TEACHING with PRIMARY SOURCES—MTSU
NEWSLETTER: APRIL 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

• TPS-MTSU is partnering with Shelby County Schools to offer three workshops in Memphis. On June 9th, we will be exploring how to use primary sources in the elementary social studies classroom. On June 10th, the day will focus on teaching 18th and 19th century United States history, and on June 11th, we will focus on teaching U.S. history from Reconstruction through the 20th century. Shelby county teacher can register by clicking here.

• Join us on Thursday, May 8th at the Clement Railroad Museum in Dickson for “The Long Struggle for Freedom: Exploring Emancipation and Civil Rights in the Classroom.” This workshop is being held in partnership with the Promise Land Community Club and will include a tour of the community. To register, email Kira Duke.

“AWSOME” SOURCE OF THE MONTH:


This rug tells a story about the artist’s father as a boy. Can you see him ringing the church bells? What else is happening?

THEME: FOLKLIFE

What is folklife? The American Folklife Center of the Library of Congress offers this definition: “The everyday and intimate creativity that all of us share and pass on to the next generation.” See the page “What is Folklife?” for a more thorough definition, accompanied by images and song clips. In Tennessee, our folklife consists of our musical traditions, foodways, tales and stories, and hand-crafted artifacts of material culture. For example, read the entries on Basketmaking, Moonshine, and African American Decorative Arts from the Tennessee Encyclopedia of History and Culture.

Using folklife primary sources is an excellent way to connect what students examine in class with what they’ve experienced in their communities and families. Looking at these sources can also bridge cultural gaps and bring people together in meaningful ways.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

• April 2—(Cleveland) “Primary Sources and the Common Core” with the Museum Center at 5ive Points from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. EST. To register, email Joy Veenstra.

• April 11—(Memphis) “Teaching World History Using the Library of Congress” from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Open to all educators. To register, email Kira Duke.

• April 14-16—(Nashville) “Using Inventors and Their Inventions as a Gateway to Being PARCC Ready” at Tennessee Education Technology Conference. Session time TBA.

• 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 17-19—(Murfreesboro) Civil War Institute: “A Soldier’s Life” at the Heritage Center of Murfreesboro and Rutherford County from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. each day. For more information or to register, email Kira Duke.

Content created and featured in partnership with the TPS program does not indicate an endorsement by the Library of Congress.
LESSON IDEA—APPALACHIAN FOLK MUSIC TRADITIONS

Traditional Appalachian folk music is uniquely American because it draws from and blends together music from many different sources. Have students start by asking them if they know the names of typical folk instruments. Be sure to mention the guitar, the fiddle, the banjo, and the dulcimer.

Have students read the overview of the Appalachian musical styles in the Encyclopedia of Appalachia entry on Music. What are the characteristics of traditional Appalachian folk music? Play Coming round the mountain, Pretty Polly, and Breakdown in A/Frosty Morning. What are some of the themes of the songs? What are the instruments students can hear on the recordings? Try to find different recordings of the same song. What are the differences? Fiddle Tunes of the Old Frontier: The Henry Reed Collection and Folk-Songs of America: The Robert Winslow Gordon Collection, 1922–1932 are both good places to find additional recordings.

This lesson can be adapted to meet curriculum standards for grade 5 Social Studies (5.47), high school U.S. History and Geography (US.33 and US.44), and high school Music History (6.0 Listening and Analyzing, 7.0 Evaluating).

LESSON IDEA—INTERVIEWS AS PRIMARY SOURCES

If you’ve ever asked a person to tell you what an experience was like for them, you’ve conducted an interview. People’s stories are important primary sources, since they often provide perspectives and information that cannot be found anywhere else. Oral history is a way of conducting, collecting, and archiving interviews in a way to make them best available as resources to others.

The American Folklife Center of the Library of Congress features hundreds of oral histories through some of its online collections. For 8th graders, play (all or part of) the audio interview with Isom Moseley (10min 6sec) from the Voices from the Days of Slavery: Former Slaves Tell Their Stories collection. (Because the words might be hard to make out, let students read the transcript while they listen.) For high school students, play “Indian Buckaroos Working on the 96 Ranch” (3min 24sec) and “Losing Jobs to Mechanization” (2.01), from the Buckaroos in Paradise: Ranching Culture in Northern Nevada, 1945–1982 collection. Or, students in grades 8–12 can select one of the 22 Tennessee recordings from the American English Dialect Recordings: The Center for Applied Linguistics Collection. After students listen to an interview, discuss: What can you learn? How did the interviewer direct the interviewee to tell certain stories? What would you have asked him/her? See this teacher resource for more discussion ideas. Have your students conduct a class oral history project, using AFC guidelines, particularly “How to Do Fieldwork.” Students should identify a theme for their interviews and carefully choose whom to interview. You may need someone with editing skills to help put together the best audio clips for a final class presentation or webpage. For more information on doing a class oral history project, read the FAQ’s from Tell Me Your Stories, “Getting Started” from Oral History in the Digital Age, and Resources from the Southern Oral History Project.

This lesson idea can be adapted to meet state curriculum standards for grades 8–12 Social Studies (8.71, US.84), and CCSS for English/Language Arts (Speaking & Listening, Literacy in History/Social Studies).
Lesson Idea—The Story-Telling Rugs of Mary Sheppard Burton

Folk art tells stories of individuals, families, and communities. Often, it also reflects aspects of the history of the United States. The hooked rugs created by renowned artist and teacher Mary Sheppard Burton (1922-2010) are a wonderful example of this. Several of Burton’s rugs are in the collection of the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress. On the Library’s Web site, digital images of the rugs are accompanied with Mary Burton’s commentaries on the rugs.

Provide students with copies of Burton’s commentary on the rug entitled A Chicken in Every Pot. After students have read the commentary, ask them to find elements of Burton’s story in the rug. Also ask them to share their thoughts about which aspects of the rug they like the best and how well they think it personalizes the nation’s history. Next, go through the same steps with copies of Burton’s commentary on the rug entitled The First Meals on Wheels.

Ask students to think of an event from their lives or a story they have been told about their parents’ or grandparents’ lives. Give them the opportunity to create a “rug” based on that event or story. They can draw the rug or they can simply describe it in their journals. In small groups or before the whole class, ask them to share with each other: How does their event or story shed light on their family or community? How does it tie in to American history? For an extension of this lesson idea, ask students to research some of the themes of Mary Burton’s rugs, such as rural American life in the 1910s, the Great Depression, President Herbert Hoover, or the Meals on Wheels program.

This lesson idea can be adapted to meet state curriculum standards for grade 5 Social Studies (5.49), grades 5-8 Visual Art (Standard 3.0: Evaluation), and CCSS for English-Language Arts (Speaking and Listening; Literacy in History/S.S.).

Lesson Idea—Legends of the Railroad

The development of American railroads created a new genre of folklore, much of which was musical. The two most well-known railroad ballads are “John Henry” and “Casey Jones.” “John Henry” tells the story of an African American “steel drivin’ man,” one of the workers who used a hammer to drive steel spikes into rock to create holes for the explosives used to blast tunnels. In the ballad, John Henry wins a race against the steam-powered hammer, which was quickly replacing human steel drivers, but dies in the attempt. Casey Jones was a railroad engineer from Jackson, TN. On April 30, 1900, while trying to set a record for speed, he famously managed to save all his passengers (though not himself) when he collided with a freight train in Vaughan, MS.

The Library’s collections include many versions of both ballads. See this article on “John Henry,” and look here for “Casey Jones.” Your students may notice that while we know exactly who, when, where, and how about Casey Jones, John Henry’s story includes almost no details. Traditionally, John Henry’s race took place around 1870, during the construction of the Great Bend Tunnel near Talcott, WV; however historians debate both the location and the identity of the real John Henry—if there really was one.

After listening to the ballads, ask students to consider why people thought these stories were important to tell. What does “John Henry” tell us about the lives of railroad workers and the challenges they faced? Some versions say very little about the race itself. Why was Casey Jones considered a hero despite (arguably) causing the wreck? How do such stories get told today? (Urban legends? Viral emails? Made-for-TV movies?) Have students choose a modern “hero” or “heroine” and explain why and how they would tell that story.

This lesson idea can be adapted to meet state curriculum standards for grade 5 Social Studies (5.27 & 5.31), grade 8 Social Studies (8.92 & 8.96), and CCSS for English-Language Arts (Reading: Literature; Speaking & Listening).
**Traditional Foodways**

Vivian Jarrell’s canned goods, produced from her garden, including tomato juice, pickles, grape juice, and beans [1997]

Food is always an important part of culture. How different groups find, cultivate, cook, preserve, eat, share, and use foods can be defining cultural characteristics. The foods preserved here are a part of traditional foodways practiced by people (particularly women) in southern West Virginia.

**Tennessee Bluegrass & Gospel**

Doyle Lawson and Quicksilver: Bluegrass and Gospel music from Tennessee [2006].

A Kingsport native, Doyle Lawson is a pioneering musician. He and his band performed a “homegrown concert” at the Library of Congress in 2006. Ask students: What instruments are being used? What kind of music is your favorite?

**Dancing in the Street**

Young street musicians on Jackson Square in French Quarter of New Orleans, Louisiana [between 1980 and 2006]

Street performers are a mainstay of folk life in the French Quarter. Ask students what they notice about the performers in this image. What is each performance group doing? What types of performances are they giving? How does this image compare with folklife in the city closest to you?

**A Tall Tale**

Paul Bunyan monument, Bemidji, Minnesota [1939]

Why do we put up statues of people? What kind of people deserve monuments? How many of your students know the story of Paul Bunyan and Babe the Blue Ox? Can any of them tell it? Why would people put up a statue of a folk hero (and his magic ox) who never really existed? Why would people go to see it?