Lesson Plan on “A Rising People and Ben Franklin” Summer 2009
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Objective: Students will compare the dissemination of news through Ben Franklin’s newspapers in the colonial period and today’s news, along with issues of “fair and balanced” coverage then and now. Using primary documents from Ben Franklin’s own paper, his anonymous writings and his autobiography, we will review his words and his actions. Students then will compare coverage today in various media and on individual topics, like health care reform. Who owns the news owns the people!

Materials:

1. Print-out of Franklin’s quote on “…conduct of my Newspaper…. Excluded all libelling and personal abuse….” Also, other facsimiles of his newspaper and broadsides to analyze.
2. Hand-out info sheet on the newspapers that Franklin set up or helped set up in the colonies, his far-reaching impact in the colonies. Photos or power-point show on the building in Providence where the Providence Gazette was. The building still exists. Copies of the article on formation of the Abolition Society and John Brown’s letter arguing against it.
~Connect the newspaper issues with delivery via the postal system and BF intrigues.
3. Comedy Central skit from Jon Stewart on the Daily Show on news coverage by Fox and other mainstream news media. Jon Stewart, the most trusted news man in the USA!
4. Questionnaire for students on their media sources.
6. Hand-out on alternate sources of world-wide media outlets from American Friends Service Committee website.
Estimation of days on this unit: 5 days

Task Summary:
Day 1: Teacher will discuss the 1700s and the importance yet slowness of the news. Discuss how the news travels, then and now, authenticity of the info, and cost.
Day 2: Discuss handouts on Ben Franklin’s newspaper, his handling of the postal service, and delivery of his and his competition’s newspapers. Point out how the news kept the colonies as a cohesive whole. Students will be given facsimiles to discuss in small groups, which will then report out to the whole class, following guided questions.
Day 3: Show clips from Jon Stewart show where he ‘points out inconsistencies’ from mass media. Discuss and then give out questionnaire on current student sources of info.
Day 4: Project assigned. Students will be given the list of world-wide sources of news, and a topic. They will then break into small groups to discuss and then search online magazines, radio, newspapers and TV for contradictions and for reasoning on what they consider to be true, and why. This assignment will be handed in a week later.
Day 5: Assignments handed in, presentations and debriefing of the class.

GSEs: HP 2-1, HP 2-2 Connect the past with the present, Chronicle events/conditions.