

## DEFINITIONS OF PRIMARY SOURCES

**Primary Sources** are first-hand accounts of an event, a life, a moment in time. They are in their original form (diaries, letters, photos, etc.) usually without explanation or interpretation.

**Secondary sources** are often written some time after an event happened by people who were not present when the event occurred. Secondary sources are based on a variety of other sources and can include books, journal articles, textbooks, and reference sources.

Historian Mary Lynn Rampolla defines [**primary sources**] as “materials produced by people or groups directly involved in the event or topic under consideration.” . . . Primary sources can include not just written documents like letters or diaries but also the material remains (e.g., tools, furniture, art, architecture, music) of a specific time and place. Primary sources are the essential building blocks for the historian's reconstruction of a moment in time.

## WHY USE PRIMARY SOURCES?

From Library of Congress American Memory Collection: <http://memory.loc.gov/learn/educators/handouts/>

**To develop critical thinking skills:** Primary sources are snippets of history. They are incomplete and often come without context. They require students to be analytical, to examine sources thoughtfully, and to determine what else they need to know to make inferences from the materials.

*A high school student states, “I learned that in order to do history, one must be objective and be able to look at a puzzle of historical events and put them together in order.”*

**To understand that all history is local:** Local history projects require students to “tell their own stories” about familiar people, events, and places. Memories from an adult’s perspective provide a rich glimpse of history that is not available in a textbook. What evolves is the sense that world history is also personal family history, which provides a compelling context for student understanding.

*An elementary/middle school teacher reports that “finding information about topics that are of importance to our local history is invaluable. Students are excited by the fact that our local history is archived nationally. This gives their immediate cultural area importance in their eyes.”*

**3. To acquire empathy for the human condition:** Primary sources help students relate personally to events of the past, gaining a deeper understanding of history as a series of human events.

*A high school teacher reported that, “In sharing the Whitman hospital letters, I clearly saw a sheen of tears in students’ eyes and noted an avid interest in Civil War soldiers as ‘people,’ not simply as pallid historical figures.”*

**4. To consider different points of view in analysis:** In analyzing primary sources, students move from concrete observations and facts to inferences about the materials. “Point of view” is one of the most important inferences that can be drawn. What is the intent of the speaker, of the photographer, of the musician? How does that color one’s interpretation or understanding of the evidence?

*A high school teacher states, “Discovering that two people may see the same primary source differently creates a kind of dissonance that opens up the meaning of the source and creates new understanding in learners.” Arguing about the past makes it more personal, more relevant!*

**5. To understand the continuum of history:** Students come to understand that we all participate in making history every day, leaving behind primary source documentation that scholars years hence may examine as a record of “the past.” The immediacy of first-person accounts of events is compelling to most students.

*A teacher comments: “Comparisons of events of the past to events our students are engaged in daily helps to bring ‘history’ to the present and make it ‘live’ for our students.”*

## **Sources for Primary Research**

Note: Provenance (chain of ownership) must be established for personal belongings. Date and authority of sources must be established, particularly in the case of items marked with an asterisk.

advertisements	financial records & audits	political cartoons
advertising brochures	fishing licenses	posters
applications	folk songs	postcards
audio recordings	furniture	pottery
autobiographies*	government documents	pre-nuptial agreements
autographs	gradebooks	press releases
automobile titles	graduation programs	professional licenses
award certificates	greeting cards	programs of events
bank records	Halloween costumes	quilts
Bible records	hand-crafted articles	receipts
bills of sale	handbills	report cards
biographies*	hardware & tools	reports*
birth announcements	historic documents	recipe cards & publications
birth certificates	home movies	research notes & files
blueprints	hunting licenses	sales slips & receipts
business records	ID badges	schedules
calendars	insurance certificates	school assignments/tests
cemetery records	interviews*	school transcripts
census records	jewelry	scrapbooks
checks	kitchen tools & gadgets	sermons
check registers	land records	sheet music
children's clothing	legal documents	shipping documents
christening records	letters	shoes, boots, hats
Christmas letters	magazines*	shopping lists
church certificates	maps, charts, diagrams	sketchbooks
church bulletins/records	marriage announcements	song lyrics
clinical case reports	marriage licenses	speeches
clothing	medals	spirituals
coins	medical records	stamps
Congressional records	membership cards	tax records
contracts	memoranda	team statistics
court records	military records	telegrams
credit card receipts	minutes of meetings	telephone memos
daybooks	mortgages	theatre programs
death certificates	music scores	timetables
deeds	news film footage	titles to vehicles
diaries & journals	newsletters	tombstones
diplomas	newspapers*	tools
directions	notebooks	toys and games
divorce papers	operator's certificates	trading cards
driver's licenses	oral history*	transportation records
drawings & paintings	organizational charts	travel & history brochures
e-mail	parish records	trophies
election certificates	patents	video recordings
embroidery	personnel folders	weapons & equipment
ephemera (menus, tickets)	photographs	wills
fashion artifacts	play programs	writing implements (pens, nibs, inkwells, etc.)
field notes	poetry	yearbooks
films	political campaign items	

## Reading Historically . . . Thinking Like an Historian

### **Historians do the following:**

#### **A. Sourcing** – *analyzing the resource: Who said so? Where did this come from?*

1. Teach students to stop and source before reading!
2. Consider a document's attribution (the name of the author or editor and how the document came into being) before doing anything else:
  - a. Read the headnote, if any;
  - b. Look at all the source information, including date, publisher;
  - c. Note the attribution, if any;
  - d. Consider the genre (book, diary, newspaper, speech);
  - e. Set it in historic context – time and region;
  - f. Verify provenance (records documenting authenticity or history of ownership);
  - g. Study the Table of Contents and Index.

#### **B. Contextualizing** – *imagining the setting, making it visual*

1. Create a picture in your head: what did the original scene look like?
2. The available technology affects the way information is produced and delivered – What things were different in those days? How might that matter?
3. Who are the others thinking and writing on this subject – the people talking about it?

#### **C. Corroborating** – *cross-checking: Who else says so?*

1. Inter-textual reading – looking for corroboration/confirmation.
2. What do other sources say?
3. Where would we find other perspectives on this issue? (e.g., after the destruction of the *USS Maine*, what was on the front page in Havana? in Madrid?)
4. How does other material support, oppose, or extend your understanding of the subject?

#### **D. Close reading** – bias, tone, implied meaning: *What does it say? How does it say it?*

### **Ruminations on textbooks:**

1. History books speak with such authority, they suggest that their analysis of history is not, in fact, only one of many possible interpretations. Teachers need to become comfortable with uncertainty – you don't have to be the only authority in the classroom. It's perfectly okay to say, "I don't know." Students are delighted to hear that experts disagree. Let your class get into the fray themselves after consulting original documents.
2. Every text is the product of a human voice. All are biased in some way. All are incomplete: their very attempts to become unbiased make them incomplete; their efforts to meet national standards make them incomplete; their efforts not to offend anyone make them incomplete!
3. Textbooks tend to repeat information from earlier textbooks – even historical myths – rather than to draw from current research. Contemporary historical thinking rarely makes its way into textbooks, which rarely admit that any controversy exists in the interpretation of historic figures and events.

## Helping Students Begin to Analyze Primary Sources

### Author

1. Who created the source and why?
2. Was this record created through an impulsive act, a routine transaction, or a deliberate process? Is it an officially-sanctioned version of the event?
3. Did the recorder have firsthand knowledge of the event or report what others saw?
4. Did the author participate in the event or watch from the sidelines?
5. Are there any factors to suggest the author's motivation for recording this event? For example, was he a neutral party, or did he have opinions or interests that might have influenced his interpretation of the events? Can you identify bias?
6. What qualifications does the author have that would make you trust his testimony (e.g., research the author's educational background, experience, previous writings.)

### Date of Publication

1. When was the source produced/published?
2. Was the information recorded during the event, immediately after the event, or after some time had passed? (Be as specific as possible about determining the amount of time between the event and the record.)
3. Is this the first version or edition of this piece? (Note: later versions may be revised.)
4. Did the author return to this event in later writings?

### Intended Purpose and Audience

1. Was the source intended to be public or private? For example, did the recorder produce the source for personal use, for a specific individual, or for a wider audience?
2. Is the author addressing a particular audience or type of audience? Is the information aimed at a specialized or a general audience? What evidence supports your answer?
3. Did the recorder intend to inform or persuade others? (Make conjectures about whether the author intended to be objective or persuasive. For example, does he use selective information or choose terms that are likely to arouse emotion in the reader?)
4. Who would be most likely to disagree with this version of events?

### Objective Reasoning

1. Would you say this information is fact, opinion, or propaganda? (Facts can usually be verified; opinions, even if based on factual information, are merely the author's interpretation of facts. Skilled writers can make it difficult to tell the difference.)
2. Is the information supported by evidence or by other witnesses? Can you identify any errors or omissions? What might the author have omitted?

### C. Coverage

1. Does the work update other sources, substantiate other materials you have read, or add new information? Have you searched for a variety of viewpoints?
2. Double-check: Is the material primary or secondary in nature? How do you know?

Primary sources expose students to multiple perspectives on great issues of the past and present. **History, after all, deals with matters that were furiously debated by the participants.** Interpretations of the past are debated as well, among historians, policy makers, politicians, and ordinary citizens.  
*By working with primary sources, students become involved in these debates – they can begin to think like historians!*

## **. . . in the classroom**

When a student asks, "Why does/How can history produce such different versions of the same event? Aren't facts facts?" . . . try one of these exercises or discussions:

1. Have every student write a description of what happened in class yesterday.
2. Set up a dramatic situation in the classroom (for example, another teacher bursts into the room and starts an argument with you, then storms out.) Ask the students to write what they saw and heard. Better yet, wait a day before you ask.
3. Read and discuss the poem "The Blindmen and the Elephant" by John Godfrey Saxe (below). Although this is based on a story that appears in many different cultures and was intended to portray people's different perceptions of God, it works equally well to demonstrate varying points of view toward any historical event.
4. Think of situations from the students' own lives where there might be more than one version of the same event – for example, if you have a fight with one of your brothers or sisters, do you both tell your mom the same story? Would you give your father and your best friend the same description of the party you went to on Saturday night?

### **The Blindmen and the Elephant**

by John Godfrey Saxe



It was six men of Hindustan  
To learning much inclined,  
Who went to see the  
Elephant  
(Tho' all of them were blind)  
That each by observation  
Might satisfy the mind.

The first approached the  
Elephant  
And happening to fall  
Against his broad & sturdy side  
At once began to bawl:  
"Bless me, it seems the  
Elephant  
Is very like a wall."

The second, feeling of his tusk,  
Cried, "Ho! What have we here  
So very round & smooth &  
sharp?  
To me 'tis mighty clear  
This wonder of an Elephant  
Is very like a spear."

The third approached the  
animal,  
And happening to take  
The squirming trunk within  
his hands,  
Then boldly up and spake:  
"I see," quoth he, "the Elephant  
Is very like a snake."

The Fourth reached out an  
eager hand,  
And felt about the knee.  
"What most this wondrous  
beast is like  
Is mighty plain," quoth he;  
"'Tis clear enough the Elephant  
Is very like a tree!"

The Fifth, who chanced to  
touch the ear,  
Said: "E'en the blindest man  
Can tell what this resembles  
most;  
Deny the fact who can,  
This marvel of an Elephant  
Is very like a fan!"

The Sixth no sooner had begun  
About the beast to grope, /Than  
seizing on the swinging tail  
That fell within his scope,  
"I see," quoth he, "the Elephant  
Is very like a rope!"

And so these men of Hindustan  
Disputed loud and long,  
Each in his own opinion  
Exceeding stiff and strong,  
Tho' each was partly in the right  
And all were in the wrong.

So oft in theologic wars,  
The disputants, I ween,  
Rail on in utter ignorance  
Of what each other mean,  
And prate about an Elephant  
Not one of them has seen!

## **Basic Rules for Analysis of Primary Sources**

(adapted from <http://www.edteck.com/dbq/>)

- A. The **TIME AND PLACE** rule: the closer in time and place the source and its author are to the actual event, the likelier to be true. The following types of sources are most likely to be accurate (listed in order, most to least):
1. Direct evidence of the event (photos, films, printed programs, manuscripts of speeches)
  2. Descriptions of the event, created at the time it occurred by first-hand participants and observers (recording secretaries, newspaper reporters, stenographers, score-keepers)
  3. Accounts of the event, produced from memory after the event, by first-hand participants and observers.
  4. Accounts of the event, produced by people who were not present, but who have worked with evidence or interviews from the event.
- B. The **BIAS** rule: **EVERY SOURCE IS BIASED IN SOME WAY**. Any document can substantiate only
- a) what the writer believed happened, or
  - b) what the writer *wants us* to believe happened.
- Because the creator's bias can "spin" the truth of a story, a researcher should take great care to do all of the following:
1. Study each source and each piece of evidence critically and skeptically. Assume bias in the handling of the facts.
  2. Consider the creator's point of view – no piece of evidence should ever be simply accepted at face value without considering bias.
  3. Cross-check everything! Don't depend on a single source of information—always compare sources, when you can, with other accounts of and evidence from the same event.

### **Determining the Trustworthiness of a Reproduction or Surrogate**

Most of the primary source materials you are likely to use in your classes will be digitized copies, photocopies, or transcriptions, so you and your students may need to evaluate how well a primary source surrogate replicates the original version.

1. A **credible copy** (surrogate) of a primary source should be reproduced as clearly as possible and should include information about the source and version of the copy.
2. Differences between a primary source surrogate (even a very faithful scan or photocopy) and the original can negatively affect your interpretation of the item. For example,
  - a. **Transcripts** of a speech cannot reproduce the inflections and gestures of the speaker or his interaction with the audience. Television news reports often include visual images that may alter the audience's emotional response to the text. A transcript of a manuscript may not include or mention the occurrence of erasures, deletions, or marginal notes that could offer revealing insights about the writer's thinking.
  - b. **Full text online versions** of newspapers and magazines may be quite different from the original. Many photographs, illustrations, advertisements, sidebars, and even some of the articles appearing in the print version do not appear online. Consequently, a researcher may not be able to assess the publication's emphasis on a particular story or to locate other articles on the same topic.
  - c. **Still image reproductions** can differ from the originals in many ways, appearing smaller, altering the texture, or lacking the color and/or detail of the original painting, engraving, or photograph.
  - d. **Sound recordings** can vary significantly depending upon the original format and the quality of the equipment used to record and to play them. Remember that many programs are presented in short segments broken up by advertisements, so that repetition may be used not so much to emphasize material as to remind viewers of something that occurred prior to a commercial break.

## **PRIMARY SOURCES: THE VERY BEST WEBSITES**

### **Tennessee and Southern History:**

Tennessee State Library and Archives

<http://www.state.tn.us/tsla/educationoutreach/index.htm>

Volunteer Voices Project

<http://www.volunteervoices.org/>

<http://diglib.lib.utk.edu/cgi/b/bib/bib-idx?c=vvs-bib>

Documenting the American South

<http://docsouth.unc.edu/>

Tennessee Portrait Project

<http://www.tnportraits.org/>

MTSU: Tennessee History, A Guide to Primary Sources (incl. TN history links)

<http://www.mtsu.edu/~kmiddlet/tn-primary.html>

### **United States and World History:**

Library of Congress: National Digital Library, American Memory

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/>

Eyewitness to History

<http://www.eyewitnesstohistory.com/>

A Treasury of Primary Documents

<http://www.constitution.org/primarysources/primarysources.html#bc>

The American Presidency Project

<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/>

A Hypertext on American History

<http://odur.let.rug.nl/~usa/usa.htm>

National Archives and Records Administration (NARA)

<http://www.archives.gov/index.html>

<http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/>

Smithsonian Institution (includes alignment with state standards)

<http://www.si.edu/>

<http://www.smithsonianeducation.org/educators/>

The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History

<http://www.gilderlehrman.org/>

University of Oklahoma Law Center: Chronology of U.S. Historical Documents

<http://www.law.ou.edu/hist/>

The History Net

<http://www.thehistorynet.com/>

The Perseus Project

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/>

Internet History Sourcebooks Project

<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/>

Avalon Project at Yale Law School

<http://avalon.law.yale.edu/default.asp>

### **And Don't Miss These Important Teacher Sites:**

Tennessee History Day

<http://www.tennesseehistoryday.org>

Also be sure to see

<http://historicalthinkingmatters.org/>

<http://teachinghistory.org/>

<http://historymatters.gmu.edu/>

<http://worldhistorymatters.org/>

<http://dohistory.org/>

## **important websites for teaching about primary sources, critical reading, textbook analysis, and more:**

Teaching with Historic Places (THP): <http://www.nps.gov/history/nr/twhp/period.htm>

→THP: “Battle of Stones River”:

<http://www.nps.gov/history/nr/twhp/wwwlps/lessons/40stones/40stones.htm>

Library of Congress (LC), American Memory: <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/index.html>

→LC: Civil War Photographs: <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/cwphtml/cwphome.html>

Historical Thinking Matters (HTM): <http://historicalthinkingmatters.org/>

→Move from this link to carefully annotated lessons on the Spanish American War, the Scopes Trial, Rosa Parks, and Social Security.

AP Central (APC): U.S. History Course Home Page:

[http://apcentral.collegeboard.com/apc/public/courses/teachers\\_corner/3501.html](http://apcentral.collegeboard.com/apc/public/courses/teachers_corner/3501.html)

→APC: “Teaching Uncle Tom’s Cabin in the AP U.S. History Course”:

[http://apcentral.collegeboard.com/apc/members/courses/teachers\\_corner/45743.html](http://apcentral.collegeboard.com/apc/members/courses/teachers_corner/45743.html)

UCLA Institute on Primary Resources: <http://ipr.ues.gseis.ucla.edu/info/definition.html>

→UCLA: “Japanese American Internment during World War II”:

<http://ipr.ues.gseis.ucla.edu/classroom/lessons.html>

Teaching with Primary Sources across Tennessee: <http://www.mtsu.edu/tps/>

→TPST: “Coming out of the Depression and into War in Tennessee”:

[http://www.mtsu.edu/tps/Lesson\\_Plans\\_Coming\\_Out\\_of\\_the\\_Depression.pdf](http://www.mtsu.edu/tps/Lesson_Plans_Coming_Out_of_the_Depression.pdf)

**And don’t overlook the value of the National History Day experience for your students:**

→NHD website: <http://www.nationalhistoryday.org/>

→Tennessee History Day website: <http://www.tennesseehistoryday.org>

## **The tip of the iceberg: a few websites offering a wide variety of photos, interviews, and other historical materials:**

<http://teva.contentdm.oclc.org/landmarkdocs/index.php>

<http://www.voicesofcivilrights.org/>

<http://www.koreanwar-educator.org/memoirs/index.htm>

[http://janus.mtsu.edu/resource%20guides/ww2\\_resource/women.htm](http://janus.mtsu.edu/resource%20guides/ww2_resource/women.htm)

[http://www.southerninstitute.info/holocaust\\_education/holocaust\\_survivor\\_testimony.html](http://www.southerninstitute.info/holocaust_education/holocaust_survivor_testimony.html)

<http://archives.nmsu.edu/rghc/photo/collections.html>

<http://sflib1.sfpl.org:82/>

<http://www.oregonpioneers.com/diaries.htm>





## **TSLA Primary Source Learning Kits**

### **#LK1: Woman Suffrage in Tennessee (Era 7: 1890-1930)**

- Lesson plan for studying broadsides and leaflets – [http://tennessee.gov/tsla/educationoutreach/worksheet\\_broadsides.pdf](http://tennessee.gov/tsla/educationoutreach/worksheet_broadsides.pdf)
- Anti-suffrage broadside distributed nationally – <http://www.state.tn.us/tsla/exhibits/suffrage/images/33900.jpg>
- Meeting announcement from an anti-suffrage group – <http://www.state.tn.us/tsla/exhibits/suffrage/images/33915.jpg>
- Lesson plan for studying historic photographs – [http://www.state.tn.us/tsla/educationoutreach/worksheet\\_photograph.pdf](http://www.state.tn.us/tsla/educationoutreach/worksheet_photograph.pdf)
- Photograph: Anne Dallas Dudley – <http://www.state.tn.us/tsla/exhibits/suffrage/images/1286.jpg>
- Photograph: “Votes for Women” – <http://www.state.tn.us/tsla/exhibits/suffrage/images/33857.jpg>
- Lesson plan for studying political cartoons – [http://www.state.tn.us/tsla/educationoutreach/worksheet\\_politicalcartoon.pdf](http://www.state.tn.us/tsla/educationoutreach/worksheet_politicalcartoon.pdf)
- Anti-suffrage cartoon (hen and rooster) – <http://www.state.tn.us/tsla/exhibits/suffrage/images/33888.jpg>
- Pro- and anti-suffragists court the Tennessee legislature – <http://www.state.tn.us/tsla/exhibits/suffrage/images/33884.jpg>
- Quick summary: See Education Outreach, Era 7: <http://tennessee.gov/tsla/educationoutreach/tah/files/era7.pdf> (pp. 21-23)

### **See also:**

- Book: Yellin, Carol Lynn, and Janann Sherman. *The Perfect 36: Tennessee Delivers Woman Suffrage*. Memphis: Iris Press, 1998.
- Book: Wheeler, Marjorie Spruill, ed. *Votes for Women! : The Woman Suffrage Movement in Tennessee, the South, and the Nation*. Knoxville: UT Press, 1995.

### **When you visit TSLA in person or on our website:**

- Governor Albert H. Roberts Papers, 1918-1921. Of interest are correspondence and other items pertaining to the ratification of the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, affording women the right to vote. Governor Roberts called a special session of the Legislature, and with Tennessee’s approval, this amendment became the law of the land.
- Carrie Chapman Catt Papers, 1916-1921. [Catt came to Tennessee to work for passage of the 19th Amendment. The collection features news clippings, letters, political cartoons, telegrams.] Location: I-J-2. (Microfilmed)
- Bettie Mizell Donelson Papers, 1787-1938. [A scrapbook in the collection is dedicated to the work of the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union and Woman Suffrage.] Location: VIII-E-4-5-6. (Microfilmed.)
- Josephine A. Pearson Papers, 1860-1943. [Pearson, head of the TN State Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage, worked to block Tennessee’s ratification of the 19th Amendment. The collection includes broadsides, clippings, correspondence, newspapers, photos, press releases, speeches, and writings.] Location: VIII-E-4-5-6 (Microfilmed)
- Resource Guide #07: <http://tennessee.gov/tsla/history/guides/guide07.htm>
- Exhibit: “Remember the Ladies!”: Women Struggle for an Equal Voice.” <http://tennessee.gov/tsla/exhibits/suffrage/index.htm>

## Using Finding Aids as a Guide to Primary Research

Many of the primary source materials available in the Tennessee State Library and Archives (TSLA) and other, similar facilities are part of archival collections shelved in areas where the public is not permitted. However, patrons are permitted access to many of these sources if they find that materials in the collections are pertinent to their research. The best way to learn what relevant material might be in a certain collection is by making use of a finding aid, which the public services staff can make available for you. For those who cannot easily come to Nashville, full-text versions of many of the TSLA finding aids now online (see below).

Finding aids are explanatory guides or indexes that summarize the information included in agency records, governors' papers, or manuscript collections of individuals and/or families. Such records are identified by name (Luke Lea (1876-1945) Papers 1826-1993) or by record group (RG) numbers (e.g., the Tennessee Department of Health Morbidity and Communicable Diseases Statistics 1917-1931 are classified as RG 252; the State Treasurer's Records 1796-1869 are in RG 23.). Many Finding Aids to the various TSLA collections may be accessed from the "Research and Collections" link on the main page of our website. (Go here – <http://www.state.tn.us/tsla/Collections.htm> – and click on "Manuscripts.")

The Finding Aid is made up of several sections: some will provide background on the persons or institutions behind the collections, and some will describe details of the collection itself or analyze its historical value.

- The Introduction provides the title and dates of the collection, a brief description of its size (expressed in linear feet) and contents, a statement concerning its provenance, and any restrictions on the use of the materials. Other background material, including historical or biographical data, is sometimes included.
- The Biographical Sketch/Agency History helps to place the material into the context of a life or an organization. This section is not intended to provide an exhaustive history, but only to help establish an approach to the collection. This section may be written as a narrative or as a chronological list.
- The Scope and Content section summarizes the range of the archival materials included in the collection (their scope) and what kinds of information they contain (their content). It is highly specific as to what materials are in the collection and how they are organized. It may also include comments on the arrangement of the collection/record group, the types of materials to be found, discussion of strengths and weaknesses, peculiarities of arrangement, and strategy for best use of this particular material. It can be extremely useful information to the researcher, being both more detailed and more analytical than the introduction.
- The Container List is a comprehensive list of the material in the collection, box by box and folder by folder – even, in some cases, item by item. If the material has been microfilmed, the applicable catalog numbers will be included for the film as well.
- Some Finding Aids include an Appendix. This might include a listing of relevant audiovisual materials, maps, and other items from the collection, particularly if stored in another area of the facility. Some finding aids include pedigree charts and other genealogical information, translations from other languages into English, and additional data to help make the most effective use of the material in the collection.

## A CLUTCH OF LESSON PLANS: USING PRIMARY SOURCES IN THE CLASSROOM

### **HISTORY IN THE NEWS**

As you study a particular era or event, have students work in teams to assemble a newspaper about what they are learning. Share the finished project with other classes. Suggested items and sections might include some of the following:

- Front-page stories (German U-Boat Sinks Ocean Liner: 1200 Die on the *Lusitania*);
- Interviews (General Lee Did Not Listen to My Advice, Says Longstreet);
- Sports stories (Pheidippides' 25-Mile Run Sets New Standard for Distance Runners);
- Arts and Entertainment (21-Year-Old Maya Lin Wins National Contest to Design Vietnam Memorial; Michelangelo Paints Chapel Ceiling);
- Captioned photos;
- Political cartoons;
- Editorials or letters to the editor;
- Clever students might be able to design a recipe section (Cooking in the Trenches), horoscopes, obituaries, ads, and so forth.

### **STORIES FROM PHOTOGRAPHS**

Many photographs have the power to elicit strong emotions. Choose one or more historic photographs as the basis for a student writing project. (Hint: photographs showing real people facing intense situations are most effective for this project, and there are many powerful choices available to you: Mathew Brady's Civil War photos, Walker Evans's photos from the Depression, Holocaust-era photos of ghettos and camps, a number of powerful photos from the Vietnam war, and pictures of people in the moments immediately following a tornado or other disaster, just to name a few. TSLA has a huge photographic database, and many of those would be appropriate for this assignment.) Allow each individual to select his/her own medium of expression – short story, poem, dramatic scene, essay, character sketch, journal entry, children's story or folk tale – and allow sufficient time for their ideas to develop. This type of imaginative activity can often make an era more authentic for students than a book or video.

### **MAPS, THEN AND NOW**

Many students have no idea that names they hear in church and elsewhere – Babylonia and Sumeria, for example – are the same places they read about in daily news headlines from Iraq; that the Medes and the Persians were early Iranians; or that the story of the Good Samaritan deals with the same conflicts – and in the same region – as modern hostilities between the Palestinians and the Jews. State history also tends to be full of regional and town name changes; TSLA has many old maps. Possible projects:

- Provide regional maps marked with the ancient names and have students locate and identify the modern political units in the region.
- Reverse the previous exercise, listing the current names of countries and municipalities and have students research the ancient names and boundaries.
- Provide a list of place names (ancient, modern, or both) and a blank map of a region. Ask students to locate the places on the map and mark it with the correct names.

## **USING LETTERS TO BRING HISTORY ALIVE**

Most dramatic historical events produce important letters. Many significant letters appear online, and TSLA has hundreds of letters in various books, files, and archival collections. Such letters can range from correspondence between heads of state to love letters from soldiers far away from home, and used as part of a history lesson, they can make a period come alive. Letters are nearly always effective teaching tools, especially if you can use legible photocopies of the original communication.

At the end of a unit (especially one with good dramatic potential), ask students to imagine themselves participants in the events you have just studied, and to write a letter in which they discuss their role in these events. A few suggestions:

- a soldier writing his sweetheart on the eve of the Battle of Nashville;
- a pioneer wife writing to her parents in Philadelphia about settling in Tennessee;
- the butler for a wealthy family writing to his brother to describe his employers' reactions to the 1929 stock market crash.
- an audience member who was present at the performance in Ford's Theatre on April 14, 1865, when Lincoln was shot – writing to a friend.
- Sam Davis, writing to his little brother Hickman, on the morning Sam is to be hanged by Union troops for spying.

## **TAKING A CENSUS**

Study blank census forms (downloadable from [www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com)) for 1790, 1820, 1840, 1870, 1880, and 1920. Many early census records are available on microfilm at TSLA, so you can obtain copies to demonstrate the types of answers people gave to the questions. Encourage the class to brainstorm reasons that the lists of questions varied so widely from year to year – what do the differences say about the changing nature of the American population and life style?

Divide students into triads to compose a census questionnaire for their classmates, designing questions to collect whatever information they believe should be passed on to future generations about students of today. The triads should not share their questionnaires with other groups until everyone has finished. The final census forms can be typed, duplicated, and distributed, or simply read aloud. Questions to discuss:

- What questions appeared on every form? Why?
- What questions appeared on most forms? Why?
- What questions did not appear as frequently as you would have expected? Why do you think those questions are important?
- What questions appeared on other groups' forms that you wish you had thought of? Explain why you think they are good questions.
- What questions should be removed from the forms? Why?
- What questions would your parents or other adults think are too trivial to be included?
- What additional questions might your parents or other adults have listed?
- What would be appropriate ways for your lists to be used by the government? How would you not want your lists to be used?