Primary Source Analysis and Historical Thinking Skills

Teaching with Primary Sources – MTSU
Kira Duke

The Basics to Primary Source Analysis

- Goals of analysis
  - Provide students with a better understanding of the past and the complexities of history
  - Higher-order thinking skills
  - Critical thinking skills

The Basics to Primary Source Analysis

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Life on the lower East Side, cor. Pitt and Rivington Streets, North, N.Y. [c1915 April 25]

Analysis as Part of Inquiry

- What do you see?
- What do you know?
- What do you wonder?

Analysis Builds Common Core Skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EVIDENCE</th>
<th>SUMMARY</th>
<th>SUPPORTING DETAILS</th>
<th>INFERENCE</th>
<th>MAIN IDEA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SEQUENCE</td>
<td>AUTHOR’S PURPOSE</td>
<td>VOCABULARY</td>
<td>POINT OF VIEW</td>
<td>ARGUMENT &amp; SUPPORT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TEXT COMPLEXITY</td>
<td>DIVERSE FORMATS</td>
<td>TEXT STRUCTURE</td>
<td>MULTIPLE SOURCES</td>
<td>CHANGE OVER TIME</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Digging Deeper – Historical Thinking Skills

- Enable students to interpret, analyze and use information about past events
- Chronological Thinking
- Historical Comprehension
- Historical Analysis and Interpretation
- Historical Research Capabilities
- Historical Issues Analysis and Decision-Making

Analysis Geared to Historical Thinking Skills

- H - Historical Context
- I - Intended Audience
- P - Point of View
- O - Outside Information

Historical Context

- Connecting a document to specific historical events, circumstances of time and place, and/or broader ideas.
  - When/where was the source created?
  - What was going on when the author wrote this document?
  - How does this help you better understand the document?

Intended Audience

- Identify the person or the group the author expects to inform or influence.
  - Does the audience affect the tone or content?

Point of View

- What is the author’s relationship to the event?
  - How does this affect the author’s understanding of that event?
  - How reliable is the author?

Point of View cont.

- Factors that might impact the source:
  - Gender
  - Age
  - Ethnicity
  - Social status
  - Economic status
  - Religious beliefs
  - Political beliefs
  - Position (job)
Purpose

- Why did the author write the document at this time?
  - To inform
  - To persuade
  - To entertain
  - To influence
  - To record
  - Argument/authors thesis

Outside Information

- What historical information can you get from the document? (outside info)
  - Not specifically stated in the document, must be connected
  - May support or refute the info in the document
  - How does the document help you make your argument? (inferences)

Immigration Report: 1907 A Banner Year

From New York Tribune, December 16, 1907

About the New York Tribune

Other Resources for Historical Thinking:
- Historical Thinking Volume I
- Historical Thinking Volume II
- Historical Thinking Volume III