WELCOME!

Teaching with Primary Sources Across Tennessee, administered by the Center for Historic Preservation at Middle Tennessee State University, engages learners of all ages in using primary sources to explore major issues and questions in many different disciplines.

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NEWS

• The TPS national evaluation is moving into a new phase. If you attended a workshop with us between June and December 2011, you will be contacted via email by the staff of SRI International and asked to complete a follow-up survey. We appreciate all of your time and effort in helping us with this evaluation process!

• Spaces are still available for the 2012 Civil War Summer Institute, June 19-21. See Upcoming Events (at right) for more information.

• Check out our newest lesson plan, “John Brown: Hero or Villain?,” which explores public perceptions of Brown and was written by Delaina Rhodes, J. Frank White Academy (Harrogate, Tennessee).

“AWSOME” SOURCE OF THE MONTH:

[“Ormston,” John Edward Aldred house, 1 East Beach Drive, Glen Cove, New York. Fountain] [1924]

April showers bring May flowers! For more lovely images of gardens, click here.

THEME: HISTORY IN THE MOVIES

Have you ever watched a movie based on a book or historical event and wondered if it really happened that way? Movies are first and foremost entertainment, though many do strive for accuracy in varying degrees (like The Grapes of Wrath, Apollo 13, Schindler’s List, and the 1960 Spartacus). Even movies that are blatantly inaccurate (like Gladiator, Braveheart, and Pocahontas) can be used as teaching tools, if presented in the right way. Most students love watching clips from films in class (try The Rosa Parks Story, Amazing Grace, Malcolm X, Tombstone, and the 1981 Clash of the Titans). Comparing the portrayal of events in movies to actual primary sources from those events is a great way to introduce critical thinking into popular entertainment.
LESSON IDEA—AMISTAD

In 1839, African captives held aboard the Spanish schooner Amistad broke free and took control of the ship. Though the Africans attempted to force the surviving crew members to sail back to Africa, at night the crew steered west instead, and the ship was eventually found off the coast of Connecticut by a U.S. naval ship. The arrival of the Amistad resulted in a series of trials in U.S. courts to determine the fate of the ship and the African captives, and provoked a debate over the slave trade and abolition. In 1997, Steven Spielberg’s movie Amistad was released in theaters. The movie has been praised for attempting to portray the cruelty of the slave trade and drawing attention to an often neglected event, but it has also been criticized for some of the choices made by the filmmakers.

The Library of Congress has a number of primary sources that can be used in conjunction with the movie (or clips selected for a school audience) to help students think critically about the movie’s portrayal of historic individuals and events. The Amistad Mutiny section of the African American Odyssey exhibit includes affidavits dictated to an interpreter by two of the African captives. Students can also search “Amistad” from 1839-1841 in Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers to find newspaper articles about the ship and the trials. The Slave and the Courts, 1740-1860 collection includes the Supreme Court arguments of both John Quincy Adams and Roger S. Baldwin.

Ask students to consider how the movie’s portrayal of events differs from or is similar to the primary sources. How does John Quincy Adams’s speech in the movie draw on his historical argument? Why would the filmmakers invent the character of Theodore Joadson? How might the filmmakers have used sources like the affidavits to better incorporate the Africans’ point of view?

This lesson idea can be adapted to meet curriculum standards for high school African American History, U.S. Government, and English (Standard 7.0: Media).

LESSON IDEA—TITANIC

In the early morning hours of April 15, 1912, the Titanic, the “unsinkable” ship, struck an iceberg en route to New York City. Within hours, many of the ship’s passengers and crew would chose between going down with the ship or taking their chances in the frigid north Atlantic waters. This tragedy, which claimed the lives of over 1,500 people, would capture the interest of the public for generations to come. James Cameron’s 1997 film Titanic is one of the most popular depictions of this tragic event. Cameron worked hard to have his film closely reflect what happened as the ship sank using descriptions provided by survivors.

Since many of your students will have seen this film, begin by asking them what details (excluding Jack and Rose’s storyline) of the sinking stood out to them in the film. If many of your students have not seen the movie, you may also elect to show clips of the sinking from the film in class. Have students discuss if they feel the film closely reflects the reality of the sinking. Why do they feel this way?

Next, have students examine “Ismay Tells Senate Committee Titanic was not Seeking Speed Record, and Testifies to General Ignorance of Details of Disaster.” Be sure to have students read the full article that continues on page 8. Have students discuss their initial reaction to the article. What elements of Ismay’s testimony can be seen in the film? What elements are not present?

Next have students examine other newspaper articles from the sample article list provided here. What elements from these articles do they see represented in the film? What elements are not represented? Have students reflect on how these articles impact their thoughts of the film’s historical accuracy.

This lesson can be adapted to meet curriculum standards for 5th grade Social Studies, high school U.S. History, 5th-12th English/Language Arts (Standard 7.0: Media).
Lesson Idea—*Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*

The Indiana Jones movies feature a fictional hero having adventures that you’ll never read about in history books. However, they also feature artifacts, symbols, places, and people that are a definite part of the historical record. Furthermore, Indiana Jones’s approach to history—part academic, part hands-on—has inspired countless young people to pursue the study of history both personally and professionally.

In the third installment of the series, *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* (1989), our hero uses his father’s research to find the location of the Holy Grail, the cup that Jesus drank from at the last supper. Starting from the city of Alexandretta (renamed Iskenderun), a “map with no names” directs the seeker east to an oasis, then to a river flowing south, which ends in the “Canyon of the Crescent Moon,” where he/she will find the temple of the Grail (start viewing film at 41:09).

Have students look for the modern-day city of Iskenderun on Google Maps (or Google Earth). Then have them look at this map or this map (both mid-16th century) for Alexandretta. If they were to follow the “map with no names” from this city, what possible places would they end up? (Hint: use the “terrain” feature on Google Maps to look for mountains and canyons.)

The location used for the Grail temple is part of an actual historic site called Petra in modern-day Jordan. Find Petra on Google Maps. How far is it from Iskenderun? If it is a journey of three days, as indicated on the “map with no names,” how fast would one have to travel to cross this distance in that time? Read about Petra here and the Treasury (a.k.a. Grail temple) in particular here, and browse through almost 700 photographs at the Library of Congress. What aspects of this site would have attracted filmmakers? In what ways is it an appropriate/inappropriate site to serve as the Grail temple? What is it like to stand in the doorway of the actual building? Students can draw their own maps to the Grail temple that better reflect today’s geography.

This lesson idea can be adapted to meet curriculum standards for 6th-7th grade Social Studies & high school World Geography (Standards 1.0: Culture; 3.0: Geography; & 5.0: History, Era 3), and 5th-12th English/Language Arts (Standard 7.0: Media).

Lesson Idea—*To Kill a Mockingbird* and Childhood

Harper Lee’s acclaimed novel *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1960) was made into a poignant film in 1962 and is preserved in the Library of Congress’s National Film Registry. Among the film’s highlights are its unique opening credits, which set the tone for *To Kill a Mockingbird’s* story of childhood innocence and racial injustice.

Show students the opening credits and then ask students to respond to the following questions in their journals: What feelings did you experience? Try to identify which elements of the credits (such as the music) inspired these feelings. What items were contained in the cigar box? List as many as you can remember. What do these objects tell you about childhood in the 1930s? How did it differ from childhood today? What might today’s children include in a keepsake box? Finally, how does the rest of the film (or book) depict childhood?

Next, introduce students to the collection *American Life Histories: Manuscripts from the Federal Writers’ Project, 1938-1940*. Divide students into four groups and assign each group one of the following oral histories (remind students that these interviews were conducted in the 1930s, when the South remained segregated and people were often identified by racial classification): [Mattie Hammond Harrell], [Elsie Wall], [The Newton Family], and [I am a Negro]. Have each group take notes on what its oral history tells them about childhood in the 1930s. After each group presents its findings, discuss how the oral histories supplement or challenge the depictions of childhood in *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

This idea can be adapted to meet state curriculum standards for high school English/Language Arts (Standard 7: Media and Standard 8: Literature), Theatre (Standard 7: Scene Comprehension), and U.S. History (Era 8).
**Votes for Women**

Official program woman suffrage procession, Washington, D.C. March 13, 1913, [1913]

You can read more about the Woman Suffrage procession in the essay *Marching for the Vote: Remembering the Woman Suffrage Parade of 1913* at the Library’s Web site. How do the parade program and the essay’s images and accounts compare to the way the procession is portrayed in the movie *Iron-Jawed Angels* (2004)? (Watch a clip of the parade from the movie on YouTube.)

**Burning of Atlanta**

Atlanta, Georgia. Burned building, [1864]

The burning of Atlanta serves as pivotal moment in the 1939 classic *Gone with the Wind*. (Watch a clip of this scene on YouTube.) Why did the Union army burn Atlanta? How widespread was the devastation? Have students compare the movie’s portrayal of this event to the image above.

**Train Travel**

Pike’s Peak Special on the Colo. & Southern Ry./photo by L.C. McClure, Denver, [between 1900 and 1920] Courtesy of the Denver Public Library.

*The Great Train Robbery* (1903) is a classic and influential silent film (warning: gun violence). What other films about trains can you think of? Use the railroad images in *History of the American West, 1860-1920* as inspiration to write your own movie scene about train travel.

**Cinematic Fairy Tales**

The Arabian Nights: Their Best-Known Tales [1909; image between pp. 106 & 107 of book / at p. 142 on “Read this book now”]

Compare the 1992 Disney film *Aladdin* to the version of the tale in *The Arabian Nights* (pp. 97-189 in book / pp. 130-226). How has Disney changed the story to make it more appealing to modern audiences? What about some of the other fairy tales that have been made into movies and tv shows?