Early Abolitionists in Philadelphia

Sandy O’Keefe
Rudolph Blankenburg School

Abstract:

This curriculum unit will explore the work of the early abolitionists in Colonial America, specifically in Philadelphia. The unit, designed for an 8th grade class but adaptable to different grade levels, will examine the work of the early forerunners who advocated for an end to slavery—both the trade and slavery itself. The unit will first deal with the Quakers who are credited with leading the movement, and then the unit will also discuss the groups led by African Americans, as well as other white groups. The anti-slavery Quakers were originally met with resistance from Quaker leadership. As many of them spoke up for the rights of all people, they jeopardized their own situations, but their work eventually changed many opinions.

This curriculum unit and lesson plans will allow students to study the work and impact of the early anti-slavery Quakers. The unit will include the names of George Keith, Ralph Sandiford, Benjamin Lay, John Woolman, Anthony Benezet, Benjamin Rush, Benjamin Lundy, William Still and James Forten, plus others. The early movement and efforts towards anti-slavery that occurred in Philadelphia are the main focus of this unit.