

Letter from William Penn, Proprietary Governor of Pennsylvania, Advertising for British Migration to Pennsylvania (London, 1683)

By John McNamara

Common Core Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies

- No.1: “Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources....”
- No. 2: “Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.”
- No. 3: “Analyze in detail a series of events described in a text; determine whether earlier events caused later ones or simply preceded them.”
- No. 4: “Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary describing political, social, or economic aspects of history/social studies.”
- No. 8: “Assess the extent to which the reasoning and evidence in a text support the author’s claims.”

Objective:

The movement and migration of people to America from all areas of the world has been a experiential process of discovery, exploration, and settlement which has transcended any specific period of time. The motives of migrants, both long ago and in contemporary times, have frequently focused on economic, political, religious, and social factors. During the period of European colonization to America in the 17th and 18th centuries, some people sought refuge from political oppression and religious persecution while others searched for opportunities for adventure and economic and social mobility. These motives have been summed up in the epithet, “Gold, Glory, Gospel (God), and Government.” While the world has significantly changed and modernized during the last three centuries, the reasons for people migrating to America have remained remarkably consistent, for political and religious freedom, economic improvement and mobility, and a better way of life. Although the motives to migrate may be evident, the decision to move and uproot oneself and family from one place to another has typically been quite arduous and momentous for the participants. Using a letter (as a case study and “literary lens”) from William Penn, the Proprietary Governor of Pennsylvania, which advertises and tries to persuade British people to migrate to Pennsylvania, the students will initially examine, explain, and evaluate the text and concepts of this document concerning the benefits and reasons why people who reside in England should be encouraged and “enticed” to move to the colony of Pennsylvania in British North America. The students will also apply the contents of William Penn’s letter to analyze the circumstances and factors (economic, political, religious, and social) toward developing a viewpoint and making a sound decision on when it is a “good move” to move! The primary learning objective of this lesson will be phrased and presented to the pupils as a thought-provoking “essential question.”

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Essential Question:

- “To what extent was colonial America a land of opportunity?” or
- “Would you have migrated (moved) to colonial America?” or
- “When is migration a ‘good move?’

Introduction:

William Penn received a charter from King Charles II to establish a proprietary colony, named Pennsylvania, which included the land between the colonies of New Jersey and Maryland in payment of a debt owed to his later father. In 1682, Penn arrived in America to supervise the planning and development of this colony. Penn envisioned that Pennsylvania would be not only a profitable business venture but also a place of refuge for members of his religious faith, the Quakers (Society of Friends), who were viewed as Protestant dissenters and had become victims of persecution. Penn believed in such qualities as “brotherly love,” hard work, humility, and help for the less fortunate, and that this colony would be a “holy experiment” with its most prominent settlement, Philadelphia, planned as a “city of brotherly love.”

In order to encourage and promote the settlement and development of Pennsylvania, Penn would write “glowing accounts” of life in this colony to his British friends, patrons, and business associates. In a “Letter from William Penn, Proprietary and Governor of Pennsylvania in America, to the Committee of the Free Society of Traders of that Province, residing in London,” Penn persuasively advertises the advantages and benefits of living in Pennsylvania as well as the profits that could be gained from trading and traveling between Pennsylvania and Great Britain. Governor Penn provided his readership, the Free Society of Traders in London, with an explanation of encouragement as well as *economic*, *political*, *religious*, and *social* rationalizations why migrating to and trading with Pennsylvania would be a “good move!” As a promotional correspondence, published in 1683, the impact of Penn’s letter was highly effective and successful, for by 1700, Pennsylvania’s population had grown to 21,000 people.

Materials:

- Primary Source Document: “Letter from William Penn, Proprietary and Governor of Pennsylvania in America, to the Committee of the Free Society of Traders of that Province, residing in London,” ” (London, 1683).
- William Penn’s “Pennsylvania Advertisement Letter” Graphic Organizer/Worksheet.
- Document Synthesis Written Response Sheet.
- “Exit Card” Written Response to Lesson’s “Essential Question.”

Vocabulary:

As the students read, reflect, and discuss the text of a “Letter from William Penn, Proprietary and Governor of Pennsylvania in America, to the Committee of the Free Society of Traders of that

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Province, residing in London” (1683), they may encounter some unfamiliar vocabulary. By having the students collaborate in small groups, they can collectively attempt to ascertain and reason the meanings of unfamiliar words from their context and usage in the document. Such a learning activity would enhance the students’ skills as “effective communicators” and “collaborative team members.” As a final option, a pupil from each group could be assigned to consult a dictionary for unfamiliar vocabulary and then share the meaning(s) of those words with classmates in the group.

Examples of possible unfamiliar vocabulary from the text of William Penn’s Letter to the Society of Free Traders in London could include the following twenty-one words:

<i>Arbitrator</i>	<i>distinct</i>	<i>loam</i>	<i>pretension</i>
<i>Artificial</i>	<i>diverse</i>	<i>manifestation</i>	<i>propagate</i>
<i>censure</i>	<i>ebb</i>	<i>natural</i>	<i>produce</i>
<i>credible</i>	<i>embolden</i>	<i>palate</i>	<i>province</i>
<i>cultivate</i>	<i>husbandry</i>	<i>partake</i>	<i>serene</i>
<i>“Itah” (greeting branch)</i>			

Examples of possible unfamiliar vocabulary that would likely be associated, highlighted, and included in this lesson would include the following eight words:

<i>Colonization</i>	<i>immigration</i>	<i>oppression</i>	<i>persuasion</i>
<i>colony</i>	<i>migration</i>	<i>persecution</i>	<i>mobility (economic and social)</i>

Procedures:

1. Divide the class into small heterogeneous groups with three to four students in each group. Each group should contain pupils of varying abilities and levels of achievement.
2. As a motivational activity to interest the students in the topic, theme, and text of this lesson, the teacher will elicit responses from the students to the following questions: “If you were making a decision to possibly move to a new place, what economic, political, religious, and social factors might influence your decision? Which factor(s) would be most important in making your decision? Explain your views. Under what circumstances is migration a ‘good move?’ Explain.” The pupils’ responses would serve as a foundation and springboard to transition backward in time to examine, explain, and evaluate Europeans’ motives for migration and colonization of the ‘New World’ during the 17th and 18th centuries.
3. The teacher will then ask each group to identify and decide specific roles for their peers, employing a “cooperative learning” format. One student in each group should be designated as the “recorder” of highlighted evidence and recommended ideas and responses, and another student should be designated as the “reporter” who will subsequently share the group’s ideas and responses with the entire class. As each group shares its evidence and ideas with the class, a third student from each group, acting as a

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“scribe,” would copy these ideas and evidence onto the front white board (blackboard) or type them into the computer for projection onto a screen and display for the class.

4. The teacher will then distribute hard copies of the “Letter from William Penn, Proprietary and Governor of Pennsylvania in America, to the Committee of the Free Society of Traders of that Province, residing in London” (1683), as well as the “William Penn’s ‘Pennsylvania Advertisement Letter’ Graphic Organizer/Worksheet” to all students in groups. The teacher will frame the “Letter from William Penn, Proprietary and Governor of Pennsylvania in America, to the Committee of the Free Society of Traders of that Province, residing in London” (1683), as a “literary lens” to view the “economic,” “political,” “religious,” and “social” factors and motives for British migration to Pennsylvania (North America) during the 17th and 18th centuries and review the structure (framework) of the Graphic Organizer/Worksheet,” including definitions of the terms, “economic,” “political,” “religious,” and “social.”
5. The students will work in groups and read the text of the “Letter from William Penn, Proprietary and Governor of Pennsylvania in America, to the Committee of the Free Society of Traders of that Province, residing in London” (1683). It is the teacher’s discretion and option to have the students in their groups read the Letter either silently (so that every pupil can proceed smoothly at their appropriate pace) or have the students within their groups do a “shared reading” or a “read around” aloud (for pronunciation and/rhetorical purposes as well as ELL pupils). For guided reading, the pupils should note, highlight, and/or underline key terms, phrases, and sentences that describe and delineate the four factors and/reasons which could affect British people’s decisions to migrate to Pennsylvania (North America): “economic,” “political,” “religious,” and “social.”
6. “Document Analysis and Evidence” --- Step One:
After reading the “Letter from William Penn, Proprietary and Governor of Pennsylvania in America, to the Committee of the Free Society of Traders of that Province, residing in London” (1683), the students in each group will “turn-and-talk” to their peers and discuss what “economic” characteristics and descriptions that are contained in William Penn’s Letter that would encourage and “entice” British people to migrate to Pennsylvania (North America). The students should identify specific terms, phrases, and/or sentences as evidence in William Penn’s Letter to support their assertions and write these terms, phrases, and/or sentences in the “Document Evidence” box of the Graphic Organizer /Worksheet, next to the “economic” migration factor. Likewise, the pupils should then collaboratively focus on the “political” factor and identify specific terms, phrases, and/or sentences as evidence in Penn’s Letter to support their assertions and write these terms, phrases, and/or sentences in the “Document Evidence” box of the Graphic Organizer /Worksheet, next to the “political” migration factor. The students should then repeat this process for the “religious” and “social” migration factors and record their specific evidence in the appropriate “Document Evidence” boxes.
7. “Document Summary” --- Step Two:

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Based on the “Document Evidence” that was recorded in the “economic,” “political,” “religious,” and “social” boxes, the students should now write a brief summary statement of this evidence in their own words in each one of the corresponding boxes (for “economic,” “political,” “religious,” and “social” migration factors). Upon completion of this Graphic Organizer/ Worksheet, pupils in each group should discuss their summary statements of the four migration factors with their peers. If time permits, each group could then report the consensus of their summary statements to the whole class.

8. “Document Synthesis” --- Step three: Based on the foundation of their “Document Evidence” selections and their personalized “Summary Statements,” the pupils in their groups will now write a response to the following thought-provoking question: **“What have I learned about the ‘economic,’ ‘political,’ ‘religious,’ and ‘social’ factors that encouraged and ‘enticed’ British people to migrate to Pennsylvania (North America) from William Penn’s ‘Pennsylvania Advertisement Letter?’”** After each student completes their written response, he/she will “turn-and-talk” to their peers in the group and share what he/she has learned about the “economic,” “political,” “religious,” and “social” migration factors, based on William Penn’s view and perspective. If time permits, each group could then report a consensus of what they have learned about the “economic,” “political,” “religious,” and “social” factors, as described and highlighted in Penn’s Letter, that encouraged and “enticed” British people to migrate to Pennsylvania (North America).

9. Lesson Closure and Final Summary:
The student groups re-assemble as a unit for whole-class discussion of the “economic,” “political,” “religious,” and “social” migration factors and reasons that are described and highlighted in William Penn’s Letter and a series of Thought-provoking Questions for pupil reflection and response. Sample questions would include the following:
 - a) “What aspects of the Pennsylvania colony did Penn emphasize in his promotional letter? Why do you think that he chose these things over others?”
 - b) “What aspects did Penn leave out in his descriptions of Pennsylvania? “Why do you think that he left out those aspects?”
 - c) “Who do you think would have been most attracted to settle in Pennsylvania, based on Penn’s promotional letter? Explain your viewpoint.”
 - d) “Penn spent a good deal of his letter describing the land, its natural vegetation and potential crops, and indigenous (native) animals. How and why would these descriptions help to attract settlers to the colony?” “How would these descriptions help to attract merchants and traders to Pennsylvania?” “Explain your opinions and viewpoints.”
 - e) “Penn also spent a good deal of time describing the colony’s local American tribes. How does Penn describe the local Native American tribes?” “Why do you think that he included these descriptions?” “How and why would these descriptions help to attract settlers to the colony?” “How would these descriptions help to attract merchants and traders to Pennsylvania?”
 - f) “Based on William Penn’s Letter, would you have migrated to colonial America? Explain the reasons for your decision.”

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Additional Discussion Question Related To The Text And Topic:

- g) “Why would people want to leave their homeland and migrate to a new land ?”
- h) “The phrase, ‘*Gold, Glory, Gospel (God), and Government,*’ is often used to summarize the motives for Europeans’ migration to (and colonization of) the ‘New World’ during the 17th and 18th centuries. Explain how each one of the ‘4Gs’ contributed to this migration and colonization.”

In the final minutes of the lesson, the teacher should refer the pupils’ attention back to the lesson’s “Essential Question”:

“To what extent was colonial America a land of opportunity?”

or

“Would you have migrated (moved) to colonial America?”

or

“When is migration a ‘good move?’

Students should respond to the “essential question,” either verbally as part of whole-class discussion or in writing by recording an entry into their journals or “learning logs,” or by writing a response to this “essential question” on an Exit Card” which will be collected by the teacher.

10. Application Activities (optional):

- a) As an “extension” assignment, the students, working in their groups, could research recent origins, statistics, trends in immigration to the United States, analyze and assess people’s motives for recent and current immigration to the United States, and then compare the migration motives of people from 17th and 18th century Europe to the reasons why recent and current immigrants have come to the United States. Over time (from the 17th century to the present), to what extent have the motives of migration to the United States remained similar or become different? (consistency vs. change). Students would explain their viewpoints and support their positions with evidence and reason.
- b) Students work collaboratively on the following relevant question: “If you were making a decision to possibly move to a new place, what economic, political, religious, and social factors might influence your decision? Which factor(s) would be most important in making your decision? Explain your views. How do your factors of migration compare with the motives of Europeans during the 17th and 18th centuries?”

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“A Letter from William Penn, Proprietary and Governor of Pennsylvania in America, to the Committee of the Free Society of Traders of that Province, residing in London” (London, 1683), 2–9.

William Penn, a well-placed English gentleman and a Quaker, turned an old debt into a charter for the proprietary colony called “Pennsylvania,” (all the land between New Jersey and Maryland) Penn took great pains in setting up his colony; twenty drafts survive of his First Frame of Government, the colony’s 1682 constitution. Penn was determined to deal fairly and maintain friendly relations with the Lenni Lenape or Delaware Indians. He laid out in great detail the city of Philadelphia as well as organized other settlements and established the Free Society of Traders to control commerce with England. He sent back glowing accounts of the colony to his English friends and patrons. This *Letter to the Free Society of Traders*, published in 1683, has been recognized as the most effective of his promotional tracts. And it proved successful; by 1700 Pennsylvania’s population reached 21,000.

For the Province, the general condition of it, take as follows:

I. The country itself in its soil, air, water, seasons, and produce, both natural and artificial, is not to be despised. The land contains diverse sorts of earth, as sand, yellow and black, poor and rich; also gravel, both loamy and dusty; and in some places . . . earth, like to our best vales in England, especially by inland brooks and rivers. God in His wisdom having ordered it so, that the advantages of the country are divided, the back lands being generally three to one richer than those that lie by navigable waters.

II. The *air* is sweet and clear, the heavens serene, like the south parts of France, rarely overcast; and as the woods come by numbers of people to be more cleared, that itself will refine.

III. The *waters* are generally good, for the rivers and brooks have mostly gravel and stony bottoms, and in number hardly credible. We have also mineral waters that operate in the same manner with Chipping Barnet and Northhaw, not two miles from Philadelphia.

IV. For *the seasons* of the year, having by God’s goodness now lived over the coldest and hottest that the oldest liver in the province can remember, I can say something to an English understanding...

V. The *natural produce* of the country, of vegetables, is trees, fruits, plants, flowers. The trees of most note are the black walnut, cedar, cypress, chestnut, poplar, gumwood, hickory, sassafras, ash, beech; and oak of divers sorts, as red, white, and black, Spanish, chestnut, and swamp, the most durable of all; of all which there is plenty for the use of man.

The fruits that I find in the woods are the white and black mulberry, chestnut, walnut, plums, strawberries, cranberries, huckleberries, and grapes of divers sorts. The great red grape (now ripe) called by ignorance the fox grape (because of the relish it has with unskillful palates), is in itself an extraordinary grape, and by art doubtless may be cultivated to an excellent wine. . . . There is a white kind of muscatel, and a little black grape like the cluster grape of England, not yet so ripe as the other; but, they tell me, when ripe, sweeter. . . . Here are also peaches, and very good, and in great quantities, not an Indian plantation without them. . . .

VI. The *artificial produce* of the country is wheat, barley, oats, rye, peas, beans, squashes, pumpkins,

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watermelons, muskmelons, and all herbs and roots that our gardens in England usually bring forth. Note, that Edward Jones, son-in-law to Thomas Wynne, living on the Schuylkill, had with ordinary cultivation, for one grain of English barley, seventy stalks and ears of barley; and it is common in this country from one bushel sown, to reap forty, often fifty, and sometimes sixty. And three pecks of wheat sow an acre here.

VII. Of living creatures, *fish, fowl*, and the beasts of the woods, here are diverse sorts, some for food and profit, and some for profit only. For food as well as profit, the elk, as big as a small ox, deer bigger than ours, beaver, raccoon, rabbits [and] squirrels, and some eat young bear, and commend it. Of fowl of the land, there is the turkey (forty and fifty pound weight), which is very great, pheasants, heath-birds, pigeons, and partridges in abundance. Of the water, the swan, goose, white and gray, brants, ducks, teal, also the snipe and curlew, and that in great numbers; but the duck and teal excel, nor so good have I ever eaten in other countries. Of fish, there is the sturgeon, herring, rock, shad, catshead, sheepshead, eel, smelt, perch, roach; and in inland rivers, trout, some say salmon, above the Falls. Of shellfish, we have oysters, crabs, cockles, conches and mussels; some oysters six inches long, and one sort of cockles as big as the stewing oysters; they make a rich broth. The creatures for profit only by skin or fur, and that are natural to these parts, are the wildcat, panther, otter, wolf, fox, fisher, mink, muskrat; and of the water, the whale for oil, of which we have good store; and two companies of whalers, whose boats are built, will soon begin their work, which has the appearance of a considerable improvement; to say nothing of our reasonable hopes of good cod in the bay.

VIII. We have no want of *horses*, and some are very good and shapely enough....

X. The woods are adorned with lovely *flowers*, for color, greatness, figure, and variety. I have seen the gardens of London best stored with that sort of beauty, but think they may be improved by our woods....

XI. The NATIVES I shall consider in their persons, language, manners, religion, and government, with my sense of their original. For their persons, they are generally tall, straight, well built, and of singular proportion; they tread strong and clever, and mostly walk with a lofty chin. Of complexion black, but by design, as the gypsies in England. They grease themselves with bear's fat clarified, and using no defense against sun or weather, their skins must needs be swarthy. . . .

XIII. Of their *customs and manners* there is much to be said. I will begin with children. So soon as they are born they wash them in water, and while very young, and in cold weather to choose, they plunge them in the rivers to harden and embolden them....

XVII. If a European comes to see them, or calls for lodging at their house or wigwam, they give him the best place and first cut. If they come to visit us, they salute us with an *Itah*, which is as much as to say "Good be to you," and set them down, which is mostly on the ground, close to their heels, their legs upright. [It] may be they speak not a word more, but observe all passages. If you give them anything to eat or drink, [that is] well, for they will not ask; and, be it little or much, if it be with kindness, they are well pleased, else they go away sullen, but say nothing. . . .

XIX. But in liberality they excel; nothing is too good for their friend. Give them a fine gun, coat, or other thing, it may pass twenty hands before it sticks; light of heart, strong affections, but soon spent, the most merry creatures that live, [they] feast and dance perpetually; they never have much, nor want much. Wealth circulates like the blood, all parts partake; and though none shall want what another has, yet [they are] exact observers of property. . . .

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XXV. We have agreed that in all differences between us, six of each side shall end the matter. Don't abuse them, but let them have justice, and you win them. The worst is, that they are the worse for the Christians, who have propagated their vices and yielded them tradition for ill, and not for good things. But as low an ebb as they are at, and as glorious as their own condition looks, the Christians have not outlived their sight with all their pretensions to a higher manifestation. What good then might not a good people graft, where there is so distinct a knowledge left between good and evil? I beseech God to incline the hearts of all that come into these parts to outlive the knowledge of the natives, by a fixed obedience to their greater knowledge of the will of God. For it were miserable indeed for us to fall under the just censure of the poor Indian conscience, while we make profession of things so far transcending. . . .

XXVII. The *first planters* in these parts were the Dutch, and soon after them the Swedes and Finns. The Dutch applied themselves to traffic, the Swedes and Finns to husbandry. There were some disputes between them [for] some years; the Dutch looking upon them as intruders upon their purchase and possession, which was finally ended in the surrender made by John Rising, the Swedes' governor, to Peter Stuyvesant, governor for the States of Holland, anno 1655. . . .

XXXI. . . . And for the well government of the said counties, courts of justice are established in every county, with proper officers, as justices, sheriffs, clerks, constables, etc.; which courts are held every two months. But, to prevent lawsuits, there are three peacemakers chosen by every county court, in the nature of common arbitrators, to hear and end differences betwixt man and man. And spring and fall there is an orphan's court in each county, to inspect and regulate the affairs of orphans and widows. . . .

XXXIII. . . . Your city lot is a whole street and one side of a street, from river to river, containing near one hundred acres, not easily valued; which is, besides your four hundred acres in the city liberties, part of your twenty thousand acres in the country

Your kind cordial friend, William Penn

Source: William Penn, *A Letter from William Penn, Proprietary and Governor of Pennsylvania in America, to the Committee of the Free Society of Traders of that Province, residing in London* (London, 1683), 2–9.

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William Penn's "Pennsylvania Advertisement Letter" Graphic Organizer

<u>Migration Factors</u>	<u>Document Evidence</u>	<u>Summary Statement</u>
<u>"Economic"</u>		
<u>"Political"</u>		
<u>"Religious"</u>		
<u>"Social"</u>		

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Document Synthesis Written Response

Based on the foundation of your “Document Evidence” selections and your personalized “Summary Statements,” please write a response to the following thought-provoking question and share your written response with the peers in your group:

“What have I learned about the ‘economic,’ ‘political,’ ‘religious,’ and “social” factors that encouraged and ‘enticed’ British people to migrate to Pennsylvania (North America) from William Penn’s ‘Pennsylvania Advertisement Letter?’”

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“Exit Card” Written Response to Lesson’s “Essential Question”

“Essential Question”:

To what extent was colonial America a land of opportunity?”

or

“Would you have migrated (moved) to colonial America?”

or

“When is migration a ‘good move?’