StudySync Lesson Plan
Paul Revere’s Ride

Objectives

1. Engage students in the language and main ideas of “Paul Revere’s Ride” so that they are prepared to discuss and write about the poem.

2. Practice and reinforce the following Grade 8 ELA Common Core Standards for reading literature, writing, and speaking/listening:

   **READING: LITERATURE - RL.8.1-4, 9-10**
   **WRITING - W.8.1-2, 4-9, 10**
   **SPEAKING/LISTENING - SL.8.1-3**

Time

155 minutes (with up to an additional 80 minutes of extension possibilities)

Materials

SyncTV Premium Lesson of “Paul Revere’s Ride” by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Overview

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow wrote “Paul Revere’s Ride” in 1860, less than a year before the start of the Civil War. In this famous, canonized poem, he commemorates the courageous actions of Paul Revere, who rode his horse to warn the colonists that the British were coming at the onset of the American Revolution. The timing of this poem makes it clear that Longfellow's motive was not just simple commemoration, and modern critics have focused on whether the poem’s many historical inaccuracies, though intentional, undermine the effectiveness of his words. Close examination of this excerpt will prepare students to consider Longfellow's language and themes, and to write thoughtful, informed, and textually-rooted responses, consistent with the ELA Common Core Standards for the eighth grades.

Background (15 minutes)

1. **Watch the Preview (SL.8.1-3).** As a group, watch the video preview of the premium lesson. Use the following questions to spur discussion following the preview, and to give students some context before reading the poem:
a. The preview quotes the excerpt’s famous first two lines: “Listen, my children, and you shall hear / of the midnight ride of Paul Revere.” Where have you heard this famous passage before? What feelings does it evoke? What time period?

b. Consider the images and music in the preview. What clues do they give you about the poem you’re about to read?

c. Why were the British coming? Discuss what you know about the historical context of this poem. Which episode of American history does this poem depict? Why were the colonists rebelling against their rulers?

Extension (additional 10 minutes)

d. Discuss (SL.9-10.1-3). How may historical documents alter our understanding of history? What sorts of factual inaccuracies might we encounter when examining stories, poems, paintings, etc. written centuries ago? Why might the teller(s) of these stories not always have a strict allegiance to fact?

Engaging the Text (140 minutes)

2. Read the Text (40 minutes)

a. Read and Annotate (RL.8.1-4). Have students read and annotate “Paul Revere’s Ride.” If your classroom has a projector, consider reading and annotating the first couple of stanzas as a class, using the projector to model the annotating skills you wish students to use. Instruct students to pay special attention to comprehending the poetic language Longfellow uses and understanding the sequence of events. Then have students complete the rest on their own. These annotations are visible to the teacher after the students submit their writing assignments or beforehand if using the “Mimic” function to access the students’ accounts.

b. Discuss (RL.8.1-4 and SL.8.1-3). Have students get into small groups or pairs and briefly discuss the responses they had while reading. As a class, discuss the images that come to mind while reading “Paul Revere’s Ride.” What feelings and emotions does the poem evoke?

Extension (additional 20 minutes)

c. Listen and Discuss (SL.8.1-3). As a class, listen to the audio reading of the text. What are some of the different effects of reading the text versus hearing it read aloud?

d. Comprehend (RL.8.1-4). Have students complete the multiple-choice questions. Collect papers or discuss answers as a class.

3. Watch SyncTV (40 minutes)

a. Watch. Either watch the SyncTV discussion associated with “Paul Revere’s Ride” as a class or ask students to watch it on their individual computers.

b. Focus (RL.8.1, 3-4 and SL.8.1-3). From 2:00-2:55, the SyncTV students discuss Longfellow’s use of poetic style, especially assonance and alliteration. Model how the SyncTV students engage in a close reading of the text.

c. Focus (RL.8.1-4 and SL.8.1-3). Between 2:55-3:50, the SyncTV students connect imagery and words with Longfellow’s ideas and purpose. Focus on how the
students derive deeper meaning from their close reading.

d. **Focus (RL.8.1, 9 and SL.8.1-3).** From 5:30-7:00, the SyncTV students bring up the many factual inaccuracies within the poem. Have students consider the opposing viewpoints presented in this debate.

e. **Focus (RL.8.1-4 and SL.8.1-3).** Finally, from 8:10-8:45, the SyncTV students speculate about Longfellow’s purpose and role as a poet. What is his motive behind writing this poem, if any? What is he trying to communicate?

f. **Discuss (RL.8.1-4 and SL.8.1-3).** After watching the model discussion, have a conversation with the class about the ideas discussed in the SyncTV episode that stood out the most. What new thoughts do they have after hearing the students' discussion? Next, divide students into small groups (3-4 students). Move around the room monitoring the groups as students follow the SyncTV episode as a model to discuss some of the following questions:

   i. How does Longfellow use description and imagery to evoke a sense of excitement and urgency? Why do you think he chooses to do this?

   ii. Does it matter that the poem contains dozens of historical inaccuracies? What is the poet’s role as reporter of events? Does poetry have an obligation to factual truth?

   iii. What would your reaction be if you were a Northerner reading this at the onset of the Civil War? Why do you think this poem was effective in rousing people to action?

   iv. Is this a children’s poem, or is this poem written for a more universal audience? Why does this poem have a reputation as a children’s poem, and is this deserved or not?

   v. Analyze the poem’s formal structure. What poetic and rhythmic structure does Longfellow follow throughout “Paul Revere’s Ride”? What kind of poem is this?

   vi. From whose point of view is the poem told? Who is telling this story? What is Longfellow’s role as narrator?

4. **Think (10 minutes)**

   a. **Respond (W.8.1, 4, 9).** Ask students to read the “Think” questions, watch the corresponding video clips, and respond to the questions, either in class or for homework.

5. **Write (50 minutes)**

   a. **Discuss (SL.8.1).** Read the prompt you have chosen for students, and then solicit questions regarding the prompt or the assignment expectations. Whichever prompt you have chosen, make sure you are clear about the assignment expectations and the rubric by which you and the other students will be evaluating them.

   b. **Organize (RL.8.1-4 and W.8.1-2, 5).** Ask students to go back and annotate the text with the prompt in mind. They should be organizing their thoughts and the points they’ll address in their writing as they make annotations. If you’ve worked on
outlining or other organizational tools for writing, this is a good place to apply them.

c. **Write (W.8.1-2, 4-6, 9a, 10).** Have students go through the writing process of planning, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing their writing responses.

d. **Review (W.8.4-6).** Use the StudySync “Review” feature to have students complete one to two evaluations of their peers’ work based on your chosen review rubric. Have the students look at and reflect upon the peer evaluations of their own writing. What might you do differently in a revision? How might you strengthen the writing and the ideas?

**Extension (additional 50 minutes)**

e. **Write (W.8.1-2, 4-6, 9-10).** For homework, have students write an essay using one of the prompts you did not chose to do in class. Students should publish their responses online.

f. **Write (W.8.1-2, 4-6, 9-10).** In a short essay response, analyze the formal characteristics of Longfellow's poem. How does Longfellow use style (alliteration, assonance) as well as figurative language? What does style contribute to the overall substance of the poem? Do you think it is effective or not?
SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS

Key Vocabulary

1. belfry (n.) - the top area of a tower where a large bell is set
2. aloft (adv.) - in the air
3. moorings (n.) - places where boats or ships can be anchored along the shore
4. barrack (adj.) – of a building where soldiers reside (usu. barracks)
5. grenadiers (n.) - specialized soldiers given a role in battle to throw grenades
6. rafters (n.) - the long pieces of wood that support a roof
7. sentinel (n.) - a soldier whose job is to keep watch over a particular area
8. impetuous (adj.) - Done or thought quickly and without deliberation or thought
9. spectral (adj.) - Of or like a ghost
10. gilded (adj.) - Covered with gold; showing of wealth and success

Reading Comprehension Questions

1. Why is hardly a man now alive who remembers the famous day?
   a. They were all killed in the American Revolution
   b. It happened nearly a century before the poem was written.
   c. both a and b
   d. neither a nor b

2. "One, if by land, or two, if by sea."

   This famous quote is referring to one or two ____________.
   a. lanterns
   b. soldiers
   c. horses
   d. rings of a bell

3. The Somerset is ____________,
   a. a British man
   b. an army barracks
   c. a village
   d. a ship

4. In Longfellow’s poem, Paul Revere is waiting ____________,
   a. in the Old North Church tower
   b. on the shore opposite the tower
   c. inside the Somerset
   d. in Medford

5. Which of the following poetic devices does Longfellow use?
   a. assonance
   b. alliteration
6. The action in this poem takes place in present day ____________.
   a. Massachusetts
   b. South Carolina
   c. Virginia
   d. Georgia

7. They discover that the British were planning to attack by ____________.
   a. sea
   b. land
   c. air
   d. all of the above

8. Longfellow portrays the coming war as _____________.
   a. horrifying
   b. beautiful
   c. exciting
   d. misguided

9. We can infer that Longfellow was probably _____________.
   a. a supporter of the Union
   b. a supporter of the Confederacy
   c. a pacifist
   d. a soldier himself

10. Who is the narrator in this story?
   a. Paul Revere
   b. Thomas Jefferson
   c. Paul Revere's friend
   d. none of the above

Answer Key

1. B
2. A
3. D
4. B
5. D
6. A
7. D
8. C
9. A
10. D
Further Assignments

1. Have students research and break down some of the many historical inaccuracies within the poem “Paul Revere’s Ride.” How did the events depicted in the poem actually transpire? Which version of events is more exciting? *(W.8.7-10)*

2. Is it possible to tell an accurate version of historical events in literature? Even if one is not trying to take poetic license, what sorts of challenges and obstacles does one face in reporting the so-called “truth”? Invite students to research an event from American history and write a brief narrative or poem based on it. Have them discuss the experience of “keeping it real.” *(W.8.2-7, 9-10)*

3. Research the life and work of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. What other poems is he famous for? When did he live, and what were the themes and subjects he explored in his work? Write a fact page for a Longfellow website. *(W.8.7-10)*

4. Who were William Dawes and Samuel Prescott? What did each man contribute to the sequence of events depicted in the poem, and why do you think they were left out of Longfellow’s retelling? Invite two students to research Dawes and Prescott and portray them in an interview or presentation, perhaps with another student portraying Longfellow, *(W.8.7-10 and SL.8.1–4)*

5. Do the factual inaccuracies in Longfellow’s retelling diminish Revere’s historical importance? Why/why not? Address this question in a 250-word opinion essay, based on research into Revere’s accomplishments. *(W.8.1-2, 4-7, 10)*

6. Have students review the action verbs that help to power “Paul Revere’s Ride.” Pair a student who is less proficient in English with one more proficient and have them draw up a list of action verbs and work to understand the actions and images they contribute to the story. *(ELL)*