

## Paul Revere Source Analysis

### The Midnight Ride of Paul Revere by: Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Listen, my children, and you shall hear  
Of the midnight ride of Paul Revere,  
On the eighteenth of April, in Seventy-five;  
Hardly a man is now alive

Who remembers that famous day and year.  
He said to his friend, "If the British march  
By land or sea from the town to-night,  
Hang a lantern aloft in the belfry arch  
Of the North Church tower as a signal light,—

One, if by land, and two, if by sea;  
And I on the opposite shore will be,  
Ready to ride and spread the alarm  
Through every Middlesex village and farm,  
For the country folk to be up and to arm."

Then he said, "Good night!" and with muffled  
oar  
Silently rowed to the Charlestown shore,  
Just as the moon rose over the bay,  
Where swinging wide at her moorings lay

The Somerset, British man-of-war;  
A phantom ship, with each mast and spar  
Across the moon like a prison bar,  
And a huge black hulk, that was magnified  
By its own reflection in the tide.  
Meanwhile, his friend, through alley and street,  
Wanders and watches with eager ears,  
Till in the silence around him he hears  
The muster of men at the barrack door,  
The sound of arms, and the tramp of feet,  
And the measured tread of the grenadiers,

Marching down to their boats on the shore.  
Then he climbed the tower of the Old North  
Church,  
By the wooden stairs, with stealthy tread,  
To the belfry-chamber overhead,  
And startled the pigeons from their perch  
On the somber rafters, that round him made

Masses and moving shapes of shade,—  
By the trembling ladder, steep and tall,

To the highest window in the wall,  
Where he paused to listen and look down  
A moment on the roofs of the town,  
And the moonlight flowing over all.

Beneath, in the churchyard, lay the dead,  
In their night-encampment on the hill,  
Wrapped in silence so deep and still  
That he could hear, like a sentinel's tread,  
The watchful night-wind, as it went  
Creeping along from tent to tent,  
And seeming to whisper, "All is well!"  
A moment only he feels the spell  
Of the place and the hour, and the secret dread  
Of the lonely belfry and the dead;  
For suddenly all his thoughts are bent  
On a shadowy something far away,  
Where the river widens to meet the bay,—  
A line of black that bends and floats  
On the rising tide, like a bridge of boats.

Meanwhile, impatient to mount and ride,  
Booted and spurred, with a heavy stride  
On the opposite shore walked Paul Revere.  
Now he patted his horse's side,  
Now gazed at the landscape far and near,  
Then, impetuous, stamped the earth,  
And turned and tightened his saddle-girth;  
But mostly he watched with eager search  
The belfry-tower of the Old North Church,  
As it rose above the graves on the hill,  
Lonely and spectral and somber and still.  
And lo! as he looks, on the belfry's height  
A glimmer, and then a gleam of light!  
He springs to the saddle, the bridle he turns,  
But lingers and gazes, till full on his sight  
A second lamp in the belfry burns!

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A hurry of hoofs in a village street,  
A shape in the moonlight, a bulk in the dark,  
And beneath, from the pebbles, in passing, a  
spark  
Struck out by a steed flying fearless and fleet:  
That was all! And yet, through the gloom and  
the light,  
The fate of a nation was riding that night;  
And the spark struck out by that steed, in his  
flight,  
Kindled the land into flame with its heat.

He has left the village and mounted the steep,  
And beneath him, tranquil and broad and deep,  
Is the Mystic, meeting the ocean tides;  
And under the alders that skirt its edge,  
Now soft on the sand, now loud on the ledge,  
Is heard the tramp of his steed as he rides.

It was twelve by the village clock,  
When he crossed the bridge into Medford  
town.  
He heard the crowing of the cock,  
And the barking of the farmer's dog,  
And felt the damp of the river fog,  
That rises after the sun goes down.

It was one by the village clock,  
When he galloped into Lexington.  
He saw the gilded weathercock  
Swim in the moonlight as he passed,  
And the meeting-house windows, blank and  
bare,  
Gaze at him with a spectral glare,  
As if they already stood aghast  
At the bloody work they would look upon.

It was two by the village clock,  
When he came to the bridge in Concord town.  
He heard the bleating of the flock,  
And the twitter of birds among the trees,

And felt the breath of the morning breeze  
Blowing over the meadows brown.  
And one was safe and asleep in his bed  
Who at the bridge would be first to fall,  
Who that day would be lying dead,  
Pierced by a British musket-ball.

You know the rest. In the books you have read,  
How the British Regulars fired and fled,—  
How the farmers gave them ball for ball,  
From behind each fence and farm-yard wall,  
Chasing the red-coats down the lane,  
Then crossing the fields to emerge again  
Under the trees at the turn of the road,  
And only pausing to fire and load.

So through the night rode Paul Revere;  
And so through the night went his cry of alarm  
To every Middlesex village and farm,—  
A cry of defiance and not of fear,  
A voice in the darkness, a knock at the door,  
And a word that shall echo forevermore!  
For, borne on the night-wind of the Past,  
Through all our history, to the last,  
In the hour of darkness and peril and need,  
The people will waken and listen to hear  
The hurrying hoof-beats of that steed,  
And the midnight message of Paul Revere.

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Paul Revere Recounts His Midnight Ride of April 19, 1775 Letter to Jeremy Belknap (c. 1798) Primary Source

Dear Sir,

Having a little leisure, I wish to fulfill my promise. I will give you some facts and anecdotes that led up to the Battle of Lexington. I do not remember seeing them in any history of the American Revolution.

In the fall of 1774 and winter of 1775 I was one of more than thirty men who formed ourselves into a committee. We were mostly mechanics. Our committee's purpose was watching the movements of the British soldiers.

We held our meetings at the Green-Dragon Tavern. We were so careful to keep our meetings secret. Every time we met, every person swore on the Bible that they would not tell anyone about our activities.

In the late winter, we frequently took turns to watch the soldiers. Two by two, we patrolled the streets all night.

Saturday night April 15th we saw something. The British boats for transporting soldiers were all put in the water and moved about 12 o'clock at night. We also found out that the special skilled troops, called grenadiers, were taken off of their other jobs and gathered together. From these movements we expected something serious was going to happen.

On Tuesday evening the 18th we observed a number of soldiers marching towards the bottom of the Boston Common. About 10 o'clock, Dr. Warren sent for me to come quickly. He begged me to set off immediately for Lexington. Mister Hancock and Mister Adams were hiding there. Dr. Warren thought the soldiers were marching to capture those men. Dr. Warren asked me to warn Mister Hancock and Mister Adams. He had already sent a different messenger to them, Mr. William Dawes, by the land route.

A week before I had made an agreement with some gentlemen in Charlestown. If the British left Boston by water, we would show two lanterns in the North Church steeple; and if by land, one lantern as a signal. When I left Dr. Warren's house that night I called upon my friend. I asked him to make the signal.

I then went home, took my boots and overcoat, and went to the north part of the town. There I had left a boat. Two friends rowed me across the Charles River. They landed me on the Charlestown side.

When I got into Charlestown, I met several friends. They said they had seen our signals. I told them what was happening, and went to get me a horse. I set off upon a very good horse. It was then about 11 o'clock and very pleasant.

After I had passed Charlestown Neck, I saw two men on horseback under a tree. When I got near them I discovered they were British officers. One tried to get ahead of me, and the other to capture me. I turned my horse very quickly and galloped towards Charlestown Neck. Then I pushed for the Medford

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Road. The one who chased me, trying to cut me off, fell into a pond. I got clear of him, and went through Medford, over the bridge and up to Menotomy.

In Medford I awaked the captain of the Minutemen. After that I alarmed almost every house until I got to Lexington.

I found Misters Hancock and Adams at Reverend Mr. Clark's house in Lexington. I told them my errand. Misters Hancock and Adams decided to leave that house and go towards Woburn.

Thus, Sir, I have tried to give you some details only I know about. I have mentioned some names you are acquainted with: I wish you would ask them if they can remember the circumstances I describe.

I am, Sir, with every feeling of respect, your humble servant,

Paul Revere

Directions: Use the chart to analyze the compare the events in the poem and the actual events as described by Paul Revere. If necessary, use additional paper to expand this chart.

Events in Wadsworth's Poem	Events in Both Accounts	Events in Revere's Letter

1. Write a paragraph explaining whether Longfellow's poem is or is not an accurate and reliable source of information regarding this event. Support your opinion by citing evidence from the texts.