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A Journey with Early Explorers Using Primary Sources

By: Amanda Star

Prior knowledge: Before winter break the students finished a unit on early exploration of the Americas. This lesson will serve to review and connect prior knowledge as an introduction to using primary sources in their upcoming social studies unit. They will also be transitioning in language arts from expository essays to informative historical research.

Overview:

Providing the students with a brief overview of primary sources from the Library of Congress and how analysis will enhance their prior knowledge on any subject. Today we will be looking at/analyzing some artifacts from early exploration of the Americas. Beginning with lecture and PowerPoint with group analysis, students will then get into small groups for independent/group work.

Goal:

The goal of this lesson is to provide students with the skills to research, analyze, and utilize primary sources. Students will have the opportunity to strengthen these skills by examining documents/artifacts from the Library of Congress in class.

Objectives:

- Students will be able to identify primary sources.
- Students will see the value of using primary sources in their research for their writing.
- Students will learn what questions to consider when critically analyzing a document/artifact. Students will become familiar with the resources available to them through the Library of Congress.
- Students will be introduced to proper citation of primary sources when used in their own research.

Vocabulary words (from text book):

Technology

Navigation

Expedition

Caravels

Empire

Entrepreneur

Cost

Benefit

Investigative Questions:

What is a primary source? What is not a primary source? Where can we find primary sources? How can primary sources be useful? How do you cite primary sources?

Time Required:

One class period – 45 minutes long

Recommended Grade Range

This lesson is an introduction to the use of primary sources. It will be geared towards the elementary level (3rd-5th). I will be teaching it to 5th graders.

Subject / Sub-Subject:

This lesson will touch upon a previous unit of social studies, while introducing students to the use of technology in their research with Library of Congress. As the students are preparing to begin a unit in language arts about informative historical research they will receive a brief overview of properly citing sources from Library of Congress.

9. Standards

CC.K-12.W.R.9 Research to Build and Present Knowledge: Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research

CC.5.W.7 Research to Build and Present Knowledge: Conduct short research projects that use several sources to build knowledge through investigation of different aspects of a topic.

CC.5.SL.1 Comprehension and Collaboration: Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 5 topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

CC.5.L.6 Vocabulary Acquisition and Use: Acquire and use accurately grade-appropriate general academic and domain-specific words and phrases, including those that signal contrast, addition, and other logical relationships (e.g., however, although, nevertheless, similarly, moreover, in addition).

Credits:

Designer(s)

Amanda Star

PREPARATION

Materials Used:

Pre-printed and laminated images for analysis and graphs to fill out provided by LoC.

Power Point with lesson lecture. Exit slips for teacher to do assessment for student's comprehension (and my reflection).

Images for analysis:

<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/det1994012335/PP/>

<http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.gmd/g3200.ct000725>

<http://myloc.gov/Exhibitions/EarlyAmericas/ExplorationsandEncounters/ColumbusandtheTaino/ExhibitObjects/EarlyDescriptionoftheNewWorld.aspx>

PROCEDURE

1. Describe an incident that happened on my way to work. (i.e. car accident) ask them if it is a reliable source. Is it a primary source? What if I then told them that it was a story I overheard someone else telling while getting coffee? Is that as reliable as a firsthand account?

2. Begin PP presentation. Go over the material covered. Define primary and secondary sources with examples. (5-10min)

3. (Observe)As a group observe image on overhead and have a group discussion where we walk through the “question, observe, reflect” processes of analysis using images from LoC. Do this with a few documents. Make sure all students are joining in the discussion. (5-10min)
4. (Reflect)Ask students to break into their preassigned small groups. (6 groups of 6) Pass out the laminates and analysis charts. Students can then choose a partner within their group to work with. EVERY student should have a chart filled out to the best of their ability by the end of this exercise. Leave slide on overhead with sample questions that they can refer to.
5. Use this opportunity to move around class and see that students understand work and provide them with leading questions if necessary. (10min)
6. (Question)Reconvene and have students share their observations (using name sticks). Discuss and compare analysis. (5min)
7. Discuss the possibilities of how they could use this information and how they would give credit to the creator, as not to plagiarize. Show slide of citation examples. Have students use the information on back of image to write a citation on their chart. (5min)
8. On the backside of their charts have them do an exit slip (3,2,1) to use for my reflection.

Assessment:

By reading over the students charts they filled out the teacher will be able to assess the depth of their analysis. Active participation in the small group work and exit slips will be taken into account, as well. This is a general introduction to the use of primary sources and is not grade dependant.

[Primary Sources Journey with Early Explorers PPT](#)

Reflection Component

“A Journey with Early Explorers Using Primary Sources”

To me, the success of a lesson is based on the student’s engagement at the time and what they take away from it. Based on these criteria the lesson I taught to the 5th grade class at Stone Scholastic Academy was greatly successful. During the lesson’s whole group discussion I did not have to prompt students for participation; they eagerly joined in. I also spoke with the homeroom teacher a few weeks later and she told me that the students have been using the term “primary sources” as they prepare for a new research assignment.

At the time of the lesson I was nervous, as most people would be under observation. We got off to a late start as the students returned from specials a few minutes late. I told my intro story about the car accident to give them something relatable regarding first hand/ second hand accounts. I would probably brush up my story to something a little less dramatic, because the students got sidetracked and wanted to talk about the car accident. As I walked the students through the lesson I began to feel more at ease with myself and the

effectiveness of the material.

The PowerPoint on the SMART board was very helpful in doing an inquiry as a whole group. The students seemed excited about the source we were analyzing (Columbus's coat of arms). They had many assumptions based on details they observed. I do believe that they were surprised when they found out what it actually was and what the symbolism stood for. The students in this class are very active and eager to explore the primary sources provided. While I was glad that they were so engaged – it did take longer to move through the lesson than I anticipated. This is definitely a multipart lesson. While we were not able to get through all of the proper citation material, I was able to stress the importance of plagiarism and how to avoid it while using primary sources. The homeroom teacher said she would be covering this material later.

If I were to teach this lesson again (and already have gone back to this grade for a mini-lesson on primary sources) I would break it down to possibly 3 days. The first day would be an introduction and analysis, second we would cover proper citation and on the last day have the students research and find a primary source on their own. This could be the culmination assessment. A rubric could be established grading the quality of the source, the relevance of the source and the proper citation of the source. While I believe these students did learn about analyzing primary sources from my lesson I would like to have seen more time spent with guided instruction. Reading through the students worksheets after the lesson I could see where some students rushed through the written portion and some really paid attention to the details they were observing.

The skill being taught in this lesson is a valuable one that a student will hopefully use often as they progress in their education. I would like to see more exposure to the ideas and use of primary sources at an earlier age. We see use primary/secondary sources in our everyday lives, but how often do we dig deeper into what we are looking at? If we activate students thought processes of analysis it will become second nature as they start to expand their research.