

Boston Massacre Climax: Analyzing and Comparing Images

Materials

The Bloody Massacre, Paul Revere, 1770

The Boston Massacre, John Bufford, 1856

Student Handout

Teacher Directions

In this activity students will analyze and compare two depictions of the Boston Massacre. One was made by Paul Revere in 1770 and the other was made by John Bufford in 1856.

- Project each image to the whole class, one at a time.
 - For each image use the Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) method. Ask:
 - What's going on in this image?
 - What do you see that makes you say that?
 - What more can we find?
- Then, pass out the handouts. Have students read the quote beside each image.
 - Note: The excerpted quote from Revere's engraving was printed with the image itself. The excerpted quote from the 1856 Bufford lithograph comes from a book written in 1855 by William Cooper Nell, a Black abolitionist.
- Finally, ask students:
 - What are three similarities between the two images?
 - What are three differences between the two images?
- Later, students will use descriptions of the Boston Massacre from people who witnessed it to debate which image is more accurate than the other.

The Bloody Massacre perpetrated in King Street, Boston on March 5th 1770 by a party of the 29th Regiment by Paul Revere, 1770



[Zoom in](#)

Context: This engraving of the Boston Massacre was made and widely distributed by Paul Revere in 1770. Revere's image is thought to be based on an engraving by Henry Pelham, who created his image first. Revere's engraving shows outrage at the actions of the British troops. The scene is historically incorrect, showing a line of British soldiers firing point-blank into a defenseless crowd. It is now believed that the soldiers were not this organized and that the Patriots were an unruly mob of sixty people of different races and ages.

For the Student: What do you notice about the two groups of people in the image? How are they standing? What are their facial expressions? Which group appears to be reacting to the other? What is the weather like in this image? The time of day? What does the dog seem to be doing in this picture? Given what you know about the Boston Massacre, is this an accurate source of the event? Read the first few lines of the text. How does Paul Revere describe the colonists? Captain P-n (Preston)? According to Revere, what was the intent of the soldiers' "bloody HANDS"?

History SOURCE

"Boston Massacre, March 5th 1770," created by John Bufford, 1856



"Attucks had formed the patriots in Dock Square, from whence they marched up King street... to make the attack... He had been foremost in resisting, and was first slain."

[Zoom In](#)

Colored Patriots. William C. Nell

Context: This print from 1856 shows Crispus Attucks in the confrontation with British soldiers known as the Boston Massacre. Attucks was Black and Native American. Crispus Attucks was not the only person of color on King Street that night. A free Black man named Newton Prince and an enslaved man named Andrew also witnessed the events of March 5, 1770, and gave testimonies about what they saw.

For the Student: Crispus Attucks is shown as the main character in this image. What do you notice about him and the other colonists? How many people appear to be involved in the incident? What can you tell about the weather in this image? Time of day?

Comparing the two images

In your responses, consider: the setting; the appearance and actions of the colonists (spectators and participants); the appearance and actions of the the British soldiers

Identify three details the images share:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Identify three differences between the images:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____