Here are some educator responses to Teaching with Primary Sources:

“Learning how to find primary sources was the most helpful. Using the Library of Congress website saves time from having to Google forever.”

“A new world has opened for me and my students using primary sources.”

“It has made the use of my time in the LOC website more judicious and focused to specific themes.”

Let us know what you think!

We hope to see you at the Tennessee Educational Technology Conference at the Nashville Convention Center on Thursday, Dec. 3. We’ll be demonstrating search strategies on the Library of Congress Web site in Room 205 at 1:30 p.m.

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

December is a month during which food is especially significant for bringing people together. Food is not only a staple—it’s a cultural institution that can even be considered an art. What are some of our cultural practices and rituals that revolve around food? What does food symbolize?

Think of all the multi-cultural foods we eat every day. How do different kinds of cuisines tell the story of America’s people?

Not only is food multi-cultural, it’s also multi-disciplinary. You can teach about measuring, teaching parts from a whole, using the five senses, writing and reading in multiple formats, following instructions, nutrition and wellness, and cultural and social implications of how we grow and eat our food.

Naval dispatch from the Commander in Chief Pacific (CINCPAC) announcing the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, 7 December 1941. [detail]

Why do you think the CINCPAC wrote “this is not drill” on this telegram? How do you describe an emergency situation in the fewest words possible?
LESSON IDEAS— NUTRITION THROUGH GRAPHIC DESIGN

During the Great Depression, the government sponsored an arts project to provide jobs to the unemployed. This was through the Works Progress (later Work Projects) Administration’s Federal Project Number 1. Many of the posters created by this project followed a health and wellness theme, including several posters about nutrition.

Have students examine some of these posters (hint: search “food” or “nutrition”). After they see what some of the posters from that era look like, have them talk about what they see. Do any of the posters (or the information on them) seem odd?

Once they have examined and discussed the WPA posters, have students draw their own nutrition posters based on the types of posters they’ve seen. Want some ideas for how to create a poster? Check out this photograph from the FSA/OWI collection. Some ideas include: the food pyramid, healthy foods, and serving sizes. Display the posters in your classroom when they are done.

This idea can be adapted to meet state curriculum standards for Health Education for grades Pre-K–2 (Standard 5: Nutrition).

LESSON IDEAS—FOOD ADVERTISING

Food and advertising go well together—just look at the WPA poster idea above! The Library of Congress also contains other food and drink advertisements. Look through the Fifty Years of Coca-Cola Television Advertisements collection and The Emergence of Advertising in America: 1850–1920 collection. What do your students think was successful about these advertisements? Why?

Now look at this Collection Connections idea from the Prosperity and Thrift: The Coolidge Era and the Consumer Economy, 1921–1929 collection:

The following two points appear in Claude Hopkins’s Scientific Advertising from 1923:

- We learn...that curiosity is one of the strongest human incentives. We employ it wherever we can. Puffed Wheat and Puffed Rice were made successful largely through curiosity. “Grains puffed to 8 times normal size.” “Foods shot from guns.” “125 million steam explosions caused in every kernel.” These foods were failures before that factor was discovered. (Page 29, Scientific Advertising)

- Toasted Corn Flakes and Malted Milk are examples of unfortunate names. In each of those cases an advertiser created a new demand. When the demand was created, others shared it because they could use the name. The originators depended only on a brand. It is interesting to speculate on how much more profitable a coined name might have been. (Page 96, Scientific Advertising)

Use these passages as a focal point for a discussion on advertising and its techniques. Demonstrate your understanding and writing skills by choosing a real or imaginary product and creating an effective advertisement based on Hopkins’s two guidelines.

For more food and drink advertisement suggestions, check out The Branding of America presentation (also featured in our May newsletter!).

This idea can be adapted to meet state curriculum standards for high school Marketing: Advertising and Public Relations (Standards 3 & 6).
Lesson Ideas—Food and Technology

Think of all the ways that technology has changed our approach to food, from the discovery of fire to a gas or electric stovetop.

Take, for example, the invention of the refrigerator. This handy machine allows us to preserve food by keeping it cold. Before families had refrigerators, they had to preserve food by other means, such as smoking, drying, pickling, and canning. Compare methods of food preservation illustrated by the images at right and left, and by the following primary sources:

- Frigidaire Recipes
- Prepare! A Book of Practical Information on Canning and Preserving
- How To Do Pickling

Divide students into groups and assign each group one of the primary sources to analyze. Address the following questions:

What is the audience that these sources are trying to reach? How do they depict each particular method of food preservation? How do these sources convey the idea that they are improving household life? Do these methods still work as effectively as other, more modern methods?

Have students demonstrate ways that they preserve food today (such as the use of plastic baggies) and create a classroom grocery store or display.

This can be adapted for Grades 6-8 Science (Embedded Technology & Engineering), Social Studies (Culture), and English (Research, Logic, Media, & Literature).

Featured Feature!—American Folklife Center

What is folklife? The Library of Congress defines folklife this way:

“The everyday and intimate creativity that all of us share and pass on to the next generation: The traditional songs we sing, listen and dance to; [...] the way we celebrate life (from birthing our babies to honoring our dead); the entire range of our personal and collective beliefs (religious, medical, magical, and social); our handed-down recipes and everyday mealtime traditions, [...] the many creative ways we express ourselves as members of our family, our community, our geographical region, our ethnic group, our religious congregation, or our occupational group. Folklife is part of everyone’s life. It is as constant as a ballad, as changeable as fashion trends. It is as intimate as a lullaby, and as public as a parade. In the end ... we are all folk” [boldface added].

The American Folklife Center, one of the Library of Congress’s research centers, is responsible for some of the collections and webcasts available on the Library of Congress Web site, as well as the Veterans History Project, StoryCorps, and much more.

Their programs and products are based in the “aims and methods of folklore, anthropology, history, and ethnomusicology, among other disciplines.” Be sure to check out the Educational Resources available, which include heritage and place-based project ideas, lesson plans, and more!

Suggested Search Terms for Food:

Nutrition
Food (or specific food name)
Foodways
Fruit
Vegetables
Dessert
Recipe
Culinary
Cooking
Menu
Agriculture
Kitchen

Display of home-canned food
[between 1941 and 1945]
William J. Shannon, PhD, assistant professor in chemistry. He is in charge of food chemistry at Iowa State College. He is here working on dried whole eggs used in lend lease shipments. The dried eggs in the beaker are equal to one dozen whole eggs. Iowa State College, Ames, Iowa. [1942]

Why would a food chemist be needed for war production? How are food and chemistry related?

Thomas Jefferson’s drawing of a macaroni machine and instructions for making pasta, ca. 1787.

How does this macaroni machine work? How does it compare to the way macaroni is prepared today? What does this invention tell us about the interests and abilities of America’s third president?

Balanced diet at Helms family supper: roast beef (home canned) turnip greens, potato salad, stuffed eggs, lima beans, rice, pear pickles, biscuits, cornbread, butter, milk, peaches, cake. Coffee County, Alabama. [1939]

The title says that this is a “balanced meal.” Would we consider this a balanced meal by the food pyramid standards? Does anything seem out of place? Why or why not?

Native men posed with mounds of food, including six giant turtles. [1895]

Where do you think this picture was taken? What kinds of foods do you see? Are turtles a part of American cuisine? What American foods would seem weird to people in other parts of the world?