

Ghost River Meets the Spirits of the Conestoga

LéAnn Murphy Cassidy

This multi-part lesson will focus on the theme of historical Continuity and Change through the analysis of primary and secondary sources related to the Conestoga massacres (1763). Students will compare text and images from the graphic novel *Ghost River: The Fall and Rise of the Conestoga* with excerpts from two of the earliest plays written in America, *The Paxton Boys, A Farce* and *A Dialogue between Andrew Trueman and Thomas Zealot*. This lesson is intended for block periods, and it may be taught over multiple days, dependent upon scheduling.

Grade Levels: Grades 6-8

Standards: From the C3 Frameworks

- **D2.Civ.10.6-8.** Explain the relevance of personal interests and perspectives, civic virtues, and democratic principles when people address issues and problems in government and civil society.
- **D2.His.1.6-8.** Analyze connections among events and developments in broader historical contexts.
- **D2.His.6.6-8.** Analyze how people's perspectives influenced what information is available in the historical sources they created.

Historical Background:

When William Penn established the colony of Pennsylvania, he envisioned a pluralistic and peaceful colony. In establishing alliances with the local Native Peoples, Penn made a series of treaties, beginning with the Great Treaty, the Treaty of Shackamaxon (1682), in pursuit of his "peaceable kingdom." From the Native Peoples' perspective, they had established kinship relationships making them friends and "brothers." A wampum belt was created, recording the terms of this treaty. Diplomacy was vital to the trade alliances between Native Peoples in the Susquehanna Valley and the colonial Pennsylvanians.

On December 14, 1763, the Paxton Boys, a group of vigilantes from the Paxtang Township, massacred six Conestoga Indians on rumors that they had aligned with other groups who planned to attack the colonists. This was not true, but it did not stop the Paxton Boys from searching out the Conestoga away from their village. The remaining 14 Conestoga were moved to the Lancaster Workhouse (often referred to in the documents as the "Goal" or jail) for their protection. However, on December 27, the Paxton Boys broke into the workhouse and brutally murdered the remaining and defenseless men, women, and children.

Materials (in order of application)

- Warmup Sheet
- Journaling Sheet
- Lee Francis, Weshoyot Alvitre, and Will Fenton, *Ghost River: The Fall and Rise of the Conestoga*. Albuquerque: Red Planet Books and Comics, 2019.
- *A Dialogue between Andrew Trueman and Thomas Zealot* (page 3) and Analysis Sheet
- *The Paxton Boys, A Farce* (page 8) and Analysis Sheet
- *Ghost River* (excerpts) with Analysis Sheet
- Exit Slips (Part 1 and Part 2)
- Image Analysis Sheet (Extension Activity)

References

- *A Dialogue Between Andrew Trueman, and Thomas Zealot*. Digital Paxton.
- Lottie Bausman, "Massacre of the Conestoga Indians, 1763: Incidents and Details." Lancaster County Historical Society.
- "Conestoga Indian Town Historical Marker." Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission.
- "Conestoga Massacre Marks 248th Anniversary." WGALTV, 27 Dec. 2011.
- "The History of the Fulton." Fulton Theatre.
- Rick Kearns, "Ethnic Cleansing in Pennsylvania: The 1763 Massacre of the Conestoga." Indian Country Today, 3 Jan. 2014.
- Lee Francis, Weshoyot Alvitre, and Will Fenton, *Ghost River: The Fall and Rise of the Conestoga*. Albuquerque: Red Planet Books and Comics, 2019.
- *The Paxton Boys, A Farce*. Digital Paxton.
- Daniel Richter, *Facing East from Indian Country a Native History of Early America*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003.

Procedure:

Part 1:

- **Warmup:** As students enter the room, project the Warmup Sheet with the caption, "History is Complicated. Violence is simple." Ask students to record responses.
- **Small-Group Discussion:** Have students discuss their responses in small groups.
- **Class Discussion:** Ask several students to share what their small groups discussed. Discuss the cover artwork of *Ghost River*. Have students consider the symbolism of the artwork and brainstorm predictions for the story.
- **Read-Aloud:** Read aloud of the full graphic novel with the students. If possible, display the digital pages on a Smartboard as it is read aloud. Upon completion, have students record reactions on the Journaling Sheet and share thoughts in pairs or small groups.

Part 2:

- **Analysis:** Break students into small groups and have them analyze excerpts from two plays written about the Conestoga massacres using the analysis sheets. Then have them analyze excerpts from *Ghost River* using its image analysis sheet.
- **Assessment:** Distribute Exit Slips (Part 1 and Part 2). Have students work independently to answer the question: *How do the text and visual representations of the event differ in their perspectives?* Students should explain and defend their answers with evidence.

Part 3:

- **Further Inquiry:** Have students analyze the final image from *Ghost River*. After that warmup, have students generate research questions for further inquiry centered on the resiliency and humanity of Native Peoples in North America using Image Analysis Sheet (Extension Activity). In small groups or as a class, have students discuss the cyclical cycle of the story and how it lends itself to the continuation; Native Peoples still inhabit "Turtle Island" (Earth).
- **Future Lessons:** Students will be able to the connections among historical events relevant to the location(s) of the Conestoga massacres. For example, students can explore history of the site of the second massacre, from the Lancaster Jail ("Goal") to the Fulton Opera House. NB: A ghost light is left on an empty stage. Each night the light at the Fulton Opera House lets us know that the spirit of the Conestoga Peoples endures in Lancaster today. Additional Resource: Fulton Opera House [application](#) for National Landmark recognition.

Extension Standard (Change, Continuity and Context):

- **HIST 8.1:** Analyze connections among events and developments in historical contexts.
- **HIST 8.2:** Classify series of historical events and developments as examples of change and/or continuity.

Warmup Sheet

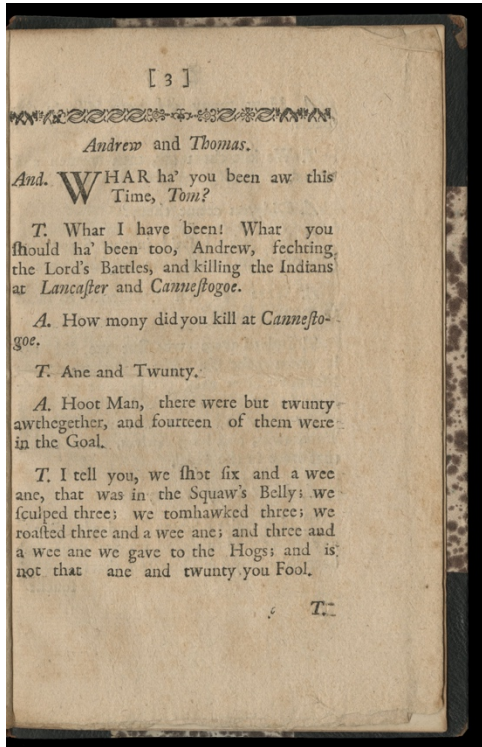
Please respond to the opening lines of *Ghost River: The Fall and Rise of the Conestoga*:

“History is complicated.
Violence is simple.”

Journaling Sheet

Please respond with your thoughts and feelings about *Ghost River*.

Analysis Sheet: A Dialogue Between Andrew Trueman and Thomas Zealot - 3



WHAR ha' you been aw this Time, Tom?
 T. Whar I have been! Whar you should ha' been too, Andrew, fechtng the Lord's battles, and killing the Indians at Lancaster and Cannestogoe.
 A. How mony did you kill at Cannestogoe.
 T. Ane and Twunty.
 A. Hoot Man, there were but twunty awthegether, and four-teen of them were in the Goal. [sic]
 T. I tell you, we shot six and a wee ane, that was in the Squaw's Belly; we sculped three; we tomhawked three; we roasted three and a wee ane; and three and a wee ane we gave to the Hogs; and is not that ane and twunty you Fool.

Which lines stand out to you? Choose two lines from the play.

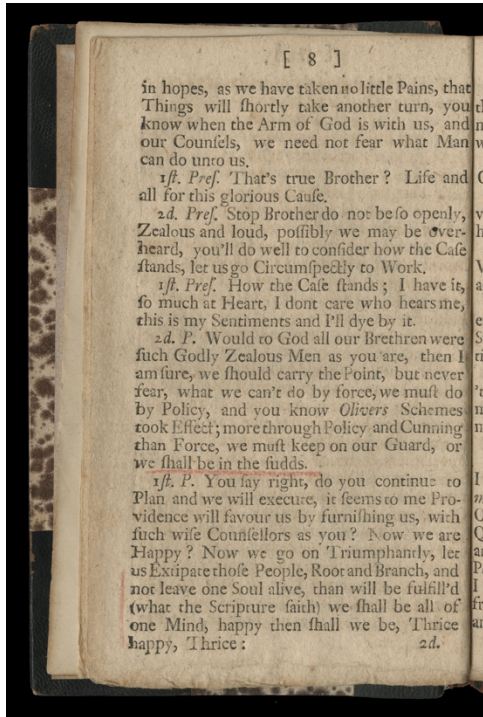
Line 1.

Why is this line in the play significant?

Line 2.

Why is this line in the play significant?

Analysis Sheet: The Paxton Boys: a Farce - 8



1st. Pres. That's true Brother? Life and all for this glorious Cause.

2d. Pres. Stop Brother do not be so openly, Zealous and loud, possibly we may be overheard, you'll do well to consider how the Case stands, let us go Circumspectly to Work.

1st. Pres. How the Case stands; I have it, so much at Heart, I dont care who hears me, this is my Sentiments and I'll dye by it.

2d. P. Would to God all our Brethren were such Godly Zealous Men as you are, then I am sure, we should carry the Point, but never fear, what we can't do by force, we must do by Policy, and you know *Olivers* Schemes took Effect; more through Policy and Cunning than Force, we must keep on our Guard, or we shall be in the sudds.

1st. P. You say right, do you continue to Plan and we will execute, it seems to me Providence will favour us by furnishing us, with such wise Counsellors as you? Now we are Happy? Now we go on Triumphantly, let us Extipate those People, Root and Branch, and not leave one Soul alive, than will be fulfill'd (what the Scripture saith) we shall be all of one Mind, happy then shall we be, Thrice happy, Thrice:

Which lines stand out to you? Choose two lines from the play.

Line 1.

Why is this line in the play significant?

Line 2.

Why is this line in the play significant?

Using your analysis of the phrases as evidence, how did the colonists view the massacre of the Conestoga Peoples? Defend your answer with evidence from the texts.

Analysis Sheet: Ghost River: The Fall and Rise of the Conestoga





Image Analysis Sheet (Extension Activity)	
Level 1 Visuals	Level 1 Words (not all images have words)
List the objects or people you see in the images.	Record any important dates that appear in the images. Locate two words or phrases used to identify people or objects in these images.
Level 2 Visuals	Level 2 Words
Which of the objects on your list are symbols? What do you think each symbol means?	Which words or phrases in the images appear to be the most important? Why do you think so? List words that describe the emotions portrayed in the images.
Level 3	
Describe the actions taking place in the images. Explain how the words clarify the symbols. Explain the message of the images. What words or images are not included but should be? Why, please explain your thinking. How does this image differ from the tone of the rest of the Conestoga story? Please explain your thinking.	

Exit Slips (Part 1 and Part 2)

In the space provided, please answer the following:

How do the text and visual representations of the event differ in their perspectives?

Please explain and defend your answer with evidence.

Image Analysis Sheet (Extension Activity)

Analyze the final image *Ghost River: The Fall and Rise of the Conestoga*:



Image Analysis Sheet (Extension Activity)	
Level 1 Visuals	Level 1 Words (not all images have words)
List the objects or people you see in the images.	Record any important dates that appear in the images. Locate two words or phrases used to identify people or objects in these images.
Level 2 Visuals	Level 2 Words
Which of the objects on your list are symbols? What do you think each symbol means?	Which words or phrases in the images appear to be the most important? Why do you think so? List words that describe the emotions portrayed in the images.
Level 3	
Describe the actions taking place in the images. Explain how the words clarify the symbols. Explain the message of the images. What words or images are not included but should be? Why, please explain your thinking. How does this image differ from the tone of the rest of the Conestoga story? Please explain your thinking.	

Questions for Further Inquiry

You will now generate research questions for further inquiry that center on the resiliency and humanity of the Native Peoples in North America.

Begin by thinking about why creators chose the title *Ghost River: The Fall and Rise of the Conestoga*, rather than "the rise and fall."

Upon completion of your research, you will create a product to demonstrate your depth of knowledge. By the end you should be able to:

- identify researchable question(s) that fit the scope of the inquiry
- be able to create and refine your questions
- create a plan that includes steps through which you may address the central topic or question
- gather, evaluate, and integrate information from primary and secondary sources reflecting multiple perspectives
- use evidence to develop a compelling product that demonstrates depth of knowledge on the central topic
- create a product that is logical and well-supported
- present informed findings to a targeted and public audience using print, oral, and digital technologies

Refer to the *Critical Thinking in History Rubric* and the *Source/Website Evaluation for Research* on the following pages.

Critical Thinking in History Rubric				
Category	Exemplary 4	Proficient 3	Developing 2	Basic 1
Analysis and accuracy of historical content	All content is historically accurate, and the student has clearly demonstrated understanding through analysis of the topic at hand	Most content is historically accurate, and the student demonstrates understanding through analysis of the topic at hand.	Some content is historically accurate, and the student understanding and analysis of the topic may be inconsistently applied.	Content is not historically accurate and student understanding of the topic is minimal.
Research	Student has developed 3-4 compelling questions and conducted research using a minimum of 5 valid sources have been utilized.	Student has developed 3-4 compelling questions and conducted research using a minimum of 3-4 valid sources have been utilized.	Student has developed 1-2 compelling questions that may need revision and have conducted research using at least 3 sources have been utilized.	Student has developed no compelling questions. Research was either incomplete or inaccurate.
Presentation of position/product	Student has presented their position/product in a clear and concise manner. The format is effective and appropriate for the topic at hand. The audience was highly engaged.	Student has done an acceptable job of presenting their position/product in an accurate and informative manner for the topic at hand. The audience was engaged.	Student has presented in a manner that may not be the best format for the task at hand. Multiple opportunities exist for improvement of the presentation. The audience was somewhat engaged.	Student presentation of position/product is confusing and in a format that is not appropriate for the task at hand. Evidence of preparation and practice is missing. Substantial improvement is needed.
Self-reflection	Student can clearly explain new understanding gained in the performance task and how it might transfer to other situations and contexts.	Student can explain most new understandings gained in the performance task and how it some might transfer to other situations or contexts.	Student can explain some things learned in the performance task but is not entirely clear about new understanding.	Student is not able to explain important new understanding gained in the performance task.

Source/Website Evaluation Checklist for Research	
	Evidence to support your research
Title of the Source/Website:	
Authority/Expertise- Are the writers/sponsoring organizations experts on this topic?	
Is there a publishing or sponsoring organization? (If listed.)	
Is the sponsoring organization an authority on the subject? Have they won awards? Do they employ or utilize experts in the field?	
Give author name (if listed) Is the author an expert on the subject? How do you know? Cite specific evidence.	
Sourcing – How accurate is this information?	
Is the source a primary or secondary source? How do you know?	
Can the information on the site or in the source be corroborated with other sources? (Look at other reliable sources about this topic and compare the information.). Give specific evidence.	
Does the site/source contradict itself? If so, how?	
What is the date of publication or copyright?	
Are the authors sources listed? Where did the person get this information?	
Motivation or Purpose- Why was this created?	
Does the author, host, publisher, or sponsor have a BIAS? Cite specific evidence.	
What was the motivation or purpose for creating the site/source? Can we tell?	