TEACHING with PRIMARY SOURCES—MTSU
NEWSLETTER: MAY 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
• World history teachers, we have new materials for you! Be sure to check out the activity Write Like a Sumerian and our newest lesson plan The Haitian Revolution. We are also developing a primary source set aligned with the new sixth and seventh grade social studies standards. Be on the lookout for this new resource in the next few weeks!
• Are you interested in learning more about the Civil War and ways to get your students more engaged in this important period? It is not too late to sign up for this summer’s Civil War Institute! The institute will explore “A Soldier’s Life” and take place in Murfreesboro on June 17-19th. We will be visiting Stones River National Battlefield as part of the institute. To register, email Kira Duke.

“AWESOME” SOURCE OF THE MONTH:

Mississippi cotton gin at Dahomey [1898, detail] Invented in 1793, the cotton gin introduced mechanization to the cotton industry. What impact did the cotton gin have on the number of workers needed to raise cotton? How did this invention change the nature of slavery in the South? What would it have been like to work in a room like this?

THEME: LABOR
Labor has existed as long as people have worked, and it has been an important part of the development of the U.S as an economic powerhouse and cultural melting pot. The word “labor” often brings up the concepts of strikes, unions, and working conditions, which are all important aspects of the history of labor. But it also refers to kinds of work, workplace technology, connections between jobs and cultures, and other, less-obvious aspects.
The Library of Congress has ample primary sources illustrating the historical, economic, and cultural issues of labor through the centuries. Loc.gov also has teacher resources to help educators gain background knowledge and develop strategies and activities for the classroom. For instance, do you know when the very first Labor Day was celebrated in the U.S.? What about where Rosie the Riveter came from? These answers and more will reward your—you guessed it—labor!

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

UPCOMING EVENTS:
• May 8—(Dickson) “The Long Struggle for Freedom: Exploring Emancipation and Civil Rights in the Classroom” at the Clement Railroad Museum in partnership with the Promise Land Community Club from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. To register, email Kira Duke.
• June 9—(Memphis) "Using Primary Sources in the Elementary Social Studies Classroom" Workshop from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Shelby County teachers can register through their district's professional development system.
• June 10—(Memphis) "Teaching 18th and 19th Century U.S. History" Workshop from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Shelby County teachers can register through their district's professional development system.
• June 11—(Memphis) "Teaching U.S. History from Reconstruction to the Present" Workshop from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Shelby County teachers can register through their district's professional development system.
LESSON IDEA—WOMEN’S LABOR & WORLD WAR II

As able-bodied men joined the war effort during World War II, wartime industries were faced with a labor shortage. Companies turned to women as a potential labor supply. While women have always worked in the United States, attitudes about women in the workforce began to change as a result of wartime employment. Prior to World War II, most white mid-middle-class women had been relegated to the domestic sphere as a result of cultural attitudes about the importance of women in the home. This all began to change partly as a result of women’s wartime labor efforts.

For this lesson idea, students will analyze a series of photographs depicting women’s wartime labor efforts. Divide the students into groups and assign each group one of the following photographs: Enola O’Connell, Mary Louise Stepan, Lorena Craig, Eloise J. Ellis, Oyida Peaks, careful hands of women, one of many capable women, or American mothers and sisters.

Remove the captions from the photographs before starting the activity. Have students use the Image Analysis Form to record their observations of their photographs. Next, instruct each group to write a caption for the image. As an entire class, compare the captions of the era with the student-created captions. What are common themes? How are the students’ captions different from the actual captions? What do these similarities and differences indicate about perceptions of women in the workforce in the 1940s? In the present day? Have attitudes changed, and if so, how?

This lesson can be adapted to meet curriculum standards for 5th grade Social Studies (5.56), high school U.S. History and Geography (US.64), and CCSS for English/Language Arts (Writing & Literacy in History/Social Studies).

LESSON IDEA—MARCH ON WASHINGTON

The August 1963 March on Washington was not the first time such a protest had been planned. The original idea for a march began in 1940 with A. Phillip Randolph, founder of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters and a longtime labor organizer, and Bayard Rustin, a nonviolent organizer with the Fellowship for Reconciliation.

With the American economy slowly recovering from the Great Depression, largely due to the growth in defense-industry jobs, African Americans found themselves denied opportunities for employment. Randolph and Rustin proposed the march to force President Franklin D. Roosevelt and Congress to open up these new job opportunities to black workers. After negotiating with Randolph, Roosevelt issued Executive Order 8802, which banned discrimination in defense-industry jobs.

Begin by having students analyze Randolph’s letter to Walter White (third item as you scroll down the page). What is Randolph’s reasons for proposing the march? Why would he describe his plan as drastic? Why would he have written to White to share his idea? Next have students analyze the pamphlet “Why Should We March?” focusing on page 2. What is the purpose of the March on Washington group? What had they been able to accomplish? Why would this group be needed after those accomplishments? How did Jim Crow practices impact African American workers?

Finally, have students read “What We Demand” from page 2 of the program from the March on Washington, 1963. How many of the demands concern jobs and economic issues? Have students discuss their impressions of the demands. Do they find any surprising? What do these demands tell us about labor issues that had persisted for black workers since the 1940s?

This lesson idea can be adapted to meet curriculum standards for high school U.S. History (US. 65 and 92) and African American History as well as CCSS for English/Language Arts (Reading: Informational Text).
LESSON IDEA— THE SONGS OF MIGRANT FARM WORKERS

During the 1930s, farmers and their families from several Midwestern and Southern states relocated to California in search of work. The Great Depression and the ecological crisis known as the Dust Bowl prompted this migration, made famous in John Steinbeck’s novel *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939). To house and assist the thousands of refugees in California, the federal Farm Security Administration (FSA) established migrant-worker camps. With the support of the Library of Congress’s Archive of American Folk Song, in 1940 and 1941 Charles L. Todd and Robert Sonkin visited the FSA camps to record the speech and music of the migrant farm workers. While some of the songs recorded in the camps were traditional ballads and gospel tunes, others reflected the migrants’ experiences in California. Workers faced an oversupply of laborers, low wages, and poor working conditions. Some became involved in the labor movement. Listen to this song written by Ruby Rains and two other strikers during a cotton strike in Arvin and recorded in nearby Bakersfield.

After listening to the song, create two lists with your students. First, list familiar concepts from the song, such as “strike,” “cotton,” “picket line,” and “union.” Next, list terms that may be unfamiliar, such as “Associated Farmers” (a group of landowners who opposed unions), “scabs,” and “CIO” (the Congress of Industrial Organization, a labor union organization). Discuss the meaning of these words with students, and then listen to the song again. Ask students: What is the point of view of the song? Why do you think the strikers composed a song based on “Old McDonald Had a Farm”? If time, discuss another parody sung by Rains, “Roll Out the Pickets.” More ideas for teachers can be found here.

This lesson can be adapted to meet state curriculum standards for grade 5 Social Studies (5.51), grades 5-8 Music (Standards 6: Listening and Analyzing, and 9: Historical and Cultural Relationships), and CCSS for English/Language Arts (Literacy in History/Social Studies).

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LESSON IDEA— TRIANGLE FACTORY FIRE

The 1911 fire at the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory is the most infamous workplace disaster of the 20th century. Like many similar factories in New York City, Triangle operated out of several floors of a high-rise building and employed mostly young, female immigrants. The poor working conditions in these factories was a familiar topic at the time. Progressives fought for legislation to improve the lives of factory workers, and Triangle workers had been at the center of the “Uprising of 20,000” in 1910, a huge and largely successful strike of New York City garment-factory workers.

At closing time on Saturday, March 25, 1911, a fire began on the eighth floor of the Asch building in New York City. Though the building itself was considered “fire-proof,” the sheer amount of flammable material present—mostly fabric and scraps from the shirtwaists—allowed the fire to spread so quickly to the ninth and tenth floors that many of the workers had no warning. One hundred and forty-six workers, all but twenty-three of them women, died trying to escape from the building. The owners of the company were put on trial for the death of one of the victims, charged with keeping the staircase doors locked and impeding the workers’ escape. The tragedy of the fire revitalized the campaign for better working conditions and inspired new regulations and legislation key to labor history in the twentieth century.

Virtually all of the Triangle workers were recent immigrants, mostly Italian or Jewish. Many of the survivors and the victims’ families spoke little English. In the aftermath, this played a role in how the disaster was reported, the trial, and how the immigrant community responded. Have students read at least three of the newspaper articles listed on the Triangle fire’s Chroncling America page. How did the news of the time discuss immigrants? How were they viewed by the public? In what ways was the response to the fire influenced by the origins of the workers?

This lesson idea can be adapted to meet state curriculum standards for high school U.S. History (US.14 & US.15) and CCSS for English/Language Arts (Reading: Informational Text).
Robert Dinwiddie to George Washington, August 19, 1756

Many colonists started their life in the Americas as indentured servants. This letter (click here for transcript with notes) highlights how servants were used to help build defensive structures in the colony and how those who owned the indentures were asked to contribute their laborers to support infrastructure building. What two groups of indentured servants are referred to? Which group is preferred for this task? How did this system change after the colonies gained their independence?

Jelina Cubic at work at the winding operation. [1994]

Paterson, NJ, was founded in 1792 by Alexander Hamilton’s Society for the Establishment of Useful Manufactures (SUM). SUM envisioned an industrial revolution powered by the Great Falls of the Passaic River, and Paterson, the heart of this vision, soon became known as “Silk City” (see the NPS lesson plan). Paterson’s silk industry, now more than 200 years old, demonstrates the vital connection between factory labor, economic opportunity, urban life, and cultural identity. See the Working in Paterson: Occupational Heritage in an Urban Setting collection for photos, oral histories, and background essays.

Die fire korbunes [1911]

This song, written to commemorate the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire, is in Yiddish, the language of many of the Jewish victims and their families. Why would a song about those who died in the fire become popular and be printed as sheet music? Do we still use music to remember the victims of disasters today?

The great railroad strike, 1894

The Pullman Strike of 1894 brought rail transport to a virtual halt and united a quarter of a million railway workers. What motivated the unions, companies, and federal government to act? Read this recollection of the strike written by a journalist in the late nineteenth century. Search “railroad strike 1894” and “Pullman strike 1894” for more images.