

The Teaching with Primary Sources Journal

Strategies and resources for K-12 classrooms from the Library of Congress



TEACHING
with PRIMARY
SOURCES

Primary Sources: At the Heart of the Common Core State Standards by Rich Cairn

The Teaching with Primary Sources Journal, Vol. 1, No. 2, Fall, 2012 [Read the full article from http://www.loc.gov/teachers/tps/journal/common_core/article.html]

What role do primary sources play in meeting the standards?

Primary sources are integral to helping students achieve the CCSS. The standards require students to digest and apply information using discipline-specific skills, such as analysis, comparing sources, persuasive writing, and research. Students generate questions, take and organize notes, find, analyze, and cite sources. Additionally, learning new content vocabulary is essential, as is the ability to compare historical interpretations and form hypotheses. Note that literacy skills embedded in the CCSS include oral communication. Presentations provide vital opportunities for students to listen and speak. Under the English Language Arts standards, students beginning in the earliest grades must substantiate written arguments with evidence. Students also learn to “gain, evaluate, and present increasingly complex information, ideas, and evidence through listening and speaking as well as media.”

The Common Core approaches science and social studies with a particular emphasis on literacy. This has several implications for teaching with primary sources. The CCSS greatly increase the focus on informational text at all grades. Assessment designers explicitly recommend a 50-50 split between literature and informational texts, starting at the primary grades. Students must be able to use subject-specific concepts and particular academic vocabulary in context.

Through the grades, students increasingly shift to writing explanation, argument, and analysis. Students’ capacity to source, organize, analyze, cite, discuss, and write about information gained from both primary and secondary sources is paramount.

Illustrative ways to address specific standards using primary sources from the Library of Congress

[Table created by TPS at SIUE with text from Rich Cairn’s article. Read the full article at http://www.loc.gov/teachers/tps/journal/common_core/article.html]

Grade/Standards Connection	Description of Activity
Grade 2 “Describe the connection between a series of historical events, scientific ideas or concepts, or steps in technical procedures in a text.” [Reading Standards for Informational Text #3 K-5] Demonstrate the ability to formulate ideas based on their analysis of texts.	-Observe technological advances by analyzing photographs including a horse and buggy ; a very early automobile ; a Ford Model T ; and a car from the 1950s . -Compare car designs from the past to those of today, and speculate about the cultural shifts that led to, or resulted from, this evolving form of personal transportation.
Grade 4 Explain cause and effect using evidence identified in informational text. [Reading Standards for Informational #3 Text K-5]	-Teacher selects primary sources from The Dust Bowl Migrations Primary Source Set for students to analyze items including a map, photographs and song lyrics. -Investigate the environmental disaster that triggered the largest migration in U.S. history.
Grade 5 “Analyze multiple accounts of the same event or topic, noting important similarities and difference in the point of view they represent.” [Reading Standard #6 for Informational Text K-5]	-Teacher selects items from another primary source set, such as Women’s Suffrage , to understand how people expressed different viewpoints through political cartoons, physical protests and publications.
Grades 6-8 “Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.” [Reading Standard # 1 for Literacy in History/Social Studies]	-Studying the Civil Rights Movement read and cite evidence from a letter, such as Daisy Bates and the Little Rock Nine , which describes the treatment of African-American students who integrated their local high school. -Explore and cite evidence from additional primary sources featured in the Library’s online exhibition, “ With an Even Hand ”: Brown v. Board at Fifty . The object list includes images and documents, including legal correspondence relating to the case.
Grades 11-12 “Analyze in detail how a complex primary source is structured, including how key sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text contribute to the whole.” [Reading Standard #5 for Literacy in History/Social Studies]	-Examine the rhetorical construction of a key speech such as Theodore Roosevelt’s second inaugural address . -Analyze drafts of famous literary works, for example, the poems “ The Ballad of Booker T. ,” by Langston Hughes and “ O Captain, My Captain. ” by Walt Whitman. -A collection of manuscripts, such as The Thomas Jefferson Papers , could provide a varied yet manageable pool of sources that students could mine to inform an explanatory essay on the drafting of the Declaration of Independence.
Grades 11-12 “Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., quantitative data, video, multimedia) in order to address a question or solve a problem.” [Reading Standard #7 for Literacy in History/Social Studies]	-Analyze historical tables, charts and maps, such as those on page eight of a statistical atlas of the United States, based upon the results of the eleventh census to observe data trends going back to 1790 and compare this data to more recent U.S. census data. -Investigate a larger question, such as “How did Americans at the turn of the last century react to large numbers of new immigrants?” might analyze a leaflet from the Immigration Restriction League along with a 1916 sound recording of a popular song, “Don’t Bite the Hand That’s Feeding You,” for examples of expressed anti-immigrant sentiment. These and other primary sources in a range of formats are available in the Library’s immigration-themed primary source set .

TIP: For more strategies and resources for K-12 classrooms from the Library of Congress go to *The Teaching with Primary Sources Journal* archives at <http://www.loc.gov/teachers/tps/journal/>



Common Core State Standards and Library of Congress Primary Sources

December 6, 2012 by Cheryl Lederle <http://blogs.loc.gov/teachers/2012/12/common-core-state-standards-and-library-of-congress-primary-sources/>

This is a guest post by Meg Steele, who works with K-12 teachers at the Library of Congress, and Mary J. Johnson, an educational consultant to the Library of Congress.

Teachers in nearly every state are implementing the *Common Core State Standards*, mapping existing curriculum to the standards, and creating, revising or tweaking classroom strategies and practices.

Despite their relative newness, some teachers have said of the Common Core: “Oh, I already do this!” We here on the education staff at the Library of Congress had the same reaction. The very skills required for effective teaching and learning with primary sources—skills that are core to the Library’s K-12 materials—are also central to the CCSS.

So, where exactly do primary sources fit into the CCSS? We’d like to highlight three ways that stand out:

- First, the Common Core State Standards explicitly state that students will be adept at reading both *primary* and *secondary* sources.** Primary sources—the raw materials of history—require students to look for details and synthesize ideas. Comparing and contrasting primary sources with secondary sources lets students construct their own understanding, and encourages them to question prior knowledge.
- Second, the CCSS emphasize the use of *informational* text.** Primary sources offer a range of types of informational texts that will engage students: books and articles, of course, but also newspapers, manuscripts, speeches, letters, diaries and formats with visual elements to “read” such as maps, photographs, cartoons, film, etc. The immigration article from New York’s *The Evening World* (5/20/22)—and thousands of others available from the Library’s Web site—is just one example teachers will find with simple key word searches.
- Third, the Standards emphasize reading skills that *parallel* best practices for using primary sources.** When students analyze primary sources, they make observations and inferences backed by evidence about vocabulary, point of view, cause and effect, and more. Primary sources drive students to wrestle with contradictions, ask questions, and develop a research strategy to find answers, leading them to other primary and secondary sources.



Image from New York evening world, May 20, 1922
<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030193/1922-05-29/ed-1/seq-13/>

How do resources from the Library of Congress fit in? Our free [teacher resources and professional development](#) are all targeted at building primary source analysis skills.

For a quick start: Here, you’ll find [analysis guides](#) that support teachers in generating lesson frameworks and guiding questions aligned with Common Core. See the analysis guides in action in an [online professional development module](#) on analyzing primary sources. Use the guides hand in hand with our [primary source sets](#), which offer a curated set of informational texts of varied complexity, and accessible to students. You can, of course, [select additional primary sources](#) to meet your teaching objectives.

The Library’s primer on [“Using Primary Sources”](#) delves deeper into developing critical thinking skills with primary sources. The Fall 2012 Teaching with Primary Sources Journal offers even more strategies and resources on [Primary Sources and the Common Core State Standards](#).

TIP: For this and other blogs about Library of Congress primary sources and the Common Core State Standards, go to The Teaching with the Library of Congress Blog at <http://blogs.loc.gov/teachers/> and enter “Common Core” in the search box.