Toolkit for Finding Treasures in American Memory

Use the list of collections and their descriptions for an overview.
❑ Choose **List All Collections** for a broad overview of American Memory.
❑ On the List All Collections page, choose **Show Collection Description** for more details.

Search all collections at once with a cross-collection search.
❑ Use the **Search All Collections** box at the top of any American Memory page.
❑ Enter words or phrases. (For search tips, click the **Help** button, then **Search Help**.)
❑ Vary word order in multiple-word searches to display results in a different order.
❑ On item pages, scroll down and click on **Subjects** links to jump to related content in that item's collection.

Narrow your search to specific groups of collections.
❑ Click the **Browse** button at the top of the American Memory Home page.
❑ **Browse by Topic** to limit searches to collections related to given broad topics.
❑ **Browse by Time Period** to limit searches to collections with items from given date ranges.
❑ **Browse Collections Containing** to limit searches to collections with specific media formats.
❑ **Browse by Place** to limit searches to collections with items about or from geographic areas.
❑ Manipulate the checkboxes on the resulting page to search one or more collections, or click a collection title to go directly to that collection.

Use an individual collection's many search features to locate items.
❑ Enter words or phrases to search by keyword. (Searches descriptive information for all items.)
❑ When the full text option is present, enter keywords. (Searches all words in the actual items.)
❑ Refine your search with more search options (match all words, match exact phrase, etc.).
❑ Consider changing the maximum number of results to be displayed.
❑ On item pages, click on **Subjects** headings to jump to related items.
❑ Review **About This Collection** to learn about the contents of the collection.
❑ Explore links to unique features and supporting documentation.
❑ Browse the categories and indexes shown on the collection's home page.

Use tools from the Library's Teacher Resources for a different perspective.
❑ **Collection Connections** offer search strategies, ideas for keywords, teaching tips, and direct links to useful items in individual collections.
❑ **Finding Items in American Memory** (http://www.loc.gov/learn/start/find.html) includes tips for browsing and searching, plus a link to a keyword synonym list.
❑ **Pathfinder Guides** (http://www.loc.gov/learn/start/gs_src_path.html) offer yet another way to locate some collections, categorized by events, people, places, time and topics.

Choose Today in History as a starting point for event-related searches.
❑ Find summaries of historical events, with search strategies and links to useful items.
❑ Select the **Archive** for keyword searching and select-by-date tools.

Search other places on the Library of Congress web site.
❑ Use the **search boxes** on The Library of Congress home page to find online exhibitions, special presentations, teaching tips and other "non-collection" materials.
❑ **The Country Studies** (http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/) program has its own search page.
❑ **THOMAS, Online Exhibitions**, **America's Library**, **the Learning Page,** and **Prints and Photographs** each has its own search page.

Library of Congress (http://www.loc.gov/)   American Memory (http://memory.loc.gov/)
Search Help (http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/help/search_help.html)

![The LIBRARY of CONGRESS — AMERICAN MEMORY]

When Searching for Treasures, Remember:

❑ American Memory offers many ways to find information; searching is only one of them.
❑ Search results differ with the finding strategy used, so try using more than one method.

Collection characteristics
❑ American Memory is a collection of **collections**, each collection containing many **items**.
❑ The collections have unique characteristics.
❑ Collections contain surprises.
❑ Collections are not encyclopedic in scope.
❑ Searching a historical archive is not like searching Google or an online library catalog.

Choosing keywords and phrases
❑ Avoid overly general words (women, war). Think of synonyms or use the Synonym List page for ideas (http://www.loc.gov/learn/start/synonym.html).
❑ Quotation marks and case (upper/lower) are ignored.
❑ Variants in word forms produce different results.
❑ Phrases or Multiple Words: Put the most important word first.
❑ Names of People: Put last name first to find items *about* a person. (Subject terms follow this pattern.) Put first name first to find references *to* or comments *by* a person.
❑ Subject-Related Searches: Scan the subject index of the collection for keyword ideas.
❑ Full-text search keywords may range from simple phrases to several sentences.
❑ To find the most effective keywords, research the subject, time, and location. Try using words from related subject headings, individual caption titles, special presentations and other support materials. The Collection Connections for many collections highlight key topics and offer productive keywords.
❑ Language changes over time; places change names. Put yourself in the time frame of the collection to think of good keywords to use in a search.
❑ History has labeled events and time frames, but people living through the time or event did not refer to their "present" by these labels. Searching by these labels will not be as productive as using terms current during the event/time.

Conducting an American Memory search
❑ Narrow the number of collections before beginning the search process.
❑ Search results may yield many hits; the most relevant will be at the top of the hit list.
❑ A search is limited to 5000 hits. You may select the maximum number of hits to be displayed.
❑ A search does not include special presentations or other supporting information.
❑ Use a full-text search whenever several words are needed to describe a concept.
❑ Use your browser's Find feature to locate search words in the document text.
❑ Searching Descriptive Information, because it is on a limited amount of information, is faster than Full-Text searching. Do a search on Descriptive Information for known words, people, places, etc.
❑ Use Descriptive Information searching for works *by* someone. Use Full Text searching for works *about* someone.
❑ Subject terms in indexes and on item record pages are hot-linked to other related items.