

LANGUAGE ARTS

CHAPTER 9, WHY AMERICA IS FREE BOOK

Poetry and Poetic License

The Landlord's Tale. Paul Revere's Ride by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Objectives

The students will:

Learn about the past from reading poetry, journals, letters and inventories.

Understand that poetic license is sometimes used to add drama to a story.

Learn how to analyze a story for its historic accuracy and correct misinformation by doing research on an individual or event.

Learn how to use primary documents (documents written by the person himself) as a source for researching the past.

Materials

Picture of the Wayside Inn

Paul Revere's primary document of the event

"The Revere and Dawes Communication System" relay game



Activities

1. Show the students the picture of a room at the Wayside Inn in Sudbury, Massachusetts. Explain to the children that this inn was where Longfellow and other writers would often meet to read their works. One that was read was the popular poem, *The Landlord's Tale. Paul Revere's Ride*, part of Longfellow's "Tales of the Wayside Inn." Share with them that this inn is one of the oldest of its kind that still offers lodging and food in the present day. Optional extra: Visit this site to learn more about the old inn: www.wayside.org with the students
2. Share with the students the fact that Longfellow wrote his poem almost 90 years after Paul Revere's famous ride. Ask the students what implication this huge gap in time could have had on its historical accuracy and on its poetic license. (*The poet may have felt free to add things or make the story more dramatic. The true facts may well have been harder to find since most who were old enough to remember the events would no longer be alive.*)
3. Read or have volunteers read the primary document of Paul Revere's actual account of the ride. As the document is read, discuss the differences in vocabulary, spelling, punctuation, and sentence structure between that time and now, as well as differences between life then and now. (Ex: communication by word of mouth by horse rider rather than the media).
4. Read or have volunteers read Longfellow's poem. First ask students if they notice any difference in Revere's story and Longfellow's. Next, referring back to Revere's affidavit, give the students the historically accurate information. (Differences include: In the poem, only Revere is mentioned as a rider though he was not the only one, and the poem says that he alerted Concord as well, though he did not.)
5. After reading the poem and sharing the historically correct information, ask students if and why they think Paul Revere was a hero.

PRIMARY DOCUMENT

Paul Revere's Actual Account of "Midnight Ride"

Paul Revere of Boston, in the Colony of the Massachusetts Bay in New England; of Lawful Age, doth testify and say; that I was sent for by Docr. Joseph Warren, of said Boston, on the Evening of the 18th of April, about 10 oClock ; When he desired me, "to go to Lexington, and inform Mr. Samuel Adams, and the Honl. John Hancock Esqr. that there was a number of Soldiers, composed of the Light troops, & Grenadiers, marching to the bottom of the Common, where was a number of Boats to receive them; and it was supposed, that they were going to Lexington, by the way of Cambridge River, to take them, or to Concord, to distroy the Colony Stores." (Note: *Stores, as described here, means weapons and gunpowder supplies that were being stored.*)

I proceeded immeaditly and was put across Charles River and landed in Charlestown Battery, went in town, and there got a Horse. while in Charlestown, I was informed by Richd. Devens Esqr. that he mett that evening, after Sun sett, Nine officers of the Ministeral Army, mounted on good Horses & Armed, going towards Concord; I sett off, it was then about 11 oClock, the Moon shone bright. I had got almost over Charlestown Common, towards Cambridge, when I saw two Officers on Horseback, standing under the shade of a Tree, in a narrow part of the roade. I was near enough to see their Holsters, & cockades; One of them Started his horse towards me, the other up the road, as supposed, to head me should I escape the first. I turned my horse short, about, & rid upon full Gallop for Mistick Road, he followed me about 300 Yards, and finding He could not catch me, returned: I proceeded through to Lexington, through Mistick, and alarmed Messr. Adams and Col. Hancock.

After I had been there after about half an hour Mr. Daws arrived, who came from Boston, over the neck.

We set off for Concord, and were overtaken by a young Gentleman named Prescott, who belonged to Concord, & was going home; when we got about half way from Lexington to Concord, the other two, stopped at a House to awake the Man, I kept along, when, I had got about 200 Yards a head of them, I saw two officers as before. I called to my company to come up, saying here was two of them, (for I had told them, what Mr. Devens told me, and of my being stopped) in an instant I saw four of them, who rode up to me, with the Pistols in their hands, said G-d d-n you stop. If you go an Inch further, you are a dead Man, immeaditly Mr. Prescott came up we attempted to git thro them, but they kept before us, and swore if we did not turn in to pasture, they would blow our brains out, (they had placed themselves opposite to a pair of Barrs, and had taken the Barrs down) they forced us in, when we had got in, Mr. Prescott said to me put on. He took to the left, I took to the right towards a Wood, at the bottom of the Pasture, (Paul Revere: "I found since that he knew the ground, for he lived within 3 or 4 miles.) He jumped his horse over the wall and got to Concord, to destroy the colony stores." I turned to the Right towards a wood in the bottom of the pasture,

intending when I gained that, to jump my Horse & run afoot; just as I reached it, out started six officers, siesed my bridle, put their pistols to Brest (chest), ordered me to dismount, which I did: One of them, who appeared to have the command there, and much of a Gentleman, Asked me where I came from; I told him, he asked me what time I left it; I told him, he seemed surprised, said Sir may I crave your name, I answered my name is Revere, what said he Paul Revere; I answered yes; the others abused much; but he told me not to be afraid, no one should hurt me; I told him they would miss their Aim. He said they should not, they were only waiting for some Deserters they expected down the Road: I told him I knew better, I knew what they were after; that I had alarmed the country all the way up, that their Boats, were catch'd a ground, and I should have 500 men their soon; one of them said they had 1500 coming; he seemed surprised and road off, into the road, and informed them who took me, they came down immeiditly on a full gallop, one of them (whom I learned later was Major Mitchel of the 5th Regiment Clap'd his Pistol to my head, and said he was going to ask me some questions, if I did not tell the truth, he would blow my brains out. I told him I esteemed my self a Man of truth, that he had stopped me on the highway, & made me a prisoner. I knew not by what right; I would tell the truth; I was not afraid; He then asked me, the same questions that the other did, and many more, but was more particular; I gave him the same Answers; he then Ordered me to mount my horse, they first searched me for pistols. When I was mounted, the Major took the reins out of my hand & said by G---d Sir you are not to ride with reins I asure you; and gave them to an officer on my right, to lead me, he then Ordered 4 men out of the Bushes, & to mount their horses; they were Country men which they had stopped who were going home; then ordered us to March. He said to me "We are now going to wards your friends, and if you attempt to run, or we are insulted, we will blow your Brains out." When we had got into the road they formed a Circle, and ordered the prisoners in the centre, & to lead me in front. We rid towards Lexington, a quick pace; They very often insulted me calling me Rebel &c. &c. After we had got about a mile, I was delivered to a Serjant to lead, he was Ordered to take out his Pistol (he rode with a hanger,) & if I run, to execute the Majors Sentence.

When we got within about half a Mile of Lexington meeting-house we heard a Gun fired, the Major asked me what that was for, I told him to alarm the country, he Ordered the other four prisoners to dismount, they did, then one of the officers dismounted and cutt the Bridles & Saddles off the Horses, drove them away, and told the men they might go about their business; I asked the Major to dismiss me, he said he would carry me, lett the consequence be what it will; He then Ordered us to march.

When we got within sight of the Meeting-House, we heard a Volly of guns fired, as I supposed at the Tavern, as an Alarm: the Major ordered us to halt, he asked me how far it was to Cambridge, and many more questiones, which I answered; he then asked the Serjant, if his horse was tired, he said yes; he Ordered him to take my horse; I dismounted, the Serjant mounted my horse; they cut the Bridle and saddle of the Serjants horse, & rode off down the road. I then went to the house where I left Messr. Adams and Hancock & told them what had happined; their friends advised them to go out of the way; I went with them, about two miles a cross road.

After resting my self I sett off with another man to go back to the Tavern, to enquire the News; when we got there, we were told the troops were, within two Miles. We went into the Tavern to git a Trunk of Papers belonging to Col. Hancock, before we left the house, I saw the Ministeral Troops from the chamber window. We made haste, & had to pass thro' our Militia, who were on a green behind the Meetinghouse, to the number as I supposed, about 50 or 60, I went thro' them; as I passed I heard the commanding officer speake to his men to this purpose. "Lett the Troops pass by and do n't molest them with out They begin first." As I had to go a cross Road, but had not got half Gun shot off, When the Minsteral Troops appeared in sight, behinde the Meeting House; they made a short halt. When one gun was fired, I heard the report, turned my head, and saw the smoake in the front of the Troops, they imeditly gave a great shout, ran a few paces, and then the whole fired. I could first distinguish iregular fireing and then platoons: at this time, I could not see our Militia, for they were covered from me, by a house at the bottom of the Street, and further saith not.

Paul Revere

The Landlord's Tale. Paul Revere's Ride

by

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Listen, my children, and you shall hear
Of the midnight ride of Paul Revere,
On the eighteenth of April, in Seventy-Five:
Hardly a man is now alive
Who remembers that famous day and year.

He said to his friend, "If the British march
By land or sea from the town to-night,
Hang a lantern aloft in the belfry-arch
Of the North-Church-tower, as a signal-light,—
One if by land, and two if by sea;
And I on the opposite shore will be,
Ready to ride and spread the alarm
Through every Middlesex village and farm,
For the country-folk to be up and to arm."

Then he said "Good night!" and with muffled oar
Silently rowed to the Charlestown shore,
Just as the moon rose over the bay,
Where swinging wide at her moorings lay
The Somerset, British man of war:
A phantom ship, with each mast and spar
Across the moon, like a prison-bar,
And a huge black hulk, that was magnified
By its own reflection in the tide.

Meanwhile, his friend, through alley and street
Wanders and watches with eager ears,
Till in the silence around him he hears
The muster of men at the barrack door,
The sound of arms, and the tramp of feet,
And the measured tread of the grenadiers
Marching down to their boats on the shore.

Then he climbed to the tower of the church,
Up the wooden stairs, with stealthy tread,
To the belfry-chamber overhead,
And startled the pigeons from their perch
On the sombre rafters, that round him made
Masses and moving shapes of shade,—
By the trembling ladder, steep and tall,
To the highest window in the wall,
Where he paused to listen and look down
A moment on the roofs of the town,
And the moonlight flowing over all.

Beneath, in the churchyard, lay the dead,
In their night-encampment on the hill,
Wrapped in silence so deep and still
That he could hear, like a sentinel's tread,
The watchful night-wind, as it went
Creeping along from tent to tent,
And seeming to whisper, "All is well!"
A moment only he feels the spell
Of the place and the hour, and the secret dread
Of the lonely belfry and the dead;
For suddenly all his thought are bent
On a shadowy something far away,
Where the river widens to meet the bay, —
A line of black, that bends and floats
On the rising tide, like a bridge of boats.

Meanwhile, impatient to mount and ride,
Booted and spurred, with a heavy stride,
On the opposite shore walked Paul Revere.
Now he patted his horse's side,
Now gazed on the landscape far and near,
Then impetuous stamped the earth,
And turned and tightened his saddle-girth;
But mostly he watched with eager search
The belfry-tower of the old North Church,

As it rose above the graves on the hill,
Lonely and spectral and sombre and still.
And lo! As he looks, on the belfry's height,
A glimmer, and then a gleam of light!
He springs to the saddle, the bridle he turns,
But lingers and gazes, till full on his sight
A second lamp in the belfry burns!

A hurry of hoofs in a village-street,
A shape in the moonlight, a bulk in the dark,
And beneath from the pebbles, in passing, a spark
Struck out by a steed that flies fearless and fleet:
That was all! And yet, through the gloom and the light,
The fate of a nation was riding that night;
And the spark struck out by that steed, in his flight,
Kindled the land into flame with its heat.

He has left the village and mounted the steep,
And beneath him, tranquil and broad and deep,
Is the Mystic, meeting the ocean tides;
And under the alders, that skirt its edge,
Now soft on the sand, now loud on the ledge,
Is heard the tramp of this steed as he rides.

It was twelve by the village clock
When he crossed the bridge into Medford town.
He heard the crowing of the cock,
And the barking of the farmer's dog,
And felt the damp of the river-fog,
That rises when the sun goes down.

It was one by the village clock,
When he galloped into Lexington.
He saw the gilded weathercock
Swim in the moonlight as he passed,
And the meeting-house windows, blank and bare,
Gaze at him with a spectral glare,

As if they already stood aghast
At the bloody work they would look upon.

It was two by the village clock,
When he came to the bridge in Concord town.
He heard the bleating of the flock,
And the twitter of birds among the trees,
And felt the breath of the morning breeze
Blowing over the meadows brown.
And one was safe and asleep in his bed
Who at the bridge would be first to fall,
Who that day would be lying dead,
Pierced by a British musket-ball.

You know the rest. In the books you have read,
How the British Regulars fired and fled,—
How the farmers gave them ball for ball,
From behind each fence and farmyard-wall,
Chasing the red-coats down the lane,
Then crossing the fields to emerge again
Under the trees at the turn of the road,
And only pausing to fire and load.

So through the night rode Paul Revere;
And so through the night went his cry of alarm
To every Middlesex village and farm, —
A cry of defiance, and not of fear,
A voice in the darkness, a knock at the door,
And a word that shall echo forevermore!
For, borne on the night-wind of the Past,
Through all our history to the last,
In the hour of darkness and peril and need,
The people will awaken and listen to hear
The hurrying hoof-beats of that steed,
And the midnight message of Paul Revere.