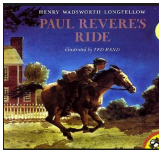


Paul Revere's Ride



Story: Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Illustration: Ted Rand

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[C3 Framework](#) Key term:

Event: An occasion, occurrence, or incident that takes place in the past. Events can be of various lengths.

SYNOPSIS

Paul Revere's Ride tells the story of Paul Revere and his historic ride to warn the town that the British soldiers were coming. It details Revere making the plan with the other soldier and continues through his ride and the resulting interaction between the British and American soldiers. The book is written in a poem-style with a rhyme scheme.

DISCUSSION

Contextualize (show the timeline of the American Revolutionary War): *Paul Revere's Ride* was on April 18, 1775. Two months later, the Congress appointed George Washington commander-in-chief of Continental Army. In multiple points in time, the revolutionary war nearly failed. The first time was the Battles of Lexington and Concord, which were saved by the warning of the midnight massagers. Although the British soldiers outnumbered the patriot militia, the resistance of the Patriots surprised them and forced the British to retreat. **Ask:** *With limited weapons and a shortage of troops, how did the determination and courage of the Patriots win against the well-trained British soldiers? Can you think of others times in history when a small army won against a larger army because of the ideals it fought for?*

ETHICS CONNECTION

Distribute copies of the poem, *Paul Revere's Ride*, written by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, and first published in *The Atlantic* in 1861. **Say:**

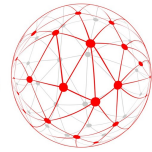
The poet used the famous story from the Revolutionary War to promote the moral courage of people in the North on the eve of the Civil War. **Mention** that the poet did not intend to convey a historically accurate account of the event but to spur reflections about values. **Say:** *The poet recognized that people hesitate to do the right thing when risk is involved. Moral courage or its absence can make the difference between moral attitudes and moral action. In groups or pairs, highlight the lines that demonstrate the Longfellow's focus on courage in the face of danger. Make a list of all the risks taken by Paul Revere. Ask* students to read aloud their lists and write the merged list of risks on the board. The list might include Injury, death or imprisonment; revealing confidential information if captured; losing his business; putting his wife, children, and other family members at risk; losing his good reputation if the news turned out false.

CHALLENGE ACTIVITY

Say: *Multiple forms of oppression led to the Revolutionary War. One was a violation of people's right to privacy. In 1765, the acting Secretary of State issued a warrant to break into the private home of John Entick in search for private papers. In court, the judge ruled that this search, although under warrant, was unlawful and unethical. The Founding Fathers ensured the secure people's right for privacy in the Fourth Amendment, including "The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures." Write a paragraph that discusses how lack of privacy threatens people's well-being, ability to defend themselves against unethical actions and the functioning of a flourishing society.*

FUN ACTIVITY

Say: *Write a short poem about an event in the American Revolutionary War. In your poem, link the event to moral courage needed for a current event, debate, movement, or public concern.*



Paul Revere's Ride

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, 1807 – 1882

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.

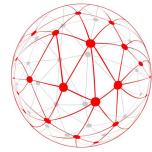
Then he climbed to the tower of the church,
Up the wooden stairs, with stealthy tread,
To the belfry-chamber overhead,
And startled the pigeons from their perch
On the sombre rafters, that round him made

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 thoughts 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 his 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 waken and listen to hear
The hurrying hoof-beats of that steed,
And the midnight message of Paul Revere.