TEACHING with PRIMARY SOURCES across TENNESSEE
NEWSLETTER: January 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.

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NEWS

• **Thanks to everyone** who came to the Teaching with Primary Sources session at the recent Tennessee Educational Technology Conference in Nashville! With your help, we had a great turnout, and we enjoyed meeting some of you afterwards. Keep in touch!

• It’s a new year! And even though we’re in the middle of winter, it’s not too soon to be looking forward to Summer 2010. Mark on your calendars: TPS-TN will be holding its first **Summer Institute** on July 13-14, 2010, at MTSU. The theme will be the impact of the Civil War on the Tennessee homefront. Stay tuned for more information!

• Want more Library of Congress **professional development**, but can’t attend a workshop? Check out the new **PD opportunities** on the Library’s Teachers Page.

“Awesome” Source of the Month:

[Image of a book cover]

January—A year of good reading ahead / Hazlett.

Primary sources and **literary** work well together. To better understand a primary source, you have to “read” it, using similar techniques to reading a book.

FEATURE ARTICLE: USING POLITICALLY INCORRECT SOURCES IN THE CLASSROOM

The Library of Congress has sources that tell the story and culture of America. To tell the whole story of America, not all of the sources can be positive or can reflect well on Americans. Despite this, these sources can be used in the classroom to provide a more complete story.

Primary sources that portray women, blacks, Native Americans, and foreigners in a sexist, racist, or otherwise negative light are often offensive. However, if approached sensitively, they can be used constructively to show how attitudes have changed over the years and how far our culture has come.

These sources are particularly good at making students develop and use critical thinking skills. Primary sources are often incomplete and have little context—in other words, they provide only one piece of the larger puzzle. Therefore, students must research, use prior knowledge, and work with multiple primary sources to find patterns and to arrive at “the big picture.”

In analyzing primary sources, students move from concrete observations and facts to questioning and making inferences about the materials. Questions of creator bias, purpose, and point of view may challenge (continued on page 2)

UPCOMING EVENTS:

- **January 1** (Everywhere)- New Year’s Day (from Today in History)
- **February 4** (Middle TN)- Webcast on Civil Rights in Tennessee, from the MTSU Instructional Technology Support Center
- **February 27** (Jackson)- Demonstration in computer lab, MT²-NW (Mathematics Teachers of Tennessee-Northwest) spring meeting
- **March 12** (Memphis)- Presentation, Tennessee Council for the Social Studies conference, 8:00—8:45

Teaching with Primary Sources is a program of the Library of Congress, and is administered in Tennessee by the Center for Historic Preservation at Middle Tennessee State University.
Inquiry into primary sources encourages students to wrestle with contradictions and compare multiple sources that represent differing points of view, thus confronting the complexity of the past.

For instance, if you are discussing the history of westward expansion, you may come across the 1815 book, "An affecting narrative of the captivity and sufferings of Mrs. Mary Smith" (frontispiece and title page only; click on image at right), in which Mrs. Smith was “fortunately rescued from the merciless hands of the Savages by a detached party from the army of the brave General Jackson.” Students can compare the tone of this primary source with descriptions of Native Americans in their textbooks. How have views changed since then? Why would Americans of the early 19th century have such negative views of Native Americans? How do you separate the truth of the events from the exaggeration?

Understanding the past means confronting both the positive and negative. Due to the controversial and sensitive nature of many of these sources, you may want to use them only in classes capable of discussing the complexities involved. These sources can also be used to challenge students to consider what attitudes we hold today that might be considered politically incorrect to future generations.

Political cartoons can provide images that are distorted for a reason. What points might the cartoonist be trying to make? Have students complete the It’s No Laughing Matter activity (Note: Requires Flash Player) to see how symbolism, exaggeration, labeling, analogy, and irony can be used to convey a political or social message. As students pick the correct persuasive technique, a brief explanation appears. If you’d rather have students work at their desks, rather than at computers, you can find the cartoons from the activity here.

Examine some of the political cartoons available through the Library of Congress, then look through a current paper. Are there any similarities? Are there any differences? How do they compare over the years?

Use the Cartoon Analysis Guide from the “It’s No Laughing Matter” activity to examine other political cartoons available from the Library of Congress or a current newspaper. Not all persuasive techniques will be used in other political cartoons, as in the online activity. Looking for an extension to this project? Examine some of the advertisements and WPA posters available from American Memory for these same types of persuasive techniques.

This idea can be adapted to meet state curriculum standards for English (Standard 5–Logic) for grades 5–8.

Using Politically Incorrect Sources in the Classroom

(continued from p. 1) students’ assumptions. Inquiry into primary sources encourages students to wrestle with contradictions and compare multiple sources that represent differing points of view, thus confronting the complexity of the past.

IMPORTANT LINKS:

- Cultural Context and Language [Collection Connections]
- The Chinese in California, 1850-1925 [see last two “Essays & Galleries”]
- An American Time Capsule: Three Centuries of Broadsides and Other Printed Ephemera [Collection Connections]
- Scopes Trial [Today in History; see also Tenn. Encyclopedia entry]
- Jim Crow in America [Primary Source Set]
LESSON IDEA— Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s

The African-American Experience in Ohio, 1850-1920 collection from the Ohio Historical Society contains several articles about the Ku Klux Klan from many different views and places. Have students look one or all of the following articles below (or any other of the articles available from this collection), then have them fill out the Primary Source Analysis worksheet.

- "Insult to the White Race" [from newspaper] (see article below)
- Ku Klux Klan [from newspaper] (see article at right)
- New Ku Klux Klan [from newspaper]

Be sure to read the information on the bibliographical page to get some context for each article. Also, students can read about the history of the KKK in Tennessee at the Tennessee Encyclopedia of History and Culture.

Once students have filled out their worksheets, have them discuss the biases in the articles. Consider the following questions:

- When were they written and for what newspaper?
- Which of the articles would be considered “politically incorrect” today and why?
- How was the KKK of the 1920s different from the KKK of the Civil War era?
- Who is more responsible for an article’s bias: the journalist who writes the article, or the newspaper who publishes it?

This idea can be adapted to meet state curriculum standards for high school U.S. History (Era 7—Emergence of Modern America, 1890-1930).

LESSON IDEA— The Ideal Consumer

In addition to political cartoons, advertisements are primary sources that make frequent use of stereotypes. Because they often appeal to an idealized or generalized type of consumer, they are good indicators of social attitudes during different eras. Let’s return to a collection highlighted in last month’s issue, The Emergence of Advertising in America: 1850-1920: Selections from the Collections of Duke University, for insight into the consumer culture of the early 20th century. (All images are courtesy of Duke University Library.)

From the collection home page, search for “women,” “African Americans,” or other subjects that tend to be portrayed in stereotypes. Divide students into groups and assign each group one “non-PC” advertisement. Have students consider the following questions: How does the ad portray its subject? Is the ad directed towards the same type of person it portrays? How does the ad reveal outdated cultural attitudes? What attitudes are still relevant?

Challenge each group to find a 21st-century ad that portrays the same subject or message as the early 20th-century ad. How are the two ads similar or different? What does that tell you about how American culture has changed or stayed the same? Students can display their “then-and-now” ads on classroom walls to provoke further class discussion.

This idea can be adapted to meet standards for high school Marketing: Advertising and Publication Relations (4.0 & 5.0), and U.S. History (Eras 6 & 7).
“Supporting” Minorities

The reconstruction policy of Congress, as illustrated in California... [1867?]

How many negative stereotypes are portrayed in this cartoon? How does the illustrator use language to convey negative stereotypes? What do you think is the illustrator’s stance on this issue?

Stereotypes on Stage

Fights of nations / American Mutoscope and Biograph Company, [1907]

How many nationalities or ethnicities are stereotyped in these film clips? How do the settings, clothes, and weapons contribute to the stereotypes? How does each “nation” resolve its fight? What overall message are these clips relaying to their turn-of-the-century audience? (NOTE: MPEG format allows you to enlarge the film image on your screen. Also look for the thorough summary in the notes section.)

Looking Backward

Looking backward / Laura E. Foster, [1912]

What is happening in this image? What is the controversial issue it addresses? Based on what is written on the steps, what biases do you believe the cartoonist holds? Compare this illustration with a similar one entitled, The sky is now her limit. How are these two similar, and how are they different?

For the War Effort

Salvage scrap to blast the jap / PvP, [1940 or 1941]

What do the eagle and the snake symbolize? What persuasive techniques has the artist used in this poster? Do certain wars sanction negative attitudes towards certain people?