

Learning Activity - Elementary Level

SOURCING A DOCUMENT: THE FIRST THANKSGIVING

Overview

This activity introduces students to the importance of source information in the analysis of primary sources. Although assessments are often thought of as tools for accountability, this History Assessment of Thinking (HAT) can be used as an activity for learning. Students complete a HAT about the reliability of a painting of the First Thanksgiving to introduce the idea that it is crucial to consider a source's date. After students complete the HAT, they examine a rubric that includes links to a range of sample student responses. After students discuss the elements an exemplary response, students will have an opportunity to revise their answers to explain why the gap in time between the painting and Thanksgiving make it a less reliable source.

Objectives

After completing this learning activity, students will be able to:

- Consider source information ("source" a document) when analyzing primary documents
- Understand the limitations of a primary source created long after the event it depicts

Time Required

30 minutes

Grade Level

4 - 6

Topic/s

Colonial America
Primary Source Analysis

Subject

American History



The first Thanksgiving 1621 / J.L.G. Ferris. Prints and Photographs Online Catalog. Library of Congress

Standards

Common Core State Standards <http://www.corestandards.org/>

RH.6-8.1: Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources

RH.6-8.6: Identify aspects of a text that reveal an author's point of view or purpose (e.g., loaded language, inclusion or avoidance of particular facts)

RH.6-8.7: Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts

California History-Social Science Content Standards for Kindergarten through Grade 5 Historical and Social Science Analysis Skills: Research, Evidence, and Point of View

Students differentiate between primary and secondary sources

Students pose relevant questions about events they encounter in historical documents, eyewitness accounts, oral histories, letters, diaries, artifacts, photographs, maps, artworks, and architecture

PREPARATION

Materials

Have the following materials ready before the activity:

- Be able to display *The First Thanksgiving 1621*
<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2001699850/resource/cph.3g04961/>
- Copies of the First Thanksgiving History Assessment of Thinking
<http://beyondthebubble.stanford.edu/assessments/first-thanksgiving>
- Interactive rubric for the First Thanksgiving HAT
<http://beyondthebubble.stanford.edu/assessments/first-thanksgiving/rubric>
- Sample student responses to the First Thanksgiving HAT
<http://beyondthebubble.stanford.edu/assessments/first-thanksgiving/samples>

Prior Knowledge

Before this activity, should be familiar with the history of Thanksgiving. Specifically, they need to know that the Pilgrims and the Wampanoags were present.

PROCEDURE

1. Tell students that they will examine a primary source about the First Thanksgiving and determine whether it would help historians to understand the relationship between the Wampanoags and Pilgrims in 1621. Display *The First Thanksgiving 1621* from the Library of Congress.
2. Hand out the First Thanksgiving HAT and ask students to complete it independently.
3. After students have completed the assessment, explain that you are going to look at some sample student responses to figure out what a strong response looks like.
4. Show students some "Basic" sample responses and explain that many students focus primarily on the content of painting. The painting is either good because it shows what the meal was like or it is bad because it is not an accurate representation. Explain that in both cases students have forgotten a crucial step when analyzing primary sources: they have not looked at the source information! Explain that we must always look at source information when we are reading primary sources.
5. Discuss with students the limitations of a document created more than 300 years after the event it depicts. Explain why looking at source information is so important. Possible questions include:
 - What year did the First Thanksgiving happen? When was the painting created? How many years separate the two?
 - Why might this gap in time make the painting less useful for historians trying to understand the relationship between the Wampanoag and the Pilgrims?
 - Who made this painting? Do you think he was present at the First Thanksgiving? Why might this be important?
 - Why might a document from someone who was actually present at the First Thanksgiving be more useful for historians?
 - What else might we want to know about how Ferris made this painting? If we knew that he did research first, would it make it a better source?

6. After discussing the limitations of the painting, show students some proficient responses. Discuss the features of these stronger responses (e.g., identifying gap in time, lack of information about Ferris, etc.).
7. Provide students with colored pens and ask them to revise their answers to the HATs with the colored pen based on what they have learned about the importance of sourcing a document. After students have revised their answers, ask them to turn them in.

EVALUATION

1. Review students' revised answers. If you identify any ongoing confusion, address it at the start of the next class.
2. Within the next week or so, ask students to complete another HAT that asks students to examine a source that was produced long after the event depicted from *Beyond the Bubble*. Possible assessments include:
 - a. The Signing of the Mayflower Compact (<http://beyondthebubble.stanford.edu/assessments/signing-mayflower-compact>) featuring Matteson's painting from the Library of Congress (<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2005684450/>).
 - b. Washington Crosses the Delaware (<http://beyondthebubble.stanford.edu/assessments/washington-crosses-delaware>), which includes a Currier and Ives lithograph from the Library of Congress (<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2002698169/>).
 - c. Several other assessments are also available on *Beyond the Bubble*. Alternatively, you can make your own version of the assessment by locating a document created long after the event it depicts.
3. Examine student responses to see whether students are now able to source a document independently. If they cannot, go back over why it is important to look at source information. This sequence of activities will help to teach students the importance of "sourcing" documents. Many teachers choose to complete this type of learning activity at the beginning of the school year or when they first begin to study primary sources.

<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2001699850/>



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