar words (*pen-cil, class-room*). Then mark the accents in the first stanza of “Revolutionary Tea” while the class slowly sings and claps the beat. Together, count the number of stressed and unstressed syllables; then count out the rhythm of “Revolutionary Tea” (*1 and a, 2 and a . .*). Have half the class sing while the other half counts out the rhythm.

Choose a student pair to sing one of their ballad stanzas for the class. *Does it have the right pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables? What can the poets do to fix the line so that it fits the meter? Can they add a syllable? Delete a syllable? Model how to use the strategy of adding and deleting syllables to adjust the meter and how to substitute strong words (“worked” or “fought” for weaker words such as “was.”).*

STEP 13: REVISE AND EDIT

Have pairs revise their ballad stanzas, adding and deleting words so their lines fit the meter of the ballad. Encourage partners to sing their stanzas and listen for parts that don’t fit. Students should use the Ballad of Paul Revere Checklist and be sure to fact check their work.

STEP 14: COMPOSE A CLASS BALLAD

Have partners select their best stanzas to include in the class poem. Students who work at a faster pace can compose an opening and closing stanza. Sequence the stanzas.

STEP 15: REHEARSE

Have three sets of partners learn and practice singing their stanzas together. The whole class sings any introductory and/or concluding stanzas in unison.

STEP 16. ILLUSTRATE: SCRATCHBOARD ENGRAVINGS

Partners choose an object to illustrate their stanza. After drawing the object in pencil, students use a simple engraving tool to etch the image onto scratchboard.

STEP 17. PUBLISH

The illustrated stanzas are published as a chapbook, a small, black-and-white, saddle-stitched booklet that was popular in Paul Revere’s time.

STEP 18: SING OUT!

Students perform their class ballad at assembly and at the Old North Church.

The Ballad of Paul Revere Checklist

_____ My ballad has 2 - 3 stanzas that relate to my topic.

_____ My ballad includes at least 2 – 3 accurate facts about Paul Revere’s life that relate to my topic.

_____ Each stanza has five lines. The fifth line repeats the fourth line.

_____ The last word in the second line of each stanza rhymes with or has the same or similar sound as the last word in the fourth line.

_____ My words are descriptive, precise, and interesting.

_____ My ballad has at least one alliterative phrase (words that begin with the same consonant sound).

_____ My stanzas are in the same meter as “Revolutionary Tea.”

_____ All of my proper nouns are capitalized. My words are spelled correctly or are spelled the way they were spelled long ago in Paul Revere’s time.

Teacher’s Reflection

Isabella Stewart Gardner admonished, “Don’t spoil a good story with the truth.” But that’s just what we did! I launched our investigation of Paul Revere with Grant Wood’s romanticized painting of Revere’s ride and Longfellow’s ballad, hooking students with the myth that has captivated children for generations. As I gradually introduced new information and facts, students revised their theories about Paul Revere and his famous ride and grappled with big issues about truth vs. fiction. They pondered the question—*Was Longfellow a poet or a historian?*—and thought critically about the different ways artists, poets, and historians tell stories about the past. The two pieces of artwork—Wood’s “Midnight Ride of Paul Revere” and Copley’s realistic portrait—anchored our inquiry, one representing the folk hero and the other representing the man.

Writing a class ballad about Paul Revere was both challenging and rewarding. At first, I was unsure about requiring students to use a rhyming pattern because I had observed them struggle with identifying rhymes during our weekly poetry time. The high level of student motivation, however, contributed to a successful process. Students built important literacy skills through social studies content. They improved phonological awareness skills as they manipulated the onset of words to create rhymes and purposefully played with word sounds and with meter. They identified a main idea for a stanza and checked their facts. Throughout the writing process, the classroom was buzzing with literary language—*stanza, alliteration, synonym, repeating line, rhyme, and meter*.

About Conservatory Lab

Founded in 1999, Conservatory Lab is a K1–6 music-infused charter school in the heart of Boston. We believe in the power of music to transform the lives of children and adolescents.

We use **Expeditionary Learning** as a framework for our unique interdisciplinary curriculum that integrates music and other creative processes. Our learning expeditions are discovery operations that demand fieldwork and mentoring by experts. We cherish active, hands-on situations where what we are doing matters to us and has consequences. Students strive to create quality work, to collaborate with their classmates, and to contribute to their community.

Conservatory Lab is also the only school in the country to incorporate **El Sistema** program and methods into its core school day. **El Sistema** is a unique program designed to effect social change and nurture promising futures for underserved communities through intensive, ensemble-focused music education.

Visit www.conservatorylab.org for information about Conservatory Lab. For information about the curriculum, email Ivy Delaney at idelaney@conservatorylab.org