

## Transcribing the Paxton Boys

Prof. Benjamin Bankhurst  
Assistant Professor of History, Shepherd University

Prof. Kyle Roberts  
Associate Professor of Public History and New Media, Loyola University Chicago

Eleanor Andersen  
Digital Paxton Intern, Temple University

### Setup

Post learning objectives before students arrive. Prepare slides with the text specified below. Configure projector to display the entry ticket on the board. Distribute entry tickets as students enter the classroom ("egregious sesquipedalian loquaciousness").

### Anticipatory Set (5-10 min)

- Wait for students to enter classroom and be seated. (1-2 min)
- Direct students to transcribe their entry word-for-word and then to translate that transcription entry ticket into comprehensible English. (5 min)
- Cold-call students, asking them what they think the entry ticket means. If no one understands the ticket, the teacher clarifies that "egregious sesquipedalian loquaciousness" means "saying something in the most complicated way possible."
- Ask students if they can think of examples of overly complicated language. Suggest that sometimes historical documents such as the Declaration of Independence and Constitution sound complicated. Explain that writers in the eighteenth century spoke differently than we do today, often using more complicated syntax. For that reason, we need to practice to understand them.
- Read learning objectives aloud.

### Teaching and Modeling & Guided Practice (20-25 min)

- Announce that the class will practice with several passages together before moving on to an eighteenth-century document.
- Project example one: "An Enumeration of Consequences of Erudite Vernacular Utilized Irrespective of Necessity."
- Write synonyms for words they already 'know' beneath the example:
  - Irrespective of Necessity → "needlessly"
  - Utilized → "used"
- Model how students might look up words they may not recognize using [dictionary.com](https://www.dictionary.com) synonyms beneath the example:
  - Erudite → "intellectual"
  - Vernacular → "words"

- The draft of the new sentence should read: "List of problems of intellectual words used needlessly."
- Demonstrate that the sentence may need revision. A translation may be: "A list of problems with needlessly complicated words."
- Project example two. Identify example as approximately 70 years old: "The individual member of the social community often receives his or her information via channels utilizing distinct visual symbols."
  - Guide students through this example.
  - Call on students to translate individual words and phrases. If no students know the definition for a word, allow students to look it up on a device.
  - Once students translated the entire sentence, simplify it, e.g. "People read."
- Project example three (Jeremy Bentham). Identify example as written in the 1700s: "A man may be said to be partisan to the principle of utility, when the approbation or disapprobation he annexes to any action, or to any measure, is determined by and proportioned to the tendency which he conceives it to have to augment or diminish the happiness of the community"
  - Repeat prior procedure.
  - Explain how readers can divide the text by clause. In this case, divide before "is determined."
  - A translation may read: "a person who likes useful things judges things as good or bad based on whether they make people more or less happy."

### ***Independent Work (40-45 min)***

- Distribute assignment sheet and explain assignment. Students will transcribe one paragraph of the [Penn Proclamation June 4th, 1765](#) word-for-word, translate it into modern English, and write a short reflection afterwards.
- Count students off by threes. Ones work on the first paragraph, twos work on the middle two paragraphs, and threes work on the final two paragraphs. Students are to work individually.
- Distribute laptops to students and circulate during work period.
- Students submit transcripts via Google Drive.

### **Closure & Feedback (remaining time)**

- Ask students to share their transcriptions of the assignment.
- Ask students to share their thoughts on the assignment.
  - Was the language difficult?
  - How was the grammar unfamiliar?
  - What words were spelled differently?
  - What surprised you?

- Assign a one-paragraph reflection as homework. Students should consult their classmates' work on Google Drive as they write their reflections.
- Provide feedback on student rubrics.