Abstract

This curriculum unit will examine the United States’ international trade with China from 1784-1844. Overall trade to and from the numerous ports along the east coast and the various trade routes that existed will be considered. Lessons will focus primarily on trade with China and Philadelphia. Ships sailing from the port of Philadelphia during this time period, the voyage itself, the cargo aboard the ships to and from China, and the Philadelphians that took the risk to make this international trade possible will be explored.

The concepts of globalization and westward expansion will be applied to this extraordinary period in American history. The economic relationship between China and America goes back more than 200 years, a fact with which most Americans are unfamiliar. Furthermore, the leaders of our early republic saw the China trade as a part of westward expansion, that is, west beyond the northwest territories to the Pacific Ocean. Students will use primary source documents throughout the unit to explore these concepts and America’s early trade with China.