TEACHING WITH PRIMARY SOURCES—MTSU
NEWSLETTER: JULY 2013

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

- Mark your calendars! TPS-MTSU will be offering exciting new content-based workshops this fall. We will offer two Civil War workshops: September 14th in Collierville and October 9th/10th in Chattanooga. We will also be offering a workshop on women’s suffrage on October 30th and civil rights on November 14th in Knoxville.

- For teachers in Rutherford county and the surrounding area, we will be offering our afterschool workshops again this fall. This year’s workshops will explore literacy-based activities that incorporate primary sources and meet Common Core standards. Middle and high school teachers are invited to join us on September 26th and elementary on December 5th from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. in Murfreesboro.

“AWESOME” SOURCE OF THE MONTH:

Gathering at the school house for a Fourth of July celebration: Osnabrock, North Dakota. [190-?] Why do you think Osnabrock held its celebration at the school? Does your community have a Fourth of July celebration?

THEME: RECREATION & LEISURE

July is a month filled with family vacations, local festivals, road trips, kids’ camps, blockbuster movies in air-conditioned theaters, and other hallmarks of the American summer. Don’t forget that as you are visiting historic sites on vacation, reading books by the pool, or attending festivals in your hometown, you are observing or using primary sources connected to your community. You are also creating your own primary sources through your movie stubs, festival programs, and photographs!

Seemingly non-curricular topics such as recreation and leisure can indeed incorporate state standards and Common Core skills. When school resumes, ask students to write about their summer experiences based on a primary source that they used or created.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

- July 2—(Collegedale) “Using Primary Sources in English/Language Arts,” Southern Adventist University, 8 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. Open to SAU students only.

- July 11 & 12—(Dyersburg) “Bringing the Nation’s Library to Your Classroom” TETA Conference. Session Times TBA.

- July 16—(Crossville) Cumberland County Schools In-service. Time TBA.

- July 18—(Greeneville) “Building a National History Day Project Using the Library of Congress” Workshop from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. To register, click here.

- July 22-23—(Murfreesboro) “National History Day, Teaching with Primary Sources, and the Common Core” Workshop at the Heritage Center from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. To register, click here.

- July 25—(Selmer) “Building a National History Day Project Using the Library of Congress” Workshop from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. To register, click here.

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LESSON IDEA— FUN FOOD

When visiting fairs, festivals, and amusement parks, most of us partake in the wide variety of specialty foods available from vendors. Food is as much a part of many of these events and sites as the rides, shows, and entertainment. The types of items offered by food vendors differ widely depending on the region and community you are in.

Begin this activity by having your students brainstorm the types of food they have tried at their local fair or at any amusement parks they have visited. What were some of the most unique foods they saw for sale? Next divide students into groups and give each group one of the following images: World’s Fair, Food vendors at night, Pic Town, New Mexico, ... at the fair, Food vendors, Coney Island, New York, Food vendor at Fisherman’s Wharf, Pier 39, San Francisco, California, Tourists buying coconuts and fruit from vendor, probably Nassau, Bahamas, and Street vendor, Italian feast. Looking at the image and its bibliographic information, have students identify the location of their image and significant details. As a class, map your images and discuss the unique details of each image. Are any of the foods represented in the images unique to their location? Why would those items be sold in that location? What cultural connections can we make to the types of food sold at festivals?

This lesson can be adapted to meet curriculum standards for Social Studies Grade 7 and high school World Geography (Standard 1: Culture and Standard 3: Geography) as well as Common Core State Standards for grades 6-12 English/Language Arts (Reading: Informational Text and Speaking and Listening).

LESSON IDEA— GOING TO THE SHOW

Before TVs were in the majority of American homes, people went to their local or neighborhood theater to see the newsreels, serials, and movies. Since 1896, when the Edison Company presented the first commercial movie, the film industry’s theaters and the audience’s experiences have changed remarkably. In the early 1900s, moviegoers could attend a nickelodeon where they saw short films that may have accompanied live vaudeville acts. With the introduction of sound in the late 1920s, “talkies” replaced live acts, and most movie theaters dedicated themselves solely to film. Despite moviegoers’ limited disposable income during the Great Depression, the silver screen and air conditioning allowed ticket holders to escape their world, if only temporarily. Soon after World War II, drive-in theaters became a popular alternative to traditional movie theaters. (See the Performing Arts: The Stage & Screen primary source set for additional resources.)

Film’s history provides an opportunity to discuss a wide range of historic events. These include technical innovations (sound, air conditioning, etc.), architecture and modernization, entertainment and social changes, and Jim Crow and desegregation. Divide students into small groups to analyze the sources linked above. Include the titles and summary information from the bibliography page. As a class, discuss the students’ observations. How have the audiences changed? How has technology changed movie-going? What social changes are reflected in these images? At the end of class, instruct students to interview their grandparents or other older adults about their memories of movie-going and how the experience has changed. Have students present their findings and write a short report about how their interviewees’ experiences are or are not reflected in these images.

LESSON IDEA—TAKE A VACATION IN 1860

Taking an annual summer vacation is a tradition for many American families. Certain places within the United States, such as Niagara Falls and Newport, Rhode Island, have welcomed vacationers for decades. Share with your students this 1860 leaflet promoting summer vacation on the island of Nantucket off the coast of Massachusetts. (You can show them the island on this 1860 map; Nantucket is directly south of the “elbow” of Cape Cod, and you can zoom in on it using your cursor.) What are the attractions of the island, according to the pamphlet? How do visitors reach the island? What costs are indicated? What are some of the activities suggested for families? Why do you think there is so much emphasis on the island’s effect on people’s health? How is the leaflet similar to a modern brochure? How is it different?

Next, give students this writing prompt to complete in their journals or within small groups: “Pretend that you are a summer visitor to Nantucket in 1860. Write a letter to a friend describing your vacation. Creatively use information from the leaflet related to the weather, your lodgings, your activities, the places you visit, and the people you meet.”

Finally, if time permits, introduce students to Maria Mitchell, the first professional female astronomer in the United States. Born on Nantucket, she served as the first librarian of the Athenaeum (see leaflet, page 1) and discovered a comet in 1847. This lesson idea can be adapted to meet state curriculum standards for grades 6–8 Social Studies (History and Geography) and Common Core State Standards for grades 6–8 English/Language Arts (Reading: Informational Text and History/Social Studies).

FEATURED FEATURE—SUMMER READING

Summer is a great time to catch up on your reading list or to explore new and interesting titles from your library. Many summer reading programs offer prizes when kids meet their reading goals, but the best prize of all is to be transported into another world by a really good book.

The Library of Congress celebrates summer reading with the National Book Festival, usually held every September. Thousands of people will flock to Washington, D.C., to have their favorite authors read stories and sign copies of their books. If you can’t be there in person, you can catch much of the action through webcasts and podcasts. The “Educators Share” page of the Book Festival’s Web site has links to booklists from authors presenting at the National Festival and a list called “52 Great Reads,” which includes a recommended book for each of the 50 states (plus D.C. and U.S. territories). Last year’s Tennessee book was Tarra and Bella: The Elephant and Dog Who Became Best Friends, a true story told by Carol Buckley. For more books highlighting stories unique to TN, scroll down.

The Library also has an exhibition devoted to Books That Shaped America, “a way to spark a national conversation on books and their importance in Americans’ lives.” Teens and older readers can survey the list to see how many nation-shaping books they’ve read, or even take the survey to recommend more titles.

The Library’s Read.gov site recommends—for young readers, teens, and adults—many excellent books that align with the Library’s online primary source collections. You can also read through rare illustrated copies of classic books.
Hiking

Two two-legged hikers and one four-legged one on the Appalachian Trail, Damascus, Virginia [between 1980 and 2006]

Hiking is a popular recreational activity. What supplies do you think these hikers have with them? What supplies would hikers need if they were on shorter trails? How many of your students have been hiking?

Creating Summer Art

Free summer art classes for children Drawing and painting, metal craft - sculpture, pottery - lithography: Queensboro Community Art Center. [between 1936 and 1938]

Why would people—and children in particular—want to take art classes? Why is summer a good time to study art? How do you think this city was able to offer classes for free?

Going to the Beach

In the golden summertime, 1915. Courtesy of Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, Duke University

Going to the beach is a summertime leisure activity that many Americans love. What aspects of going to the beach are conveyed by this sheet music cover? How have bathing suits changed over the past 100 years?

Eating Popsicles

Two Spanish-American girls dressed in fiesta costumes eating popsicles, Taos, New Mexico [1940, detail]

This image depicts two summertime activities: participating in ethnic celebrations and eating frozen treats. Why are popsicles perfect for summer? What is your favorite summertime frozen treat?