

Honors United States History: Summer Reading Assignment

Reading Assignments:

The textbook for this course is Alan Brinkley's *American History: A Survey* 13th ed. (New York: McGraw Hill, 2009). Please read the **first four chapters** of the textbook. The other book that you are required to read is David Hackett Fischer's *Paul Revere's Ride* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994; paperback edition, 1995). Please read the "Introduction," pages xiii-xviii; the main text, pages 1-295; and the section entitled "Historiography," pages 327-344. Be sure to look at all illustrations and maps; they enhance the text.

Writing Assignment: Use Fischer's *Paul Revere's Ride*

You should be prepared to hand in the written portions of this assignment on the first day of class.

Part I: Introduction and the Narrative

Please answer the following questions in complete sentences on a separate sheet of paper.

1. What does Fischer mean when he uses the term "contingency"?
2. What does Fischer say are two of the purposes of his book?
3. Who was Paul Revere? Be sure to talk a bit about his background and the sort of man he was.
4. Who was General Thomas Gage? Be sure to talk about his background and the sort of man he was.
5. Fischer talks about different definitions of the word "liberty." Explain what the term "liberty" meant to Revere. Explain what the term "liberty" meant to Gage.
6. What kind of a town was Paul Revere's Boston?
7. What does it mean to have a town meeting form of government? Where do you live? What type of government does it have?
8. Look at the map of Boston in 1775 on page 11. Then find a map of contemporary Boston. Compare the two. What do you notice? Make a list of at least three (3) similarities and three (3) differences.
9. When Paul Revere and William Dawes set off from Boston on the night of April 18, 1775 what was their mission?
10. What route did Revere follow? What route did Dawes follow?
11. What did Revere say while on horseback?
12. How did the news of the Battle of Lexington and Concord spread throughout the colonies? What were the reactions to the news?
13. How did the news of the battle spread to Great Britain? What were the reactions to the news?

Part II: Historiography and Historical Memory

1. Define the word “historiography.” You may have to look this word up in a dictionary.
2. Briefly discuss the ways in which historians and others have portrayed Paul Revere and his ride since April 18, 1775.

Please obtain and read a copy of the poem “Paul Revere’s Ride” by Longfellow.” After you have read the poem, go back to the section in Fischer’s book entitled “The Union in Crisis: Longfellow’s Myth of the Lone Rider” on pages 331-33.

1. What was Longfellow’s reason for writing the poem on Revere? What did he hope that the poem would do? Whom did he leave out of his story of the events on the night of April 18, 1775?
2. Compare the version of Revere’s ride in Longfellow’s poem to what you learned from Fischer’s narrative. How do the two stories differ? Make a list of at least three (3) differences.
3. Think about Fischer’s discussion of Revere, his ride, and historical memory. Can you think of other examples of historical events that have been used or misused by individuals or groups for their own ends?

Part III. Optional Activities

It is certainly not required that you do any of these activities, but you may want to stop by the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston to look for Copley’s portrait of Revere, as well as examples of Revere’s silver, when the Art of the Americas Exhibit reopens in November. Spend some time walking on the Freedom Trail in downtown Boston—part of Boston National Historical Park--to see such sites as Paul Revere’s house and the Old North Church. And you might want to visit Minuteman National Historical Park to wander on the Lexington Green and cross the North Bridge in Concord. The following websites might be helpful:

<http://www.mfa.org/>

<http://www.nps.gov/bost/index.htm>

<http://www.nps.gov/mima/index.htm>

Part IV. Just in case you are interested. . . .

“The Midnight Ride of William Dawes” by Helen F. Moore from *The Century Magazine* (1896)

I am a wandering, bitter shade,
Never of me was a hero made;
Poets have never sung my praise,
Nobody crowned my brow with bays;
And if you ask me the fatal cause,
I answer only, "My name was Dawes"

'Tis all very well for the children to hear
Of the midnight ride of Paul Revere;
But why should my name be quite forgot,
Who rode as boldly and well, God wot?
Why should I ask? The reason is clear --
My name was Dawes and his Revere.

When the lights from the old North Church flashed
out,
Paul Revere was waiting about,
But I was already on my way.
The shadows of night fell cold and gray
As I rode, with never a break or a pause;
But what was the use, when my name was Dawes!

History rings with his silvery name;
Closed to me are the portals of fame.
Had he been Dawes and I Revere,
No one had heard of him, I fear.
No one has heard of me because
He was Revere and I was Dawes.

