Finding Primary Sources

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Teaching with Primary Sources - MTSU

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
TEACHING WITH PRIMARY SOURCES
Consortium Member

Teaching with Primary Sources is the Educational Outreach program of the Library of Congress.

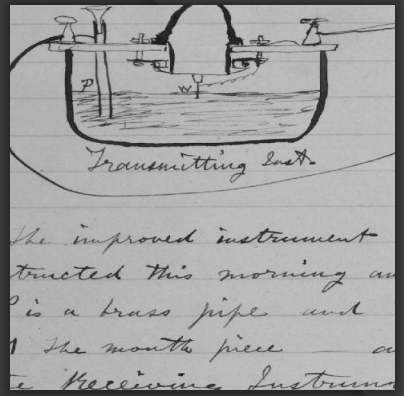
In Tennessee, this program is administered through the MTSU Center for Historic Preservation.

CHP MTSU Center for Historic Preservation
History • Education • Architecture

TEACHING WITH PRIMARY SOURCES

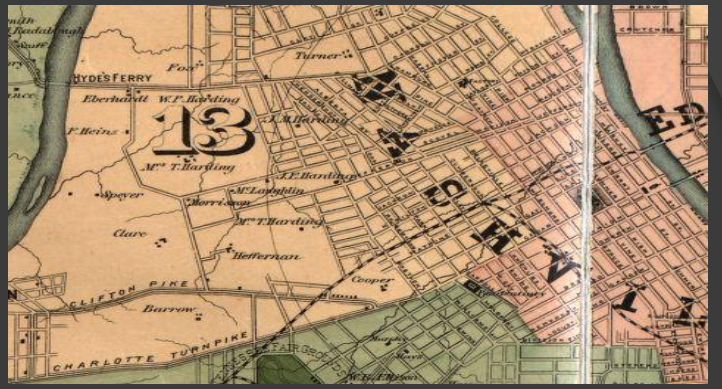
- Promotes and facilitates the use of the primary sources available at the Library of Congress Web site
- Help educators engage students in inquiry through the use of primary sources

- What kinds of primary sources are available through the Library of Congress Web site?
- How do I find them?
- What do I do with them?



EXAMPLES OF PRIMARY SOURCES

- Letters
- Diaries
- Photographs
- Newspapers
- Maps
- Oral interviews
- Drawings/illustrations



- Political cartoons
- Posters
- Sheet music
- Buildings
- Scientific data
- Acts of legislation
- Folk songs

...and more!

So, where can you find them?

Good Places to Start

- Library of Congress - www.loc.gov
  - Search Box on Homepage
- Chronicling America - https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/
- Veteran's History Project - www.loc.gov/vets
- Library of Congress Exhibits - https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/

Sources for World History (1 of 4)

Web sites with lesson plans:

- Reading Like a Historian (Stanford): https://sheg.stanford.edu/history-lessons?f%5B0%5D=topic%3A9#main-content#main-content#main-content#main-content
- History Teaching Institute (The Ohio State): https://hti.osu.edu/history-lesson-plans
- Center for History and New Media:
  - World History Sources http://chnm.gmu.edu/worldhistorysources/
  - Women in World History http://chnm.gmu.edu/wwh/index.php

Sources for World History (2 of 4)

Web sites with primary source images:

- World Digital Library https://www.wdl.org/en/
- British Museum https://blog.britishmuseum.org/how-to-explore-the-british-museum-from-home/?gclid=EAIaIQobChMItdOl5o6W6QIVTL7ACh06pwnHEAAYASAAEgIAJ_D_BwE
- Metropolitan Museum of Art https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection

Sources for World History (3 of 4)

Web sites with primary source texts:

- Internet History Sourcebooks https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/index.asp
- Eye-Witness to History http://www.eyewitnesstohistory.com/18frm.htm
- The Avalon Project https://avalon.law.yale.edu/default.asp

Sources for World History (4 of 4)

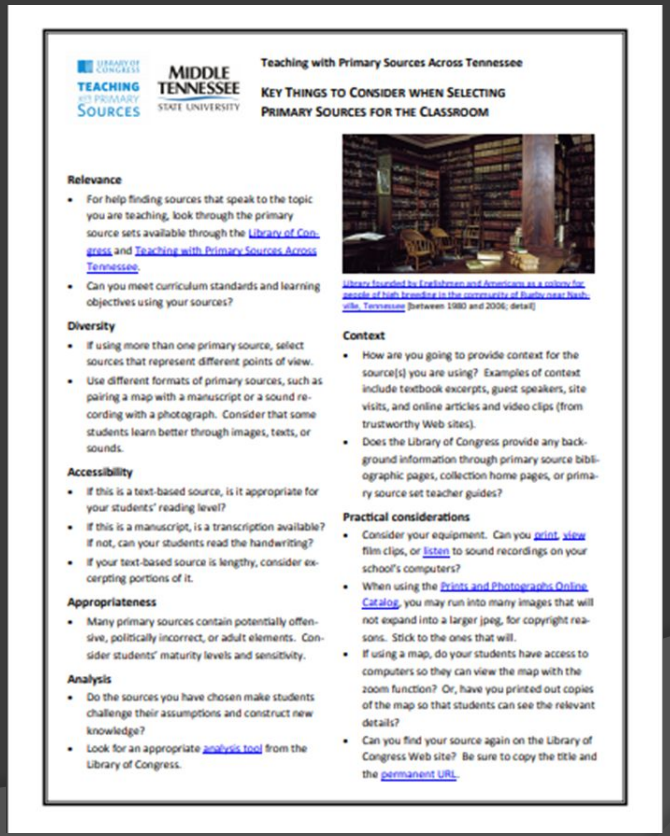
Web sites with videos:

- Crash Course World History
  https://www.pbslearningmedia.org/collection/crash-course-world-history/
- The History Channel - History at Home
  https://www.history.com/history-at-home

How do we choose what primary sources to use?

Selecting Primary Sources

- Relevance
- Diversity
- Accessibility
- Appropriateness
- Analysis
- Context
- Practical Considerations



Teaching with Primary Sources Across Tennessee

KEY THINGS TO CONSIDER WHEN SELECTING PRIMARY SOURCES FOR THE CLASSROOM

Library founded by Englishmen and Americans as a colony for people of high breeding in the community of Rugby near Nashville, Tennessee [between 1980 and 2006; detail]

Relevance

- For help finding sources that speak to the topic you are teaching, look through the primary source sets available through the Library of Congress and Teaching with Primary Sources Across Tennessee.
- Can you meet curriculum standards and learning objectives using your sources?

Diversity

- If using more than one primary source, select sources that represent different points of view.
- Use different formats of primary sources, such as pairing a map with a manuscript or a sound recording with a photograph. Consider that some students learn better through images, texts, or sounds.

Accessibility

- If this is a text-based source, is it appropriate for your students' reading level?
- If this is a manuscript, is a transcription available? If not, can your students read the handwriting?
- If your text-based source is lengthy, consider excerpting portions of it.

Appropriateness

- Many primary sources contain potentially offensive, politically incorrect, or adult elements. Consider students' maturity levels and sensitivity.

Analysis

- Do the sources you have chosen make students challenge their assumptions and construct new knowledge?
- Look for an appropriate analysis tool from the Library of Congress.

Context

- How are you going to provide context for the source(s) you are using? Examples of context include textbook excerpts, guest speakers, site visits, and online articles and video clips (from trustworthy Web sites).
- Does the Library of Congress provide any background information through primary source bibliographic pages, collection home pages, or primary source set teacher guides?

Practical considerations

- Consider your equipment. Can you print, view film clips, or listen to sound recordings on your school's computers?
- When using the Prints and Photographs Online Catalog, you may run into many images that will not expand into a larger jpeg, for copyright reasons. Stick to the ones that will.
- If using a map, do your students have access to computers so they can view the map with the zoom function? Or, have you printed out copies of the map so that students can see the relevant details?
- Can you find your source again on the Library of Congress Web site? Be sure to copy the title and the permanent URL.

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