

History Day Lesson Plans

Courtesy of the State Historical Society of Missouri and the Missouri Humanities Council

Lesson One:

Introduction to Primary Sources

Rationale:

It is important for students to understand what primary sources are, how they differentiate from secondary sources and how to use them in research because they provide unique and often otherwise unattainable information and perspectives on historical events in history.

Grade/Subject:

This lesson could be used for any Social Studies class grades 6-12, just be sure to apply this lesson to material the students have been or will be learning.

Duration:

This lesson could take between 3-5 class periods depending on amount of time given to discuss.

Objectives:

1. The students will be able to recognize what primary sources are and the differences between primary and secondary sources.
2. The students will be able to examine historical documents and provide an analysis based on the materials.

Assessing Prior Knowledge:

1. Write "Primary Resources" on one side of the board and "Secondary Resources" on the other side of the board. Have a variety of sources laying out including things like Anne Frank's Diary, a newspaper clipping, an interview, a documentary, and a text book.
2. For each source, ask the students which category they think it falls under. Once finished with the sorting, explain to them what primary resources are, then ask if they would like to change any of the source's positions.
3. Go through each source and discuss with the class the characteristics that make it a primary or a secondary source.

Instructional Activities:

Activity One:

1. Ask the class why they think primary sources are important and discuss.
2. Divide the class into four or five straight lines and give the last person in each line an envelope (the story inside will be the same for all lines) and the first person in each line will have a pen and paper.
3. Inform the class that the last person in the line will be reading the story and then telling it to the person in front of them (tell them to speak softly, but it does not have to be a whisper). Then that person will proceed to tell it to the person in front of them (the sheet is not passed on) and so on. Finally, the first person in the row will write it down.
4. Make sure to try to distract the lines by talking to them while they are trying to learn the story.
5. Have each of the first people in the row read what they have written down, and then have someone read the original.
6. Discuss the discrepancies in the stories and talk about how it relates to primary and secondary sources.

Activity Two:

1. Now that students have an understanding of what primary sources are, how they are different from secondary sources, and their importance, it is time to give them a primary source to analyze.
2. Give everyone a copy of the same primary source for them to read. Ask them to circle anything they cannot read or understand and underline any important information the document may contain.
3. As a class, go through the document piece by piece, analyzing important information and addressing any difficult jargon or comprehension problems. This will help students become more comfortable with primary sources.
4. Now divide them into groups and give each group a different primary source (everyone in the group gets a copy). These primary sources, however, should be about the same event. For example, the Boston Massacre, the Emancipation Proclamation, the Industrial Revolution, Irish Potato Famine, etc. It is important to use an event that pertains to what they are learning in class.
5. Using butcher paper, have the students create a graphic organizer that shows who wrote their document, the message of the document, and any bias they found in the document.
6. Have the students present their document and visual to the class.
7. Ask the class to discuss why the articles differed and different ways the documents could be interpreted.

Assessment:

1. Ask the students to write a reflection by answering the following questions:
 - a) What did you learn about primary sources? Give two examples.
 - b) What are at least two pros and two cons of using primary sources?
 - c) Why is bias important to keep in mind when using primary sources?
 - d) What concerns do you still have using primary sources?

Missouri Show-Me Standards addressed:**Performance Goal 1:**

#1: Develop questions and ideas to initiate and refine research.

#7: Evaluate the accuracy of information and the reliability of its sources.

National Council for the Social Studies Thematic Strands Addressed:

Theme II: Time, Continuity, and Change

Lesson Two:

Researching with Primary Sources
Learning to use Digitized Databases

Rationale:

It is important for students to learn what resources are available to them and how they can use those resources to research and gain knowledge on various subject matters. Digitalized databases provide a wealth of knowledge at one's fingertips and the sooner students know how to access those resources, the better researchers they will become.

Grade/Subject:

This lesson will work for any Social Studies class grades 6-12, but it will be more important to understand whether or not your students are already proficient in research. Teaching students these tools earlier in life will benefit them for longer, but refresher courses are always helpful. Never assume your students do or do not know how to research.

Duration:

This lesson should take 4-5 class periods depending on research and presentation time

Objectives:

1. Students will be able to successfully research subjects using digitalized databases.
2. Students will be able to use primary sources found during research to create and present projects.

Assessing Prior Knowledge:

1. Discuss with the students what methods of research they have used in the past, including successes and failures.
2. Chart the sources and web sites that they have used on the board, along with why they use those sources.
3. Ask your students how much they have used internet databases such as The National Archives and Missouri Digital Heritage.

Instructional Activities:

Note: Generally your school district will have subscribed to certain databases like LexisNexis Academic and Proquest for your students' use. If you are not sure if your school provides such databases, please speak with your librarian.

1. Inform the class that they will each be researching a topic based on information being taught at the time. The teacher can either assign topics, or allow students to choose their own. The students do not need to know their topic before going to the library, but ask them to be thinking about a few they might want to use.
2. Take your students to the library where everyone, or almost everyone, has access to a computer.
3. Provide your students with a list of various databases that can be used to research and find primary documents. Be sure to include information about what materials the databases contain, for easy use by the students. Be sure to include any databases available to your students at your school, or urge them to go to the public library if none are available at the school. This list should include but is not limited to the following:
 - a. The National Archives: www.nara.gov

- b. Missouri Digital Heritage: <http://www.sos.mo.gov/mdh/>
 - c. Missouri State Archives: <http://sos.mo.gov/archives>
 - d. Harry S. Truman Library and Museum: www.trumanlibrary.org
 - e. The Avalon Project, Yale Law: <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/avalon.htm>
4. Give short introductions to a few of the best sites, and provide useful tips for researching.
 - a. The use of quotes ensures that the words will always be used in that order.
 - b. The use of an * will allow for multiple searches.
 - i. For example, a search for *histor** would include: history, historians, and historical.
 - c. Sort by *relevance* rather than *date added*.
 - d. Do multiple word searches.
 - i. For example, during a search for prisons one could also use the words incarcerated and penitentiary system.
 5. Let your students get used to using these search engines, and make sure to come around to answer any questions they might have. Require that they have an approved topic by the end of the class period.
 6. Allow your students to research their topics, and require that they have at least five sources, with only one being a secondary source.
 7. Have them put together presentations and present them to the class.

Assessment:

1. Have the students write a reflection about the difference in quality of their projects using the digitalized databases against the sources they used to use.

Missouri Show-Me Standards addressed:

Performance Goal 1:

#2: Conduct research to answer questions and evaluate information and ideas.

#4: Use technological tools and other resources to locate, select and organize information.

Performance Goal 2:

#1: Plan and make written, oral and visual presentations for a variety of purposes and audiences.

National Council for the Social Studies Thematic Strands Addressed:

Theme I: Culture

Theme II: Time, Continuity, and Change

Theme IV: Individual Development and Identity

Lesson Three:

Oral Histories

Rationale:

It is important for students to understand that people who witnessed history have an abundant amount of information on it including facts, figures, attitudes, and perceptions.

Grade/Subject:

This lesson could be used for any Social Studies class grades 6-12, just be sure to apply this lesson to material the students have been or will be learning.

Duration:

This lesson could take between 3-5 class periods depending on amount of time given to discuss.

Objectives:

1. Students will be able to value the importance of oral histories.
2. Students will be able to recognize and deliver meaningful questions to those they interview.
3. Students will be able to utilize oral histories in their research.

Assessing Prior Knowledge:

1. Have a discussion about what oral histories are and why they are important.
2. Ask the students to work with 3-4 classmates to brainstorm what they think are good interview questions.
3. Have someone write these interview questions on the board, and discuss the use of different question types i.e. open ended questions, yes/no questions, leading questions, etc.
4. Give each student a handout with 4 interview questions already written on it. Ask them to pick 4 more from the list the class just created (they have to be different from the ones on the handout). Make sure the handout has a place for the interviewee to put their name, age, and age at the time of the event.
5. Explain that each student will be conducting their own Oral History interview. They will be interviewing anyone who was alive during the event including, grandparents, parents, neighbors or family friends. Ask the students to choose an event in history and interview someone who lived through it. Choose six topics for the students to choose from. Possible topics include:
 - a. Berlin Wall Falling
 - b. Assassinations of MLK, JFK, RFK
 - c. Gulf War
 - d. Vietnam War
6. The students will then interview the person, being sure to record their interview questions.
7. Then take the students to the computer lab to type up the Oral History.
8. Put the students into groups by which topic they chose to interview about. Have the students create a presentation based on the different information given by each interviewee.
9. The students will present their findings to the class.

Instructional Activities:

1. Give the students a copy of the transcript from the Missouri Ex-POWs Oral History Project Records from the State Historical Society Collection.
<http://shs.umsystem.edu/outreach/teachpacket/ww2/exercise2.pdf>
2. Split them into groups and have them read the transcript and answer the questions.
3. Discuss the answers in a class discussion.

Assessment:

1. Have the students write a reaction to the following prompt:
 - a. What do you think are pros and cons of using oral histories? Use examples from the class discussions.

Missouri Show-Me Standards addressed:

Performance Goal 1:

#2: Conduct research to answer questions and evaluate information and ideas.

#7: Evaluate the accuracy of information and the reliability of sources.

Teacher Lesson Plan

Developed by New York State History Day and Washington State History Day

Lesson: Highlighting History Day

Lesson Description: In this lesson, students will work to develop several skills that may be used to complete a History Day project:

- Reading non-fiction text and determining the main idea
- Working cooperatively with others to complete a task
- Synthesizing information and presenting it in a visual product
- Presenting their findings orally and fielding questions about their topics

Resources Used:

- NHD Contest Rule Book
- Lesson Handouts: Highlighting History, Contest Rule Book Poster & Evaluation Rubric
- Highlighters
- Poster Board, Markers, Colored Paper, and other art supplies

Pre-Lesson Preparation:

- Have 1 copy of the NHD Contest Rule Book per group of 3-4 students
- Number slips of paper 1-5 and place them into a hat or cup
- Make 1 copy for each student of the Highlighting History and Contest Rule Book Poster & Evaluation Rubric
- Prepare workspace for groups to use poster board, markers, colored paper and other materials to make posters

Washington State Grade-Level Expectations Addressed

Social Studies: The student understands and applies reasoning skills to conduct research, deliberate, form, and evaluate positions through the processes of reading, writing, and communicating.

Communication:

1. The student uses listening and observation skills and strategies to gain understanding
2. The student uses communication skills and strategies to interact/work effectively with others
3. The student uses communication skills and strategies to effectively present ideas and one's self in a variety of situations

Writing:

1. The student understands and uses a writing process
2. The student writes in a variety of forms for different audiences and purposes

3. The student writes clearly and effectively

Teacher Background

This lesson takes a creative approach to understanding the procedures and rules for History Day. Students will be introduced to a reading strategy called selective highlighting that can be an effective tool in their History Day research.

Students will also work cooperatively in a group to produce a final product that synthesizes information they have researched. This may be a good time to review cooperative group rules or guidelines. Students at all levels need direct instruction on how to work as a group.

The visual can be as simple or complex as you like. Markers and butcher block paper may be quick and easy, or if you want to spend the time, posters and art supplies can be used.

Step One:

1. Explain to your students that today they will be developing a better understanding of the rules for History Day and the different aspects of the program.
2. Break students into groups of 3-4 students. Pass out copies of the Contest Rule Books, or have the students download a PDF version online www.nhd.org/Rules.htm.
3. Have the groups send one person to the front to choose a number from the cup or hat. The number chosen will correspond to the section their group will be required to research.
4. Pass out and review the Highlighting History handout to familiarize them with the concept behind selective highlighting.
5. Have the students open the books to their section and carefully read and highlight information they think will be important for their final product.

Step Two:

1. Pass out the Contest Rule Book Poster handout. Review the instructions and the evaluation rubric on the back. Be sure to stress that this is a group project and for it to be successful, all must do their part!

Step Three:

1. The time allowed for production is up to you. It can be an in-class project or homework assignment. If you plan to evaluate the group work, it may be best to complete the posters during class time where you can observe the groups as they work together.
2. Students work best in groups when they individually assigned a specific "job." Some job suggestions are:
 - a. Facilitator: makes sure everyone is doing their job and helps to solve problems.
 - b. Time keeper: keeps track of time and lets the group know when they need to clean up, or to keep the pace on their work.
 - c. Go-for: gets supplies and moves about the room as needed.

- d. Spokesperson: Asks the teacher or other groups questions if needed.

Step Four:

1. Groups should present their posters to the class. Each member should have a brief speaking part. As a general rule, their posters should give the short version, and the student provides the long version.
2. When each group has finished presenting their poster, open the floor to questions for the group to answer.
3. Have individual groups display their posters around the room.

Step Five:

Conclude the lesson by reminding students that this activity has specific parameters. These parameters are not designed to limit what the student will do, but challenge them to share their findings in a concise, accurate, and compelling way.

Remind them that selective highlighting is a strategy they can use when researching any topic, but one that will be especially helpful when researching their History Day topics.

Evaluation:

See Contest Rule Book Poster Evaluation Rubric

Highlighting History

We know that sometimes reading history textbooks and other source material can be a bit, well, boring. With all that tiny type filled with dates, names, and other facts, it can be a little hard to keep all that information straight. Here is a smart reading tip that will help you identify the main ideas from your readings, which will help you understand the material better. It is called ***selective highlighting***.

Highlighting is a bit of an art form; you don't want to highlight too much, because you will have lost your main idea in all the details. If you highlight too little, you will not capture the important details that support the main idea. Your teacher or parent can help you make sure your highlighting amount is just right.

There are a few simple steps to make selective highlighting work for you. Taking a little extra time to follow these steps will save you a world of time and energy later. Trust us!

Step 1: Review the whole source.

Before you dive right into your reading, take a few minutes to skim the document from beginning to end. By reviewing the highlights, you will get an idea of what the source is about:

- Read the title, headings, and subheadings.
- Look at charts, graphs, pictures, maps, and other visual material.
- Read captions.
- Read the first and last paragraphs.
- Write down what you anticipate the reading will be about, or what the main idea is on a sheet of paper or graphic organizer.

Step 2: Selective Highlighting

In Selective Highlighting you highlight **ONLY** the key words, phrases, vocabulary, and ideas that are central to understanding the piece.

- Look for the main vocabulary and see if it is followed by verb phrases.
- You are creating simple sentences and sometimes just parts of the main point. Looked at together, you will have the main ideas!
- Read one paragraph or section at a time.
- Look for and highlight sentences or phrases that summarize or support the main ideas you have identified.

Step 3: Main Ideas

Look over the vocabulary words and actions accompanying them and write it out in complete sentences in your own words.

Step 4: Review

After completing each chapter or reading assignment, review what you've highlighted. If you have done a good job, your highlighted sentences and phrases should provide a good summary of the main idea or ideas of your source. Use your highlighted sections when you write your research notes.

Contest Rule Book Poster

Today you will be creating a poster that will explain your section of the National History Day Rule Book. You will be required to do both individual and group work. Your final product must capture the main ideas of your section.

Here is what you do!

- Use selective highlighting to take notes on your section
- Have each member read their highlighted parts aloud and then discuss if the group needs any additional information
- Talk about layout. Be conscious of your use of white space
- Talk about the use of color and decide on a scheme
- Make a list of the materials you will need for the poster
- Make a simple mock up of what your poster will look like
- Run the poster mock up by your teacher
- Assign part of the poster to each of the group members to complete
- Begin production

Poster Requirements

Each group member is responsible for the production of part of the poster. For groups to be successful, their posters must meet the following requirements:

- Posters must contain the main idea of the section.
- Posters must be able to stand on their own, and information is complete enough that a full picture of the section is provided.
- Posters must contain at least two graphics.
- Posters are visually pleasing: Consistent colors, fonts, and text are unified; matting is neat and free of smudges and glue marks.
- Titles are large enough to be seen from around the room and clearly state the topic.
- Poster is free of grammatical and spelling errors.

Presentation

Presentations should be no longer than five minutes. Each member should give a brief explanation of their section (60-120 seconds) and meet the following requirements:

- Each group member is responsible for explaining part of the poster.
- The text on the poster is the basic idea, your presentation gives the full detail.
- You must speak clearly to be heard around the room.
- You must make eye contact with your audience.
- You must stand and be free of distracting movements,
- You must be able to answer questions from classmates on your section.

Contest Rule Book Poster Evaluation Rubric

Areas of Assessment	Possible Points in Each Area: 25
Research <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You have turned in your copy of the Rule Book You have effectively used selective highlighting on your section Your section of the poster captures the main ideas 	Total Points: _____ Comments: _____
Group Behavior <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You were respectful of all group members You stayed with your group You kept your noise level reasonable You listened while others spoke You were positive towards other group members 	Total Points: _____ Comments: _____
Group Participation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You provided research from your section You completed your section of the poster and met the design requirements You provided ideas or comments during planning You were helpful to others 	Total Points: _____ Comments: _____
Oral Communication <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You had eye contact with your audience You spoke clearly You spoke loud enough to be heard in all parts of the room You took your presentation seriously You knew your information (did not read from the poster) 	Total Points: _____ Comments: _____ <hr style="border: 0.5px solid black;"/> Total Points: _____
Please describe what parts of the poster you were responsible for, and how you were helpful to the group: <div style="height: 150px; border: 1px solid black; margin-top: 5px;"></div>	