Introductory Lesson

Purpose:
Introduce students to the Northampton Association and prepare them to work with their Source Packets. Connect this unit with prior learning. Have students consider how we choose to organize ourselves as a society and how to engage in that process.

Teaching Method: Guided discussion with group work using primary sources.

Time Frame: 90 minutes

Materials: Printed copies of the NAEI Constitution and a blackboard.

Introduction:

1) Ask: Name some social, not personal, problems you see around you at the local or national level. Examples: racial injustice, economic inequality, corruption, greed, addiction, violence, etc. List them on the board.

2) Ask: Name some things we can do, as individuals or in groups, to address those problems as citizens living in a democracy. Examples: vote, petition government, boycott, form a union, demonstrate. Ask them to consider yet another option: starting or joining a model community. Describe what this means: like-minded people choose to live and work together and set an example in miniature for how society at large should organize itself differently.

3) Ask: Why would people join such a community? Hint: Not to hide or disappear from view. List their answers. So, this is an opportunity to model the values that you would like to see adopted and practiced in society at large. Ask: What values would you model in your community? List them on the board. Examples: equality, fairness, respect for differences, free expression, peaceful coexistence.

4) Ask: Does it sound like an easy choice to join a community? Why not? List your answers: loss of privacy, loss of income/equity, sparse conditions, binding commitment. What are some benefits: not feel isolated, learn from others, save money? What would be your reason for joining a model community? Go back to your two lists on the board: problems and values (solutions). How much difference is there between what you see and what you would like to see?

Lesson

1) Refer to copies of the NAEI Constitution. Give a very brief backstory: A handful of families pooled their money and bought a large business with land in Florence in 1842

with the idea of forming their own model community. The first thing they did as a group was to write and then ratify their own constitution. Ask: Why did they do this? So, this was in part a recruitment tool used to help convince other families to join their community. What did they include? Let's take a look. Note: It would help if students were assigned the Constitution the night before and asked to focus on particular paragraphs to present on in class.

2) Read paragraph one out loud and analyze it as a class. Define "institutions of society" and "existing social arrangements". Then divide the class into three groups that will focus on paragraphs two, three and four respectively. Ask each group to read, summarize and explain their paragraphs. We re-assemble as a class and hear from each group. We see that the writers were identifying problems they saw in society at large. We list those problems on the board and put them into historical context.

3) We turn to Roman numerals I-V in the Constitution. Different students are asked to read the five sections out loud. We discuss them one at a time, defining and explaining the significance of key terms. Ask: Consider the relationship between rights and responsibilities. Ask: Identify some of the values the founders wanted to live by and model for society at large. We list those values on the board and put them into historical context. Note: Assign students paragraphs I-V the night before and ask them to identify and define key terms.

4) We close by comparing the two pairs of lists from 1842 and now. How much has changed between then and now? Was this an effective recruitment strategy? If you read this, would you consider joining an experiment in communal living that modelled your values? How do you think things worked out for the Northampton Association? Did they create the change they wanted to see in society? Let's find out.

Final note: A lot of complex, layered material is presented in this lesson. If students leave the classroom with more questions than answers, that's a good thing. The purpose of this lesson is to invoke a host of interrelated topics that will come into focus as students do their own work and hear from other students as they dig into their Source Packets.