

# Lesson Plan: Paul Revere Using Visual Thinking Strategies

## Theme: American Revolution

- **Target Audience:** ESOL or BL class - Level 4+ (and Citizenship classes)
- **Goal:** Students will increase speaking, writing, listening and reading skills.
- **Objectives:** Students will be able to look at two paintings and describe, analyze, interpret and evaluate them. They will be able to relate the content of the paintings to historical events of the time.
- **Class time:** 90 minutes
- **Resources/Materials:**
  - Student Handouts
  - Posters of artwork – *Paul Revere, 1768* and *The Midnight Ride of Paul Revere, 1931*  
(Note: You can obtain the posters from Rebecca)
- **Preparation:** Make copies of student handouts and hang the posters in your classroom.

### Lesson Flow:

#### *Notes to Tutor:*

- The lesson is designed for the tutor to use “Visual Thinking Strategies” (VTS) which are what many museum educators use to facilitate discussions with guided questioning. Everyone participates and the facilitator doesn’t correct anything (except perhaps language).
- The primary Visual Thinking Questions are: (1) What do you see? (2) What do you see that makes you say that? (3) What else can you see? What else stands out?
- More information about the strategy can be found at <https://vtshome.org/>. A brief video example (7 minutes) of how this method is used can be found at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IC71KUcUBS4>.
- Two paintings are presented so that students can compare and contrast the paintings as part of the lesson.
- Optional: Tutors can also introduce the poem *Paul Revere’s Ride* by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. See details in PART 5.

### PART 1: Speaking and Listening

First explore the painting called *Paul Revere, 1768*. Block off the title on the painting. Use the questions below to facilitate your discussion with the class.

1. **Ask:** What do you see? Based on what you see, what would you name this painting?  
*Listen for their responses. All responses are valid based on what they are seeing. You can share that it is called Paul Revere.*
2. **Ask:** Who was Paul Revere?  
*Paul Revere was a famous American silversmith and patriot, known for his night horseback ride, April 18, 1775, to warn Massachusetts colonists of the coming of British troops.*
3. **Ask and re-ask:** What else do you see? What do you see that makes you say that? What stands out?  
*Listen for their responses. Remember, no need to correct. Possible responses: Engraving tools, teapot, emphasis on Revere’s eye with light, etc.*

### PART 2: Reading - Student Handout 1

1. **Ask** for volunteers to read the student handout about John Singleton Copley’s painting and the history of its time.
2. **Reinforce** new vocabulary and concepts.

### **PART 3: Speaking and Listening**

Now explore the painting called *The Midnight Ride of Paul Revere, 1931* by Grant Wood. Block off the title on the painting. Use the questions below to facilitate your discussion with the class as you did with the first painting.

1. **Ask:** What do you see? Based on what you see, what would you name this painting?  
*Listen for their responses. All responses are valid based on what they are seeing. You can share that it is called The Midnight Ride of Paul Revere.*
2. **Ask and re-ask:** What else do you see? What do you see that makes you say that? What stands out?  
*Listen for their responses. Remember, no need to correct. Possible responses: Paul Revere on his horse, a church with a tall steeple, houses with chimneys and lights, etc.*

### **PART 4: Comparing and contrasting through speaking, listening and writing**

1. **Ask:** How are the two paintings alike? How are they different?
2. **Ask** students to write a summary of how the two paintings are alike and different.

**PART 5 (Optional Activity): *Paul Revere's Ride* by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow – Student Handout 2**

1. **Ask** students to volunteer to read aloud *Paul Revere's Ride*. Work primarily on pronunciation.
2. **Ask:** What is the main message of this poem? See background\* below for information that you can share.

**\*Poem background information for tutor preparation:**

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (February 27, 1807 – March 24, 1882) was an American poet and educator whose works include "Paul Revere's Ride."

The poem describes the action-packed night of April 18, 1775, the famous ride of Paul Revere. It starts in Boston, where Paul and a friend are talking about the British army. They think the soldiers are going to leave Boston that night, but they aren't sure whether they will go by land or sea.

Paul has a plan to warn people in the countryside about the British coming, but he needs to know which direction they are taking. So the two men agree on a secret code: Paul's friend will signal him by hanging one lantern in the church belfry (the tall tower in a church where the bells are hung) if the British are marching out on land, two lanterns if they are leaving in boats. After agreeing on this plan, Paul rows across the river and waits for the signal.

Paul's buddy in Boston snoops around and finds out that the British are going with the boats. So he climbs up to the church steeple, takes a moment to look around, sees the British ships, and hangs out his two lanterns.

On the other side of the river, Paul is all ready to go. He sits on his horse, fiddles with his saddle, and watches the church. Suddenly, he sees the signal and takes off to let the people in the countryside know that the British are coming by sea. He races through the countryside, hitting a new town every hour and calling out to warn people in each place. By midnight he's in Medford, by one he's made it to Lexington, and by two, he gets to Concord.

That's about all we hear about the actual ride. The rest of the poem gives a quick, simple review of the battles that happened the next day. It closes by telling us that Paul Revere's warning will echo down through history, whenever the country is in trouble.

Source: <https://www.shmoop.com/paul-reveres-ride-longfellow/summary.html>

**OR,**

Instead of using the above optional activity featuring the entire poem, you can ask students to read and discuss the ReadWorks article called "Colonization & Revolutionary War – Paul Revere's Ride." This article includes a historical context and an excerpt of the poem.

# Student Handout 1

## **Paul Revere, 1768**

John Singleton Copley (1738–1815)  
Museum of Fine Arts,  
Boston, MA

### **About the Painting**

This portrait of Paul Revere captures an important moment in his work as a **silversmith**. With tools that rest on a table in front of him, he appears ready to engrave the **gleaming** surface of a teapot. The portrait gives him an **air of importance**. Revere's **arched brow** draws attention to his right eye. His left eye remains shadowed, while his forehead seems to be brightly lighted. Revere wears a **spotless** linen shirt, which is open at the neck, and a woolen vest with gold buttons. His workbench is a highly polished and **unscratched** table. Aside from the engraving tools, the table is free from a silversmith's **clutter** or any other signs of an active workshop. This tells us the tools are mainly in the picture to show what Revere did for a living.

### **About the Artist**

In the American colonies, painting portraits was generally considered more of a practical trade than a fine art. A portrait's success was largely measured by how much it resembled the actual person. Because Copley had a special talent for recording the physical features of the people he painted, he became the first American artist to achieve **material success** in his own country. Copley's portraits reveal clues about the personality, profession, and social position of his subjects.

### **History**

Copley painted this portrait some years before Revere's famous ride to alert patriots that the British were coming. At the time of this sitting, Revere was known as a silversmith with a growing Boston trade, not as an American hero. Although Revere had been active in revolutionary politics at the time of the portrait, Copley wisely kept the portrait free of anything **controversial**. Revere's portrait remained in the Copley family's attic until the end of the 19th century, when Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's famous poem, "Paul Revere's Ride," finally brought attention back to the patriot's story. In 1930, Revere's family members donated Copley's portrait of their famous ancestor to the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

*Source: "A Head Start on Picturing America"*

### **Vocabulary**

- **Silversmith:** a person who makes things out of silver
- **Gleaming:** shining brightly
- **Air of importance:** impression of importance
- **Arched brow:** curved eye brow
- **Spotless:** very clean
- **Unscratched:** not marked
- **Clutter:** things that are not arranged in a neat or orderly way
- **Material success:** having a lot of things
- **Controversial:** causing disagreement or argument

## Student Handout 2

### ***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 the tower of the Old North Church,  
By 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.

***Paul Revere's Ride by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (continued)***

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 at 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 flying 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.

***Paul Revere's Ride by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (continued)***

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 after 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 farm-yard 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.