TEACHING WITH PRIMARY SOURCES—MTSU
NEWSLETTER: JULY 2017

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.

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NEWS

• New lesson plans from TPS-MTSU: Reconstruction and the Fourteenth Amendment; Back to Africa Movement: Marcus Garvey, W.E.B. Dubois, and Booker T. Washington; The “Starving Time” in Jamestown.

• TPS-MTSU is excited to be partnering with the Tennessee State Library and Archives again for a summer institute “Reconstruction in Tennessee.” This special 2-day event will focus on content from the Tennessee social studies curriculum standards in grades 5, 8, and high school U.S. History. For more information, click here.

• In advance of last month’s summer institute, Will Kelley from Kirby High School (Shelby County) developed a great new lesson plan: Two Sides of the Same Coin—Washington and DuBois on Education.

“AWSOME” SOURCE OF THE MONTH:

Civil Rights Memorial, Montgomery, Alabama [2006 April 10]

How is the MLK quote and water used at this memorial to honor the names of those who lost their lives during the civil rights movement? How does this memorial tie in to the work of the Southern Poverty Law Center?

THEME: HISTORICAL MEMORY

Educators are on the front lines in confronting good and bad historical memory. What you teach students in the classroom is constantly agreeing or disagreeing with the version of history they get from TV, movies, historical sites, Internet Web sites, and their family and community members.

The good thing about all this is the interest it can generate among students to play historical detective and find out what really happened in history. Students can feel really accomplished when their sense of history becomes more nuanced and they are able to appreciate the gray areas.

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UPCOMING EVENTS:

• July 10 (Crossville) - History Day and Teaching with Primary Sources workshop at Art Circle Public Library from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. To register, email Jennifer Core.

• July 11 (Cleveland) - History Day and Teaching with Primary Sources workshop at Museum Center at Five Points from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. ET. To register, email Jennifer Core.

• July 18 (Murfreesboro) - History Day and Teaching with Primary Sources workshop at the Heritage Center of Murfreesboro and Rutherford County from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. To register, email Jennifer Core.

• July 19 (Martin) - History Day and Teaching with Primary Sources workshop at Boling University Center at UTM from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. To register, email Jennifer Core.

• July 20 (Ripley) - History Day and Teaching with Primary Sources workshop at the Ripley Center from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. To register, email Jennifer Core.

• July 24 (Clarksville) - History Day and Teaching with Primary Sources workshop at Morgan University Center APSU from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. To register, email Jennifer Core.

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HISTORICAL MEMORY CONTINUED...

It may come as a surprise at first for students to realize that many people remember history in many different ways. It may not necessarily mean that people disagree about the facts, but rather that they disagree on how to interpret the facts, or which facts to focus on more than others. How we remember America’s Founding Fathers, for instance, has gone through plenty of changes over the years. How they really felt about “liberty for all” in the midst of slavery, how they felt about the place of religion in the nation-state—these and other important issues have been debated as historians and archaeologists uncover new information about what they wrote and how they lived.

Primary sources are what allow for this new information. Archaeological excavations taking place at presidential homes such as Monticello and Montpelier are revealing the role that enslaved African Americans played in the functioning of the Founding Fathers’ economy and society. While we are still learning more about Thomas Jefferson and James Madison from their own writings, we now have access to primary sources that we didn’t know about before, which allows for us to expand our evaluations of these Founding Fathers.

In another example, a historical marker and a symposium in 2016 commemorated the events of the “Memphis Massacre” of 1866. There was controversy, however, over whether it should be remembered as a massacre or as a “race riot.” The choice of words we use today to remember historical events can have a big impact on how people receive that history, and, ultimately, how they reconcile difficult history with what they know to be good about America.

How we remember history keeps it relevant and important to how people live their lives and how nations conduct their affairs. It’s up to all of us to investigate that memory so we can do our part as informed citizens of the United States and the world.

LESSON IDEA—THE ROADS REMEMBER

Place names are a great way to find out the history of a place. Place names can include names of towns, hills, rivers, or any other geographical feature on a map. This lesson will focus on road names. In Tennessee, county roads are often named after the families that first settled there or owned the land. If a street sign says “Old Log Cabin Rd.” or “Cemetery Rd.,” you can be sure that there is (or at least there was) a log cabin or a cemetery to be found along that road. To find the center of a town, look for Main Street. College Street may sound like a common street name in many towns and cities, but that’s only because there were once schools there. Have your students ever paid attention to what streets were named?

Place names can also be used to commemorate important people. Many road names across America, especially in larger cities, were renamed Martin Luther King Blvd. or Rosa Parks Blvd. after the success of the Civil Rights movement in the 1950s and 60s. They often denote the location of the historic African American neighborhoods of those cities. In Nashville, Rosa Parks Blvd. downtown was once 8th Avenue. Before that, it was Spruce Street. North of the capitol, this street runs through a major African American neighborhood that is still important today.

Instruct students to observe the map of Nashville from 1877 on these two handouts. Can they find the state capitol building? Have them look at some of the street names around the capitol. Next, show them this exact same downtown area in the Google Maps excerpt. Can they see how many streets have different names today? Point out that the major east-west streets, Church, Broad[way], and Demonbreun, are still the same. What about the north-south streets? Why would you rename streets after numbers? Find, in Google Maps, 8th Avenue. Try to find it in the 1877 map and see what it used to be called. Then, look back in Google Maps and see what other name it has been given (Rosa Parks Blvd.). Who was Rosa Parks and why would a street be renamed to remember her? Have them trace the street north to where it intersects with Jefferson. Explain that this is one of the largest historic African American neighborhoods in Nashville. Why would Rosa Parks be a good choice for a street in this neighborhood?

This lesson idea meets state standards for 1st grade Social Studies (1.2, 1.15, 1.19, 1.24).

IMPORTANT LINKS:
- Lesson Plan: What We Remember: A Civil War Battlefield
- Lesson Plan: Memory and History
- Blog: Teaching Selma: Remembrances and Memorials
- Blog: The National World War II Memorial at Ten Years Old
- Blog: Honoring Our History through Artwork: Martin Luther King, Jr. in Library of Congress Primary Sources
- Blog: The Titanic: In the News and in Memory

Map of the city of Nashville and vicinity [1877, detail]
LESSON IDEA—VIETNAM WAR MEMORIAL CONTROVERSY

The United States escalated involvement in Vietnam in 1965 to fight on the side of South Vietnam against the communist regime of North Vietnam and the Viet Cong. The war became unpopular at home among various groups; over three million lives were lost by the time the U.S. withdrew in 1973. After the war, the American public struggled to create a memorial commemorating soldiers while also acknowledging the controversy surrounding the war and atrocities committed. The current Vietnam War Memorial in Washington D.C. drew both positive and negative reactions during its construction in 1982.

Have students research the controversy surrounding the Vietnam War and some of the political cartoons depicting the public’s view of the war. Bring the class together to discuss why some Americans supported the war effort and why some chose to protest the war. What is meant by the “domino effect”? What else was going on in American society at this time?

Discuss the construction of the Vietnam War Memorial and the controversy surrounding its design. Have students answer the following questions: What specific artistic attributes caused such backlash? What did some Americans wish to see within the memorial that was lacking? Why did Lin choose this specific design and approach? Then students should read the letter concerning the addition of names to the wall and the article concerning a women’s monument. This portion of the activity prompts students to think about the challenges public historians face when creating monuments, museum exhibits, and other forms of commemoration. Students will create their own digital or hand drawn monument or pamphlet commemorating the Vietnam War. Students will summarize, in words, their monument or pamphlet and the major features. They will explain who their audience is and how they considered their varying opinions regarding the Vietnam War.

This lesson plan meets state standards for high school U.S. History and Geography (US.81), and English and Language Arts (Reading: Informational Texts).

LESSON IDEA—REMEMBERING THE ANTEBELLUM SOUTH

Movies and television are powerful influences on collective historical memory. The classic Gone with the Wind (1939) is arguably one of the most influential films in shaping our collective memory about the antebellum South, the Southern Civil War experience, and the immediate post-war period. Popular culture can be a tricky influence on historical memory as it dramatizes and romanticizes the past and often does not reflect an accurate view.

Begin by showing the opening poem from Gone with the Wind. You may need to discuss unfamiliar vocabulary words as you read through this as a class. What does the opening poem tell us about how the film will depict the antebellum South? Next have your class fact-storm what they know about life in the South during slavery. Then show this clip from the film. Instruct your students to pay attention to how Scarlett and Mammy interact with each other. How would students describe their relationship? Next have students read two excerpts from the Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass.

How is the relationship between slave and mistress described in these readings? How does this compare with the film clip? Students can also analyze the image Please Mammy. How does this image fit with the film clip?

Next show your students this clip from the film. Ask your students to describe the relationship between Scarlett, Big Sam, and the other men. Where are the men heading? What is their attitude about the work they are doing? Allow your students time to reflect on this scene and discuss it. Then ask them to analyze Journey of a slave from the plantation to the battlefield. How does this compare with the film clip? Conclude class discussion by asking your students how they think the film contributed to how we have remembered the antebellum South. How accurate is this historical memory?

You may choose to layer in a more contemporary popular culture representation of the antebellum South such as the films Twelve Years a Slave (2013) and Birth of a Nation (2016) or the TV shows Underground and Mercy Street.

This lesson idea meets state standards in 4th grade Social Studies (4.61) and 5th grade social studies (5.1).
Protest & the Lincoln Memorial

The Black Panther Party hosted a convention in June 1970 to bring together over a thousand people in hopes of uniting various revolutionary groups. The event took place in front of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C. The flag being held by the man in the picture reads “Revolutionary People’s Constitutional Convention.” What meaning do we draw from the Lincoln Memorial? What significance does the Lincoln Memorial hold as a site of protest? In what ways have protests held at the memorial changed its significance and meaning over time?

Portrayal & Memory

Our memory of a group of people in history can often be skewed by stereotypes and negative imagery. Native Americans have often been portrayed in westerns, drawings, and American consumer products as savage or less than human. Efforts have been made to debunk this myth but some stereotypes still persist today. How are Native Americans presented in each image above? How did American policies towards Indians change from 1645 to 1875?

Remembering Through Music

Music, both melody and lyrics, are often used as a form of commemoration or memorialization. In Memory of Fallen Heroes was written in 1920 to honor soldiers who died in World War I. Students can access the lyrics here. What is the meaning behind the lyrics? What are other songs you can think of that commemorate other historical events?

Statues of Notable Women

Few statues and memorials in the United States represent or honor women and their significance in history. Eleanor Roosevelt, most known as a First Lady, was also an activist, politician, and social justice advocate throughout her entire life. In this Washington, D.C., monument she is memorialized as an elderly lady. How does this differ from statues we see of famous men? Does her monument accurately depict her determination and fight for justice? Why or why not?