TEACHING with PRIMARY SOURCES—MTSU
NEWSLETTER: DECEMBER 2014

WELCOME!

Teaching with Primary Sources—Middle Tennessee State University, administered by the Center for Historic Preservation, engages learners of all ages in using primary sources to explore major issues and questions in many different disciplines.

Contact: Stacey Graham or Kira Duke at (615) 898-2947 or www.mtsu.edu/tps

NEWS

• Save the Date! TPS-MTSU will be offering two summer institutes in 2015. Our final Civil War Institute will take place June 23-25 in Greeneville and will focus on Reconstruction. We will also be partnering with the Tennessee State Library and Archives to offer a World War I institute from July 13-15. Registration information will be available in the spring for both of these institutes.

• The MTSU Center for Historic Preservation and MTSU Walker Library launched a new digital humanities project this fall. Trials and Triumphs explores African American life in Tennessee from Reconstruction to the beginning of WWII. TPS-MTSU has written several new lesson plans for the project. To learn more about it, be sure to join us at the Tennessee Council For Social Studies Conference.

“AWESOME” SOURCE OF THE MONTH:

While educational philosophy and standards frequently change, the chaos of active learning remains unchanged. How does this image portray the emotion and mood of this class? How does this compare with your classroom?

[Quizzing an oracle] [1910?]

Theme: Historical Thinking
By Stacey Graham

This fall, I taught a course at MTSU called “Teaching Historical Thinking.” All the students were undergraduate history majors, about to take licensure exams to become middle or high school history teachers. They learned that historical thinking means approaching the past the way a historian does—in an open, questioning way that weaves together a narrative based on primary sources. This is key whether you’re a historian or a teacher or a high school student.

The foundational text for this class was Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts by Sam Wineburg, and the foundational Web site was Wineburg’s Reading Like a Historian, part of the Stanford History Education Group, a TPS partner in California. The approach to history that is demonstrated in the RLaH lessons promotes critical-thinking skills such as contextualization, corroboration, sourcing, and use of evidence.

The students in the Teaching Historical Thinking class tackled these four skills in the following lesson ideas, with additional Common Core skills highlighted on page 4. They created these lesson ideas, as well as lesson plans, a lesson unit, a teaching portfolio, and other work as part of their course assessment. Best of luck to these students as they look for teaching jobs in the near future!

UPCOMING EVENTS:

• December 5 (Knoxville) — “Teaching Early Tennessee History” at the East Tennessee History Center from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. EST. To register, email Lisa Oakley.

• December 9 (Murfreesboro) — “Connecting Architecture with Literacy” at the Tennessee Reading Association Conference from 11 to 11:45 a.m.

• February 25 & 26 (Knoxville) — “Exploring the History of Labor in the United States” at the East Tennessee History Center from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. EST. Attendance required for both days. To register, email Lisa Oakley.

Content created and featured in partnership with the TPS program does not indicate an endorsement by the Library of Congress.
Lesson Idea—Contextualizing the Gettysburg Address

Who doesn’t know the famous opening line of the Gettysburg Address? This speech was given on November 19, 1863, by President Abraham Lincoln, in honor of soldiers who had fallen at the Battle of Gettysburg. To understand this speech, as well as other important moments in history, we need to contextualize it. Contextualization is the idea that events must be located in place and time to be properly understood. Contextualizing includes asking who, when, where, what, and why. The use of contextualization will help us to understand what these words meant to the nation at the time they were given and their legacy.

Begin by having students read the Gettysburg Address. Discuss what they know about what was happening in late 1863. Why did Lincoln travel to Gettysburg to speak after the battle? Why was Gettysburg an important battle? Why did Lincoln need to remind the nation of the purpose of the war? What overall impact did the Gettysburg Address have on the nation, both at the time of the speech and after the war? To help answer these questions, students might want to review the Civil War timeline and the Civil War in America exhibit.

This lesson idea can be adapted to meet CCSS for English/Language Arts (Reading: Informational Text) and grades 5 & 8 Social Studies standards (5.13 & 8.76).

Lesson Idea—Corroboration: Women’s Suffrage

National Woman’s Party leader Alice Paul played an active role in the fight for suffrage, not just in the United States but in Great Britain as well. During her time in the British suffrage struggle, she was arrested and jailed for her activities. While in jail, she waged a hunger strike and refused to wear prison garb. News of Paul’s actions were widely circulated both in the U.S. and Great Britain. For this activity, students will review multiple newspaper accounts to corroborate details of Paul’s imprisonment. Corroboration is questioning important details across multiple sources to determine points of agreement and disagreement.

Begin by having students read “Alice Paul Describes Force Feedings.” After their initial reading of the article, have them go back through it and underline key details. Discuss these as a class. Next have students read “Suffragette Would Starve” (left column at the bottom). How does this account of events compare with the previous article? Are there new details, or were some left out? Why might the accounts be different? Finally, ask students to read “Alice Paul Talks.” This article was published later than the other two. How is Paul’s time in prison talked about in this account? Students might want to use a graphic organizer to help them compare the three sources. Discuss the students’ findings.

For corroboration, it is important to evaluate your source beyond just what it says. Students will want to consider how reliable their source might be. They will want to consider the author’s bias and think about who the audience for the source was. Have your students address these issues for the sources they have looked at. Ask your students what commonalities all the sources have. Do they portray the events in a positive or negative light? Do you think each article was pro- or anti-suffrage? What other sources might you consider to get additional viewpoints on Paul’s efforts in the British suffrage movement?

This lesson idea can be adapted to meet CCSS for English/Language Arts (Reading: Informational Text) and high school U.S. History standards (US.18).
Lesson Idea—Evidence of African American Accomplishments

The Paris Exposition of 1900 was filled with the optimism in cultural and technological advancement that was characteristic of the Progressive Era. A part of the U.S. pavilion at the fair was devoted to an exhibition of African American people and their accomplishments, featuring hundreds of photographs collected by W.E.B. Du Bois, an African American historian and activist. Du Bois used these photographs as evidence that African Americans were not socially, culturally, or intellectually inferior to white Americans. How would images depicting African American churches, businesses, schools, homes, newspapers, and craftsmen make a compelling argument in his favor? How does the information presented on this chart add to his evidence?

Your students can explore how to use primary sources as evidence using examples from the collection, beginning with the photograph at right. First, have students guess who these people are and what this image is supposed to depict. Next, challenge them to indicate why they made these assumptions. Lead them in the observation step of the primary source analysis tool. Do any of their observations of details from the image support their assumptions? For which of their guesses does this image serve as evidence? Next, share the bibliographic information with them. How does this add to their interpretation of the image? What additional evidence does this source reveal? What themes other than African American advancement do these primary sources reflect? Students can read this essay to learn more about historically black colleges in Tennessee, or this Web site to find out more about the “American Negro” exhibit in Paris. See this blog entry for additional ideas.

This idea can be adapted to meet CCSS for English/Language Arts (Literacy in History/Social Studies) as well as high school U.S. History standards (US.11).

Lesson Idea—Sourcing the Dust Bowl

The Dust Bowl was an ecological disaster that wiped out crops, livestock, and homes in the Central Plains states during the Great Depression of the 1930s. Many farmers whose livelihoods were lost migrated westward, lured by the promise of agricultural jobs in California. Using songs and photographs, students will practice the skill of sourcing, which requires the reader to ask questions about where a source came from (who produced it? what is this author’s agenda?) in order to make sense of it.

Start off by having students read and then listen to “Why We Come to California” (from this collection). Whom do they think wrote this song, and when? Do they think this person had first-hand experience of the Dust Bowl? What makes them think that? Next, listen to and read the lyrics to “So Long, It’s Been Good to Know You,” by Woody Guthrie. After reading a short bio on Guthrie (for 5th grade, for high school), ask students if this song represents a vivid, first-person account of the Dust Bowl? What makes them think that? Then share this photo (at left, from this collection) with students. Who do they think would have taken this photograph, and why? Read about the photographer, Arthur Rothstein (for 5th grade, for high school), to see if their predictions are accurate. How would Rothstein’s experience of the Dust Bowl be different from that of Flora Robertson or Woody Guthrie? Also note that the two songs above were recorded by people associated with the Library of Congress’s Archive of American Folk Song. What interest would the Library of Congress have in preserving these sources and making them publicly available?

For more resources on the Dust Bowl, click here: for 5th-graders, for high schoolers, and for teachers (primary source set and blog entry).

This idea can be adapted to meet CCSS for English/Language Arts (Literacy in History/Social Studies) as well as standards for grade 5 Social Studies (5.49), and high school U.S. History (US.48).
**POINT OF VIEW**

*Johnson taking oath, [1963 November 22]*

Lyndon B. Johnson was sworn in as president onboard Air Force One after the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. Ask students to consider what this image tells us about the point of view of the photographer at this moment. How does the photographer’s point of view influence the viewers? Why is this considered to be such a powerful image, shaping the point of view of our nation at the time it was taken?

**CHANGE OVER TIME**

*Frontispiece to Reflections on the French revolution [1790]*

Use this image to talk about how popular opinion of the French monarchy in general and attitudes toward Queen Marie Antoinette specifically changed during the course of the 18th century. Students will want to find additional sources to compare how the queen is depicted. Why did opinions change? What events are important in highlighting this change?

**INFERENCE**

*Roman theatre, interior, Orange, Provence, France [between ca. 1890 and ca. 1900]*

Inference refers to making conclusions based on evidence. Examining the photograph, what can you infer about what this theatre originally looked like and what it was used for? What can you infer about how it deteriorated over the centuries? Test your conclusions by reading about the theatre’s construction [here](#) (with an artist’s rendering of its original appearance) and about its preservation [here](#).

**SEQUENCE**

*Common Sense: Addresses to the Inhabitants of America . . . [1776; transcription available here]*

Sequencing historical documents means being able to understand, from the text, what is going on at that time, and how to fit it into the larger narrative. Print out these texts from the Revolutionary era and black out the dates (sometimes repeated within the text, too): George Washington letter re: Stamp Act, Boston Tea Party announcement, Common Sense, Treaty of Paris, and Articles of Confederation. Have students work in groups to put the documents in the proper order, thereby demonstrating an understanding of what led up to American independence.