

Teacher Instructions

The attached student projects rely on a modified version of the postal ledgers used by Benjamin Franklin created by APS Museum Guide Craig Fox. If interested in learning how the modified ledger was created, [read this post about the process](#). In addition to the assignments below, we encourage you to make your own assignments involving the ledgers to explore different topics and to fit the needs of your students and classroom. You can also use the data (found [here](#)) to make your own ledgers and explore other data.

Share what you make with us at MuseumEducation@AmPhilSoc.org!

Modified Ledgers

Again, you can also use the data (found [here](#)) to make your own ledgers and explore other data.

The last page of this PDF contains the modified ledger used for these activities.

Here's a link to the [modified ledger in Google Sheets](#) as well.

Useful Resources and Further Learning

More Educator Resources

<https://www.amphilsoc.org/educator-resources>

Want to learn more about the Franklin Postal Project? Check out these links

<https://diglib.amphilsoc.org/franklindata/>

<https://www.amphilsoc.org/blog/introducing-franklins-philadelphia-post-office-ledgers>

Help Expand These Records

Postal records like these can be hard to find because they sometimes weren't considered valuable enough to put in an archive! But to tell a fuller story about relationships between people and places in colonial British North America, we'd love to be able to connect our records from Philadelphia to similar postal records from the other twelve colonies. We could use your help! If you know of any account books, postal records, or other data sources related to the postal service prior to 1800, please let us know at digitalprojects@amphilsoc.org.

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Addition, Subtraction and Conversion: Student Instructions

One of the many ways Franklin improved the postal system was to devise a series of ledgers that standardized the information recorded and made a concrete system of record keeping of letters. Look at the information in the ledger and use it to answer the questions below.

Helpful Conversions

1 featherweight (dwt) = 24 grains (grs)

1 grain (gr) = 1/7000 pound (lb)

Questions

1. On June 11, 1767 (Time of Receiving): How many featherweights (dwt) of unpaid letters were received?
2. How many grains (grs) were paid for on June 6, 1767 (Date of the Bills received)?
3. How many unpaid letters were received from Boston from June 6, 1767 to June 18th, 1767?
4. Way letters were letters picked up on the way from a location. Add up the way letters coming from each location. Which location had the most? How much more are from that location compared to all the other locations?
5. On June 10, 1767 how many pounds of unpaid letters were received?
6. Are there more undercharged or overcharged letters in featherweights on June 11, 1767 and by how much?
7. How many grains of letters were mis-sent during the whole time period of the ledger?

Fractions, Percentages, and Ratios: Student Instructions

One of the many ways Franklin improved the postal system was to devise a series of ledgers that standardized the information recorded and made a concrete system of record keeping of letters. Look at the information in the ledger and use it to answer the questions below.

Questions

1. What is the ratio of unpaid letters to paid letters received on June 6th, 1767?
2. Do we still send unpaid letters? What does this show you about the mail system in the mid-1700s?
3. From June 6th to June 12th 1767 what percentage of letters are from New York? What about Boston?
4. At the time there were roughly two million people in the Thirteen Colonies. New York had about 16,000 people, and Boston had about 15,000 people. Compare these proportions to those of the number of letters you found in Question 3. Is there a discrepancy? If so, what do you think could be the cause of it?
5. What fraction of entries from June 12th to June 18th 1767 have the same time of receiving and date of the bills received? What fraction is the time of receiving and date of the bills received within two days?
6. Is there a pattern between which places have shorter differences? How does this compare to the modern mail system's speed?

