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ZOOM in on america

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By the U.S. Missions of Austria and Poland

"Proclaim Liberty Throughout the Land"

This image of the Liberty Bell adorns the Postal Service's "forever" stamp. "Forever" stamps remain valid regardless of an increase in the price of postage. Photo © AP Images

In this issue: Liberty Bell

Zoom in on America

William Penn & The Liberty Bell

(left) William Penn, founder of Pennsylvania; (right) The statue of Pennsylvania colony founder William Penn rises from a pedestal atop City Hall in this aerial view of Philadelphia. Photos © AP Images

The most famous bell in the history of the United States, the Liberty Bell, was given its name in the 1830s, some 80 years after it arrived in America, by a group of abolitionists who were fighting against slavery. But long before this the bell was already associated with freedom.

The bell was ordered by the Speaker of the Pennsylvania Assembly for the State House in Philadelphia in 1751. It was cast in a bell foundry in London and brought to Philadelphia. The inscription on the bell was chosen to read:

"Proclaim Liberty throughout all the Land Unto all the inhabitants thereof - Leviticus 25:10"

This inscription was meant to remind the colonists that they were free to choose the religion they wanted and that they had their rightful share in the making of laws. Even though the founder of Philadelphia and its Government, William Penn (1644 - 1718), was no longer alive, his democratic principles were spreading and developing. Eventually, they would lead to the U.S. Constitution, which was modelled on Penn's ideals of freedom and unity of the American states.

Another inscription on the bell reads: *By Order of the ASSEMBLY of the Province of PENSYLVANIA for the State House in Philada.* The name "Pennsylvania" was spelt with one "n".

The bell was rung for public announcements but by far its most famous performance, at least in legend, was to summon the citizens of Philadelphia for the reading of the *Declaration of Independence* on July 8, 1776.

In the 1830s the bell was chosen by abolitionist societies as a symbol in their fight against slavery. Between the 1880s and 1915 the Bell journeyed around the country to expositions and fairs. Its role was to bring the society back together after the Civil War.

Some of the current traditions and events that take place at the Liberty Bell from year to year are:

Martin Luther King Jr.'s Birthday: wreath laying on Doctor King's birthday in January.

Freedom Day: (February) which commemorates the passing of the 13th Amendment to the US Constitution (ending slavery). This is the longest running event held at the bell.

July 4: Ceremonial Bell tapping. Descendents of the Signers of the Declaration tap the Liberty Bell.

(left) A model of a slavery-themed, bas-relief sculpture by the architectural firm of Howard & Revis of Washington, planned as part of the design of an exhibition about a house occupied by George Washington and his slaves is displayed at the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia. The planned site is next to the Liberty Bell Center.; (right) Britain's Prince Charles and the Duchess of Cornwall Camilla Parker-Bowles view the Liberty Bell in Philadelphia on January 27, 2007.

How the Bell Cracked

(left) The newly unobstructed view of Independence Hall from the Independence Visitors Center in Philadelphia is shown in 2006. Earlier in the day, the 30-year-old Liberty Bell pavilion left Independence Mall for its new home in Alaska. The city's Liberty Bell was moved to a new building in October 2003. About 85 percent of the pavilion , including granite, copper cladding, pine flooring, windows and window frames, was intended for "Remembrance Park" in Anchorage;
(right) Sensors are seen attached to the crack in the Liberty Bell to monitor vibration as it is slowly moved in Philadelphia on October 9, 2003 to its new home at the Liberty Bell Center. Photos © AP Images

The measurements of the Liberty Bell are impressive. It measures 12 feet in circumference around the lip. It is made of copper (70%), tin (25%) and traces of lead, zinc, arsenic, gold and silver. The bell weighs 2,080 pounds (940 kilograms,) while its clapper weighs "only" 44 pounds. It is suspended from its original yoke made of American elm which itself weighs about 100 pounds.

Unfortunately, the clapper cracked the bell rather early in its use. Local craftsmen John Pass and John Stow recast the bell twice, once adding more copper (to make it less brittle) and then adding silver to sweeten its tone. Their names appear on the front of the bell, along with the city and date. In 1846 the city of Philadelphia had the earlier crack drilled out (the wide gap that is seen in the bell) so the bell could ring for George Washington's Birthday Celebration. This is the event when the bell cracked the last time, leaving it irreparably silent.

The Bell was first put in the Pennsylvania State House, now Independence Hall. In October 2003 it was moved from the Liberty Bell Pavilion to the Liberty Bell Center on Market Street in Philadelphia. It constitutes part of the Independence National Park and is administered by the National Park Service.

Now that the Liberty Bell is basically silent, its replica, called the Freedom Bell, is in Washington. The Freedom Bell was cast for celebrations of the nation's Bicentennial in 1976. During the celebration it was carried on the American Freedom Train to all of the 48 contiguous states. It is twice as large as the Liberty Bell. The replica is placed in front of the Washington DC's Union Station.

The Freedom Bell in front of the Washington DC'c Union Station

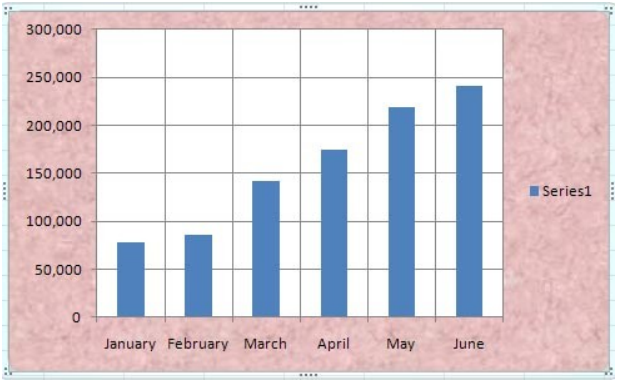
Activity Page

Exercise 1 Look at the number of visitors at the Liberty Bell Center per month in 2011 as provided on the NPS web site (http://www.nps.gov/inde/parkmgmt/statistics.htm).

Look at the graph with another student and analyze the data. Make sentences comparing the number of visitors. For example:

January was the least busy month in 2011 at the Liberty Bell Center, but by April the number of visitors doubled and was growing rapidly towards the middle of the year.

January	77,914
February	85,330
March	141,327
April	173,933
May	219,362
June	240,622



Exercise 2 Speaking

The text below comes from the National Park Service general information on visiting the Liberty Bell Center (http://www.nps.gov/inde/liberty-bell-center.htm). Some words have been removed and placed under the paragraph, but not in the right order. Please put them back into the text.

The Liberty Bell Center is ..... on Market Street between 5th and 6th Streets. The building is open year ..... , though hours vary by season. The Liberty Bell Center offers a video presentation and ..... about the Liberty Bell, focusing on its ..... and its modern day role as an international ..... of freedom. Taped presentations about the ..... of the Liberty Bell are offered in a dozen ..... for the convenience of ..... visitors. The Liberty Bell itself is displayed in a magnificent glass chamber with Independence Hall in the .....

origins, background, languages, history, located, icon, foreign, exhibits, round

Exercise 3 Word study

The words “liberty”, “freedom” and “independence” are close in meaning. Can you tell from the dictionary definitions below which word is explained?

1. the state of being free within society from repressive restrictions imposed by authority on one’s way of life, behavior, or political views.
2. the fact or state of being free from outside control, not depending on another’s authority.
3. the power or right to act, speak or think as one wants without hindrance or restraint.

How do the words “liberty”, “freedom” “independence” translate into your native language? Can you think of good definitions of them?

ZOOM in on america

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