

## Interpreting Conflict through Political Cartoons

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### Lesson Overview:

This lesson will examine the "An Indian Squaw King Wampum Spies" cartoon and then begin to extrapolate the schisms between the Paxton Boys, Native Peoples, and Pennsylvania Government, and by extension British Crown. This lesson will help students connect the Proclamation of 1763 and Pontiac's War to the growing mistrust between colonial settlers and their government as we head into the Revolutionary Era.

### Lesson Objectives:

- Students will read through and contextualize an 18th century political cartoon.
- Students will use the document to connect existing historical ideas they have learned.
- Students will create their own political cartoon that they think most accurately portrays their understanding.

**Grade Level:** Grade 8

### Standards:

- **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:

Excerpt from Will Fenton, "[Introduction](#)." Digital Paxton, 2019.

"In December 1763, a mob of settlers from Paxtang Township murdered 20 unarmed Susquehannock Indians in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. A month later, hundreds of 'Paxton Boys' marched toward Philadelphia to menace and possibly kill more refugee Indians who sought the protection of the Pennsylvania government. While Benjamin Franklin halted the march just outside of Philadelphia in Germantown, supporters of the Paxton Boys and their critics spent the next year battling in print.

The Paxton Boys accused the Conestoga Indians of colluding with the Ohio Country Lenape and Shawnee warriors who were attacking Pennsylvania's western frontier, a charge that had no basis in fact. Their opponents accused the Paxton Boys of behaving more savagely than the Indians they had killed.

The pamphlet war that followed in 1764 was not so different from the Twitter wars of today. Pamphleteers waged battle using pseudonyms, slandering opponents as failed elites and racial traitors. At stake was much more than the conduct of the Paxton men. Pamphleteers staked claims about colonization, peace and war, race and ethnicity, masculinity and civility, and religious association in pre-Revolutionary Pennsylvania."

Excerpt from Jane Merritt, "Paxton Boys." *Colonization and Settlement, Third Edition*, 2017.

"The Paxton Boys mostly came from the Scots-Irish immigrant communities established along the Pennsylvania frontier in the 1720s. Some had ties to local militia groups in Lancaster County and Northampton County, west and north of Philadelphia, and many fought Indians during the 1750s when hostile Delaware and Shawnee attacked isolated frontier plantations that had been built on disputed territory claimed by both cultures. After the Seven Years' War Scots-Irish settlers feared the continued presence of Native Americans in the region and, making no distinction between allies and enemies, took out their anger on a peaceful Indian community nearby. The initial attack came on December 14, 1763, when a group of armed men from Paxton township in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, marched on Conestoga Manor, killing and scalping six of the Christian Indians living on the small reserve of land. A few weeks after the original attack, 50 or 60 armed men on horseback attacked the surviving Conestoga Indians who had been placed under protective custody in the jailhouse at Lancaster.

The Pennsylvania governor and other Pennsylvania leaders, including Benjamin Franklin, condemned the actions of the Paxton Boys as being more 'savage' than those of the Indians they hated. The colonial government did not criticize the brutal murder of Indian people but instead worried that poor white frontier inhabitants had challenged their authority and feared that they would continue to do so. Indeed, by early 1764 nearly 250 "Paxton Volunteers," as they called themselves, gathered and headed for Philadelphia intending to kill several hundred Indians under the protection of the Moravians and Pennsylvania government. Benjamin Franklin and a small militia force stopped the group in Germantown, just short of their goal, but a pamphlet war quickly ensued that explicated the grievances of the frontier inhabitants. Through satirical verse, cartoons, and pointed prose the largely Presbyterian Scots-Irish group questioned the loyalties, morality, and masculinity of politically powerful Quakers in the provincial assembly. Matthew Smith and James Gibson, the most vocal of these pamphlet authors, complained that the largely Quaker assembly had refused to help frontier settlers during the war with funds for a militia and protective forts. Instead, those in power had used public monies and private donations to assist Indians, such as the Delaware, who, with Quaker support, claimed rights to land in eastern Pennsylvania. Still, the Paxtons' ultimate complaints revolved around issues of relative political power and their own place within the British Empire. They contended that frontier inhabitants in the western counties of Pennsylvania had less political representation in the provincial assembly than did the smaller eastern counties and that the legal justice system did not extend into their isolated communities. The Paxtons, demanding that the British treat them as equal subjects, took out their anxieties on the Conestoga Indians, who they thought did not deserve recognition or protection from the Pennsylvania government.

Whether or not the Paxton Boys' actions came from a nascent nationalism, the massacre and its aftermath set a precedent for Indian-white relations on the American frontier. After 1763 the level of "Indian-hating" dramatically increased. Other groups of frontier vigilantes, patterned on the Paxton Boys, attacked peaceful Indian communities in the Ohio Valley during the Revolutionary War. In turn, very few Native American groups allied themselves with colonists against Great Britain."

**Materials:**

- Historical Background (above)
- James Claypoole, [An Indian Squaw King Wampum Spies](#). Digital Paxton.
- Lee Francis, Weshoyot Alvitre, and Will Fenton, [Ghost River: The Fall and Rise of the Conestoga](#). Albuquerque: Red Planet Books and Comics, 2019.
- Political Cartoon Graphic Organizer (Handout)

**Procedures:**

1. For homework, have students read the Historical Background (above).
2. At the start of class, ensure that the students have a framework for the political cartoon.
  - a. In small groups, have students put events in chronological order.
  - b. As a class, have students discuss their annotations.
  - c. Individually, have students read an excerpt from *Ghost River* to help frame or better understand the events associated with the historical Background.
3. Introduce political cartoons as primary source documents. Reinforce the understanding that this cartoon was engraved in the context of the 1764 pamphlet war.
4. Project [An Indian Squaw King Wampum Spies](#) and open the transcription.
  - a. Have students to list what they see. Record observations on the board.
5. Break students into small groups and provide the [link to the transcription](#)
  - a. Provide students with the Political Cartoon Graphic Organizer and have them to fill it out as best as they can.
6. After students finish, review their interpretations.
7. Have students discuss the power dynamics between the groups living in Pennsylvania and the English Crown.

**Assessment and Extensions:** Ask students to create their own cartoon that they feel accurately portrays the conflict in Pennsylvania in 1764.

**Political Cartoon Graphic Organizer**

Give the cartoon a title:

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What is the significance of the central figure(s) or object(s)?

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What action is taking place in the cartoon?

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What mood or tone is created by the cartoon and what in the image is creating that tone or mood?

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What message is the artist giving to the viewer?

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