

Family Paideia Seminar Plan

Text: **The Midnight Ride of Paul Revere (painting) by Grant Wood**

Ideas, Values: Art, Courage, History, Memory & Imagination, Night

Pre-Seminar Content

Big Ideas Chat:

Read to the family (or play a recording) “Paul Revere's Ride." Explain that this poem was written by American poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow to commemorate the actions of American patriot Paul Revere on April 18, 1775. Discuss why the poet might have chosen to write about something that had happened 85 years before. (Perhaps discuss the connection between 1775 as a time of crisis and our own time of crisis.)

1st Read:

Display a large version of Grant Woods’ painting, “The Midnight Ride of Paul Revere,” for a few days prior to the discussion, either with a print or by leaving it up on a large screen. Allow family members to discuss and write about various aspects of the painting as time permits.

Vocabulary:

Discuss with family members any vocabulary that they will need to interpret the painting. Consider including some or all of the elements of art: **line, shape, color, value, form, texture,** and **space.** Also discuss the idea of **perspective,** as one of the seminar questions has to do with that element.

2nd Read:

Distribute smaller prints of the painting, one to each pair of participants (perhaps pair an adult with a child). Give each pair a sheet of tracing paper along with some colored pencils (or plain, #2 pencils will work). Have each pair tape the tracing paper over the print and trace what they can see. Discuss what details each group discovers through making this tracing.

Pre-Seminar Process:

* Share why you are having the discussion.

(Sample script from our classroom Paideia Seminars: Modify to fit your household.)

*“A Paideia seminar is a collaborative, intellectual dialogue about a text, facilitated with open ended questions.”*

*“The main purpose of seminar is to arrive at a fuller understanding of the textual ideas and values, of ourselves, and of each other.”*

* Describe what you want to accomplish.
* Set a Family Goal.
* To balance the talk time
* To refer to the text
* To ask a question
* To speak out of uncertainty
* To build on others’ comments

Seminar Questions:

* Opening (Identify main ideas from the text):
* What is the most interesting detail in this painting? (round-robin response)
* What is so interesting about that detail? (spontaneous discussion)
* Core (Analyze textual details):
* Why do you think the foreground of this painting is lit up and the background is dark?
* How are the houses on the right side of the painting different from the houses on the left? Why?
* According to the title, this painting is set at midnight; what does it teach us about *night*?
* Why do you think the church spire is so prominent in the painting?
* From what perspective are we (the viewers) watching the events in the painting? Why do you think the painter chose this perspective for us?
* Closing (Personalize and apply the ideas):
* These events (Paul Revere warning his neighbors) happened over 200 years ago. Why do you think we are still writing poems and painting pictures about those events? Do you think that poets and artists will be using our own time for subject matter in the future? Why or why not?

Post-Seminar Process:

*“Ask each person what they liked most about the discussion.”*

* Have the family do a quick check of the discussion goal.

Post Seminar Content:

* Transition to Writing:

Have participants brainstorm everything they said, heard, or thought during the seminar that they could use to design a drawing that reflects their current lives.

* Writing:

After examining and discussing Grant Woods’ “The Midnight Ride of Paul Revere,” create a drawing that shows something interesting happening in your family’s life right now. BUT the drawing has to be set at night, and you have to be looking down on the events from the sky.

Together, talk about the kinds of things that your family does at night. Think about what sorts of things would make an interesting picture.

Now, talk together about what it would look like if, in your drawing, you are looking down on your family from above. Make a preliminary sketch and share with the other members of the group. Examine their sketches as well.

Then have everyone create their own nighttime masterpieces! And display them around the house.

This Paideia Lesson Plan was created by:

Name: Terry Roberts

Organization: National Paideia Center

\*Text is attached if open sourced.

\*Text is cited if it needs to be procured.

<https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/works-of-art/50.117/>