Not So Friendly Fire – A Lesson Plan on the Boston Massacre

Introduction:
This lesson plan is for eighth grade students, but can be adapted for any middle or high school class that studies the Boston Massacre and Revolutionary War. This lesson will take place about one week into my Road to Revolution Unit that examines the reasons behind the Revolutionary War. In class I read a dramatic retelling of the Boston Massacre while my students partially act out the events of March 5, 1770. This lesson would take place the following day.

Objectives:
The student will evaluate Paul Revere’s “Boston Massacre” engraving as a piece of propaganda.
The student will analyze the Boston Massacre as a pivotal event in the Road to the Revolutionary War.
The student will examine Benjamin Franklin’s shift in attitude toward independence.

State Standards Addressed:
Eighth Grade United States Civics-Government, Benchmark 3, Indicator 4
The student:

Eighth Grade United States History, Benchmark 4, Indicators1-2
The student:
1. (A) examines a topic in United States history to analyze changes over time and makes logical inferences concerning cause and effect.
2. (A) examines a variety of different types of primary sources in United States history and analyzes them in terms of credibility, purpose, and point of view (e.g., census records, diaries, photographs, letters, government documents).
Outline/Steps
1. Students will answer six questions about the Paul Revere engraving of the Boston Massacre.

2. Discussion of the inaccuracies of the painting and thoughts on the six questions. At least 9 inaccuracies should be found in the painting.

3. Teacher will solicit answers on the last questions relating to Benjamin Franklin. Following discussion, teacher will show quick PowerPoint slides illustrating world events related to the Boston Massacre.

4. Teacher will solicit more answers following the images from the PowerPoint. The answer of why Ben Franklin changed from being an Englishman to being an American is from the Boston Massacre. When British citizens are shot by British soldiers, Franklin realizes independence is necessary.

5. Discussion of what “friendly fire” means during war.

6. The following quotes may be shared with the students concerning Franklin’s belief about British soldiers in the colonies:

“The sending of soldiers to Boston always appeared to me a dangerous step; they could do no good, they might occasion mischief. I cannot but fear the consequences of bringing them together.” – Franklin wrote to a friend after the British decided to send troops to Boston in 1768

From London, he wrote to Reverend Samuel Cooper, telling him that the British policy of maintaining a "standing army among us in time of peace, without the consent of our assemblies" was a grievance almost as serious as Parliaments claim that it had the right to tax Americans.
Assessment
Teacher will collect questions on the Boston Massacre and students will later be tested in the Road to Revolution Unit Exam.

Closure
Discussion of how this conflict will turn into a civil war, including Franklin’s own son who sides with the Crown.
Analysis of Paul Revere’s Painting

1. What was Paul Revere’s objective in his engraving of the Boston Massacre?

2. What was the reaction of the colonists after seeing Revere’s engraving?

3. Does the painting seem accurate from our simulation yesterday and from your reading? Explain with examples of any inaccuracies you detect!

4. Why would this be considered by some to be one of the most famous paintings in American History? Do you agree with this opinion?

5. How is Revere’s engraving propaganda?

6. Benjamin Franklin remained loyal to the crown until this event. Why do you think that might be so?