



Day 2-3 American Revolution  
130 Minutes

Boston Massacre

# Differentiated Two-Day Lesson Plan: The Boston Massacre

*Truth, Propaganda, and an Unexpected Outcome*

**Grade Level:** 6–8

**Total Time:** Two class periods (50–55 minutes each)

**Unit Context:** Causes of the American Revolution

**Anchor Artifact:** Boston Massacre PowerPoint

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## Lesson Objectives

Students will:

- Analyze propaganda as a historical tool
- Describe what actually happened at the Boston Massacre
- Compare Paul Revere's depiction with historical evidence
- Understand why John Adams defended the soldiers
- Explain why the Boston Massacre briefly reduced tensions instead of increasing them

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## Essential Questions

- How can images shape public opinion more powerfully than facts?
- Why did the Boston Massacre not immediately lead to revolution?

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## Key Vocabulary

- Propaganda
  - Boycott
  - Massacre
  - Self-defense
  - Manslaughter
  - Repeal
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# DAY 1 – PROPAGANDA & THE EVENT

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## 1. Investigation Opener: Propaganda Analysis (10–12 minutes)

### Primary Source Focus

Paul Revere's famous engraving *The Bloody Massacre*  
(Used with your **Propaganda Activity**)

Show iconic image here:

<https://learnaboutamerica.com/american-history/revolutionary-war/causes-of-the-revolutionary-war/boston-massacre>

### Student Task

Students examine Revere's image and answer prompts such as:

- What is happening in the image?
- Who appears guilty?
- How are the British soldiers portrayed?
- How are the colonists portrayed?

- What emotions does the image create?

### Teacher Framing:

Today, we're starting not with facts—but with **how people were encouraged to feel**.

Do **not** correct students yet.

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## 2. Anchor Instruction: PowerPoint with Script (25 minutes)

Use the uploaded PowerPoint. Below is a **slide-by-slide teaching script aligned directly to your slides**.

<https://learnaboutamerica.com/american-history/revolutionary-war/presentations-and-bundles/boston-massacre-presentations-and-bundles>

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### Slide 1 – Causes: The Boston Massacre

#### Script:

We've already studied earlier causes of the American Revolution. Today we're looking at an event that shocked the colonies—the Boston Massacre.

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### Slide 2 – Why Did the Revolution Happen?

#### Script:

The revolution didn't start overnight. Each event added tension and resentment.

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### Slide 3 – 1768: Townshend Acts

#### Script:

Parliament passed new taxes on everyday items like glass, paper, and tea. Colonists were furious—again.

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### Slide 4 – Boston Under Pressure

#### Script:

British soldiers—called Redcoats—began patrolling Boston. Colonists believed they were there to control them, not protect them.

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## **Slide 5 – Boycott**

### **Script:**

A boycott is when people stop buying goods to protest unfair treatment. This became one of the colonists' most powerful tools.

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## **Slide 6 – March 5, 1770**

### **Script:**

Communication was slow. While Parliament had begun repealing taxes, Bostonians didn't know it yet.

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## **Slide 7 – The Night of the Massacre**

### **Script:**

A confrontation escalated quickly. A mob formed. Snow, ice, and insults were thrown. Tension exploded.

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## **Slide 8 – Defining “Massacre”**

### **Script:**

A massacre suggests a deliberate killing—but was that really what happened?

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## **Slide 9 – Shots Fired**

### **Script:**

After a soldier was struck, shots were fired. Chaos followed.

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## **Slide 10 – Casualties**

### **Script:**

Five colonists died. One of them was **Crispus Attucks**, often remembered as the first African American killed in the Revolutionary era.

**OPTIONAL:** Dig into the life and times of Crispus Attucks. This differentiated biography comes with lots of activities.

<https://learnaboutamerica.com/american-history/revolutionary-war/people-of-the-revolutionary-war/crispus-attucks>

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## Slide 11 – Propaganda

### Script:

Paul Revere's image made the event look like a planned execution. Ask yourself—how accurate was it?

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## Slide 12 – Day 1 Closure

### Quick Write:

Based on what we've learned so far, was this truly a massacre—or something more complicated?

### Alternatively:

- [Bloody Massacre Online Jigsaw Puzzle](#)
  - [Bloody Massacre Printable Coloring Page](#)
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# DAY 2 – TRUTH, TRIAL, AND THE SURPRISE ENDING

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## 1. Review & Revisit the Image (5 minutes)

Students look again at Revere's engraving.

### Prompt:

What parts of this image now seem misleading?

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## 2. Anchor Instruction Continued: Trial & Aftermath (15–18 minutes)

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### Slide 13 – The Trial

**Script:**

The soldiers were arrested and charged with murder.

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### Slide 14 – John Adams Defends the Soldiers

**Script:**

**John Adams** chose to defend the soldiers—not because he supported Britain, but because he believed in the rule of law.

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### Slide 15 – Verdict

**Script:**

Six soldiers were found not guilty. Two were convicted of manslaughter—not murder—and punished by branding, not prison.

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### Slide 16 – The Aftermath

**Script:**

Here's the surprise: instead of escalating tensions, things cooled down. Most taxes were repealed. Boycotts ended.

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### Slide 17 – Temporary Peace

**Script:**

A fragile peace lasted more than three years. Calls for independence actually softened—temporarily.

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### Slide 18 – Follow-Up

**Script:**

The Boston Massacre mattered—but not in the way many people expect.

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### 3. Differentiated Reading Stations (15–20 minutes)

Students rotate or choose **ONE** article pathway:

**Article Options**

1. [Boston Massacre Overview](#)
2. [The Truth Behind Paul Revere's Woodcut](#)
3. [Why John Adams Defended the Soldiers](#)
4. [Crispus Attucks: Legacy & Meaning](#)

**Differentiation**

- **Support Level:** Guided questions, vocabulary support
  - **On-Level:** Standard comprehension
  - **Challenge:** Bias analysis, cause-and-effect writing
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### 4. Culminating Writing Activity: The Surprise Ending (10–12 minutes)

<https://learnaboutamerica.com/american-history/revolutionary-war/revolutionary-war-writing-activities/surprise-endings>

**Prompt**

Most people assume the Boston Massacre pushed America closer to revolution. In reality, it led to a short period of peace. Explain why this happened and why the peace did not last.

**Alternate Option:**

- Write from the perspective of a Boston citizen in 1770 reacting to the trial's outcome.
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## 5. Optional - Reading Comprehension

These reading comprehension activities contain a reading passage and between 7 or 10 questions. Online versions give immediate feedback.

### RECOMMENDED -

Primary Source Super Comprehension - John Adams' Defense of the British Soldiers in the Boston Massacre

These primary source comprehension activities guide students through close reading of authentic historical texts. By working across three skill-focused tabs—Main Idea & Details, Inference, and Contextual Vocabulary—students develop a deeper understanding of the passages and strengthen essential literacy skills. The interactive tools and structured layout help readers analyze, annotate, and interpret the text with clarity and confidence.

<https://learnaboutamerica.com/american-history/revolutionary-war/primary-source-super-comprehension/the-defense-of-the-accused-in-the-boston-massacre-primary-source-super-comprehension>

### Other Options:

- [Boston Massacre Printable Reading Comprehension](#) - Lexile 900
- [Boston Massacre Online Reading Comprehension](#) - Lexile 900
- [Boston Massacre Printable Fact or Fiction](#) - Lexile 900
- [Boston Massacre Online Fact or Fiction](#) - Lexile 900
- [Boston Massacre Virtual History Teacher](#) - Studies in Elaboration

This fun activity requires students to role play as a history teacher grading a student's history test that reflects a poor effort. "Teachers" must grade the test and then elaborate on student answers to make them complete answers.

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## Why This Lesson Works

- ✓ Starts with visual inquiry
- ✓ Teaches media literacy and bias
- ✓ Differentiated content pathways
- ✓ Emphasizes complexity over slogans
- ✓ Ends with a powerful historical twist