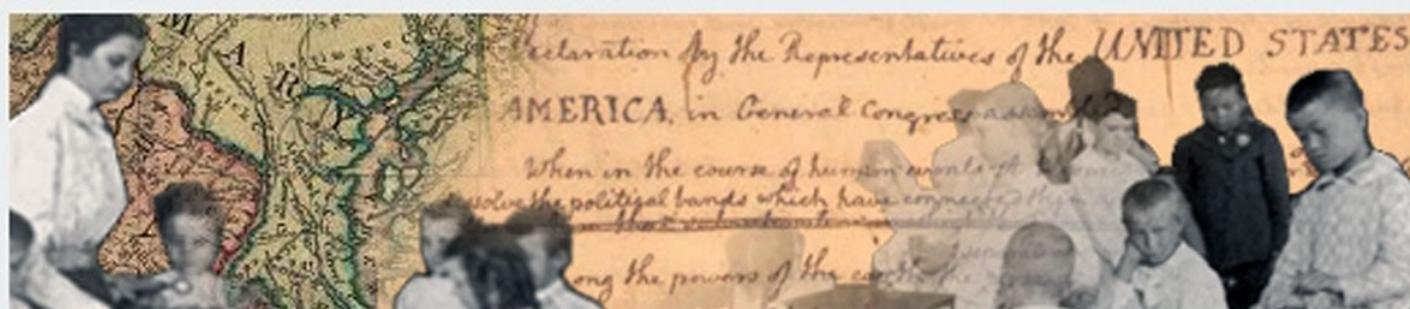


The Teaching with Primary Sources Journal

Strategies and Resources for K-12 classrooms from the Library of Congress



Teaching with Fine and Performing Arts

Vol. 7, No. 1, Fall 2014

Fine and performing arts-related primary sources allow students to study and investigate how people use creative activity to celebrate and express their experiences. They prompt students to think about multiple perspectives, develop literacy skills, and consider complex forms of problem solving.

About *The TPS Journal*

The Teaching with Primary Sources (TPS) Journal is an online publication created by the Library of Congress Educational Outreach Division in collaboration with the TPS Educational Consortium.

Each issue focuses on pedagogical approaches to teaching with Library of Congress digitized primary sources in K-12 classrooms. *The TPS Journal* Editorial Board and Library staff peer review all content submitted by TPS Consortium members and their partners. Please email questions, suggestions or comments about *The Teaching with Primary Sources Journal* to Vivian Awumey, TPS Program Manager, at vawu@loc.gov.

[The TPS Journal Archive](#)

Previous issues of *The Teaching with Primary Sources Journal*, formerly known as the *Teaching with Primary Sources Quarterly*, are available at www.loc.gov/teachers/tps/journal/archive.html.

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Primary Sources from the Fine and Performing Arts: Observe, Reflect, Explore

By Erin Elman and Sheila Watts

Listen to a song. Watch a dance or a play. Look at a piece of art work. All can evoke a mood, inspire a thought, express an idea, or offer a glimpse into another world. Art can express beliefs that were important at a particular period of time, present specific points of view, display technological developments, and make a bygone era come to life.

Art is engaging. Teachers can use paintings, photographs, literature, music, and dance to help students meet learning goals across the curriculum. Primary sources may inspire students to express themselves in creative works of their own. By connecting intellectually as well as emotionally to art, students strengthen their literacy skills and meet learning standards related to evaluating information presented in diverse formats and media.

Students can investigate works of art by considering a variety of concepts.

- Emotional expression: What emotions does the artwork evoke?
- Idea expressed: What does the artist say? To whom is the artist communicating?
- Artistic expression: What strategies does the artist use to present his or her message?
- Context: What events, people, or historical/social trends inspired the artist?

Encourage students to think about what the artist is trying to convey through a particular piece and why he or she chose the medium used. What materials or techniques were popular with other artists at the time? What was happening at the time the artwork was created that sparked the desire to create a specific piece of art? What emotion is the artist trying to evoke? Does the artist want us to celebrate? To take action? To think more deeply? To mourn?

Considering Artistic Expression

Pose, setting, clothing, props, and focus of an image all affect how a viewer perceives the subject of a photograph. Making different choices changes the impact and point of view of the picture. Consider these two photographs of Billie Holiday taken by two different photographers, William Gottlieb and Carl Van Vechten. How do the differences in perspective, clothing, and hairstyle create different impressions?

Consider questions of context, purpose, and point of view: When were these photographs made? Were they candid or posed? What objects appear in the photograph; what significance might they have? What was the photographer's purpose for taking the photos?

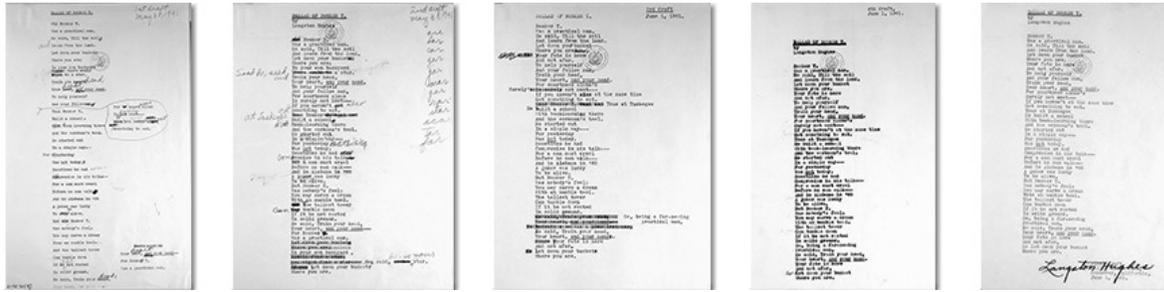
While Gottlieb was capturing Billie Holiday as a performer, Van Vechten promoted a broader view of the creative artist. How did those different creative purposes shape each photograph? Invite students to speculate about why each presented her as he did. To better understand each photographer's intention, guide students to learn more about the experiences of African American performers and artists at the time, the purpose of *Downbeat Magazine*, and Carl Van Vechten's role in the Harlem Renaissance.



Portrait of Billie Holiday, *Downbeat*, New York, N.Y. (Feb. 1947) Gottlieb, William P., photographer. Prints and Photographs. Library of Congress



Portrait of Billie Holiday, (1949) Van Vechton, Carl, photographer. Prints and Photographs. Library of Congress



Drafts of Langston Hughes's poem "Ballad of Booker T.," (30 May-1 June 1941) Library of Congress.

Understanding the Creative Process

Studying this series of drafts of "The Ballad of Booker T." offers insights into Langston Hughes' thinking processes and decisions as he honed this particular creative work. Students can analyze the four drafts and final version of this poem, with Hughes' handwritten edits, on the Library of Congress website. What changes did he make? What is the impact of each? For example, students can consider why the poet switched the placement of the words "head" and "heart" throughout his first draft. Or why he added the word "so" to the poem's last sentence. Looking at what stayed the same across drafts can also offer insights. For example, "For yesterday/Was not today" remains unchanged from the first to the final draft. Studying Hughes' word, meter, and syntax choices can help students better appreciate the mechanics of artistic expression and build their sophistication as readers and writers.

Showcasing Advances in Technology and Media

Around the turn of the last century, the Edison Company distributed numerous dance films. Observing these 1-2 minute clips, today's students might judge that some of the performers featured are not particularly talented. To help them develop understanding, invite them to think about the context in which the films were made. Why did the Edison Company make and distribute these films? What important cultural ideas do they express? How do these films connect to what students know about early 20th century American society and its growing global interests? What do these clips say about the introduction of motion pictures into American life? The collection "Inventing Entertainment: The Early Motion Pictures and Sound Recordings of the Edison Companies" offers some history and perspectives on this art form, which remains hugely important today.



Ella Lola, a la Trilby. (1898)
Thomas A. Edison, Inc.
Library of Congress

Making Social Commentary



The Weaker Sex II (1903)
Gibson, Charles Dana.
Prints and Photographs.
Library of Congress

The artist Charles Dana Gibson was known for drawing cartoons featuring "Gibson Girls." From the end of the nineteenth century until World War I, many considered them, with their tall, slender hour-glass shapes and their immaculately-coiffed hair, to be the ideal American woman. Take a close look at the deceptively gentle women featured in "The Weaker Sex" to determine what Gibson says about relationships between men and women. How does "The Weaker Sex" compare to other images of Gibson Girls, and to photographs of actual women of the time? What message does the juxtaposition of the title and image give about American women during the turn of the last century? "Gibson Girl's America", on the Library of Congress website, offers information about how these drawings display the changing roles and status of women during the artist's lifetime.

Expressing Ideas and Emotions

How do you feel when you hear a song from your past? Does it remind you of a special event? Of a good or bad feeling or emotion? Of a personal memory or historical event? Songs are an outstanding way to explore history. Songs from the Depression era, for example, illustrate different aspects of life during that difficult time. Two twelve-year-old girls, Mary Campbell and Margaret Treat, sing the "Government Camp Song" about their experience at the Shafter Farm Security Administration (FSA) Camp. In another song, "Home in the Government Camp," recorded in the same year, the adults describe their feeling about the camps. Why is music such a powerful means to share their experiences? What did they want people to understand about the camps? Listen to the poem "Hard Luck Okie." What emotions does it express? What emotions does it evoke? Why? How does listening to the poem differ from listening to the songs? Ask students if listening to "Hard Luck Okie" helps them gain a new perspective on the sentiments expressed in the songs. Analyzing these two short songs and the poem can help students study the impact of the government's response to the Dust Bowl and Great Depression.

Art on a Mission

The Federal Arts project was another government project designed to alleviate some of the hardships many Americans faced during the Great Depression. Noted painter, printmaker, muralist, and political activist Ben Shahn created a 1938 mural, documenting the founding of the Jersey Homesteads, now named Roosevelt, New Jersey. This work is full of symbolism and images for students to question. For example, who is featured in the mural? Why did Shahn select these particular people, both famous and not, to portray? Students may notice that not all of the individuals in the mural were contemporaries. What do they all have in common? What is the artist trying to convey by grouping them together? Who was he "talking to" with his mural? Students can explore more of Shahn's work, along with his background and beliefs, to get a sense of him as an artist and a representative of an immigrant community.



*Detail of mural painted by Ben Shahn at the community building, Hightstown, New Jersey (1938)
Rothstein, Arthur.
Library of Congress*

Benefits of Incorporating the Fine and Performing Arts

These are just a few of the ways that you can bring the fine and performing arts into your classroom through primary sources, to strengthen students' understanding and literacy. With art, students can enter into multi-faceted investigations that allow them to consider how ideas, subjects, events, and craft reflect not only artists as creative individuals, but also communities that existed during a specific time and place. Foster opportunities for students to express their understandings through their own creative works as well as studying art. Taking a photograph, writing a poem, or creating a poster will help them to explore the artistic process and more clearly understand decisions made by artists when crafting a message.

Many thousands of creative works wait for you on www.loc.gov, along with primary source analysis teachers guides, to help students investigate music, photographs, manuscripts and more on the Library's Teachers Page. Explore how you can use them in your classroom to inspire student creativity and to deepen their understanding of the past.

Erin Elman is the dean, and **Sheila Watts** is the associate dean, of Continuing Studies at The University of the Arts. Together, they manage the Teaching with Primary Sources program activities that their institution conducts.

Research and Current Thinking

For each issue, Teaching with Primary Sources Consortium members submit summaries of and links to online resources—articles, research reports, Web sites, and white papers—that provide research and current thinking relating to the theme. This issue's Research & Current Thinking focuses on helping teachers use primary sources to use fine arts-based primary sources in their instruction.



Children at the black board.
Lee, Russell, Library of Congress.

Book Tackles Old Debate: Role of Art in Schools

<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/08/04/arts/design/04stud.html>

Harvard Graduate School of Education program *Project Zero* conducted a study in 2000 that found that the arts did not contribute to the academic improvement of students in the areas of math and science. While these findings are contrary to other studies on the subject, these researchers did conclude that the arts have a positive impact on students' creativity, critical judgment and visual analysis skills.

Champions of Change – The Impact of the Arts on Learning

This study explores the benefits for educators in the classroom of incorporating the arts into the curriculum. The study examined three questions: "What is arts learning? Does it extend to learning in other school subjects? What conditions in schools support this learning?" The researchers found "significant relationships between rich in-school arts programs and creative, cognitive, and personal competencies needed for academic success."

Detailed study at: <http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/champions/pdfs/ChampsReport.pdf>

Curriculum change for the 21st century: Visual culture in art education

<http://www.myotherdrive.com/dyn/dl/979.512019.21012009.50064.6a64fi/Curriculum%20Change%2021st%20Century.pdf>

Contributors to the field of art education have argued for a transformation in response to changing conditions in the contemporary world where the visual arts, including popular arts and contemporary fine arts are an increasingly important part of the larger visual culture that surrounds and shapes our daily lives.

Guggenheim Study Suggests Arts Education Benefits Literacy Skills

http://www.nytimes.com/2006/07/27/books/27gugg.html?_r=0

The Guggenheim Museum's *Learning Through Art* program placed teaching artists in New York City public schools to work with classroom teachers on projects related to school curriculum and the arts. This study focuses on the positive impact of the arts on literacy skills.

Staying in School: Arts Education and New York City High School Graduation Rates

http://www.cae-nyc.org/sites/default/files/docs/CAE_Arts_and_Graduation_Report.pdf

This study, including an Executive Summary, reports findings that increasing students' access to arts instruction in schools with low graduation rates can be a successful strategy for lifting graduation rates and turning around struggling schools. However, it reports, despite these known benefits, New York City public school students at schools with the lowest graduation rates have the least access to instruction in the arts.

To access links to resources cited above visit the online version of this issue of *The Teaching with Primary Sources Journal* at <http://www.loc.gov/teachers/tps/journal>.

Learning Activity - Elementary Level

PHOTO ANALYSIS – PRESENTING THE STATUE OF LIBERTY

Overview

Observation skills are crucial to primary source analysis. The ability to examine a primary source closely is a gateway to building critical thinking skills and constructing knowledge. This lesson provides the students with an opportunity to observe similarities and differences between two visual images, represent their observations on a Venn diagram and, later, to use conversational skills by articulating their opinions in a classroom discussion.

Objectives

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

- Observe, analyze and construct meaning from a text
- Present information in a graphic format
- Practice conversational skills of listening and following up on another's comments

Time Required

One 40 minute lesson

Grade Level

1–3

Topic/s

Statue of Liberty

Symbolism

Subject

Language Arts

Standards

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

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.1.2 Ask and answer questions about key details in a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.1.4 Describe people, places, things, and events with relevant details, expressing ideas and feelings clearly.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.1.1 Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about grade 1 topics and texts with peers and adults in small and larger groups.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.1.1a Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions (e.g., listening to others with care, speaking one at a time about the topics and texts under discussion).

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.1.1b Build on others' talk in conversations by responding to the comments of others through multiple exchanges.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.1.1c Ask questions to clear up any confusion about the topics and texts under discussion.



Statue of Liberty, officially "Liberty Enlightening the World," Jersey City, New Jersey. Highsmith, Carol M., photographer. Prints and Photographs. Library of Congress

View and download the complete learning activity:

http://www.loc.gov/teachers/tps/journal/teaching_with_fine_arts/pdf/ElementaryLevelLearningActivity.pdf

Learning Activity - Secondary Level

LEADERSHIP AND ALLIANCES IN THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

Overview

This activity helps students apply the skill of gathering information from multiple sources to the visual arts. The activity should be used with students who are familiar with the power of primary sources and practiced at primary source analysis using the Primary Source Analysis Tool. This activity, used in a social studies course, provides an opportunity to collaborate with the art teacher.

Objective

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

- Analyze the value of gathering information from a variety of sources

Time Required

Two 45 minute sessions

Grade level

9 - 12

Topic/s

Art Works as Primary Sources

Primary Source Analysis

Subject

American History

Standards

Common Core State Standards

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

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.7

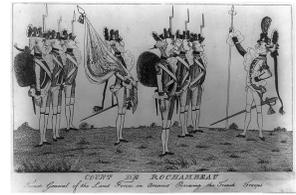
Analyze various accounts of a subject told in different mediums (e.g., a person's life story in both print and multimedia), determining which details are emphasized in each account.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.11-12.7

Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words in order to address a question or solve a problem.



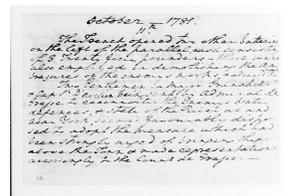
Washington before Yorktown.
Peale, Rembrandt.
Library of Congress



Count de Rochambeau -
French general of the land
forces in America reviewing
the French troops. (1780)
Library of Congress



George Washington letter to
Francois Joseph Paul, Comte
de Grasse, October 16, 1781
Library of Congress



George Washington Papers at
the Library of Congress, 1741-
1799: Diary, August 15-
November 5, 1781 Image 32.
Library of Congress

View and download the complete learning activity:

http://www.loc.gov/teachers/tps/journal/teaching_with_fine_arts/pdf/SecondaryLevelLearningActivity.pdf

Teacher Spotlight

**Audrey
Blust**



In each issue, we introduce a teacher who has participated in Teaching with Primary Sources (TPS) professional development and successfully uses primary sources from the Library of Congress to support effective instructional practices.

This issue's Teacher Spotlight features Audrey Blust, a 5th grade teacher at Pickering Valley Elementary School, in Pennsylvania. The University of the Arts nominated Audrey for her effective classroom use of primary sources. In this interview, she discusses how she integrates fine-arts primary sources into her teaching, and her favorite Library of Congress online resources.

Describe the first time you tried using a fine arts-related primary sources in the classroom.

The first Library of Congress resource I used was a daguerreotype from the Library's Prints and Photographs collections. The students were amazed at how old the images were, and we had a great discussion comparing the old images to modern photographs. We were reading a biography of George Eastman, and seeing the images gave them more insights into the early history of photography.

Based on your experiences, what questioning techniques are effective when helping students analyze fine arts-related primary sources?

Critical thinking and analyzing is so important for academic success and you can really have a lot of fun if you provide scaffolded opportunities for kids to work with primary sources.

Observation skills are critical, questions such as: What do you see? What do you think the people are doing? What do you think this object is used for? How do you know? What details can you pick out from the item? What can you learn from this item? Who do you think used this item? What questions do you have about this photograph, poem, play, recording? If you wanted to find out more about this item, where would you look?

I notice that students in small groups ask the questions that I previously listed. I ask students to look at pictures, come up with a title, and

explain why they gave the title they did. Students act out a colonial painting of a harbor with both slaves and masters. Looking at Martin Luther King's famous "I have a Dream" speech, students analyze the words and create Found Poems based on this speech.

What is your favorite resource available on the Library of Congress Web site?

What a tough question... I love the Veteran's History Project because my dad was a 100% Disabled Vet, but the prints and photographs are probably my favorite...a picture is worth a thousand words. There are so many questions you can ask a student to analyze in a photograph. I love the cartoons for teaching inference! I have used the Fine Prints to find paintings of colonial people to extend colonial America for my students.

What advice do you have for teachers who have never tried teaching with primary sources?

When I first started using primary sources, I was at a loss as to how to fit them into my Social Studies curriculum. I teach explorers to Colonial America and I found some of the resources to be difficult for a 10 year old to understand without a lot of background information. Plus the materials from that time range can be limited based on what your curriculum covers. Then I realized that there were so many areas that I could tie in or extend to my reading curriculum. We read a story about an Asian immigrant family and I found lots of information and ideas to extend that story, such as primary sources related to Angel Island. Another story features Rosa Parks and I found photos and other materials to tie in.

Do you have any additional thoughts or tips about using fine art materials across the curriculum?

There are many paintings that can be used for Social Studies that were painted in an earlier time when photographs or other media were not available. Don't forget to seek these out as well.

Are there any other thoughts, insights or suggestions that you'd like to share?

With fifth graders I always use a collaborative team approach so they can bounce ideas off each other. For most kids, this is their first exposure to primary sources and they need the approach to be scaffolded to promote success.

The Common Core expects our students to be able to analyze primary sources because it promotes critical thinking but it also makes thinking fun!