# Examining Multiple Historical Perspectives Through Primary Sources

This lesson introduces strategies that can be used to prepare students to interact with primary sources when exploring historical perspectives on a certain time period or historical event. The strategies in this lesson can be adapted for future lessons in which primary sources are used. The strategies in this lesson can be found in the book Making Thinking Visible by Ron Ritchhart, March Church and Karin Morrison.

**Essential Questions**
What role do multiple causations play in describing a historic event?
What role does analysis have in historical construction?

**Objectives**
Students will be able to compare and contrast primary and secondary sources by providing examples of each.
Students will be able to analyze a primary source by observing details about the source, making hypotheses about the source, and generating questions for further research.
Students will be able to interpret a historical event or time period through multiple perspectives to develop their understanding of the event.

**Other Materials**
This lesson is designed to be used with primary sources. To maximize effectiveness and to create meaning for the students, teachers are encouraged to choose primary sources that are relevant to the topics being studied in class. This lesson must be used with primary sources that represent multiple perspectives on one historical event or time period. The lesson can be adapted to be used with individual sources or with a collection of complementary sources.

For this strategy to be effective, the sources should be novel to the students at the appropriate grade level, should be open for interpretation, and should be detailed enough that students will benefit from extended looking. WHRO eMediaVA is perfect to develop a playlist for which students can interact and continue to develop their analytical social studies skills.

**Suggested Instructional Procedures**

1.Do Now

On the board, draw a word web. In the middle bubble, write "Primary Sources."
Students will participate in a Think-Write-Share to answer the question, "What do you think you know about primary sources?" (Think-Write-Share is a variation of the Think-Pair-Share.)

Students may record their answers in their notes or you can provide them with a copy of a word web. Give students one minute to think or brainstorm, two minutes to write their answers, and allow four minutes to share. Record student answers on the board as they share.
(10 Minutes)

**Introduction to New Material**

Ask students if they know the difference between a primary and a secondary source. Tell students they will be using primary sources in today's lesson, but before they can begin, they must know the difference between the two.

Create a T-Chart on a sheet of chart paper. In one column, write "Primary," in the other write "Secondary." Use two different colors of markers. In one color, write the definition of a primary and secondary source. The definition of a primary source is as follows: "A primary source is an original document or physical object that was written or created during the time period of study." The definition of a secondary source is as follows: "A secondary source is written about the time period. A secondary source might offer an analysis of the primary source." (To save time, this chart can be prepared ahead of time and revealed at the appropriate time.)

Using another color marker, have students share their examples of each. Write them in the chart as students share. Some examples of primary sources may come from the answers students shared during the Do Now. If, during the Do Now, a student incorrectly shared an example of a secondary source instead of a primary source, this is a great "teachable moment," where the student's answer can be listed correctly under the column "Secondary."

(7 minutes)

**Guided Practice**

Pass out an enlarged copy of a primary source or project the image on a screen. Tell students that they will be participating in an exercise called "See-Think-Wonder" on a topic that they have already been studying in class.

In the "see" stage, students should share what they notice about the source. Discourage interpreting what they see and explain that you are only interested in what detail they notice about the source. Model this step if students struggle.
In the "think" stage, encourage students to think about the source. If the source is an image, students may be asked what they think is happening in the image. If the source is a document, ask students what the document makes them think about. Help students to dig deeper by asking, "Why do you say that?"
In the "wonder" stage, students should be encouraged to ask broad questions and to share questions that are raised by the source's content, as opposed to asking questions directly related to the source, e.g. "I wonder what that object is."

*To extend this part of the lesson, students can participate in a Think-Pair-Share or a Think-Write-Share at each stage. If this lesson is broken into two class periods, you may give students more than one primary source with which to practice the "See-Think-Wonder" exercise.

(12 minutes)

**Independent Practice**

Prepare multiple primary sources that depict differing perspectives on one historical event. This strategy is best used with a controversial historical event or a historical event about which people have multiple perspectives. Try to reflect the multiple perspectives in the sources you choose. You may adapt the number of sources you use to fit the amount of class time you want to dedicate to the lesson.

Tell the students that they will use the "See-Think-Wonder" strategy to investigate many different perspectives on one event in history. Either project the images of the primary sources or pass out enlarged copies. Have students apply the "See-Think-Wonder" strategy to the sources independently. Students can record their answers in their notebooks or in a graphic organizer.

*If this lesson is broken into two class periods, this part of the lesson can be modified by setting up stations around the classroom with a different type of primary sources at each station (e.g., a painting, a political cartoon, the classroom computer set up to play a news clip, a listening station with a recording of a famous speech). Have students circulate to the different stations and record what they see/hear, think and wonder about each of the objects.

(13 minutes)

**Closing**

Distribute "exit tickets" with the phrase, "I used to think...., now I think..." written. Encourage students to reflect on the days' learning. Ask the students to consider how their thinking has changed from the start of the lesson. Give the students two minutes to complete the sentence, "I used to think..., now I think..."
Collect the exit tickets as students leave and use them to assess the students' learning and understanding of the concepts.

Your expectation for how students changed their thinking will reflect the scope of the lesson -- if the lesson was only meant as an introduction to primary sources, students might write that they changed their thinking on what a primary source is. Rather, if the primary sources are relevant to a topic being studied in class, students will gain knowledge not just about primary sources, but about the topic of study, as well.

(3 minutes)

**Vocabulary**
Analysis: breaking something into its parts for deeper study; exploring relationships between items; comparing and contrasting what is here with prior knowledge; identifying fact and opinion

Interpret: to synthesize material in a new way that reflects the bringing together of analysis with prior knowledge; to provide an understanding of the thing for another

Primary source: a source that was created at the time of ane vent; a first-hand account, e.g. a letter, diary, photograph, newspaper article written by a party involved in an event or an eyewitness

Secondary source: a source that was created about an event after it; providing an interpretation of the event, using other more than one source, e.g. textbook, film, webpage article

Adapted from “Examining Multiple Historical Perspectives Through Primary Sources” from Historical Society of Pennsylvania.
https://hsp.org/education/unit-plans/using-primary-sources-in-the-classroom/examining-multiple-historical-perspectives-through-primary-sources