Teaching with Primary Sources Across Tennessee

KEY THINGS TO CONSIDER WHEN SELECTING PRIMARY SOURCES FOR THE CLASSROOM

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.