Analyzing a Primary Source

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Subject /Grade Level: 11th grade United States History

Overview: Analyzing primary sources is an important component of study for historians and greatly furthers our understanding of historical events. During this activity students will read and carefully evaluate a primary source using the primary source analysis worksheet provided by the National Archives.

Objective: Students will learn how to carefully analyze a primary source.

Alabama Dept. of Education Curriculum Standard:

IL (K-12) 1. The student who is information literate accesses information efficiently and effectively.
  • Recognizes the need for information.
  • Recognizes that accurate and comprehensive information is the basis for intelligent decision making.
  • Formulates questions based on information needs.
  • Identifies a variety of potential sources of information.
  • Develops and uses successful strategies for locating information.

SS2010 (9-12) 5. Analyze cultural elements, including language, art, music, literature, and belief systems, to determine how they facilitate global understanding or misunderstanding.

TC2 (6-8) 11. Use digital tools and strategies to locate, collect, organize, evaluate, and synthesize information.
Examples:
  • locating—Boolean searches, graphic organizers, spreadsheets, databases
  • collecting—probeware, graphing calculators
  • organizing—graphic organizers, spreadsheets
  • evaluating—reviewing publication dates, determining credibility
  • synthesizing—word processing software, concept-mapping software
**Time Needed:** One hour

**Materials Needed:**
- primary source analysis worksheet

**Primary Sources:**
- The Gettysburg Address
- President Lincoln’s 2nd Inaugural address
- President Kennedy's Inaugural address
- Letter from Martin Luther King written to W.E.B Dubois
- Heed Their Rising voices advertisement
- Wallace for governor pamphlet (1970)
- Freedmen’s bureau labor contract.
- Montgomery County slaveholder’s affidavit.
- Emory Folmar for governor flyer
- Letter to Mayor Emory Folmar from General John Roberts of the United States Air Force.

**Procedures:**
- Step 1: Introduce the lesson by explaining what primary sources are and how they differ from secondary sources. Also why they are important in studying history.
- Step 2: Pass out a primary source to each student along with a primary source analysis worksheet. Allow students to individually read the source and complete the worksheet.

**Accommodations/Modifications:** Students can be given extra time to work on the assignment if needed.

**Assessment:** Students should be evaluated based on the completion of the worksheet, as well as the level of thoughtfulness of their answers to each question. Students should also be graded based on how well they identify and understand key issues within their primary source as shown through their answers on the worksheet.
1 September 1978

Honorable Emory Folmar
Mayor of the City of Montgomery
City Hall Building
103 North Perry
Montgomery, Alabama 36104

Dear Emory

During my visits to Montgomery, I have been impressed by the courtesies afforded me, and certainly yesterday was no exception. The luncheon at the country club was especially enjoyable, and Fern and I are grateful to you and Anita for your hospitality. It was a real pleasure for us to be able to visit with you, as well as with some of Montgomery's other leading citizens.

We thank you and Anita for being so gracious.

Sincerely

[Signature]

John W. Roberts
General, USAF
I wish I could talk with you before November 2nd, but it is impossible to meet and shake hands with every Alabamian. A friend from my hometown has volunteered to bring you my personal message. My wife Anita and I have traveled over this state and talked with people from all walks of life. We share your concerns and hopes for the future.

I offer you my sincere commitment to solving the problems before us. When you vote, I ask you to put Alabama first and vote Folmar for Governor. With your prayers and support, we can have a better future.

Sincerely,
Emory Folmar

FOLMAR
FOR GOVERNOR
GET ALABAMA WORKING!
CONTRACT FOR LABOR.

State of Alabama,

COUNTY OF 

Between Deo. J. Robinson, and the undersigned colored laborers, Wit- nessth, That I, Deo. J. Robinson, obligate myself to give to the undersigned colored laborers,

of the cotton; one third of the corn; one third of the fodder; and one half of all other produce raised on my plantation; and to furnish the said laborers with corn meal, milk, meal, and feed for cattle, everything necessary to maintain them, and two hundred pounds of good pork or bacon; and

of corn meal, each, per week, until the first day of January, 1869.

For and in consideration of the above, We, the undersigned colored laborers, obligate ourselves to labor faithfully for Deo. J. Robinson, each day, from sunrise until sunset on Sunday excepted, until the first day of January, 1869, working according to, and obeying all reasonable orders given by the employer or his agent. We also obligate ourselves to pay __________ per day, for all time lost by us, and to observe and be governed by the general rules and regulations of the plantation.

Signed at Montgomery, Ala., the 4th day of April, 1868.

J. T. Robinson

WITNESS:

U. H. Anderson
State of Alabama:

MONTGOMERY COUNTY.

Personally appeared before me, DAVID CAMPBELL, Judge of Probate in said County, WILLIAM SPRAGG and on oath saith that a Negro man named LEWIS about twenty years old, copper skinned, now confined in Jail in Montgomery County, is the property of and belongs to J. S. McCALL of Lowndes County, Ala.

Sworn to and subscribed before me,

14th day of August, 186_.

DAVID CAMPBELL
Judge of Probate.