

Lynching and Terrorism: The Paxton Boys *Jacqueline Katz, Wellesley High School*

This lesson reviews contemporary definitions of terrorism and lynching and applies them to the massacre of the Conestoga people by the Paxton Boys in 1763. Students will learn vocabulary, read primary and secondary sources, and perform their own research using Digital Paxton. For assessment, have students create a pamphlet that applies what they learned.

Lesson Objectives:

- Students will apply contemporary terms in new ways to the Paxton massacre.
- Students will perform primary and secondary source research to analyze the massacre.
- Students will produce a pamphlet that answers the essential questions and reflects the media of the time.

Historical Thinking Skills:

- Analysis of Primary and Secondary Sources
- Sourcing
- Understanding Historical Context

Essential Questions:

- Was the massacre of the Conestoga people a lynching?
- Were the Paxton Boys terrorists?

Grade Level: Grades 8-12

Common Core Standards:

- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.1:** Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.2:** Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.8:** Evaluate an author's premises, claims, and evidence by corroborating or challenging them with other information.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.9:** Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies among sources.

Teacher Background: Teachers should be familiar with the Paxton Boys and the massacre of the Conestoga people. Teachers should read Dr. Fenton's overview, browse Digital Paxton, and/or ask a librarian for help with the research excerpted in the lesson.

Materials

- Digital Paxton
- Worksheet Packet
- SPARC Handout

Procedures:

1. Distribute Worksheet Packet
2. Have students define the word "lynching" and "terrorism" using the Worksheet Packet. (pages 1-2 of packet).
 - a. Where have they heard these words before?
 - b. Do they know what they mean?
3. Review definitions with students, ensuring that each part of the definition is reviewed. For instance, it is key that terrorists have a political purpose—make sure students understand that they need to look for political reasons as they research. For lynching, the action must be extralegal and conducted by a mob of 2+ people (pages 3-4).
4. Show students the research graphic organizers (pages 7-8), and check that students understand that they have to find all the parts of the definition as they research.
5. Review Historical Context (pages 5-6). Set up the major players and locations. Only answer questions that are integral for understanding the sources. Do not answer the focus questions.
6. Have students read through the primary sources first to find answers to the essential questions (begins on page 10).
7. Have students read through the secondary sources. Struggling students may start with the secondary sources. Advanced students may skip the secondary (so they have to piece together the primary sources—a more difficult skill).
8. When students have completed the readings, review the Research Worksheet (page 9) to set up the online research. Depending upon the grade level, students may perform this research in-class or as homework. Once students can answer the focus questions with evidence, they may stop research.

Assessment:

Have students create their own pamphlet that addresses the focus questions. (Other options might include a letter, account, discussion, op-ed, political cartoon, or poem.) Students should answer the questions using primary and secondary source materials. They may evaluate evidence the SPARC technique (SPARC Handout).