(mini) Podcast Project

Audio Tour of Historic Philadelphia at America's Founding
In Partnership with Teaching American History

Class Periods: 2–3 | Overview: Students explore Teaching American History's interactive map of historic Philadelphia during the Constitutional Convention and choose one location to investigate. Through close reading, vocabulary study, paraphrasing, inquiry, and additional research, students create a short, 1-3 minute podcast episode in the style of an audio tour stop that explains the site's significance to the founding of the United States and/or the creation of the Constitution.

Steps:

1. Before beginning the activity, make sure students have enough background knowledge about the Constitutional Convention to understand the people, places, and events they will encounter on the interactive map. If you have not yet introduced the Convention, provide students with a brief verbal or text-based overview, or invite them to explore primary sources that establish key context about why the Convention was called, who participated, what delegates hoped to accomplish, and the major issues they debated. If students are already familiar with the Constitutional Convention, move directly to step two.
2. Introduce the task and central question. Explain that students will explore Philadelphia as it existed during the Constitutional Convention and create a short podcast episode in the style of an audio tour stop. Their episode should answer the central question:
    a. *What role did this location play in the founding of the United States and/or the creation of the Constitution?*
    b. Note: You may wish to play a short example of an audio tour stop or briefly discuss what makes this kind of audio engaging and informative. Emphasize that students are not simply creating a report about a historic building; they are using a specific place as a lens through which to explore the larger story of the nation's founding.

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3. Distribute the Mini Podcast Project student activity and invite students to explore Teaching American History's interactive map of historic Philadelphia. Allow students time to freely explore several locations before choosing one that they find particularly interesting or significant. Depending on your goals and class size, students may work independently, with partners, or in small groups. You may also choose to limit the number of students working on the same location to create a more varied class audio tour.
4. Guide students through the four parts of the activity:
    a. **Part 1: Close Reading & Vocabulary Study**. Students begin by closely reading the information provided about their chosen location and identifying unfamiliar words or phrases. After defining those terms in context, students look for patterns among the words and consider what those patterns reveal about the site's history and the author's message.
    b. **Part 2: Paraphrasing.** Ask students to exit the interactive map and, without looking back at the original passage, rewrite what they learned about their chosen site in as much detail as possible. They should then use their own explanation to develop an initial response to the central question.
    c. **Part 3: Gathering Additional Information.** Students return to the interactive map and identify at least two additional questions they have about their location and its relationship to the nation's founding. Encourage students to consider what is missing from the brief map entry and what additional information a listener would need to fully understand the significance of the site. Note: Depending on your students' age, research experience, and access to technology, you may allow students to conduct independent online research or provide a curated set of reliable resources. Encourage questions that deepen or complicate the story rather than simply collect more facts. For example: Whose stories are represented at this site? Whose stories might be missing? What happened here before or after 1787? How did the people associated with this place influence the Constitution or the broader founding era? Remind students to distinguish between direct quotations and paraphrased information, use quotation marks around words taken directly from a source, and keep track of the sources they consult.

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d. **Part 4: Write & Record!** Students use their close reading, paraphrasing, inquiry questions, and additional research to write a final script for a 1–3 minute podcast episode in the style of an audio tour stop. Their episode should clearly and fully answer the central question while helping listeners understand why the location matters.

5. Provide students with time to rehearse and record their episodes. Encourage them to read their scripts aloud at least once before recording and revise any sentences that sound awkward or overly formal when spoken. Recordings can be created using any available audio-recording platform or device and should be shared in the space designated by the instructor.
6. Consider bringing the individual episodes together as a class audio tour of Philadelphia. Organize recordings by location or geographic proximity and invite students to listen to several of their classmates' episodes. As a concluding reflection, ask students to consider how examining multiple locations changes or complicates their understanding of the Constitutional Convention and the nation's founding.

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