Lesson Plans

Fall 2014

Introduction to Analyzing Sources

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Recommended Citation

Introduction to Analyzing Sources
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1. Title: Introduction to Analyzing Sources

2. Overview:
This lesson introduces students to the concept of primary and secondary sources and how to analyze them. It includes discussing bias and how source bias affects the study of history. It also includes modeling by way of whole-class guided source analysis, and later smaller group analysis.

3. Goal:
Students will learn to distinguish and analyze primary and secondary sources.

4. Objectives:
Students will correctly determine if a source is primary or secondary. They will discuss and rephrase what is bias in sources and how it can affect social studies. They will critically analyze primary sources using the LOC analysis method – Observe, Reflect, Question – correctly separating their work into those categories.

5. Investigative Question:
How can the bias of a primary or secondary source influence what we know about history?

6. Time Required
This lesson will take one and a half 45 minute class periods. The first half-lesson will be dedicated to students' learning the differences between primary and secondary sources. The second day whole-class period will be for teacher-guided reflection on bias and its effects on examination of the past (not to exceed half of the class time), followed by modeling the analysis of primary sources. Subsequent classes will transition students from teacher-led analysis toward student group or independent analysis. (The remainder of the unit will take about four class periods.)

7. Recommended Grade Range
Recommended for grades 6-8 as students are transitioning to think more abstractly than concretely.

8. Subject / Sub-Subject:
Social Studies / Skill Development Unit

9. Standards:
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.8
  Distinguish among fact, opinion, and reasoned judgment in a text.
    - 16.A.3c Identify the differences between historical fact and interpretation.

10. Credits: Mrs. Tiffany Simoncelli

<u>**PREPARATION**</u>

11. Materials Used:
PowerPoint slide prints, projector, exit slip, pictures of students' highlighters, notebooks

12. Resources Used:
Photo of Egyptian sandals: http://www.ancientegypt.co.uk/life/story/sand.html

Photo of Egyptian woman with mirror: http://www.ancientegypt.co.uk/life/story/ste.html

Map: "City of Chicago"; http://www.loc.gov/item/2011593046/; created by Gaylord Watson, 1871

Leavenworth Bulletin Article "First Edition Chicago Gone" Vol. XVII, Issue 155, Leavenworth, Kansas 10/9/1871

"Rhode Island Insurance Companies Excited over the Chicago Fire," *Boston Daily Journal* Vol. 38, Issue 12857, Boston, Massachusetts 10/10/1871

"The Great Chicago Fire," *Colorado Springs Gazette,* Colorado Springs, Colorado 4/24/1906

<u>**PROCEDURE**</u>

1st Half-day:
1. After students complete a quiz from the previous unit, students pick up a copy of the PowerPoint slides and follow the directions of reading, marking key elements, and inserting the page into their notebook.

2. When all students are at least finished with the marking of key elements, reiterate the differences between primary and secondary sources by reviewing what students learned last year about ancient Egypt. Then compare that knowledge with the photo of Egyptian sandals and its analysis using the Observe-Reflect-Question model. [Connect, Predict]

3. If time allows, continue to practice source analysis modeling with the photo of the Egyptian woman with the mirror, walking through the Observe-Reflect-Question model.

Second day (full class period)
1. For bell work, students analyze the quote: "All history is biased. History is about winners and losers. Winners' stories get told; losers' don't." (quoted from a colleague) with the guided questions: What does it mean? And If it is true, how does that impact our studies? [Wonder]

2. Discuss students' interpretations of the quote and clarify the meaning of bias (representing a certain perspective) and teach the three principles of applying this knowledge to source analysis:

      1) Read/view everything skeptically and critically.
      2) Consider the author's point of view - never face value.
      3) Cross check all evidence with related sources.

3. Introduce the topic of the Chicago Fire of 1871 by giving a general overview of the facts. (That there was a fire that consumed a significant portion of the city in 1871.) Then have students share with a partner what kind of news they think would have been reported after the fire. [Connect, Predict]

4. Tell students they will practice source analysis as a class to find out if they are correct. Distribute copies of the Kansas newspaper article and the LOC Primary Source Analysis Tool. Read through the text and walk through the Observe-Reflect-Question model and determine whether it is primary or secondary, and identify the source's bias/agenda. [Investigate, Express]

5. Repeat the above activity but with the Massachusetts newspaper article. Then again with the Colorado article (if time allows). [Investigate, Express]

6. Ask students to reflect on their predictions of what news would be reported after the fire. [Investigate, Reflect]

7. Distribute the exit slip for students to complete by the beginning of class the next day. [Reflect]

The slip asks students:
- What is the difference between a primary and secondary source?
- What is one way a source's bias can affect accounts of history?
- How well do you feel you understand the process of analyzing sources?: 4-I could teach it to someone., 3-I think I can do it., 2-I need to go over it some more., 1-I have no idea what we are talking about.
- Is there anything you want to ask or need me to explain better?

14. Extensions
Throughout the year, students can be given "Surprise Source" activities where the teacher provides a source on the current topic of study, and the students must classify it as primary or secondary, then analyze it for what bias it has and how that affects the interpretation of the past event.

EVALUATION

15. Evaluation:
A. Student answers to review questions as day-two bellwork will reveal whether or not they can differentiate primary and secondary sources.

B. Students' exit slips will reveal the level of their understanding of the impact of bias in sources.

C. Subsequent class work and unit quiz (containing questions where students must classify sources as primary or secondary and complete a smaller scale Observe, Reflect, Question chart) will reveal the level to which students can separate fact from opinion or judgment in sources.

Lesson Reflection

Overall I was impressed with the students' ability to differentiate between primary and secondary sources by the end of this lesson. Most classes gave correct classifications to suggested sources with 100% participation by day two, showing that they met the primary objective. Additionally, the third day (day after the lesson), students could identify correct terms related to the LOC analysis process when provided definitions. For bell work that third day, students wrote the definitions in their notebook, then as a class we added the corresponding vocabulary (primary source, secondary source, bias) and procedure words (observe, reflect, question). Since that time, they have been given examples of sources and correctly differentiated between primary and secondary as well as reiterated the meaning and implication of bias in analyzing sources.

In reflecting on this lesson's timing, this lesson definitely requires two full classes. As it was, the first day's half-lesson was shorter than desired due to the time students needed to finish the quiz given at the beginning of class. That meant that no class had enough time to analyze both Egyptian sources, but a few were able to analyze the sandals. The second day, students analyzed the bell work quote and collectively analyzed the first two Chicago Fire sources, but had to analyze the third source on the following day. They did have time to predict the types of news they would expect after a disaster (and they gave a wide range of answers), but unfortunately, I neglected to revisit students' predictions about the types of news stories they expected in three of the five classes throughout the day. Part of what slowed down day two was reading the first source aloud to the class, but I actually would highly recommend doing so. It helped greatly that we analyzed the first source together and that I read it aloud, because when students had to analyze the third source in pairs, I discovered that they struggled to read the newspaper type. Next year, I will either print this third source larger or re-type it for students to be able to decipher the words. Making this change and allotting two full days should be perfect timing.

As for general observations of the lesson, it very much seemed to clarify the bell work quote's impact on our studies when students thought of historical examples of winners and losers. Utilizing specific examples helped bring the "concrete thinkers" closer to abstract thinking. Along those same lines, one class period, I asked if students thought the opening quote was true, but their collective answer (a programmed-like "yes") seemed to indicate that they did not yet know how to challenge the concept of all history being biased. Thus, I thought it would be better to proceed in the lesson on the assumption that it is true. Later this year I hope to have students re-evaluate the quote after they have more examples of historical accounts that could perhaps be used to defend or argue against this statement.

Also, in working with sixth graders, I discovered that as a whole, they are unfamiliar with such vocabulary as face value and even the pronunciation of bias. Throughout the second day I learned it was important to clarify the unfamiliar terms and phrases as well as to clarify some terms in the reading with multiple meanings (i.e. cars being for freight, not automobiles; excited meaning strong feelings, not happiness, etc.). Again, it was helpful to use a concrete example in order to explain these terms and phrases. So, the first half-day I gave students the scenario of: you wrote home a letter from summer camp to your parents. This single pretend "source" helped me to later explain: bias and its impacts on historical study (how the letter may not include info that could get students in trouble at home or may only include their version of events and would be different than if it was a letter to their friend), face value vs. actual meaning (sarcastically saying how great camp is while actually meaning it is awful), and primary vs. secondary source (their letter vs. my pretend upcoming video for The History Channel on youth summer camp experiences). Obviously, this example became an invaluable part of the lesson, since I could use it for multiple purposes.

Finally, in reflecting on the assessments, many students reported that they did not understand the second question on the exit slip. Next time, it would be better to reword it as: "How does the bias of a source affect what we know about historical events," and to include a definition of bias on the slip as a reminder since it was not yet in their class notes. Encouragingly, though, students could answer the question once they understood what it was asking. Additionally, in the days following this lesson, students could separate observations from reflections about 80% of the time during analysis of artifacts, photos, political cartoons, and historical maps. They key factor that made the difference in the depth of analysis provided by different classes seemed to be background knowledge of the time/place being studied. After the third day's class, I asked students to indicate their confidence in their own individual analysis abilities on a scale of "fist-to-five". All students reported confidence levels of three, four, and five. Students have yet to take the unit quiz, but I am predicting that many will successfully differentiate primary/secondary sources, but there will be a wider range of depth of analysis of sources.