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

- **PLEASE NOTE:** the Library of Congress’ home page has changed! Maybe you have already noticed? Well, as of today, November 1st, loc.gov has upgraded its appearance and functionality to work better on mobile phones. Don’t worry—it won’t affect your access to teacher resources or to millions of primary sources. Read more about the new organization [here](#).

- The Library of Congress has recently added the diaries of John J. Pershing and George Patton to their online collections. Pershing was commander-in-chief of America Expeditionary Forces in WWI, and Patton was a tank commander in WWI and an army general in WWII. These items add to the Library’s already impressive collections of WWI materials ahead of the centennial of U.S. involvement in the Great War.

“AWESOME” SOURCE OF THE MONTH:

![Sculpture "The Town-Ho's Story" in entry foyer of Metcalfe Federal Building, Chicago, Illinois [2007]](image)

This sculpture triggers great research question. What is the context of the sculpture? Who created it? What does the selection of the materials say about the artist?

THEME: RESEARCH SKILLS

A lack of information on a topic is simply not as much of a problem today as it was twenty years ago. The problem students do have today is sifting through all those search results and evaluating what’s good to use and what’s not. At least you can trust the materials you find at the Library of Congress!

Primary sources are great places to begin developing a research topic. For example, the city of Aleppo has been in the news a lot recently. Do your students know where this is? Do they know why it’s significant? Put "Aleppo" in the Library’s main search box and see what you can find.

Near East relief: Anatolian refugees, Aleppo, Syria [between 1915 and 1916]

Did you know that Aleppo welcomed thousands of refugees during WWI and WWII?

UPCOMING EVENTS:

- **November 2** (Brownsville) - "Examining Tennessee’s Story: Resources and Strategies for Social Studies" Workshop at the West Tennessee Delta Heritage Center from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. To register, email Kira Duke.

- **November 3** (Memphis) - "Yellow Fever in Memphis: Teaching How Disease Impacted the City" Workshop at the Pink Palace Museum from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. To register, click [here](#).

- **November 4** (Murfreesboro) - "Developing Research Skills: Small-Scale Activities with Primary Sources" Workshop at the Heritage Center of Murfreesboro and Rutherford County from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. To register, email Kira Duke.

- **November 18** (Knoxville) - "The New South: Industrialization and Labor" Workshop at the East Tennessee History Center from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. ET. 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—RESEARCHING IN TEAMS

While individual student research is definitely something you want all your students to accomplish, researching in teams can impart skills while also building in some helpful organization for students. Assigning specific roles to each team member can keep the project organized while not overwhelming students with all the components involved in a research project. For short activities that only cover one or two class periods, consider the following roles:

- **Search term processor:** This student will generate keywords and phrases to use as search terms for Internet research. This student will be challenged to list important themes, subjects, events, and people related to the topic, as well as synonyms and, if applicable, alternate spellings.
- **Online navigator:** This student will enter the search terms into search functions such as the Library of Congress home page or the school’s online library catalog. This person should be good at typing and navigating Web sites, and should share results with the curators.
- **Primary source curator:** This student will consider the primary source results found by the navigator and decide which particular primary sources will be most valuable for the research topic. This requires close reading and primary source analysis.
- **Historiographer:** This can also be considered a secondary/tertiary source curator. This student will locate secondary sources that show how this topic has been interpreted, making particular note of different perspectives of secondary source authors.

You may wish to assign research topics that you know will yield plenty of primary and secondary sources (that are grade-level appropriate). Make sure you impress on students the importance of team communication at every point in the research process. For example, the search term processor’s job isn’t done once the navigator starts searching; based on search results of the other team members, the processor may have to revise the search terms.

LESSON IDEA—THE ART OF QUESTIONING

Quality research projects start with a good question or series of questions. For many students, the art of developing a good question is a skill that needs to be further developed. The move to more student-centered teaching strategies such as inquiry allow for students to develop their own questions that can drive the class discussion. For students who struggle with developing quality questions or prioritizing questions, what can we do to help them?

Start your class with a provocative primary source. This should be something that you know will capture your students’ interest. For example, you might use this image including its title or this poster. Either in small groups or as a class, have your students begin to ask questions about the source. Explain to them as you start this that they are only allowed to ask questions. There should be no discussion or declarative statements made about the source. Also, remind them that they are not to answer questions generated by other students. If you are doing this in small groups, be sure that one student is designated as a recorder to capture the group’s questions. If you are doing this as a class, write down each question on the board for all the students to see. Allow about five minutes or so for questions to be generated.

Next ask your students to define open- and closed-ended questions. What are some key words that determine if a question is open- or closed-ended? What are the positives and negatives of each type of question? Now have students review their lists of questions, identifying each question as open- or closed-ended. Can questions be rewritten to switch types?

Finally, have students prioritize their questions from most important to least. Have them discuss their reasoning behind the ranking. As they select their most important question, you may allow them to rewrite and combine some of their question to develop a central question for the source. This exercise can be completed at the beginning of a lesson or unit so that the students’ questions can be addressed during the course of the lesson or unit.

This lesson can be adapted to meet English Language Arts standards (Writing) for middle and high school. This activity was developed based on the **Question Formulation Technique** from the Right Question Institute.
**Lesson Idea— Chronicling America: Newspaper research**

The *Chronicling America* newspaper collection on the Library of Congress’ Web site is an excellent tool for researchers. However, due to the sheer size and scope of the collection, it can be hard to research effectively. This lesson idea will use the topic of World War I to help your students develop research skills using the *Chronicling America* collection.

A crucial part of research is developing good search terms. Have your students go to the *Chronicling America* Web site. On the search pages tab, have them type in “world war one.” There are a few hits, but some of them do not relate to the subject of World War I. The reason, of course, is that nobody called it “World War I” while it was happening. Ask the students what else it could have been called. Once you have received their input, have them type in “the great war.” This search term gets us back on track with our research.

It is also important for researchers to know the scope of the subject they are researching. For example, it is commonly accepted that World War I started in 1914 and ended in 1918. In addition, it may be useful for researchers to define the area they are looking at. Have your students use Tennessee as the state with 1914 and 1918 being your from/to dates. This narrows it down considerably more, although we still have over 2,400 results!

Lastly, it is important for researchers to have a question to focus their research. While sifting through this material, maybe our researchers would like to know more about how African American newspapers reacted to World War I. Have your students use the “All Digitized Newspapers 1789-1922” tab and type in Tennessee, African American, and All Languages. This will give your students a list of all African American newspapers in Tennessee. We will use *The Nashville Globe* for this exercise. Go to the “Advanced Search” tab and select *The Nashville Globe*. Enter in the date range (1914-1918) and the key words “the great war” using the “within 5 words” option. This gives you excellent results, with April 27, 1917 being especially useful for answering the aforementioned question. For more information on how to use *Chronicling America* or for the types of projects done using this collection, check out this blog.

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**Featured Feature— How to Conduct Research on Loc.gov**

All-purpose search boxes, popularized by Google in particular, are usually the first place students begin research, and all too often their last place as well. The general search box on the Library of Congress’ home page is indeed an excellent and speedy way to delve into the Library’s primary and secondary sources on a given topic, but it is not the only way. In fact, some resources will not even show up in a general search, such as newspapers from *Chronicling America*. Here are a few tips for effective searching:

**Browse.** Even the best-selected search terms may not match the labels in bibliographic records. Instead of giving up if search terms fail, try using the nine thumbnail tiles or the “Browse by Topic” categories on the home page. Or, from a primary source bibliographic page, scroll down to “More like this” or “You might also like” for similar results.

**Looking only for images in the public domain?** On the search results page, scroll down to “Access Condition” near the bottom of the left-hand margin, and click on “Available Online.” This will weed out most-to-all of the images that are unavailable due to uncertain copyright.

**Looking for secondary sources for context?** Many online collections provide information that explains formats and technologies, creators and subjects, and historical and cultural factors involved in the compilation of primary source collections. When you select a particular collection, look for the tabs “About this Collection” and “Articles and Essays.” Today in History, (for younger students) America’s Story, exhibitions, and blog articles also have great historical context, and will each show up in your search results as a “Web page.”

**Looking for further reading?** The Library’s Web Guides are great resources on popular topics that highlight not only the most relevant links within the Library’s online collections, but also lists of suggested books you can check out at local libraries.

**Don’t forget** to search in *Chronicling America* separately. From the home page, click on the tile for “Historic Newspapers,” and then select *Chronicling America* from among the choices. (Other newspapers will show up in general search results.)

**If all else fails…** try Ask a Librarian. They really do get back to you promptly—we know from experience!
RESEARCHING WITH MAPS

City of Chicago. /Chicago, as it is, showing the burnt district [1871, detail]
Maps are valuable primary sources that can provide historical data and help fill out the context of the location and time period you’re researching. For instance, when researching the neighborhood served by Jane Addams’ Hull House, you can find out the exact streets and blocks of the neighborhood, and then find those streets on a historic map of Chicago, such as the one above showing the extent of the Great Fire of 1871. Cross-reference those on a current Google Map to see how the neighborhood has, or hasn’t changed.

WHO IS CONGRESSMEN BURNETT?

The Americanese wall - as Congressman [John Lawson] Burnett would build it [1916]
This political cartoon can generate many interesting questions. One of those is who is Congressmen Burnett. Have your students search for more information about Burnett in Chronicling America and Congress.gov. For more ideas on how to use this source, check out this blog article.

COMMUNICATING RESEARCH

A pretty typewriter? [1892]
Though it is important to learn good research skills, it is also important to learn how to communicate your research to a broad audience. One way to communicate research is to write a blog post. Have your students read through some Library of Congress blogs. Then have your students read this interview with research specialist Margaret Clifton. Afterwards, have them create a blog post that communicates their research.

RECONCILING CONFLICTING SOURCES

Our heroes of the Spanish-American war [1898]
Inevitably, researchers will come across different accounts/depictions of the same event. This is because there are many different viewpoints of the same story. To make your students more comfortable with this, have them analyze the above source. Then have them look at this source. Encourage them to think about how they would incorporate the sources in their research. See our newsletter for another conflicting sources lesson idea.