



# Historical Society of Pennsylvania

## Bank of America

### “Preserving American Freedom”

#### An Introduction and Explanation of the Teacher Component

The Bank of America’s “Preserving American Freedom” is a selection of fifty treasured documents and manuscripts illustrating the exercise and denial of freedom throughout our nation’s history. All of the primary sources focus on the issue of freedom. Freedom as an over arching theme allows teachers, K -12, great leeway to incorporate these documents into the curriculums of United States History, World History, and several other academic fields. The concept of freedom provides teachers with an engaging topic that can be traced from our earliest landings in North America to the current day. Freedom can serve as a central theme for students in a year-long discussion on the evolving meaning and interpretation of freedom within the history of the United States. To guide teachers through this odyssey of historical inquiry the Historical Society of Pennsylvania (HSP) provides lesson plans and assignments for teachers to use within the framework of their school standards or curriculums.

The teacher tools component of the Bank of America’s “Preserving American Freedom” project is intended to suit the needs of all teachers, from the novice to master. The website is set-up to provide teachers with an array of technological aids to make the documents accessible to students, teachers, and the layman. The “Preserving American Freedom” project is divided into seven chronological sections, from 1655 to 1978. Each section begins with a contextual essay by a prominent historian in the field. The benefits of the contextual essays allow readers to gain a better understanding of the period in which the document was written. The documents clearly state the authors or organizations responsible for the publication, along with the year and title. Each document is annotated to provide the reader with easy access to definitions, biographical information, descriptions of organizations, and any affiliations. All of the documents are transcribed into an easy to read word document that can be printed out for use in the classroom.

The benefits of the Bank of America’s “Preserving American Freedom” website allow teachers to develop several traditional and non-traditional lessons, projects, and assignments. The

Teachers Tools component serves as a gateway for teachers to either use the accompanying lesson plans or construct their own based on their knowledge and skill. For the novice teachers the lesson plans and guides may serve as an introduction to teaching with primary sources. Novice teachers are encouraged to use the plans and all the accompanying material on the website. All of the documents can be incorporated as a companion piece to a state issue textbook. The more experienced teacher may want to edit or alter the provided lesson plans to fit his/her class or individual plans. The goal of the Teacher Tools component is to be use in any fashion, the lessons serve as templates or recommendations of what individual teachers can create by using the “Preserving American Freedom” website.

The documents in the Bank of America’s “Preserving American Freedom” project address several themes in the history of the United States pertaining to the exercise and denial of freedom. The length of some documents may require teachers to edit the transcriptions the documents to better fit the skill level or time restrictions of a class. At the elementary and middle school levels some documents are more appropriate for the students and can be edited to fit a wide array of learning styles and assignments. Many of the documents in the first three sections have traditional eighteenth century spellings, descriptive words to identify people, and references to world, national, and state geography. Through a corrective spelling lesson students can read a sentence or more and learn about the goods William Penn traded with the Native Americans. The advertisements in the *Pennsylvania Gazette* and William Stills’ Journals can provide a geography lesson for students learning about the indentured servants and slaves who escaped from the South to Philadelphia. Students could map their journey and engage in creative writing lessons creating a journal or series of letters. The lesson provide in the Bank of America’s “Preserving American Freedom” for elementary school students (3-5 grades) examines the Star-Spangled Banner and the events it describes. Students review the stanzas and learn why this poem became an integral part of American History. The middle school students (6-8 grades) examine William Penn’s Charter of Privileges that permits religious freedom and the election of local colonists for office. Students will gain a greater understanding of Penn’s impact on Pennsylvania and the United States.

The Bank of America’s “Preserving American Freedom” project can challenge the skill levels of all high school students and be incorporate into any Pennsylvania or national Social Studies curriculum. Documents such as; Declaration of Independence in 1776, a draft of the Constitution by James Wilson in 1781, the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863, and the Constitution of the national Woman Suffrage Association in 1874 have national significance in the study of history. High school lesson plans are thematic and chronological to illustrate the different capabilities of the Bank of America’s “Preserving American Freedom.” The thematic lessons address a specific issue, religious freedom, women’s rights, and immigration. These lessons have a larger timeframe that demonstrate change and continuity over time. The ideal of religious freedom is right guaranteed in the Bill of Rights today, but throughout our nation’s history religious groups have fought to practice free from abuse and discrimination. The scope of

the lesson may need to be edited by a teacher looking at religious freedom in the early republic but left intact to accommodate a government teacher dealing with religious freedom overall. Therefore, it is encouraged to edit or model a lesson based on those provided. The traditional lesson plans are designed to fit into a specific textbook chapter or subject; Slavery and Emancipation and Labor in the early twentieth century. The lesson on Slavery and Emancipation examines the Underground Railroad and its role in helping fugitive slaves reach Philadelphia. The lesson continues to compare and contrast the experience of blacks living in Philadelphia during the Civil War and the change that followed the Emancipation Proclamation. The assessment for both the thematic and chronological lessons are similar in having students take notes and use their notes to answer essays or have a discussion (teacher or student based).

The scope of the documents allows teachers of advanced level students to create Document Based Questions (DBQ). The use of DBQ does not need to be limited to AP or IB courses but can be used in any class format. The Bank of America's "Preserving American Freedom" Teacher Tools provides a guide to creating your own DBQ from the fifty documents. In order to better facilitate the process, two DBQ have been provided that can also be used as a form of assessment. The two DBQs illustrate how a teacher may create a DBQ using multiple sections or a single section of the "Preserving American Freedom" website.

Teachers are not limited to all of the above suggestions. Teachers who have more time or less restriction may want to go further with the documents to create non-traditional forms of assessment. Group projects that analyze several documents in a particular section or based on a theme may challenge the students to dig deeper into the documents and context of the period. Teachers may also focus on a particular person or organization and assign students research papers that would require the use of other primary and secondary sources (the Historical Society of Pennsylvania has an entire digital library <http://digitallibrary.hsp.org/> with documents and images). Presentations, group or individual, could easily be devised to have students address a significant issue or organizations. The Bank of America's "Preserving American Freedom" touches on such themes as: religious freedom, consent of the governed, economic liberty, slavery, Anti-Slavery organizations, suffrage, labor rights, civil rights, imperialism, and equality. "Preserving American Freedom" also addresses many different disciplines within the field of history, documents that be used for the study of intellectual, political, economic, cultural, gender, military, religion, immigration, race and ethnicity.

The Bank of America's "Preserving American Freedom" website is ultimately designed to benefit teachers, students, historians, and citizens. The educational possibilities are endless given the significance of the documents and the authors and organizations that wrote and published these works. Please take the time to search the Teacher Tools component for lesson plans, recommendations, and guides to better serve you in the classroom. Hopefully, all your students will participate and enjoy the experience of the Bank of America's "Preserving American Freedom."