Standard 1 Lesson

Tammie Spencer

Fishers High School

Objective: Students will analyze images from different artists in order to identify changing interpretations of the events of the Boston Massacre.

I have found that students struggle to understand the concept of historiography and the related concept of point-of-view or bias. Visual images are often a more manageable way for students to work through these two skills. Throughout this lesson we kept asking students 'Does it matter?'. Does is matter that history changes, does it matter that artists have a different interpretation over time, does it matter that details vary?

Preparation: Students have been assigned a reading about the Boston Massacre incident.

Materials: Student worksheets, Power Point presentation, color copies, and teacher reference materials if desired.

The Lesson:

* Students are put into groups of 3 - 4 and given a set of color images. Each student is given a student worksheet which has small, black and white copies of each of the images on them for reference.
* Students are told to work independently for a few minutes (7 - 8 mins.) to observe each image and take any notations on their student worksheet.
* Next, have small groups work through the questions on the back side of the worksheet together (allow 8 - 10 mins.)
* Then bring class back together. Open PowerPoint presentation and scroll through slides 2 - 6 asking students to provide their observations about each painting.
* On slide 7, you can either move to questions on the back or begin to ask for comparisons - by this point, students are usually intrigued enough to carry the discussion without much prompting.

Variations:

* **Crispus Attucks** figure (central figure in several) is replaced by a white figure by Southern artist in 19th c. painting. His skin tone varies in others and students feel he is entirely absent from Paul Revere's print.
* The **dog** - kids will spend hours on the dog!
* The **time** of day/**seasons** - two of the paintings have a moon, students address the snow in two paintings.
* **Weapons** or not! Students have tons to say about the presence or lack of weapons (colonists'). And this is the one place that they clearly understand that the artists' were clearly trying to garner support/sympathy for the colonists depending on how they showed the colonists as victims.
* The single painting that shows a different **setting** causes a bit of speculation.
* but most students miss what I find most fascinating . . . the changing **British uniforms**. In Paul Revere's print they wear the traditional coats/tri-corner hats one thinks of from the colonial era. But by the late-19th century the uniforms look positively Hessian. Once that is discovered or pointed out a very sharp student will connect the Southern artist to the recent Civil-War/British relations as reason enough for a revision of the events by this 19th c artist. This is the reason for the images on the last slide - British and Hessian uniforms.