

Teaching American History Project

Tricking the Tallyman and the First U.S. Census from Maureen Festi

Grade- 5

Length of class period- about two 45 minute sessions

Inquiry: How does honestly answering the U.S. census show responsibility as a citizen and help create a more efficient representative government?

Objectives:

As a result of this lesson students will be able to:

- Understand the responsibilities of being a U.S. citizen and following Constitutional law.
- Analyze and compare information from various U.S. Censuses.
- Compare the information found in primary sources with the information found in historical fiction and differentiate between fact and fiction.

Materials:

- *Tricking the Tallyman: The Great Census Shenanigans of 1790* by Jacqueline Davies
- *U.S. Constitution Article 1: The Legislative Branch; Section 2: The House*
http://www.usconstitution.net/xconst_A1Sec2.html
- *U.S. Appendix A. United States Population and Census Cost*
<http://www.census.gov/prod/2002pubs/pol02marv-pt5.pdf>
- *First Census of the United States 1790 : Vermont*
<http://www.census.gov/prod/www/abs/decennial/1790.html>
- *George Washington's Journal Entry: April 24, 1791 page 119 second paragraph*
<http://rotunda.upress.virginia.edu:8080/pgwde/dflt.xqy?keys=search-Dia06ch2m3.18&hi=census>
and Letter To Gouverneur Morris, 28 July 1791 page 383 second paragraph
<http://rotunda.upress.virginia.edu:8080/pgwde/dflt.xqy?keys=search-Pre08d242&hi=census>

Activities:

1: Read, *Tricking the Tallyman: The Great Census Shenanigans of 1790*, a picture book written by Jacqueline Davies about the first census and ask:

- What was the job of the tallyman, and what materials did he need?
- Why did the people of Tunbridge refuse to be counted at first, and how did they trick the tallyman?
- Why did the people change their minds about being counted, what did the tallyman get in return for counting them again, and how did they trick the tallyman again?
- Why did the people want to be counted a third time?
- Were the people of Tunbridge being good citizens of the newly formed U.S.?
- Why do you think Phineas Bump continued to be a tally man when he was “heart-sick, saddle-sore, and down on his luck”?

Activities 2-5 can be discussed with the whole class or used separately as small group activities with each small group reporting their discoveries to the whole class for discussion.

2: *U.S. Constitution Article 1 Section 2*

- What are the reasons for first taking the census, and how and why have the reasons for taking the census changed over the years?

3: *U.S. Appendix A. United States Population and Census Cost*

- Study the chart and compare differences in population and cost over the years. Estimate the amount of increases between each 10 year census. What can you infer about the reasons for the years of greatest and least increases?

4: *First Census of the United States 1790 : Vermont*

- Go to <http://www.census.gov/prod/www/abs/decennial/1790.html>. Download the zip file for Vermont.
- In the Table of Contents on the left hand side, click on “Summary of Population by Counties and Towns” for the total population of Tunbridge.
- In the Table of Contents on the left hand side, click on “Names of Heads of Families- Addison County to Rutland County”. Tunbridge is in Orange County and can be found on pages 32 and 33.
- How does the information found in *Tricking the Tallyman* compare with information from the census sheets.

5: *George Washington’s Journal Entry: April 24, 1791 and his Letter To Gouverneur Morris, 28 July 1791*

How does President Washington feel about the 1790 census? What reasons does he give for the inaccurate numbers? How does he feel the numbers will help the United States?

6: Compare the information found in the historical fiction, *Tricking the Tallyman*, with that found in the primary sources. Based on the primary documents in this lesson, what information is factual and what is fictional in the picture book? Where else could we look to validate other information found in the picture book?

Extra Activity: Download and analyze the 1790 census for your town.

Assessment:

- Participation in discussions and activities
- Written Assessment: This is a story about the first census. Do you think people have still continued to try to trick the census takers over the years? What reasons would they have to do this? Are they being good citizens? What effect does tricking the census takers have on the efficiency of our representative government? Defend your answers with specific examples.

Connecticut Framework Performance Standards

- Demonstrate one’s rights and responsibilities as a citizen
- Locate and gather information from primary and secondary sources.

Additional Resources: *Census Historical Highlights 1790 -2010* copy and paste this URL <http://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/pdf/cb10-ffse02.pdf>