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.

Contact: Stacey Graham or Kira Duke at (615) 898-2947 or www.mtsu.edu/tps

NEWS

- TPS-TN will be offering an advanced workshop exploring the Progressive Era at the East Tennessee History Center in Knoxville on Saturday, September 17, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Dr. Bruce Wheeler from the University of Tennessee will join us to talk about this fascinating time period. Participants must have attended a previous TPS-TN workshop. To register, email Kira Duke.
- The Exquisite Corpse Adventure has been removed from Read.gov. A print edition will be available later this month from Candlewick Press. Look for it at your local library or bookstore! For teaching materials to go with the new book, click here.
- Participate in author discussions at the Library of Congress Center for the Book’s Facebook group, called Books & Beyond.

“Awesome” Source of the Month:

Wee Willie Winkie runs through the town ... to count the many children reading library books / Cleo Sara. [1940]

THEME: CHILDREN’S LITERATURE

Books are wonderful primary sources that improve literacy, creativity, the expansion of knowledge, and critical thinking skills. The Library of Congress holds more books than any other library in the world, and has worked to make many of them available to online viewers.

The importance of reading skills for children in particular cannot be overstated. To this purpose, the Library has developed Read.gov, a Web site for children, youth, teachers, parents, and readers of all ages. See a detailed introduction to this site in our Featured Feature on p. 3.

In addition to the lesson ideas in this newsletter, be sure to check out the idea using children’s illustrated books in the April 2010 newsletter.

LC #220 Whitman’s Cardboard Butterfly (bottom) [1847-1860] See the poem printed on the top side here. Why would a person want to combine visual and literary media?
Writing Contests for Students @loc.gov

The Library of Congress has made the world of literacy even more engaging for school-aged children by sponsoring writing contests that excite and challenge kids’ creativity.

Everyone has a favorite book or short story, one that compels them to return to the story or subject matter over and over again. Read.gov (see p. 3) sponsors a contest, “Letters about Literature,” that provides students with a new way to interact with their favorite books by encouraging them to write letters to their favorite authors. Ask your students what their favorite books are, and why they like the stories so much. Use the questions provided from the contest page to help students reflect on the literature.

Have each student write a letter to an author (alive or dead) explaining why the book is so important to her/him. Does it have a personal connection to the student’s life? Is the student similar to any of the characters portrayed? Did the book create an interest in a new subject? Remind students that this is not a book report, since the authors already know their stories. What an author wants to know is how the story affected the student.

These letters are judged based on exposition (use of language skills, organization, and grammar), content (addressing the theme), and the writer’s voice (style and originality). The contest is open to grades 4-12, with three levels of competition: grades 4-6, 7-8, and high school. Last year, a student from Murfreesboro, TN, won her level with a letter to J.D. Salinger.

The Library also sponsors a contest called “River of Words,” which encourages students to write poetry about what they see in the natural world. Now the “largest international youth poetry and art competition in the world,” this contest is open to people ages 5-19. The Web site includes a link to a 75-page PDF Teaching Guide to help students in the poetry-writing process.

Lesson Idea—Teach Dear America

The books in the Dear America series are diaries written from the standpoint of girls growing up during different periods in American history, from the colonial period to World War II. Dear America and Scholastic Inc. have collaborated with the Library of Congress to provide teacher and student resources, all available at the “Teach Dear America” Web site. For each of the time periods covered by the books, students can read about the era, look at a timeline, turn the pages of a scrapbook put together by the book’s main character, and do activities like making period food and crafts. Teachers can view related books and choose from a number of primary sources from the period provided by the Library of Congress.

After reading one of the Dear America books, students can search for images in American Memory that correspond with what they have read. Then ask each student to write a letter, pretending to be a friend or family member of the main character. Pick a diary entry from the book that corresponds to a primary source found in American Memory, and write the letter to the main character in response to this entry, mentioning the primary source image or document found.

Another option is to have students pretend to be friends or relatives mentioned in the diary and to write their own diary entries from their point of view. Or, students can make scrapbooks using primary sources from the time period, like the main characters have done.

Please note that the Dear America series is largely targeted towards girls. Boys in your class may wish to choose titles in the My Name is America series (also published by Scholastic), many of which are included in the “View Related Books” sections of the “Teach Dear America” Web site.

This lesson idea can be adapted to meet state curriculum standards for 4th-5th grade Social Studies (Standard 5: History) and Language Arts (Standard 3: Writing).
Lesson Idea– Form Your Own Book Club

With the National Book Festival occurring in Washington, D.C. on September 24-25, this fall is a wonderful time to celebrate reading in your class. Book clubs are a great way to get students to think about what they read, ask questions of the story, and articulate their thoughts among their peers. The Library of Congress has several books of classic children’s literature available for reading online, as well as book recommendations for students and author Webcasts from past National Book Festival events.

Students may select a title of their choosing from the list of books recommended by the Library of Congress Young Readers Center; click here for a list for elementary school, and here for a list for middle and high school. These lists include both fiction and nonfiction, and tie into primary sources available through American Memory. You may wish to narrow down the lists into 3 or 4 titles for your class, and gently push your more advanced readers towards the more difficult books and your more challenged readers towards the easier titles. Make sure you have at least 4 students reading the same book.

Students should all write a synopsis of the plot and keep journals in which they record quotes that stand out to them (on the left side of the page) and their thoughts about the quotes (on the right-hand side). Then students form groups based on what books they picked. Each student in the group gets a role: 1) discussion director—who develops open-ended discussion questions for the group to address; 2) illustrator—who finds images and graphics that are relevant to the story (American Memory is a good place to look); 3) vocabulary director—who picks out certain words in the text that may need defining and creates new sentences for them; and 4) connection maker—who connects people, places, or events in the text to things in today’s world. Groups will create posters and present their books to the class. Each student should reflect on how well he/she contributed to group work and cooperated with other group members.

This lesson idea can be adapted to meet curriculum standards for 6th-8th grade and high school English/Language Arts (Standards 1: Language, 2: Communication, & 8: Literature).

Featured Feature– Read.gov & The Center for the Book

The Center for the Book in the Library of Congress was founded in 1977 to promote books, reading, literacy, and libraries. The Center reaches out to readers of all ages through its network of state affiliates, programs such as the National Book Festival, and Read.gov.

Read.gov offers a wealth of links and information for readers of all ages. You can read classic literature online such as The Story of the Three Little Pigs or The Raven. Be sure to check back frequently since each month a new book is featured. Young adult and adult readers can view webcasts featuring authors such as Stephenie Meyer, R.L. Stine, and John Grisham.

Looking for great books? Educators, parents, and students can explore suggested booklists for exploring American history and culture. These booklists are divided by reading level and theme. All children and young adult suggestions include links for corresponding collections from American Memory. You can also find information about local book festivals and community resources, the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, and tips for how parents can instill a lifelong love of reading in their children.
How has this nursery rhyme been changed? Who would this poster have targeted? What is the purpose of the poster? What other nursery rhymes can your students recite? Have them develop their own posters using different nursery rhymes.

Letter with illustrated fable, Theodore Roosevelt to Theodore Roosevelt, Jr., 11 July 1890.

To read the entire fable click on the image above. To expand, click again when you see the little magnifying glass. What do you think President Roosevelt was trying to teach his son by telling him this story? What other fables do your students know?

Eugene Field was a famous children’s writer of late 19th-century America. Known for his whimsical children’s poems, he was kind of like the Dr. Seuss of his time. Above is one of his best-known poems, “Wynken, Blynken, and Nod.” What is the poem about? How does the illustration capture the meaning and spirit of the words?

Do these boys look like they are reading for school or for fun? Do you think they read often? Where is your favorite place to sit and read a book? The library? Your bedroom? The living room armchair? Does where you read a book and how comfortable you are while reading affect your impression of the book?