

## In this Issue: Differentiated Instruction

This issue explores how teachers can use primary sources to help differentiate instruction to better meet the needs of all learners.

Carol Ann Tomlinson, a noted expert on the subject, defines differentiated instruction as the practice of adjusting curriculum, teaching strategies, and classroom environment to meet the needs of all students (Tomlinson, 2001). That is not to say that the curriculum is changed, nor that the teacher must develop and teach individual lessons to each student. Rather, the teacher selects materials and constructs lessons to accommodate varied ability levels, interests, and learning styles.

Differentiating instruction with primary sources may be accomplished in numerous ways, as the authors of this issue's feature article explain in detail. A teacher can use primary sources in a variety of formats—photographs, maps, documents, audio files, films—each conveying information to students with different learning styles. Alternatively, the same primary source could be paired with different tiered questions to guide students of varying academic readiness levels through the process of analyzing information. Still another strategy would be to invite students to choose from a menu of products they can create (e.g., a story or collage) based on interests or strengths as part of a shared primary source-based learning experience.

Regardless of how teachers use primary sources to differentiate their lessons, the end result is more meaningful and challenging instruction for all students. Primary sources provide unique opportunities for teachers to successfully engage every student in higher-order thinking skills.

### References

Tomlinson, C.A. (2001). *How to differentiate instruction in mixed-ability classrooms* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Alexandria, VA: ASCD

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## Teaching with Primary Sources

The Library of Congress Teaching with Primary Sources (TPS) Program works with universities and other educational organizations to offer professional development that helps teachers use the Library's digitized primary sources to deliver effective instruction. The TPS Newsletter provides information and materials that support this goal.

For more information about Teaching with Primary Sources or to identify a TPS Consortium member in an area near you, please visit the web site at <http://www.loc.gov/teachers/tps>.

## Engaging All Learners with Primary Sources

by Patricia Baron Carlson, M.Ed., and Rhonda B. Clevenson, Ph.D.

Often teachers adjust the curriculum content, learning process, or student product/learning outcome to address diverse learners' needs (Tomlinson 2001). Primary sources are particularly valuable for differentiating instruction because in addition to the varied complexity, vocabulary, and media forms, primary sources connect to students' lives and capture their natural desire to know and understand the world.

Like our students, primary sources are diverse. While manuscripts, journals, maps, photographs, motion pictures, sound recordings, and artifacts were not created with a specific grade level and curricular subject in mind, these curiosity-provoking fragments of history invite learning that students with diverse reading levels and background knowledge simply can't resist.

**Boone, N. (1936).**  
Library of Congress.  
*American Memory.*  
*American Life Histories:*  
*Manuscripts from the*  
*Federal Writers' Project,*  
*1936-1940*



**Migrant agricultural worker's family.**  
Photographer. Lange,  
Dorothea. 1936. Library  
of Congress. Prints and  
Photographs Division.

Differentiated instruction begins when teachers recognize that variations are needed to engage and challenge all learners in a particular lesson. Assessing what students know is the first step. For example, all students might participate in preassessment using a primary source image, cartoon, map, document, or quotation. Students respond to the primary source as a means of activating prior knowledge regarding a concept or topic, and as a way to assess knowledge gaps and misconceptions. The teacher uses the responses to inform differentiated instruction through the design of tiered assignments, flexible grouping, re-teaching activities, and independent studies based on the identified student needs. Varying the complexity of curricular content is a natural fit with the use of primary sources.

### Differentiating by Content

When a teacher differentiates instruction by content, groups of students complete the same challenging task using different primary sources to provide information. For example, during an examination of the Great Depression, all students might address the question: *What were some of the economic, social, and political effects of the Great Depression on people?* Three different primary sources corresponding to students' academic readiness levels could be used to answer this question. These primary sources would demonstrate similar content ideas, but vary in their format and complexity. One group of students could consider *Dorothea Lange's photograph, "Migrant agricultural workers' family," 1936.* Another group could listen to and examine *Mrs. Mary Sullivan's folksong "A Traveler's Line," 1940.* A third group could read *Nina Boone's oral history manuscript from the 1938 Federal Writers' Project, North Carolina.*

### Differentiating by Process

When differentiating by process, all students experience the same content through a single primary source, but perform different learning processes. Primary sources can be used to engage students and all may answer the same knowledge and comprehension questions to establish a foundational understanding. Through flexible grouping, whereby students move in and out of groups based upon interest, learning profile, or readiness, groups of students might interact with and respond to the primary source using different modalities or employing varied types of critical thinking. This allows all learners to be challenged, engaged, and successful.

For example, when examining, *"Marcus Miller and family,"* all students describe what they see in the photograph (knowledge), and compare and contrast their home to the home depicted in the image (comprehension). One group might go on to speculate what the people in the photograph might be saying (analysis and synthesis), while another explains how the room might be used by the family and why they believe their interpretation to be true (analysis and interpretation). Finally, another group might assess the Great Depression's social and economic impact on the family based upon evidence from the picture, (analysis and evaluation).



**Marcus Miller and family in shack that he built himself.**  
Spencer, Iowa.  
Photographer: Lee,  
Russell. 1936 Dec.  
Library of Congress.  
Prints and Photographs  
Division.

### **Differentiating by Product Choices**

If students have analyzed the same primary source content, and experienced the same sense-making or processing activities, teachers can design differentiated product choices. For example, all might study the same set of raw data or primary source oral histories, photographs, maps, folksongs, diaries, broadsides, and land records about the Great Depression. Students might analyze why the Midwest experienced a Dust Bowl during the Depression years, the effect it had on different communities, and assess the local and national response to this crisis. Choices for a response might include an annotated timeline, scrapbook, performance, speech, editorial, or position paper. These measure mastery of defined learning objectives, yet appeal to student preferences, are appropriate for different learners' needs, and are still rigorous for all.

### **Conclusion**

Working with primary sources can also be useful for students who demonstrate mastery of portions of the regular curriculum and require a well thought out independent study option. When students examine primary sources, they are working like real historians or scientists. Through observation, analysis, interpretation, synthesis and evaluation, students discover clues and integrate new information into their knowledge base. Through this process, students often uncover new theories or findings. Learning with primary sources is part of working like a professional in the field, testing and revising ideas and responding to new information.

With the millions of digitized primary sources available from libraries, museums, historical societies, universities and other cultural institutions, students have access to many of the materials that historians work with. They are well poised to create, in many forms, the next generation of historical interpretations.

Primary sources are most often integrated into the social studies classroom, but this raw stuff of history has a place in every discipline. Teachers across subject areas can use primary sources to adjust curriculum content, learning processes, or student products. Indeed, like our students, primary sources are diverse. A wealth of digitized primary sources provides teachers an efficient means to differentiate instruction by creating engaging learning opportunities to meet the unique needs of all students.

*"Dr. Rhonda Clevenson and Patricia Carlson manage the Library of Congress Teaching with Primary Source Northern Virginia Partnership (TPS-NVA) as Program Director and Assistant Program Director, respectively."*

### **References**

Tomlinson, C. (2001). *How to Differentiate Instruction in Mixed-Ability Classrooms*, 2nd Edition. Alexandria, VA: Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Library of Congress items referenced

Boone, N. (1936). American Life Histories: Manuscripts from the Federal Writers' Project, 1936-1940. [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/wpa:@field\(DOCID+@lit\(wpa228010807\)\)](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/wpa:@field(DOCID+@lit(wpa228010807)))

Lange, D. (1936). Migrant agricultural worker's family. [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?pp/fsaall:@filreq\(@field\(NUMBER+@band\(cph+3c31366\)\)+@field\(COLLID+fsa\)\)](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?pp/fsaall:@filreq(@field(NUMBER+@band(cph+3c31366))+@field(COLLID+fsa)))

Lee, R. (1936). Marcus Miller and family. [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?pp/fsaall:@field\(NUMBER+@band\(fsa+8b30038\)\)](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?pp/fsaall:@field(NUMBER+@band(fsa+8b30038)))

Sullivan, M. (1940). A traveler's line. [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/toddbib:@field\(DOCID+@lit\(4115a3\)\)](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/toddbib:@field(DOCID+@lit(4115a3)))

## Research and Current Thinking

For each issue, TPS partners 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 Research & Current Thinking focuses on differentiated instruction.

**Adapting Language Arts, Social Studies, and Science Materials for the Inclusive Classroom** (Lenz, K. and Schumaker, J., ERIC/OSEP Digest #E645) describes a nine step process for planning and implementing materials adaptations to allow students greater access to the information to be taught.

**Differentiated Instruction** (Hall, T., CAST Universal Design for Learning) defines and identifies components of differentiated instruction, provides guidelines making differentiation possible for teachers to attain and lists a variety of resources and links to learn more about differentiated instruction.



*Grammar school children gathered around a table doing woodworking projects while teachers watch nearby in a classroom. Library of Congress. Photographs from the Chicago Daily News, 1902-1933. American Memory.*

**Differentiated Instruction: Flexibility Without Breaking** (Hipsky, S., Robert Morris University, *Essays in Education*) reflects on practical strategies and provides some “stretches” that classroom teachers can do to meet the needs of all students. Suggestions and approaches include tiered instruction, flexible grouping, anchor activities, and learning contracts.

**Differentiation: From Planning to Practice, Grades 6-12** (Wormeli, R.) takes readers step-by-step from a blank page to a fully crafted differentiation lesson. Wormeli shows middle and high school teachers the behind-the-scenes planning that goes into effective lesson design for diverse classrooms, demonstrates how to weave common and novel differentiation strategies into all subjects and offers clear advice about what to do when things don't go as expected. The author provides an overview of the cognitive science behind differentiation as well as more than two-dozen tools to help implement differentiation in the classroom.

**Making a Difference: An Interview with Carol Ann Tomlinson** (Rebora, A., *Teacher*magazine.org) explains how differentiated instruction works and why we need it now. Tomlinson describes hallmarks of a well-run differentiated classroom, lists key concepts for teachers developing a differentiated lesson plan and how differentiated instruction fits into the current environment of mandated standards and standardized test scores. She addresses building “language bridges” to help English-language learners and the importance of teachers’ feelings of fulfillment in their roles.

**Primary Sources and Differentiated Instruction** (Moessinger, P., Waynesburg University) describes examples of differentiating instruction using primary sources from a curriculum guide entitled, “The Social History of the United States: Melting Pot or Salad Bowl?” The article includes a link to a complete curriculum guide, which features primary sources from the Library of Congress.

**The Rationale for Differentiated Instruction in Mixed-Ability Classrooms** (Tomlinson, C., Chapter 2 from *How to Differentiate Instruction in Mixed-Ability Classrooms*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition) describes how people learn best—the engine that drives effective differentiation. She also focuses on understanding the needs of both advanced and struggling learners, outlining principles for coaching advanced learners for growth and ensuring that struggling learners maximize their capacity in school.

**Universally Designed Instruction** (Orkwis, R., ERIC/OSEP Digest #E641) presents seven general principles of universal design developed by the Center for Universal Design at North Carolina State University. Orkwis focuses on the importance of flexibility in curriculum, teacher methods, classroom environment, and assessment. He also stresses the importance of including and supporting every student and being prepared and organized in order to maintain a flexible, intentional approach to differentiation.

To access links to articles cited above please visit the Teaching with Primary Sources Newsletter online at <http://www.loc.gov/teachers/tps/newsletter>.

## Learning Activity - Elementary Level

### THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE: DIFFERENTIATED LEARNING ACTIVITY

#### Overview

The purpose of this activity is to engage students at various academic levels in examining the Declaration of Independence. Below-level/ELL students will review the historical setting and influential figures surrounding the writing of the Declaration. On-level students will examine parts of the document. Above-level students will compare wording from various source documents with key phrases from the Declaration. All students will "rewrite" the Declaration of Independence as they evaluate alternative wording choices in the document, and later defend their decisions in class discussion.

#### Objectives

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

- explain the importance of the Declaration of Independence;
- identify and/or analyze key concepts put forth in the Declaration of Independence;
- and evaluate alternative wording choices in the Declaration and defend their decisions.

#### Time Required

Two class periods

#### Grade Level

4- 5

#### Topic/s

United States History/Government

#### Subject/Sub-subject

Social Studies, Language Arts (Reading)

#### Standards McREL 4th Edition Standards and Benchmarks

Grades K-4 History

Standard 4. Understands how democratic values came to be, and how they have been exemplified by people, events, and symbols

United States History

Standard 6. Understands the causes of the American Revolution, the ideas and interests involved in shaping the revolutionary movement, and reasons for the American victory.

Language Arts: Reading

Standard 7. Uses reading skills and strategies to understand and interpret a variety of informational texts.

Language Arts: Listening and Speaking

Standard 8. Uses listening and speaking strategies for different purposes.

Thinking and Reasoning

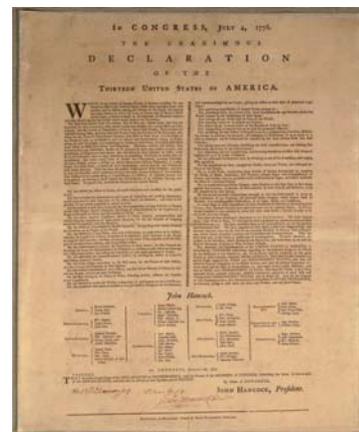
Standard 6. Applies decision-making techniques.

#### Credits

Cynthia L. Buher, Whittier Elementary School, Wheaton-Warrenville CUSD #200, Illinois.

#### View and Print the complete learning activity:

<http://www.loc.gov/teachers/tps/newsletter/pdf/Winter2009ElementaryLevelLearningActivity.pdf>



*Declaration of Independence*  
Baltimore, Maryland: Printed by  
Mary Katharine Goddard [1777]  
Library of Congress Bibliographic  
record: <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.rbc/bdsdcc.02101>

## Learning Activity - Secondary Level

### SLAVERY IN THE ANTEBELLUM SOUTH: VARYING THE LEARNING PROCESS WITH PRIMARY SOURCES

#### Overview

This learning activity engages students in an analysis of multiple primary sources relating to slavery in the antebellum South from the Library of Congress. It is tiered to accommodate different levels of student comprehension and ability, and to guide students of all learning levels to higher-order thinking.

#### Objectives

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

- articulate the differences in social, economic, and legal status of slaves in the antebellum South;
- speculate why the institution of slavery existed;
- and identify some of the arguments offered by 19<sup>th</sup> century abolitionist and pro-slavery groups.

#### Time Required

Two class periods

#### Grade level

6 - 8

#### Topic/s

Slavery of African-Americans

#### Subject/Sub-subject

Social Studies/History.

#### Standards

McREL 4th Edition Standards and Benchmarks [www.mcrel.org/compendium/browse.asp](http://www.mcrel.org/compendium/browse.asp)

United States History

Standard 12. Understands the sources and character of cultural, religious, and social reform movements in the antebellum period.  
Benchmark 1. Understands perspectives that influenced slavery in the antebellum period (e.g., changing ideas about race, the reception of proslavery and antislavery ideologies in the North and South, arguments used to defend slavery in the 18th and 19th centuries)

#### Credits

Activity adapted from a lesson plan developed by Courtney Kisat, Teaching with Primary Sources Program at Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, IL

#### View and Print the complete learning activity:

<http://www.loc.gov/teachers/tps/newsletter/pdf/Winter2009SecondaryLevelLearningActivity.pdf>



## Teacher Spotlight

### Renee Van Pelt

In each issue, we introduce a teacher who 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 features teacher Renee Van Pelt. The Southern Illinois University in Carbondale, Illinois TPS program nominated Renee for effective classroom use of primary sources to differentiate instruction. Renee has taught 32 years at Pinckneyville Elementary School in Pinckneyville, Illinois. She taught in a Learning Disabilities resource room (grades 1-8) for three years, second grade for eleven years, and kindergarten for fourteen years. Now in her fourth year teaching fourth grade, Renee discusses teaching strategies and favorite Library of Congress online resources.

**How did you learn about the Library of Congress TPS Program?** I learned about TPS from fellow teachers who had recommended it as professional development that gives useful information instead of busy work.

**What motivated you to participate in TPS workshops in your local area?** While I was looking for a class to complete teacher recertification, and wanted something interesting and different from professional development classes that I have taken in the past. I was looking for something that would provide me with strategies and materials to use in my classroom.

**Tell us about the first time that you tried using primary sources in your classroom.** One TPS course requirement at Southern Illinois University Carbondale (SIUC) was to field test existing primary source-based lesson plans. The first time I used primary sources in my classroom was testing a lesson created by another teacher in the national TPS program. To my surprise, it was very easy to carry out the lesson plan. During the lesson, students examine photographs of the White House from the Library of Congress Web site. Looking at the images, students became really excited! Listening to a description of the White House or reading its history in textbooks would not have had the same effect because each student would visualize something different. By examining these primary sources together, students could compare and contrast what they observed and discuss findings.

**How do primary sources help you differentiate instruction?** Teaching with primary sources resulted in all students learning and showing interest in the topic under study. Primary sources enable differentiated instruction using various methods, including auditory, visual and tactile, to include all students in learning.

I created a lesson titled "The Life of a Slave" that engaged students with primary sources in different formats. The lesson brought the issue of slavery to life using the narratives and photographs of former slaves from the Library of Congress collection, "Voices From the Days of Slavery: Former Slaves Tell Their Stories." The core of the lesson was the oral history. Listening to narratives had students mesmerized; you could have heard a pin drop in the classroom!

Throughout the lesson students asked lots of questions. We then researched questions and branched into other areas such as Harriet Tubman, the Underground Railroad, forced immigration, slave ships from Africa, the living conditions on ships and other topics. Students of varying abilities were assigned to partners or small groups to engage in cooperative learning practices. Activities varied depending upon learning needs and interests. Seeing the images of the actual people and hearing their stories in their own words engaged students in learning. Differentiating instruction using primary sources helped students to better understand what people went through during their time as slaves.

**What is your favorite resource on the Library of Congress Web site?** American Memory provides maps, photographs and documents that give insight into our nation's history and culture. Not only is it a great teaching tool, but I have learned new information visiting the site frequently and just looking around.

**What advice do you have for teachers who have never tried teaching with primary sources?** I encourage teachers to go to the Library of Congress Web site and just explore! [*Editor's note:* The Teachers Page, [www.loc.gov/teachers](http://www.loc.gov/teachers), provides a good starting point.] You will find many interesting primary sources, analysis tools and other resources. As you are looking at all of the information available to you, you will find your mind racing in many different directions just thinking of all the ways you could use primary sources in your classroom. And if you use primary sources in your lesson plans, you will be surprised at how much more easily your students will understand the content of your lessons.