"The Regulars are Coming Out:” Paul Revere and Diligence

- **Compelling Question**
  - How can you act diligently in order to protect what is important to you?

- **Virtue:** Diligence

- **Definition** – Diligence is intrinsic energy for completing good work.

- **Lesson Overview**
  - In this lesson, students will learn about the actions of Paul Revere during his midnight ride on April of 1775. They will study how his diligence in working towards Independence helped to advance the cause and use this example to better understand how they can be diligent in their own lives.

- **Objectives**
  - Students will analyze Paul Revere’s role in the midnight ride.
  - Students will understand how to remain diligent in their own lives.
  - Students will apply their knowledge of diligence to their own lives.

- **Background**
  - After a decade of American resistance against British taxes and tyranny, the Boston Tea Party of December, 1773, finally prompted the harsh British response that sent the two peoples on an irrevocable path to war. The following year, the British Parliament passed the Coercive Acts that punished Boston severely until restitution was made for the tea. The repressive acts galvanized a united response to the British as the colonists sent representatives to the First and Second Continental Congress to decide on a common course of action. Meanwhile, the colonies kept each other abreast of events through Committees of Correspondence that depended on riders to travel back and forth with the letters between leaders of the resistance. As the first shots were fired at Lexington and Concord in April, 1775, the cause of liberty in Boston became the cause of America.

- **Vocabulary**
  - Tyranny
  - Irrevocable
  - Restitution
  - Repressive
  - Galvanized
  - Contingent
  - Cache
  - Militia
  - Indefatigable
  - Propaganda
  - Denouncing
  - Eluding
  - Interrogate

- **Introduce Text**
  - Have students read the background and narrative, keeping the “Walk-In-The-Shoes” question in mind as they read. Then have them answer the remaining questions below.

- **Walk-In-The-Shoes Questions**
  - As you read, imagine you are the protagonist.
    - What challenges are you facing?
    - What fears or concerns might you have?
    - What may prevent you from acting in the way you ought?

- **Observation Questions**
  - What was Paul Revere’s role in the midnight ride?
  - What was Paul Revere’s purpose for making the midnight ride?
  - What about your life could you compare to the diligence shown by Paul Revere?
  - What does Revere’s purpose for participating in the midnight ride tell you about his identity?
Discussion Questions
- Discuss the following questions with your students.
  - What is the historical context of the narrative?
  - What historical circumstances presented a challenge to the protagonist?
  - How and why did the individual exhibit a moral and/or civic virtue in facing and overcoming the challenge?
  - How did the exercise of the virtue benefit civil society?
  - How might exercise of the virtue benefit the protagonist?
  - What might the exercise of the virtue cost the protagonist?
  - Would you react the same under similar circumstances? Why or why not?
  - How can you act similarly in your own life? What obstacles must you overcome in order to do so?

Additional Resources
- Paul Revere House [https://www.paulreverehouse.org/](https://www.paulreverehouse.org/)
Handout A: The Regulars are Coming Out: Paul Revere and Diligence

Background

After a decade of American resistance against British taxes and tyranny, the Boston Tea Party of December, 1773, finally prompted the harsh British response that sent the two peoples on an irrevocable path to war. The following year, the British Parliament passed the Coercive Acts that punished Boston severely until restitution was made for the tea. The repressive acts galvanized a united response to the British as the colonists sent representatives to the First and Second Continental Congress to decide on a common course of action. Meanwhile, the colonies kept each other abreast of events through Committees of Correspondence that depended on riders to travel back and forth with the letters between leaders of the resistance. As the first shots were fired at Lexington and Concord in April, 1775, the cause of liberty in Boston became the cause of America.

Narrative

In the evening of April 18, 1775, Paul Revere received word through the Boston spy network that a contingent of British troops were making quiet preparations for an expedition to seize a cache of weapons in Concord and arrest two ringleaders of the resistance, John Hancock and Samuel Adams. Revere prepared to ride out and warn the countryside that the British were coming at no small risk to himself. The British had thousands of troops in Boston, warships in its harbor, and roving patrols to capture riders such as Revere. But the silversmith Revere had ridden through danger before and during the past few years had been a key messenger in spreading news in the American resistance.

Paul Revere was the most indefatigable and famous of American riders who lived and worked as a silversmith in Boston, which was one of the main centers of opposition to the British. He was a dedicated patriot and member of the Sons of Liberty, the militia, Boston town meeting, and a local Congregationalist church. After the Boston Massacre, he had created the most important engraving that was used as propaganda denouncing the redcoats for murdering five colonists. Between 1773 and 1775, he had ridden no less than eight times thousands of miles to New York and Philadelphia to allow the leaders of the different colonies to communicate with each other and form an effective united response to British policies in America. Most notably, he brought the Suffolk Resolves to the First Continental Congress, which proclaimed that Massachusetts owed “no obedience” to the Coercive Acts and claimed the rights the colonists were “justly entitled by the laws of nature, the British Constitution, and the charter of the province.”

None of Revere’s rides were as important—and as dangerous—as the midnight ride on April 18 to warn the countryside that the British were on the march. Because of the possibility of capture, two other riders were dispatched on various roads to Lexington and Concord. Leather tanner William Dawes sped out along Boston Neck on horseback, and an unidentified rider also rode out. Meanwhile, as two lanterns were placed in the steeple window of Old North Church to signal that the British were crossing the Back Bay by boat to Cambridge, Revere rowed across the Charles River, narrowly eluding the HMS Somerset and capture.

Revere reached land and galloped off toward Lexington and outraced two British regulars who spied him and gave chase until Revere disappeared into the night. He reached Lexington, where he went to the home where Hancock and Adams were in hiding in order to warn them to leave. He may not have yelled “The British are coming,” but he did tell the militiamen who were guarding the house that, “The Regulars are coming out!” Other members of the militia were roused from their beds and soon assembled on the town green with their muskets in case of trouble. Shortly thereafter, Dawes arrived (though the mysterious rider had apparently been captured and detained), and the pair decided to continue on to Concord. As they were riding, they met up with Dr. Samuel Prescott, who offered to help. The trio leapfrogged to every farmstead along the way, informing the inhabitants that the redcoats were on the march. Soon, the alarm was raised with the tolling of church bells and firing of signal guns.

The riders dashed along the road until they were suddenly ambushed by four armed British regulars who emerged from their hiding spot. The redcoats prevented the riders from bolting and threatened to “blow our brains out.” As six more regulars appeared to interrogate the prisoners, Dawes saw an opportunity and escaped their captors, though he was soon violently thrown from his horse and had to limp back to Lexington. The well-known Revere was
roughly handled by the British troops who pistol-whipped him in the back of the head and insulted him furiously. The captives were led on foot to another group of prisoners and moved back toward Lexington. When they arrived, they were released as the first shots of the war were fired. Thinking of the public cause more than his own safety, Revere grabbed a trunkful of important papers owned by Hancock and Adams, and barely eluded the exchange of musketfire as he made off with the trunk.

As the smoke cleared, eight Americans lay dead and others gravely wounded. The British gave a victory salute, and marched off towards Concord. Revere’s own part in the night’s events were over, but he had diligently completed his assigned task with great courage. The British troops eventually searched for the hidden weapons in Concord and engaged with the militia swelling from the surrounding towns. After a sharp exchange, the British desperately fought their way back to Boston as the Americans fired from behind rocks, fences, and barns. They were the first shots fired in the American War of Independence.

Rider Paul Revere was diligently committed to the American cause for liberty. His travel between different cities helped forge an American unity and identity as the colonists from disparate parts of the country communicated their concerns and mutual support against a common foe. Moreover, during his most famous ride, whereas other famous revolutionaries wrote inspiring words or delivered fiery orations, Revere was one of the first Americans to put his life on the line to serve a cause higher than himself.