TEACHING with PRIMARY SOURCES—MTSU
NEWSLETTER: JUNE 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.
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NEWS
• Are you currently participating in History Day with your students, or would you like to learn more about it? Join us in the month of July as we partner with Tennessee History Day in a series of workshops across the state. Most sessions will provide introductory information about both History Day and the Teaching with Primary Sources program. Click here for a complete list of dates and locations. To register for any of the workshops, contact Jennifer Core.
• TPS-MTSU has a new lesson plan, “Tennessee’s Western Frontier,” which is designed for grades 4 and 8. This lesson plan explores what life was like on the frontier, looking at primary sources from frontiersmen such as Daniel Boone and Davy Crockett. Students will be challenged to map their own routes into Tennessee’s frontier land.

“AWESOME” SOURCE OF THE MONTH:

News from home / EF. [1863]
Many soldiers were young men who had never been far from home before. They longed to hear what their friends and family were doing back home, perhaps as a reminder that “normal” life goes on. What emotions or reactions does this illustration evoke?

THEME: CIVIL WAR: A SOLDIER’S LIFE
A soldier’s life consisted of skirmishes and full-scale battles and, for approximately 25% of the men involved, injury, disease, and violent death. The Civil War could not have been fought without the sacrifices of soldiers. However, the majority of the average soldier’s life in the Civil War consisted not of combat but of drudgery. From foraging to chopping down trees, from brewing coffee from corn and munching hard tack, from drilling and waiting and marching and more waiting—soldiers endured boredom as much as excitement. The way they reacted to their circumstances, including writing letters to loved ones at home and creating entertainment opportunities for themselves, is wonderfully conveyed through primary sources. Through letters, memoirs, photographs, etc., the voices of the men and boys who fought the war are heard.

Content created and featured in partnership with the TPS program does not indicate an endorsement by the Library of Congress.

UPCOMING EVENTS:
• June 4—(Cleveland) “Resources to Support Common Core from the Library of Congress” P16 Conference Session at 10:40 a.m.
• June 9—(Memphis) “Using Primary Sources in the Elementary Social Studies Classroom” Workshop from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. To register, email Kira Duke.
• June 10—(Memphis) “Teaching 18th and 19th Century U.S. History” Workshop from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. To register, email Kira Duke.
• June 10—(Smyrna) “Bringing the Nation’s Library to Your Classroom” session at Rutherford County Technology Academy. Open to Rutherford County teachers.
• June 11—(Memphis) “Teaching U.S. History from Reconstruction to the Present” Workshop from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. To register, email Kira Duke.
• June 13—(Crossville) “Using Primary Sources to Address Common Core” Cumberland County Schools In-service.
LESSON IDEA—SAM WATKINS & CO. AYTCH

Samuel “Sam” Rush Watkins (1839 – 1901) from Columbia, TN, joined the Confederate army in early 1861, along with many of his relatives and neighbors. Watkins fought throughout the war with the First Tennessee Infantry, Company H, called the “Maury Greys.” He survived with only minor injuries and was one of few left from his unit when the Army of Tennessee surrendered to Gen. William T. Sherman in April 1865. After the war, Watkins returned home to Columbia and married. He began writing his memoirs in 1881, publishing them as a serial in the Columbia Herald. The serials were combined as a book in 1882. The Library holds both the first and second editions in digital form.

Encourage students to consider Watkins’s intentions. Watkins signed his newspaper columns, “Co. Aytch.” Why use this rather than “Co. H.,” “Maury Greys,” or his own name? Why subtitle his book, “A Side Show of the Big Show?” Why did Watkins include a quote from the Aeneid on his title page? ("So many terrible things I saw, and in so many of them I played a great part.") Assign passages describing a soldier’s life outside combat such as: meeting General Lee (18), picket duty in the snow (26), the execution of a deserter (40), “games” played in camp (44 & 111), raiding for food (68, 81 & 113), getting letters from home (153, 155, & 170), being sent to the hospital (164), and being captured while scouting (196). Have students respond in writing by imagining one of the scenes described from a different point of view.

This lesson idea can be adapted to meet state curriculum standards for 5th grade Social Studies (5.7, 5.14 & 5.15), 8th grade Social Studies (8.79), and CCSS for English/Language Arts (Reading: Literature & Writing).

LESSON IDEA—LETTERS HOME

While deployed, soldiers seek to stay connected to their families, friends, and communities. Before the advent of the Internet, e-mail, and video chatting, soldiers exchanged letters to keep themselves connected to the home front and to help them pass time while they were in camp. During the Civil War, these letters allowed news to travel between the different battle fronts to the home front. They allowed both soldiers and those at home to share information about how relatives, friends, and acquaintances were being affected by the war.

Divide students into two groups. One group will be reading the January 2, 1863, letter from Joseph Green to Julianna Reynolds and the other group will be reading the January 19, 1863, letter from Tilton Reynolds to Julianna Reynolds. Transcriptions are available for both letters. Be sure that each student has a primary source analysis worksheet as they begin reading. As they are analyzing, be sure that students identify who is the author and recipient. Can we determine their relationship to one another? What do students find surprising in the letters? What does the content of the letters tell us about the soldiers’ experiences during the war? After students have finished analyzing their letters, ask them to summarize their letter in their own words as well as pull out at least three key details.

Next pair up students so that each student has read the other letter. Have each pair compare the two letters starting with the summaries and key details they selected. How are the letters different? What can those differences tell us about the two writers and their lives in the army? How might the experiences of a present-day soldier be similar to or different from what these two men lived through? If any of your students have family members in the military, ask them to share their thoughts based on their own experiences. You might also ask if students have family letters from other conflicts that could be used for comparison.

This lesson idea can be adapted to meet curriculum standards for grades 5 and 8 Social Studies (5.14 and 8.79) as well as CCSS standards in English/Language Arts (Reading: Informational Text).
Lesson Idea—Music and the Civil War Soldier

“When Johnny Comes Marching Home” is one of the most popular songs to come out of the Civil War. But its melody is based on an Irish protest song, “Johnny, I Hardly Knew Ye.” (Listen to a recording here.) It was common for soldiers to change the lyrics to such popular songs and create their own versions. One example is the Confederate parody of “When Johnny Comes Marching Home” called “For Bales.” Soldiers sometimes changed lyrics according to their political views or based them on their experiences in a particular battle. Some songs portrayed the grim realities of life as a soldier while others celebrated victories or displayed patriotism. Songs like these can be used to show how music reflects certain social, economic, and political shifts.

Show students the cover sheets for the songs “For Bales” and “When Johnny Comes Marching Home.” Have them make predictions about the subject of each song based on the illustrations and the titles. Then, allow students 5-10 minutes to read the lyrics and examine the sheet music. Ask students: Who is the intended audience of the song? What is the mood of the song? Why do you think the song was written? Why do you think there are images of elephants on both cover pages? Have students evaluate whether their initial predictions were right or wrong.

Next, have students create their own lyrics to the tune of “When Johnny Comes Marching Home” using a primary source such as this account from a Civil War soldier. What ideas or phrases from the soldier’s account can be used? Is the account biased? Have students share their revised songs with the class. They may even create a new cover sheet based on examples from this collection of Civil War sheet music.

This lesson can be adapted to meet state curriculum standards for grade 5 Social Studies (5.14), grades 6-8 Music (Standards 6 and 9), and CCSS for English/Language Arts (6-8.6, 6-8.9).

Lesson Idea—Envisioning the Combat Experience

Civil War combat was often chaotic. The average soldier may not have been able to see much of what was happening, especially once the smoke of rifle and cannon shot filled the air. Commanding generals, on the other hand, needed to envision both armies’ positions in order to formulate strategy and order specific movements. For this purpose, illustrators and engineers provided generals with maps of the fields of battle.

See, for example, the Union-created map of the Battle of Shiloh (a.k.a. Pittsburg Landing) and the Confederate-created one. Compare the two maps; can students tell which map was created for which army? What clues might point to that answer? Point out to students that soldiers are depicted in regiments that appear as colored bars on the maps. (This handy Park Service article illustrates the structure of Civil War armies from regiments to brigades and so forth.) If you were a soldier in one of those colored bars, what kinds of physical obstacles would you have encountered as you marched towards the enemy?

For 8th graders, have them read an account of the battle here or here (or read Sam Watkins’s account here). Can they match any names or locations in the text with features on the maps? How do the letters/memoirs portray combat in a way that maps cannot (and vice-versa)? Consider showing students this 1885 lithograph as a third way to portray combat, and discuss how maps, texts, and illustrations can work together to form the larger picture. You may also wish to show the WNPT 29-minute documentary, “Shiloh: The Devil’s Own Day,” to your students to give them a better overall sense of the battle.

This lesson idea can be adapted to meet curriculum standards for grades 5 and 8 Social Studies (5.11 & 14 and 8.79 & 80) as well as CCSS in English/Language Arts (Reading: Informational Text).
Baseball in Time of War

Union prisoners at Salisbury, N.C. [c1863]

What are these prisoners doing? How does this scene fit with students’ ideas about prisoner-of-war camps? Why might prisoners be allowed to play sports while being detained? What does this tell us about the popularity of baseball during the Civil War? Why would the artist choose to portray this scene?

Soldiers Eager to Join the Cause

Siegel Sharp-Shooters!... [1861—1865, detail]

Posters like these were used to recruit new soldiers for regiments and sometimes to raise new regiments altogether. Imagine you are a young man looking to make money. Does this poster appeal to you? What about it grabs your attention?

Soldiers Eager to Desert

Destruction of Housatonic by a rebel torpedo. Feb. of 17 1864. Charleston [1864]

Housatonic was sunk by the first successful submarine attack in history, by the Confederacy’s H. L. Hunley. But the Hunley never made it home, and its fate was a mystery until 1995. Investigators found the remains of the crew still inside the wreck, along with a gold coin, inscribed Shiloh, April 6, 1862, My life Preserver, G. E. D. This discovery confirmed the romantic legend that Lt. George Dixon, the sub’s commander, carried a gold coin from his sweetheart. The coin saved his life by turning a bullet at Shiloh, and he carried it for good luck for the rest of his life. Why would a good luck token be so important to a soldier? Why do we find the story so compelling today?

Note to members of the 52nd regiment Virginia volunteers... M. G. Harman, Col. 52nd Reg. Va. Vol. Staunton, June 22nd, 1862 [detail]

Many soldiers who signed up enthusiastically to fight were soon disillusioned with the realities of a soldier’s life. What might be the reasons a soldier would desert? Read this notice of desertion (transcription). How might it persuade a deserted soldier to rejoin his regiment? What was the punishment for desertion?