

Teacher’s Guide: Analyzing Primary Source Media

Recommended Grade Level: 6-12

Suggested Time: About one hour completed in the classroom or at home, plus additional time to complete the final assignment

Goals

During this lesson, students will accomplish the following:

- Understand what primary sources are and what historians can learn from them
- Learn how to analyze primary sources and gain a sense of how people at a time in history felt about individuals, issues, and events of the day
- Examine a primary source in depth and prepare a detailed and personal analysis of it

Overview

Analyzing Primary Source Media is a student-directed learning experience. However, while students are expected to work through the lesson on their own, teachers should be available to keep the lesson on track, answer questions, and ensure that all learning goals are met.

The following is a summary of the lesson screens:

- Screen 1: Students learn that primary sources are pieces of evidence from which they can learn about historical figures, issues, and events.
- Screen 2: Students read about the different types of primary sources and are introduced to a three-step method for analyzing primary source news footage that they will apply during the lesson.
- Screen 3: Students read about the first step: observe. They watch a video that features news footage of Barack Obama when he was a law student. They then write down observations about what they see in the footage, using some questions to guide them.
- Screen 4: Students read about the second step: interpret. They watch a video showing news footage of some of the effects of the 1979 oil crisis: long lines and fuel shortages at gas stations. They then write down interpretations based on their observations, using some questions to guide them.
- Screen 5: Students read about the third step: question. They watch a video containing news footage that captures the strong emotional response following the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. They then write down new questions that they may have thought of after watching the footage.
- Screen 6: Students learn that they will be using the three-step method to analyze a single primary source and write a detailed essay or blog post. They watch two videos they have yet to see in the lesson.

- Screen 7: Students choose the one video out of the five that interests them the most, watch their chosen video, and then write down observations about what they see. They may reuse observations they made about this video earlier in the lesson but should look for new ones as well. Several questions are provided to guide them.
- Screen 8: Students interpret their observations, citing evidence to support their ideas. They may reuse interpretations they made about this video earlier in the lesson but should look to add new ones as well. Several questions are provided to guide them.
- Screen 9: Students complete their analysis by asking questions about the video that haven't yet been answered. Once again, several questions are provided to guide them.
- Final Assignment: Based on what they've learned during the lesson and their notes, students prepare a written analysis of their chosen primary source. Before doing this, they will meet with you to discuss their notes and any questions they have. They will then conduct any further research that is necessary to understand the subject of the primary source footage in its historical context. Depending on your instructions, the writing assignment will take the form of an essay or blog post that the students will publish.

Lesson Assessments

The following are descriptions of the lesson features that will be part of the packet of materials that students will submit. Students will use the packet for reference when writing their final assignment. It also allows you to monitor students' work as they are progressing through the lesson.

- **Notes** - Students take notes on screens 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, and 9. If time allows, review their notes before they begin their writing assignment.
- **Final Assignment** - Students complete the final writing assignment. Depending on your goals for the lesson and the technical resources available to you, you may have students write an essay that they will turn in or a blog post that you will help them publish. You may also want to clearly define for students your expectations for the work they are to complete. For example, you may state how long an essay should be and show an example of an effective blog post.

Lesson Aids and Extensions

Use the following suggestions to help students if they are stuck on a particular screen, to prepare students for completing their writing assignments, or as follow-up discussions to reinforce learning.

- **Watching Videos** - Encourage students to watch the videos more than once. If you are completing the lesson as a classroom activity, after students initially view a video, provide them with a specific content focus to frame their next viewing(s). This will help them draw connections between the main topic and the information that the video has to offer.
- **Answering Questions** - Before students view the videos or, encourage them to read any questions they will be expected to answer so they can watch with the questions in mind.