

Lesson- Examination of the Historical Narrative of Boston

Sabra Brown

1-2 Days, 45 minutes per day

Essential Question:

What does the naming of Warren Street after Dr. Joseph Warren reveal about the historical narrative of Boston?

Introduction and Objective:

The purpose of this lesson is to explore the deception of the historical narrative about slavery in the North, and Boston in particular. The lesson will start literally at the front steps of our school's door. My school, Boston Latin Academy, sits on the corner of Townsend Streets and Warren Streets at the intersection of the neighborhoods of Dorchester and Roxbury. I want to start by asking students to explore the significance of our school, a school with a student body predominately of color, being located on this street memorializing patriot Dr. Joseph Warren.

Opening Activity: Journaling - 10 minutes, writing and sharing in small groups

Why do we memorialize? What is the purpose of the memorialization in the short term and the long term? What should the criteria be to be memorialized? Who do you remember and think is important to remember from our or your past and why?

Close Reading of the Documents: 20 minutes

Students should explore the following document in groups of three.

1. Before they begin, students should agree upon and record 3 criteria for memorialization.
2. They should read and annotate the documents together, making a list of "factual" information about the life of Dr. Joseph Warren. Each group's list needs to have at minimum 15 "facts."
3. Next, students should examine the list of "facts" and now make inferences about the influence and significance of Dr. Joseph Warren in Boston at the time. In what way does his life tell us something about Boston on the eve of the Revolution.

"Facts" about Joseph Warren	Inferences about Warren and/or Boston
1. established doctor who immunizes colonists	1. respected for his contributions, connected to wealthy colonists
2.	2.
etc...	etc...

Structured Academic Discussion: 15 minutes

The group of three should now discuss whether Dr. Joseph Warren should be memorialized. Refer to the criteria you developed in the beginning. However, in the course of this discussion, you can make revisions to these criteria. There are three possible positions that students can select in this structured conversation Warren (1) deserves to be memorialized (2) should be memorialized with qualifications or (3) should not be memorialized at all.

- Each member of the group is assigned one position to defend.
- Then each student will develop an argument that consists of a claim and warrant. (For example- Dr. Joseph Warren should not be memorialized with a street name because he....) Then each student should find evidence from the documents to support the argument. The preparation time is 10 minutes in length.
- Next, the group will have an open-ended discussion debating these positions. The discussion will last for 10- 15 minutes, depending on interest. There are no particular rules for this discussion. It could proceed naturally, but you could also advise students to proceed as follows:
 - 1 presents, 2 and 3 respond with points of agreement, disagreement and questions
 - Then 2 presents, and 1 and 3 respond with points of agreement, disagreement and questions
 - Then 3 presents, and 1 and 2 respond with points of agreement, disagreement and questions
- Lastly, students drop the assigned positions and come to a consensus. What is the right thing to do? Why? What are the benefits and drawbacks to your consensus choice.
- Small groups will share out their consensus views with the larger group.

Closer: Journaling- 10 minutes

Students should journal about the following question: What does the naming of Warren Street after Dr. Joseph Warren reveal about the historical narrative of Boston? Discuss how, why and who has recorded this history, as well the legacy of these choices.

Dr. Joseph Warren Document Set

Document 1- *Joseph Warren* by John Singleton Copley (about 1765)



Source: About 1765, Joseph Warren (1741-1775), Boston; 1775, by descent to the brother of the sitter, Dr. John Warren (1753-1815), Boston; 1815, by descent to his daughter, Rebecca Warren Brown (1789-1855), Boston; 1855, by descent to her son, Buckminster Brown, M.D. (1819-1891), Boston; 1891, to his wife, Sarah Alvord Brown, residuary legatee under the will of Buckminster Brown; 1895, gift of Buckminster Brown, M.D. to the Museum of Fine Arts through Carolyn M. Matthews, M. D., Trustee. (Accession Date: November 5, 1895)
<http://educators.mfa.org/americas/joseph-warren-18690>

Document 2- *The Death of General Warren at the Battle of Bunker Hill, 17 June, 1775* by John Trumbull (painted between 1815 to 1831)



Source: Between 1815 and 1831, commissioned by the Warren family; 1909, descended in the Warren family to J. Collins Warren (1842-1927), Boston; 1927, by inheritance to his son, Joseph Warren (1875-1942), Cambridge, Mass.; 1942, to his estate; 1946, by inheritance to his son, Howland Shaw Warren (1910-2003), Nahant, Mass.; 1977, gift of Howland S. Warren to the Museum of Fine Arts Boston. (Accession Date: December 15, 1977)

Document 3- Gilder Lerhman Biographical Entry on Joseph Warren

Joseph Warren (1741–1775) was a Massachusetts physician turned Revolutionary leader. Warren befriended John Adams in the 1760s and in the 1770s emerged as a vocal critic of British rule. Following the Coercive Acts (Intolerable Acts) of 1774, Warren helped draft the Suffolk Resolves. In April 1775 he sent Paul Revere and William Dawes on their famous ride to warn of the impending arrival of the British. On June 14, 1775, Warren was named a major general in the army, but he was killed just three days later in the Battle of Bunker Hill (Breed's Hill).

Source: <https://www.gilderlehrman.org/history-by-era/road-revolution/timeline-terms/joseph-warren>

Document 4- National Park Service Description of Dr. Joseph Warren's Life

When a person dies suddenly, tragically, especially in the “prime of life”, we tend to frame his /her life in those final moments. We can all name such people: John F. Kennedy, Amelia Earhart, the victims of September 11th. These are our heroes. Such a man was Joseph Warren.

Joseph Warren was, undoubtedly, the hero of Bunker Hill and by dying on that hill that June day in 1775; he became the embodiment of the young nation's sacrifice. The question remains; how do we separate the hero from the man? How did Joseph Warren, physician, find himself on that fated hill just six days after his 34th birthday?

Joseph Warren was born in Roxbury, MA on June 11, 1741, the eldest of four sons of Joseph Warren, a farmer, who died after falling out of an apple tree. Joseph, Jr. would attend Harvard, teach briefly at the Latin School and then study to be a physician (as his mother's father had been). He married Elizabeth Hooten on 6 September, 1764. Elizabeth brought as her dowry a considerable fortune she had inherited.

Dr. Warren began his participation in the radical cause in 1767, with the passage of the Townsend Acts. Warren's response was a series of articles in the Boston Gazette under the pseudonym “A True Patriot”. These articles so angered the royal governor that he attempted to charge Warren and the publishers of the newspaper with libel, but the grand jury refused to bring forth a true bill.

After the publishing of the articles, Warren's star began to rise in the radical circles. His friendship with Samuel Adams as well as family ties with James Otis (his brother-in-law) and Masonic connection with Paul Revere and other rebel luminaries would put him in the thick of the separatist movement. Warren would become chairman of the Committee of Safety after the “Boston Massacre” of 1770 and would deliver two of the famous orations on the anniversaries of that event.

While Samuel Adams was away in Philadelphia in 1774, attending to the business of the Continental Congress, Joseph Warren assumed Adam's leadership role in Boston and became involved with the raising of militias and procurement of arms and powder. A few months later Adams and John Hancock would return to Massachusetts to find the Crown had placed a price on their heads. It was Joseph Warren, who would direct Paul Revere and William Dawes to warn the

two leaders that British soldiers were heading toward their sanctuary in Lexington, MA to arrest them on 18 April, 1775.

The news of the skirmishes at Lexington and Concord would cause Warren to leave his patients in the care of his assistant, William Eustis and ride toward the scene of battle. He would spend the next six weeks readying the militia for the inevitable battles to come. For his efforts, he was elected second general in command of the Massachusetts forces by the Provincial congress on 14 June, 1775.

After meeting with the committee of safety at General Artemas Ward's headquarters on Cambridge common on the morning of 17 June, Warren learned that British forces had landed at Charlestown. About noon, he rode over to the American fortifications on Breed's Hill. The rest is the stuff of legends: Warren refused to take command, instead going into the line as a regular volunteer. On the third and final British assault near the redoubt, while attempting to rally the militia, Warren was instantly killed by a ball between the eyes. The men that Warren had rallied in those last moments were a spectrum of Massachusetts society: merchants, farmers, mechanics, laborers; white men, black men, both slave and free and indigenous people; all fighting for their freedom. How ironic that the leader was a slave owner.

The British forces, upon taking the field, placed Warren's body in a common mass grave. His remains were later identified by Paul Revere, who identified him by the set of false teeth he had fashioned for him.

Joseph Warren became an instant hero. His death was immortalized in John Trumbull's painting; "The Death of General Warren" King Solomon's Lodge honored their Grand Master with the first Bunker Hill Monument, which now resides in the base of the present monument. In New England, every state has a town named in his honor. In death he was a hero, his life cut tragically short, and his potential unknown.

He left four small children orphaned (their mother had died in April, 1773), whose welfare remained in dire straits until 1778, when General Benedict Arnold (who had befriended Warren at Cambridge) gave \$500 for their education and petitioned Congress for the amount of a major - general's half pay for their welfare until the youngest reached majority.

In the course of just a decade, Dr. Joseph Warren married, fathered four children, furthered the revolutionary movement in Boston and died a hero's death. Perhaps, Edna St. Vincent Millay could have been speaking of Joseph Warren when she wrote, "My candle burns at both ends; It will not last the night; But ah, my foes and oh, my friends, it gives a lovely light!"

Source: <https://www.nps.gov/bost/learn/historyculture/warren.htm>

Document 5- Dr. Joseph Warren's Writing on the American Revolution

Date: March 5, 1772

"May we ever be a people favoured of GOD. May our land be a land of liberty, the seat of virtue, the asylum of the oppressed, a name and a praise in the whole earth."

“In young and new formed communities...the motives which urged to the social compact, cannot be at once forgotten, and that equality which is remembered to have subsisted so lately among them, prevents those who are clothed with authority from attempting to invade the freedom of their brethren... [E]very member feels it to be his interest, and knows it to be his duty, to preserve inviolate the constitution on which the public safely depends...”

“When they [Pilgrims] came to this New World, which they fairly purchased of the Indian natives, the only rightful proprietors, they cultivated the then barren soil, by their incessant labour, and defended their dear bought possessions with the fortitude of the Christian, and the bravery of the hero.”

“I am very much at loss to know by what figure of rhetoric, the inhabitants of this province can be called FREE SUBJECTS, when they are obliged to obey implicitly such laws as are made for them by men three thousand miles off, whom they know not, and whom they never have empowered to act for them; or how they can be said to have PROPERTY when a body of men, over whom they have not the least control, and who are not in any way accountable to them, shall oblige them to deliver up any part, or the whole of their substance, without even asking their consent...”

“None but they who set a just value upon the blessings of liberty are worthy to enjoy her.”

“[I]f you, from your souls, despise the most gaudy dress that slavery can wear; if you really prefer the lonely cottage (whilst blest with liberty) to gilded palaces, surrounded with the ensigns of slavery, you may have the fullest assurance that tyranny, with her accursed train, will hide their hideous heads in confusion, shame and despair...”

Source: *An Oration Delivered March 5th, 1772. At the Request of the Inhabitants of the Town of Boston; to Commemorate the Bloody Tragedy of the Fifth of March, 1770.* 2nd ed. Boston: Edes and Gill by order of the town of Boston, 1772. Reprinted many times both during the Revolutionary era and in collections of the Massacre Orations through the mid-nineteenth century. <http://www.drjosephwarren.com/2011/10/may-our-land-be-a-land-of-liberty-1772-oration-highlights/>

Document 6- Private Papers of Dr. Joseph Warren

Date: June 28, 1770

“I the Subscriber having this day purchas’d a Negro Boy of Joshua Green have made the follow^g: conditions with him viz. That I will add Ten Pounds Lawfull Money to be paid in Potter’s Ware manufactur’d in this Town in three years to the Thirty pounds first agreed for if in 3 Months from this date I shall think the negro worth the money & if I do not think him worth the additional ten pounds I will reconvey him to sd: Green he return^g the two Notes I gave him for the negro, one for 17.£ & the other for 13.£, both of them bearing date herewith. —

Joseph Warren

[Page 2] It is also further agreed that in case of my decease that the within mention’d negro shall become the property of said Green; he deliver^g up my two notes. —

[Page 3, *Endorsement*] Dr: Warren’s Obl: to pay 10.£ in Pott: Ware
June 1773 — ”

Source: In *Samuel A. Green Papers*, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston.
<http://www.drjosephwarren.com/2012/03/30-pounds-and-pottery-for-a-slave/>

Document 7- Probate Records of Dr. Joseph Warren (1757)

Dates: 1756 thru 1757

Accounting Vol. 64, p. 470 (also noted as Vol. 51, p. 5-6, dated Jan 5, 1756.)

Doner Appraisal Vol. 64, pp. 471-472

(Vol. 51 for 1756-1757) May 2, 1766 1495/7 Pounds total including: "One old Negro Man serv^t & young Negro Girl" valued at 26/13/4. Vol. 51, p. 630, 800/0/0 for house, barn + 30 acres includes additional acreage. Animals: one yoke oxen + 1 horse + 3 cows valued at 26/18/0. Apparel not appraised because it was "cut up" for children's use.

Settlement Vol. 64, p. 473

Release Vol. 86, p. 297

Source: Extracts of Joseph Warren (2nd), Docket 11189, *Suffolk County Probate Records*, New England Historical and Genealogical Society, Boston. For Guardianship, see Docket #11626 for year 1757. "30 Pounds and Pottery for a Slave." Doctor Joseph Warren RSS. Accessed March 6, 2015. <http://www.drjosephwarren.com/2012/03/30-pounds-and-pottery-for-a-slave/>.

Document 8- Excerpt from Professor Joanne Pope Melish's *Disowning Slavery: Gradual Emancipation and "Race" in New England 1780-1860* (1998)

According to the first general census of New England's population in 1715, there were 158,000 whites, or about 26,333 families, and 4,150 "negroes," or about one "negro" for every six white families. The Massachusetts governor, Sir Francis Bernard, reported that the colony's 1763 population of 200,000 "souls" included 2,221 "negroes and mulattoes"- noting, however, that "as all returns before mentioned were taken in order to make a rate of taxes... they are certainly short of the truth." It is possible that by midcentury in Connecticut, Rhode Island, and Massachusetts (the three states with the largest populations of slaves), there were as many as one African for every four white families. Obviously, slaves were not distributed evenly among families across New England in this way; however, Jackson Turner Main, surveying Connecticut estate inventories, found that in 1700 one in ten inventories included slaves, with the incidence rising to one in four, by the eve of the Revolution, confirming the statistical incidence.

Source: https://books.google.com/books/about/Disowning_Slavery.html?id=l6GrQkssEcUC

Document 9: Law 91 from the Body of Liberties 1641 in Laws of the Massachusetts Colony from 1630 to 1686

There shall never be any bond slaveries, villinage, or Captivitie amongst us unles it be lawfull Captives taken in just warres, and such strangers as willingly selle themselves or are sold to us. And these shall have all the liberties and Christian usages which the law of god established in

Israell concerning such persons doeth morally require. This exempts none from servitude who shall be Judged thereto by Authoritie.

Source: *A Biographical Sketch of the Laws of Massachusetts colony from 1630 to 1686. In which are included The Body of Liberties of 1641, and the Records of the Court of Assistants, 1641-1644.* William H. Whitmore, Record Commissioner. Published by Order of the City Council of Boston. Boston: Rockwell and Church, City Printers. 1890. P. 53.