

INTRODUCTION TO PRIMARY SOURCES



GRADES 4-8

OVERVIEW

Students will create their own primary sources and analyze those of their classmates as though they are historians from the future wishing to learn about the early decades of the 21st Century. Without knowing the objective of the activity, students will write a log of the previous day's activities. Students will be divided into groups A-E, each studying a different aspect of daily life. The logs students created will then be distributed as, 'primary sources,' to each group for analysis. After about seven minutes, the, 'primary sources,' will be redistributed so students can gain a broader understanding of their area of study. Following the activity, the class will discuss their findings as well as the challenges of working with primary source documents.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to:

- * Recount and articulate the activities of the previous day.
- * Read and analyze other students' writings as primary sources.
- * Answer questions related to their specific area of study.
- * Discuss findings, conclusions and challenges.

STUDENT STANDARDS

COMMON CORE:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.1

Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.2

Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.6.1

Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6.1.C

Pose and respond to specific questions with elaboration and detail by making comments that contribute to the topic, text, or issue under discussion.



INTRODUCTION

It is the year 2120. You are historians researching the first decades of the 21st century. You have come across the accompanying primary sources from the early 2020s (this current year) that you hope will help you in your current study. What can you learn from the sources provided?

Your group is researching one of the following aspects of the first few decades of the 21st century (2001-2030). Use the distributed logs to answer questions about your area of study.

- (A) Popular Entertainment
- (B) Diet and Foodways
- (C) Modes of Transportation
- (D) Lifestyles
- (E) Jobs and Vocations

MATERIALS

- * Individual logs of the previous day
- * Analysis questions for groups A-E
- * Discussion questions

ACTIVITY

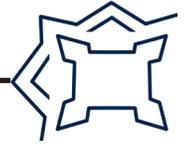
1. Without telling students the objective of the activity, have them write down everything they did yesterday, from lunchtime until they went to bed. They may answer the questions on the accompanying sheet to help them organize their thoughts. Limit the time students have to complete the task (seven minutes or less).
2. Collect the sheets. Divide the students into groups of three or four. Redistribute the sheets as “primary sources” to each group.

STUDENT STANDARDS

C3 FRAMEWORK:

D2.His.6.6-8 Analyze how people’s perspectives influenced what information is available in the historical sources they created.

D2.His.10.6-8 Detect possible limitations in the historical record based on evidence collected from different kinds of historical sources.



3. Provide each group with an assignment sheet (Groups A-E). Using the distributed primary sources, each group tries to identify activities and items related to their area of study (transportation, popular entertainment, etc.).
4. After about seven minutes, redistribute the primary sources again, so each group has the opportunity to examine new sources.
5. After another seven minutes, ask each group to share what they learned about their area of study by examining the documents.
6. Discuss the questions below.

CLASS DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What were some of the challenges/frustrations students faced when working with the documents (might include illegible handwriting, not enough specifics)?
2. Now that students know how the documents were going to be used, how would they have completed them differently?
3. Discuss the intended audience for documents and how we as historians often use documents in ways never intended or imagined by their creators.