

Grade Level:
Middle School

Study Unit:
American Revolution

Lesson Topic:
Immigration

Resource Materials:
Aitken Bible Preface

Objective:

Middle school students will understand the motivations for **immigration** into colonial America. In addition, students will study political, religious, and economic factors. Finally, students will learn about immigrant Robert Aitken, who rose to become a printer for the Journals of Congress and publisher of the first American Bible.

Procedure:

- Lead the students to imagine they live in a country where there is a war, where people cannot vote, and where there are few good jobs. One day, their parents tell them they are immigrating to a new country.
 - Ask the class to list positive things about immigrating to the new country (peace, voting, jobs).
 - Ask them to list negative things about immigrating to the country (leaving home, family, friends).
 - Tell the students that these kinds of issues were faced by immigrants to colonial America.
- Lead the students to discuss the factors that brought immigrants to colonial America.
 - Political: immigrants seeking relief from political persecution
 - For example, Germans escaped oppressive policies and wars.
 - Religious: immigrants seeking freedom to practice their beliefs
 - For example, Protestants, Catholics, and others fled Europe.
 - Quakers founded the colony of Pennsylvania.
 - English Catholics founded the colony of Maryland.
 - Economic: immigrants seeking to improve their financial situation
 - For example, Robert Aitken came for economic reasons (see below).
- Lead the students to consider Robert Aitken as an example of an immigrant coming to America.
 - Born in Dalkeith near Edinburgh, Scotland, around 1735
 - Learned bookbinding and went into the book business in Paisley
 - Pursuing better business prospects, journeyed to America in 1769
 - Left wife and three kids at home (one child died in his absence)
 - Arrived in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in 1769, advertised books for sale
 - Received orders for and had printed two books—one a religious work
 - (Aitken is claimed by both Quakers and Presbyterians.)
 - Within the year, returned to Scotland, brought family to America in 1771
 - Opened a business as a bookseller, soon became a publisher and binder
 - Appointed printer of the Journals of Congress from September 1776 until May 1778
 - Printed the first English Bible in America in 1782 (the Aitken Bible)
 - The Aitken Bible was approved by Congress and recommended to Americans.
- Suggest the students ask a parent for the story of their immigrant ancestors (who, what, when, where, why).

Closure/Review:

Lead the students to review the following topics through discussion. What motivated some Germans to immigrate to colonial America? What motivated some Protestants and Catholics to immigrate to colonial America? What motivated people like Robert Aitken to immigrate to colonial America? What did these immigrants hope to find in colonial America? How did the story of Robert Aitken seem to show the promise of a better life in America?

THE
AITKEN BIBLE
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