

Crispus Attucks: K-8 Activities & Assignments

Activities for Grades K-2:

See Coloring Page

Activities for Grades 3 - 5:

Also see Multiple Choice

Class Activity: Play the “Telephone Game” with your class, in order to demonstrate how the transmission of a story can change very swiftly, as it is repeated by different people.

Before the game begins, establish a brief statement to use. To do so, you might ask everyone in the class to write down a statement of 2-3 sentences and then select one. It can be about any topic, but it should be long enough that it can’t be immediately memorized.

Or, try this statement: *Crispus Attucks escaped slavery when he was 27 years old and was 6 feet 2 inches tall. For twenty years he worked as a whaler, a rope maker and a sea merchant. He used the alias Michael Johnson.*

To play, you begin at one end of the classroom and give the brief written statement to the first person. The first person whispers the statement into the next person’s ear, and this continues down the line until the last person is asked to repeat what s/he heard out loud. Often, it will not make much sense by that point, and then the first person reads aloud the initial statement verbatim. This is a rough approximation of how historical narratives can change and legends can grow or evolve with time.

Activities for Grades 6 - 8:

Prompt: Are artists accountable to accurate depictions of events and the people involved in these events, or is “creative license” a legitimate rationale for differences?

The famous 1770 image of the BLOODY MASSACRE, mass-produced by Paul Revere, has been re- worked many times over the past 200+ years. It might be interesting to look at a series of those images as one potential exercise or discussion topic for students.

Ask at home about what kinds of artifacts remain of your family's ancestors. Report to your class on what you were able to find. How far back can you go?

Read and try to interpret [this poem](#) written below Paul Revere's famous "BLOODY MASSACRE" image.

Transcript of poem from Paul Revere's print *The Bloody Massacre*

Unhappy Boston! see thy Sons deplore
Thy hallow'd walks besmear'd with guiltless gore
While faithless P[reston] and his savage bands
With murd'rous rancour stretch their bloody hands
Like fierce barbarians grinning o'er their prey
Approve the carnage and enjoy the day.

If scalding drops from rage, from anguish wrung
If speechless sorrow, lab'ring for a tongue
Or if a weeping world can ought appease
The plaintive ghosts of victims such as these
The patriot's copious tears for each are shed
A glorious tribute which embalms the dead.

But know, Fate summons to that awful goal
Where Justice strips the murd'rer of his soul,
Should venal C_____ts,* the scandal of the land,
Snatch the relentless villain from her Hand
Keen execrations on this plate inscrib'd
Shall reach a Judge who never can be brib'd.

* Censored in the original poem, along with Captain Preston's full name.

Readers at the time would have known who was intended. Could also ask students: What name do you think was this blank supposed to indicate? Why do you think Revere had the names removed from the text?

Assignments:

Ask students to view [William Cooper Nell's *The Colored Patriot* online](#). They can specifically read the first chapter, which covers Crispus Attucks, the Boston Massacre, and efforts by Nell and other abolitionists to erect a monument to Attucks, "the first martyr of the American Revolution." Some possible response prompts include:

Look up more information on William Cooper Nell and write a report about his life and activities in the abolitionist movement. What was his contribution to our understanding of Attucks, and the field of Black American history more broadly?

Harriet Beecher Stowe wrote the introduction to *The Colored Patriot*. Summarize what you know about Stowe, if anything. Then, look up more information and write a brief report on her life and times. What is she most famous for? Why would she be involved in promoting the work of Nell and his histories of Black America?

Look up Doris "Dorie" Miller, a hero of Pearl Harbor, and write a 1–2-page biography about him and the event that made him famous. How are Miller and Attucks connected in American memory? What similar (or different) functions did they serve as icons or symbols in the debates of their own times?

Look up American historian Carter G. Woodson and write a 1–2-page report about him, his contribution to the field of Black American History, and his role in shaping the memory of Crispus Attucks. Consider these quotes by Carter G. Woodson. Choose your favorite one(s) and write a paragraph explaining what it means to you:

"When you control a man's thinking you do not have to worry about his actions."

"Those who have no record of what their forebears have accomplished lose the inspiration which comes from the teaching of biography and history."

"The mere imparting of information is not education."

"In our so-called democracy we are accustomed to give the majority what they want rather than educate them to understand what is best for them."