

THEME: The Revolutionary War

TOPIC: Paul Revere's Ride, George Washington Crossing the Delaware and the Battle of Trenton

PREPARATION / PROPS: Sign on a tree or wall, papers on the "Liberty Tree", pictures of Samuel Adams, John Hancock, and Paul Revere, poster of George Washington crossing the Delaware, map of Paul Revere's route

LESSON: Paul Revere's Ride. Our country was not always the United States. We used to be 13 colonies owned by a country called Great Britain. A colony is similar to a state. Great Britain is across the Atlantic Ocean.

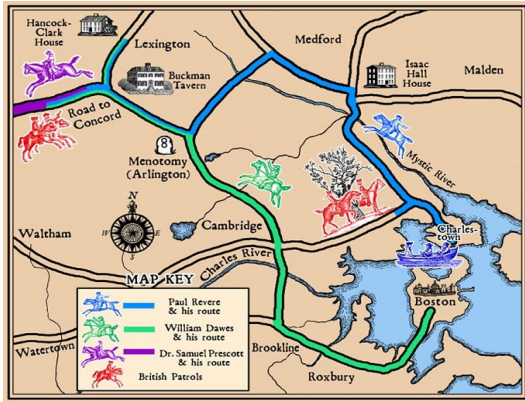
Great Britain was ruled by a king named King George III. For a while, the colonists really didn't seem to mind. But King George started to tax the people. Taxes are extra money you have to pay when you buy something, and the money goes to the government. The colonists didn't like that at all. They didn't think it was fair because they had no say in it. The king taxed them and they had to pay.

In response, men from the colonies got together for a meeting to talk about what to do about King George. The meeting was called the First Continental Congress. Not everyone felt the same way. Some people wanted to stay part of Great Britain and work things out with the king. But others wanted to break away from Great Britain and start their own country.

Things were getting worse in the colonies, especially in a city called Boston in Massachusetts. Colonists were getting frustrated. There were British soldiers sent to keep order. There were fights breaking out. Five Americans were killed in what was called the Boston Massacre. Things were getting out of control. The colonists were smart and could predict that the king was going to send more troops to try to control them. So they started stashing guns, gun powder, bullets, ammunition, and supplies so that they would be ready. They stored a lot of supplies in a town called Concord, not far from Boston. They also started practicing to be a militia, which is like a small local army. The men in the town would get together and practice shooting guns, and anything else they would need to do as a soldier. Some of them got so good at it that they were called Minute Men, because they could be ready to fight at a moment's notice.

Finally it happened in April of 1775. The colonists got word that the British were going to make their move and try to capture their supplies in Concord. On the way they were going to stop in Lexington and capture two men who were very important to the colonists and the fight for independence – Samuel Adams and John Hancock. They were hiding out at a friend's house and they knew if they were caught, the British would execute them, by hanging them, for treason, which is going against your country.

There was a man named Paul Revere who was a friend of Samuel Adams and John Hancock. He had a few friends he asked to watch the British to figure out when they were going to move. He told his friend to signal him by putting lanterns in the church steeple - one lantern if the British were coming by land and two lanterns if they were coming by sea, across the Charles River.



Paul Revere waited on the other side of the river and saw two lanterns in the church steeple. Paul Revere took the northern route and his friend William Dawes took the southern route and they rode through the countryside telling everyone “The Regulars Are Coming Out!” They tried to be quiet so the British didn’t know they were warning everyone. By the end of the night there were 40 riders throughout the countryside, including an African American named Wentworth Cheswell who rode to the north, warning colonists there, and gathering support for Boston.

When Paul Revere got to Lexington and the house where Samuel Adams and John Hancock were staying, it was after midnight. He yelled to them to warn them and a guard came out and told him to be quiet. The guard said, “You’re making too much noise!” Paul Revere replied, “Noise! You’ll have noise enough before long!” That meant there was going to be a battle with gun shots and canons firing and it was going to be much louder.

With Samuel Adams and John Hancock warned, Paul Revere, William Dawes and another man named Samuel Prescott started out for Concord to warn the people there. Concord is where the Americans were storing all of their guns and supplies. On the way, the British captured the three of them. Prescott and Dawes got away, but Revere did not. He got lucky, because when the British heard gunshots being fired, they left Revere and went to fight. They kept his horse though, and he had to walk back to Lexington. But he helped two very important men to escape unharmed.

When the British got to Concord, they didn’t find many of the supplies because the Americans had been warned and were able to hide most of it. But whatever they did find, they destroyed.

George Washington Crossing the Delaware and the Battle of Trenton. After that first battle at Lexington, there were a number of battles, and the Declaration of Independence was written and sent to the king. This lesson is about the Battle of Trenton and when George Washington and his troops crossed the Delaware River. It was Christmastime. It was cold and snowy. There was a blizzard and wind. It was sleeting and totally dark. Washington’s troops were tired, cold, and hungry. Many of them didn’t have coats or shoes. Some of them were so hungry that they actually ate their shoes. Their feet were cracked and bleeding and they left bloody footprints in the snow.

George Washington was worried. He knew that many of his men had only a few weeks left until they were done with their time in the army and could go home to their families and get warm and eat. He knew they would leave, too. Washington wrote to a cousin and told him “the game is near up.” He was worried that they were going to lose to the British. He knew he had one last chance. He decided to sneak attack the Hessians (soldiers from Germany hired by King George III to fight for Britain) in Trenton. It worked. Back in Colonial times, countries did not fight in the winter. It was too hard to stay warm and find food, so they would take a break and come back in the spring to fight again. So the Hessians were not expecting

an attack. There was a loyalist – an American who supported the king and not the colonies – who found out that Washington was going to attack Trenton. He wrote a note and gave it to a Hessian soldier, who gave it to his commanding officer, who put the note in his pocket and never read it. If he had read that note, things could have turned out very differently.

At night, in darkness, in sleet and wind and a blizzard, with no coats or shoes on many of them, Washington's soldiers loaded guns, ammunition, supplies and even horses into boats, and very quietly crossed the river. When they got to Trenton, the Hessians were unprepared and the Americans easily won. They took all of their supplies, guns and ammunition. Then they moved on to Princeton and took British supplies there as well.



The men were energized and many decided to stay on for another year. Washington offered them \$10 each if they would stay. He said he knew they were cold and hungry, but he knew not how to spare them. The victory even inspired more men to join the army. It was a huge victory for the Americans because not only did they now have some supplies (including shoes and coats), but they had HOPE!

DISCUSSION POINTS:

- The colonists prepared for the worst – war – by stockpiling weapons and practicing. How do you prepare for trouble? Examples could be a bully at school, playing a tough sports team, how parents prepare for inflation.
- Do you think Paul Revere was brave? What could have happened if he had chickened out? When have you been brave and what was the outcome?
- Do you think you could have been one of George Washington's soldiers? Why or why not? How do you feel about those soldiers, knowing the conditions they endured? Why do you think those soldiers stayed?

ACTIVITY: Acting out Paul Revere's Ride

Materials: Stick horse, tricorn hat, 2 lanterns, the phrase “Noise? You’ll have noise enough before long!”

Method: Act out the midnight ride as you tell the story about Paul Revere. Wear the hat and “ride” the stick horse as you talk. Have one of the kids hold up the lanterns for you as you explain that part of the story. Have the kids practice the line “Noise? You’ll have noise enough before long!” You can use this repeatedly throughout the meeting to quiet them down. Simply tell them they are making too much noise and have them reply very loudly “Noise? You’ll have noise enough before long!” It is a fun way to get their attention.

ACTIVITY: Soldiers Without Shoes

Materials: Poster of Washington Crossing the Delaware, plastic 4' diameter pool, 4 40-pound bags of ice, strips of cloth

Method: To teach the kids a bit about the harsh conditions facing the American army, you can simulate marching with no boots. Fill the plastic pool with the ice. If it melts partially, it will be even colder! Have the kids take off their shoes and give them the option of going barefoot or wrapping cloth around their feet. Then have them walk through the ice. Younger kids may need assistance so they don't hurt their feet. Tell them to "press on boys" like George Washington did. The kids will love this and want to walk through the ice over and over again!

REFERENCES: The American Revolution for Kids with 21 Activities by Janis Herbert, Wikipedia, Samuel Adams: Son of Liberty, Father of the Revolution by Benjamin H. Irvin