TEACHING with PRIMARY SOURCES Across TENNESSEE
NEWSLETTER: APRIL 2010

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.
Web site: www.mtsu.edu/tps Contact: sgraham@mtsu.edu or (615) 898-2947

THEME: LITERATURE & POETRY
Reading is one of the most essential keys to success in life and a favorite pastime. Literature and poetry are subjects that enhance our experiences as human beings. The Library of Congress encourages the enjoyment of the written word through its reading and poetry Web sites. The Poetry site brings you links and articles about American poets and poetry past and present. Read.gov links you to author webcasts, writing competitions & festivals, booklists, and more, and even divides these links into pages for kids, teens, adults, and educators & parents. Check out the classic books section, click on a title, and “turn” the pages right on your computer screen! Also don’t miss the Exquisite Corpse Adventure. If you don’t know what an Exquisite Corpse is or how it works, turn to page 3 and read all about it in our “Featured Feature” section.

“AWESOME” SOURCE OF THE MONTH:

The slant book / by Peter Newell. [1910, image 9]
How does the design of this book fit the content of the poem and the illustrations?

NEWS (CONTINUED ON P. 2)

• Please join us at Tennessee History Day state competition in Nashville on Saturday, April 17, as TPS-TN offers a lunch-time workshop from 12:30—2:00 in Conference Room 3 of the Nashville Public Library. Learn about how you can teach with them, and how you can start searching for them on the Library of Congress Web site. Bring your laptops and follow along. Download a flyer here.

• Congratulations to TPS teacher Connie Lawson (4th grade, Richard Hardy Memorial School, Marion County), who won an award for outstanding elementary school teacher of the year at the recent Tennessee Council for the Social Studies conference in Memphis. Ms. Lawson submitted the first TPS-TN teacher-produced lesson plan, “Lewis and Clark Expedition,” which you can find on the Lesson Ideas & Units page of the TPS-TN Web site.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

• April 17 (Nashville)- TN History Day workshop, Nashville Public Library, 12:30—2 p.m. (See “News” p. 1.) Email Kelly Wilkerson at kellyw@tennesseehistory.org to sign up.

• June [date TBD] (Greeneville)- Lincoln Memorial University workshop. (Still in planning stages—stay tuned for more details.)

• July 13-14 (Murfreesboro)- TPS-TN 2010 Summer Institute, “The Impact of the Civil War on the Tennessee Homefront,” MTSU. (See “News” p. 2 for more info and links to institute details online.)
Many of you have been asking for more details on our first TPS-TN Summer Institute, which will be held July 13-14, 2010, at MTSU. This two-day institute will provide participants with specific insights into the theme of “Impact of the Civil War on the Tennessee Homefront.” How to incorporate primary sources and the inquiry method in quality classroom activities will be the focus. More information is available through the TPS-TN 2010 Summer Institute Web page on the TPS-TN Web site. Please register by April 30 to ensure your slot. Please note that this institute is geared towards educators with prior TPS experience, preferably at least two hours. Interested educators who have not quite gained the requisite experience will be placed on an “alternates” list and notified by the end of May.

We extend a warm welcome to Kira Duke, our new TPS Specialist. Kira was the education coordinator at the National Museum of Civil Rights in Memphis for five years. She will help TPS-TN offer more services and materials to more educators across the state as the program grows.

Many thanks and good luck to Ashleigh Oatts, who graduated from MTSU in December with a M.A. in Public History with an emphasis on museums. Ashleigh was responsible for the format and content of most of the TPS-TN newsletters, and contributed to the program in many ways in her year as Graduate Assistant.

Lesson Idea—Children’s Illustrated Books

Great illustrations help a story come to life! Illustrations are primary sources and can add different layers of interpretation to any book. The wonderful world of children’s literature is the best place to explore the relationship of illustration and text, perhaps because illustration plays such a prominent role in the telling of children’s stories.

The Library of Congress Rare Book and Special Collections Reading Room presents digital versions of many of the beautiful illustrated children’s books in its collections. Scroll through the selection of Children’s Books from the Rare Book Room. Many of these are also available from Read.gov, which has a special interactive book feature. Click on “Page turner” (or, from Read.gov, “Read this book now,”) and enjoy some of the twentieth century’s liveliest book illustrations with your students.

First, read a poem or a story to your students (or photocopy the text for them to read out loud), then ask how they would illustrate the scene. Share the illustrations in the rare books and ask students how these illustrations add to their understanding of the poems/stories. Is it close to what they had pictured? How does it change or enhance the meaning of the text? For example, see “Little Miss Muffet” in Denslow’s Mother Goose, pp. 66 & 67. Students can design their own illustrations or their own stories or poems based on an existing illustration.

These ideas can be adapted to meet state curriculum standards in grades K-5 Reading, K-5 English/Language Arts (3.0 Writing, 7.0 Media, 8.0 Literature), and grades 1-5 Art Education (6.0 Interdisciplinary Connections).
LESSON IDEA— THE FUGITIVES

Tennessee has nurtured the careers of numerous writers and poets over the centuries, from Davy Crockett to Mary Noailles Murfree to Nikki Giovanni. One of the most famous and influential circles of writers emerged from Vanderbilt University in the 1910s and 20s. The Fugitives, and their offshoot, the Agrarians, engaged in intense poetry publication, literary criticism, and eventually social commentary. The group included John Crowe Ransom, Robert Penn Warren, Allen Tate, Donald Davidson, and several others, all of them Vanderbilt students, faculty members, or friends, and all united by their devotion to poetry.

Two of the original Fugitives, Allen Tate in 1943 and Robert Penn Warren in 1944, were appointed Consultant in Poetry to the Library of Congress by then-Librarian of Congress Archibald MacLeish. The title Consultant in Poetry was changed in 1987 to Poet Laureate Consultant in Poetry, and today is commonly known as the U.S. Poet Laureate. In this position, Tate and Warren influenced the selection of literature to be represented by the Library’s holdings during a very crucial time in the Library’s formative history. This time is documented by the collection Freedom’s Fortress: The Library of Congress 1939-1953.

- Read the letter (right) from Tate to Warren, discussing recommendations for the Chair of Poetry. What considerations are important to Tate? How does he decide whom to choose? What tells you that this is an informal letter between friends?
- Ask your school librarian how she/he selects books for the library’s collections.
- Ask your teacher how she/he selects books and poems for you to learn about in class or read for homework.
- Form groups around a common interest among your classmates and publish a poetry magazine that reflects your shared interest. Give your group a name and maybe one day you’ll be famous and influential, too!

These ideas can be adapted to meet state curriculum standards in High School English (3.0 Writing, 5.0 Logic, 8.0 Literature) and Government (1.0 Culture, 2.0 Economics, 6.0 Individuals, Groups, and Interactions).

FEATURED FEATURE— EXQUISITE CORPSE ADVENTURE

No, it’s not about dead bodies. "Exquisite Corpse" is actually the name of an old parlor game. One person writes a sentence on a piece of paper, folds it to hide part of the sentence, then hands it to the next person, who adds to the sentence, and so on. The end result is a rather strange, patchwork story, that is supposed to represent the idea that our minds are all connected, and stories are therefore written by the whole group, not just individual people.

The Library of Congress has invited several well-known young people’s authors and illustrators to create an Exquisite Corpse on its Read.gov Web site. Teachers and students can watch the story unfold, as a new author adds a new chapter every other week. So far, fourteen chapters have been posted by writers such as Jon Scieszka, Katherine Paterson, Natalie Babbit, and Lemony Snicket, with illustrations by Chris van Dusen, James Ransome, Calef Brown and others.

You can view the text in html, but it’s much more fun to view the interactive book, with handy zoom and page turning features. Just click “Read it” beside your chosen chapter to get to the interactive version, then start reading.

Try this in your classroom as a creative writing exercise. Begin with the same sentence as the Library of Congress, “This story starts with a train rushing through the night,” and see where it takes you!
The Poet Revises His Poem

Letter and corrected reprint of Walt Whitman’s "O Captain, My Captain" with comments by author, 9 February 1888. [detail]

How do the handwritten corrections show Whitman’s writing process? Would the poem have been less effective if he had not made these changes? To learn more about Whitman’s revision process, see the online exhibit, “Revising Himself: Walt Whitman and Leaves of Grass.”

The Author Reads His Book

Neil Gaiman, celebrated author of comic books, novels, and young people’s fiction (Coraline, Stardust), reads from The Graveyard Book. The webcast is 30 minutes long, and the book excerpt lasts from about 8 min. 30 sec.—14 min. 20 sec. Listen to the rest of the webcast to learn about the author’s creative process. Where does he get ideas for his novels? How does he make his book come alive when he reads it aloud?

A Lady from Knoxville

Tour of Eugenie Blair, A lady of quality by Francis Hodgson Burnett and Stephen Townesend. [c. 1899]

Francis Hodgson Burnett, best known for writing The Secret Garden, spent part of her childhood growing up in Knoxville. This poster advertises a theatrical performance of one of her plays, A Lady of Quality. How does it capture the action of the play for potential theater-goers? Click here to view more posters from this collection. Why are so many plays and movies based on works of literature?

The Harlem Renaissance


The Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s and 30s celebrated the rich artistic world created by Harlem blacks independent of whites. Langston Hughes and Zora Neale Hurston (who, for a time, worked for the Library of Congress American Folk-life Center) were two writers who exemplified the literary accomplishments of this period, collaborating on a play called Mule-Bone. Hughes and Hurston meant for the play to portray African American life as it really was, and not through the filter of white Americans’ eyes. How do they use dialect and characterization to achieve this?