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Lesson in Action

AT A GLANCE

Before Reading

- Read aloud a short, vivid passage from *Johnny Tremain* and have students listen and visualize with closed eyes.
- Ask students to sketch their visualizations.
- Divide the class into groups of three and have each group share their drawings and discuss how their visualizations were similar and different.
- Photograph student drawings and add to class website.

During Reading

- Explain how visualization techniques can be applied to social studies readings.
- Review the historical context of the Boston Tea Party.
- Share and display an engraving of the Boston Tea Party.
- Instruct students to examine the image and write down everything they see, noticing as many details as possible.
- Compile a list of students' observations about the engraving, explaining the connection to the descriptive caption.
- Present a simplified excerpt from an eyewitness's account of the Boston Tea Party.
- Have students practice visualizing the descriptions in the excerpt and discuss their mental images.
- Circulate to provide feedback and guiding questions as needed.

After Reading

- Have class work together to turn the excerpt into a photographic storyboard for a short movie.
- Distribute cameras and have groups stage and photograph their images.
- Lead a discussion about how visualizing the descriptions in the excerpt helped in creating the photographs.
- Assemble the photographs into a slide show and publish on the class website.

Visualizing: Storyboarding

Context

Ms. Flynn is using primary sources to help her Grade 5 students learn about the American Revolution. She wants to bring the era to life to help her struggling readers and those with learning disabilities. She has found that visual and auditory clues support her students' understanding of, and connection with, a literary text. She plans to have students create a photographic storyboard of a primary source description of the Boston Tea Party as a way to encourage more detailed visualization and interpretation of text.

Common Core State Standards

- ▶ [CCSS.ELA.RI.5.3](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/RI/5/3) (<http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/RI/5/3>) Explain the relationships or interactions between two or more individuals, events, ideas, or concepts in a historical, scientific, or technical text based on specific information in the text.
- ▶ [CCSS.ELA.RI.5.7](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/RI/5/7) (<http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/RI/5/7>) Draw on information from multiple print or digital sources, demonstrating the ability to locate an answer to a question quickly or to solve a problem efficiently.
- ▶ [CCSS.ELA.SL.5.5](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/SL/5/5) (<http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/SL/5/5>) Include multimedia components (e.g., graphics, sound) and visual displays in presentations when appropriate to enhance the development of main ideas or themes.

Lesson Objective

Students will learn to use visualization strategies to build an understanding of prerevolutionary Boston through the creation of a photographic storyboard of the events of the Boston Tea Party.

Technology

- ▶ Cameras, for taking staged photographs for the storyboard
- ▶ Interactive whiteboard, for displaying text and images for class interpretation
- ▶ Google Docs (<http://www.docs.google.com>) for creating and sharing images, text, and hypertext

Assessment

- ▶ Review images created for the storyboard and the process they used to plan them.
- ▶ Review the students' reflections in conjunction with the images themselves.

Ms. Flynn's Class in Action

Before Reading

"Today, we are going to practice visualizing," Ms. Flynn begins. "Take out your drawing notebooks and a pencil. I am going to read a few lines from the beginning of *Johnny Tremain*—a book we have all been enjoying as a class."

"I want you to listen with closed eyes and visualize the scene—create images in your imagination that go with what I say. Then, you are going to draw what you see in your mind." Ms. Flynn reads:

Boston slowly opened its eyes, stretched, and woke. The sun struck in horizontally from the east, flashing upon weathervanes—brass cocks and arrows, here a glass-eyed Indian, there a copper grasshopper—and the bells in the steeples cling-clanged, telling the people it was time to be up and about.

Ms. Flynn rereads the passage several times while the students work on their drawings. She reminds students that they should be drawing not exactly what the text says, but what they are imagining when they hear it. She also emphasizes that the quality of the artwork is not important: "This is just a quick, rough sketch, and it's not meant to be pretty!"

When the students have finished drawing, she divides the class into groups of three. In each group, students share their drawing and describe what they drew and why. They discuss how their visualizations of morning in Boston are similar and different. Students then use the cameras on their tablets to photograph their drawings and upload them to the class website.

During Reading

Ms. Flynn explains that they are now going to turn their visualization skills to social studies content. "We've been creating mental movies to accompany stories and fiction. But we can use these same skills to help us understand what we are reading about the American Revolution."

"Today, we're going to look at firsthand accounts of the time and place in which Johnny Tremain lived. We're going to read about Boston right before the American Revolution, and by visualizing this world, we'll have a better understanding of what the colonists did and why."

The class has been studying the events leading up to the American Revolution, so today's content will focus on the Boston Tea Party. Ms. Flynn reviews the historical context in late 1773, encouraging students to refer to their notes from previous days' lessons.

Next, she displays the following engraving on her interactive whiteboard. She has also shared the file with the class via Google Docs so that students can look at the image on their own devices and zoom in and pan out as they wish.



The Destruction of Tea at Boston Harbor, December 16, 1773

During the night of December 16, 1773, the three ships carrying tea and anchored to Griffin's Wharf were boarded by thirty to sixty men from Massachusetts, some dressed as Mohawk Indians. This boarding took place within minutes of the end of a meeting of nearly 5,000 colonists who had gathered to protest the tea tax. Within hours of boarding, forty-five tons of tea in 342 boxes were tossed over board with little damage done to the ships and no harm done to the men who were on board. No other part of the ships' cargo was touched.

"This is an engraving of the event that we now call the *Boston Tea Party*," she says. "Take a moment to look closely at it. You can either write down everything you see or record it. You don't have to write or speak in full sentences if you don't want to. Just list the things you see in the image— as many as you can. Try to notice all of the details the engraver included in this scene."

When the students have completed this task, volunteers share items on their lists while Ms. Flynn compiles them on the interactive whiteboard. She applauds the high level of detail that the students observed, explaining that talking about images helps to clarify our understanding of a setting or event. The class then discusses how the image is an illustration of the paragraph of text. She asks, "How many of the details in the paragraph are present in the image? What else does the image add that isn't in the text? Does the illustration make the text easier to understand?"

Ms. Flynn then presents the following text, explaining that it is a simplified version of a primary text, in which an actual observer of the Boston Tea Party describes what he saw that night:

Soon, about 20 men disguised as Indians came through the church in single file holding up their tomahawks. When they left the church, they headed down Milk Street toward Gray and Tiletson's wharves where the ships with the tea were docked. When they arrived at the wharves, they split into three groups, one for

each ship. Each group assigned a leader. They quietly boarded the ships and began to open the wooden chests of tea with their hatchets. They emptied the tea onto the dock. After several hours, all of the tea was on the docks. One bystander was tempted and put lots of tea in his pocket. Others saw him do it and made him empty his pockets, then took him aside where they tarred and feathered him.

Prior to class, Ms. Flynn created a hypertext version of this paragraph in a Google Doc, in which the potentially challenging words and names are flagged with notes that provide an explanation or a link to a picture. Ms. Flynn now distributes this document to the students' devices.

Students work in pairs to read the description, using text-to-speech software if desired or just reading the passage aloud to one another. As they read the description, they practice visualizing everything described. Partners discuss their imagined versions of the scene, comparing the details they've each added or altered. Ms. Flynn circulates and assists pairs as needed.

When some pairs struggle to discuss their visualizations, Ms. Flynn poses the following guiding questions, displayed on her interactive whiteboard:

- ▶ What do you think the men looked like, based on this description? How did they move through the streets?
- ▶ What were they wearing? What were they holding?
- ▶ What do you think the men usually looked like?
- ▶ How do you think the men looked and behaved when they saw the man stealing tea?
- ▶ How do you think the man felt when he was caught? What would it have been like to be tarred and feathered?

Gradually, students create a mental movie of this event. Ms. Flynn asks if they think the men looked scary, funny, sad, and/or strong. She asks them to explain their answers. She then encourages them to imagine if it was day or night, cold or hot, sunny or raining, and if the men were scared or excited. She asks them to predict what might happen next.

After Reading

As a large-scale activity, Ms. Flynn will have the entire class work together to turn their visualizations of this paragraph of description into staged photographs, which will become a storyboard for a short movie. She numbers the sentences in the description, one through nine. She then divides the class into nine groups of three or four students and assigns each group one of the sentences. Each group is to discuss their assigned sentence as part of the overall narrative of the paragraph and decide how they would present that image in a movie.

Ms. Flynn explains that they are going to create a storyboard for a short movie about the Boston Tea Party. A storyboard shows in static images what is happening in each beat of a film; it is essentially a script in images. Using the class's cameras, each group will storyboard their sentence with two to five staged photographs. Each group makes a plan for how to stage the photographs, working together to assemble basic costumes and props from objects around the room. Groups plan their photographs by drawing pictures and writing captions that explain what everyone will do in each picture. They can also enlist helpers from other groups, if necessary, to make sure that there are enough people in a particular photograph.

After Ms. Flynn looks at each drawing of a planned image, she distributes cameras, and the groups stage and photograph their shots. When everyone has finished, Ms. Flynn leads a discussion about how visualizing the descriptions in the paragraph helped the class

to flesh out their sentences for the photographs. Later, they will look through their images as a group and choose the best ones, which Ms. Flynn will assemble into a slide show and put on the class website.

Reflection

Ms. Flynn was impressed with the quality of the photographs her students produced, but she knows that some groups' creativity was largely propelled by one student while the other group members just followed along. Next time she does a project like this, she will consider not just evenly distributing the strong readers and writers among the groups but also keeping the enthusiastic talkers in separate groups from the quiet students so that they all have a chance to be creative.