



Digital Primary Sources as Tools in Teaching Literature and Writing

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THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

RESOURCES FOR ENGLISH TEACHERS

American Memory

A digital library of historic maps, photos, documents, audio and video organized by topics including advertising, literature, women's history, war, and sports and recreation.

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

Prints & Photographs

Catalog of about half of the Library's pictorial holdings with over 1 million digital images organized into collections and searchable by keyword.

- <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/>



Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers

This site allows you to search and view newspaper pages from 1860-1922 and find information about American newspapers published between 1690-present.

- <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/>

Center for the Book

Special features of this site include (1) a list of "Books that Shaped America;" (2) interactive, full-text, digital versions of classic books; (3) the Young Readers Center; and (4) Author Webcasts.

- <http://www.read.gov/cfb/>

Poetry 180

Developed by Billy Collins, former Poet Laureate of the United States, this site features a poem a day for American high schools; a way to infuse poetry into the everyday life of school.

- <http://www.loc.gov/poetry/180/>

National Book Festival

- <http://www.loc.gov/bookfest/kids-teachers/>

Poetry and Literature – Home of the US Poet Laureate

- <http://www.loc.gov/poetry/>

Highlights from the *Teachers Page* at the Library of Congress Online
<http://www.loc.gov/teachers/>

Teachers' Guides and Analysis Tools

PDF handouts that may be used by teachers to guide student analysis of primary sources

- <http://www.loc.gov/teachers/usingprimarysources/guides.html>

Click on "***Classroom Materials***" to access the following wonderful resources!

(1) Lesson plans (include an overview and links to primary sources)

<http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/lessons/>

Sampling of lesson plans related to English / Language Arts:

- Segregation: From Jim Crow to Linda Brown
- *The Grapes of Wrath*
- *The Great Gatsby*
- Mark Twain's *Hannibal*
- *To Kill a Mockingbird*
- *Jacob Have I Loved*
- Culture and Folklife: The American Dream

(2) Primary Source Sets

Sets of pre-selected primary sources on specific topics, available as easy-to-print PDFs; includes background information, teaching ideas, and tools to guide student analysis.

<http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/primarysourcesets/>

Sampling of primary source sets relevant to English / Language Arts:

- Harlem Renaissance
- Found Poetry
- Dust Bowl
- The Civil War
- Jim Crow in America
- Veterans' Stories
- Women's Suffrage

Why Use Primary Sources?

Primary sources provide a window into the past—unfiltered access to the record of artistic, social, scientific and political thought and achievement during the specific period under study, produced by people who lived during that period.

Bringing young people into close contact with these unique, often profoundly personal, documents and objects can give them a very real sense of what it was like to be alive during a long-past era.

1. Engage students

- Primary sources help students relate in a personal way to events of the past and promote a deeper understanding of history as a series of human events.
- Because primary sources are snippets of history, they encourage students to seek additional evidence through research.
- First-person accounts of events helps make them more real, fostering active reading and response.

2. Develop critical thinking skills

- Many state standards support teaching with primary sources, which require students to be both critical and analytical as they read and examine documents and objects.
- Primary sources are often incomplete and have little context. Students must use prior knowledge and work with multiple primary sources to find patterns.
- 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 students' assumptions.

3. Construct knowledge

- Inquiry into primary sources encourages students to wrestle with contradictions and compare multiple sources that represent differing points of view, confronting the complexity of the past.
- Students construct knowledge as they form reasoned conclusions, base their conclusions on evidence, and connect primary sources to the context in which they were created, synthesizing information from multiple sources.
- Integrating what they glean from comparing primary sources with what they already know, and what they learn from research, allows students to construct content knowledge and deepen understanding.

Source: <http://www.loc.gov/teachers/usingprimarysources/whyuse.html>