Primary vs. Secondary Documents; Change over time

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Lesson Description: Students will explain the difference between a primary and secondary source as they identify artifacts or documents as sources of historical data from which historical accounts are constructed and examine the artifacts or documents for change over time.

Grade: 4 -5

Time Required: 2 – 3 days

Benchmark[s] Addressed: Students will identify artifacts and documents as either primary or secondary sources of historical data from which historical accounts are constructed.

Essential Question Addressed: How do artifacts and documents influence how history is written? Which historical source is best?

Enduring Understanding: Many different types of sources exist to help us gather information about the past, such as artifacts and documents. Sources about the past need to be critically analyzed and categorized as they are used. A historian must prove where the information can be found that is the basis for historical conclusions.

Materials:

- Primary or. Secondary Source definition sheet
- Primary and Secondary Source sort
- ELMO, overhead, chalkboard or chart paper and markers
- Examples of primary and secondary sources
- What Can We Learn from The Past handout
- Scoring Rubric and Check for Artifact Analysis

Procedures:

1. **Gathering Information:** "Students, we have found a man wandering in the streets of Georgia claiming that he is one of the few survivors of a bloody war that occurred sometime around 1865. (We're referring to the Civil War, but don't tell the kids.) Medical examinations prove that he is at least 150 years old. How could we go about discovering if what he says is true about being a survivor of something in 1865?"

(Realize your students could get very caught up in the why and how of this man's existence. So, you'll need a couple of minutes to stomp out the fires. The students love the fantasy features of this scenario, but you need to keep them focused on the question you asked.)

2. **Brainstorming**: Students brainstorm possible answers, which you write on the chalkboard, chart paper, or overhead projector. Probe for more specifics or clarification as necessary. Possible answers: textbooks, encyclopedias, library books, magazines, legends (or oral stories about the incident), church records, court records, gravestones, army records, diaries, letters, newspapers of the time, going to the area and finding artifacts (define artifacts as man made items for the students.) Use this vocabulary often during the lesson.

Which of these items actually existed in the time period of 1865?"

(Tip: You could use a different color pen or marker to make a star next to those items.)

"This is what historians use to figure out what happened in the past. History is a mystery that historians need to solve, using the artifacts, documents, and/or oral stories from that time period." (At this point someone may ask, "What about the ones that aren't starred?" (Example: videos, Internet, history books, etc.) You could respond, "That's a good question. How did the historians decide what information went in the video, on the Internet or in books?" Students will quickly realize they used the first hand (primary) sources to piece together the story. "The stuff we use, write, and say today will become what historians of the future will use to tell our story."

4. Allow the students to work in small cooperative groups. They are to divide the results of their brainstorming into two lists. The teacher question might be, "What criteria could you use to divide this list into two separate groups?" Let the students decide on the titles for their two groups. Tell the groups that the will need to explain the criteria they used.

5. Discuss the criteria that the students used. Possibilities would include written vs. non-written, oral vs. non-oral, primary sources vs. secondary. After the discussion, explain that all their categories are fine, because it divides the work into smaller pieces to investigate. Historians need ways to categorize information, too. One of the ways frequently used by historians is to distinguish between the material that was actually written during the time period or comes from the time period, versus material that was written or developed after the time period. The first is called primary sources (or first - the first person to do it) and the latter is called secondary sources (the second person to hear about it).

6. Categorize: List the information on the ELMO, chalkboard, overhead projector, or chart paper in 2 categories:

Primary Source
letters of people involved
diaries of people involved
court records of the time
church records of the time
gravestones
army records
wandering man's story (eyewitness)
Internet

Secondary Source
magazine articles about it
encyclopedias
textbooks written later
legends or oral stories about it
history professor's interpretation
Internet

Explain how the Internet can be both a primary and secondary source of information. Mostly it reports secondary information compiled by others, but it can have primary source information in the form of copies of original documents.

7. Pass out the Reading sheet Primary or Secondary Source? and the graphic organizer titled Comparing a Primary Source and a Secondary Source. Have students work in pairs to complete a Read – Write –Share. Review the answers they have come up with on the chart.

8. **Assessment:** Prepare the sorting activity (Handout 3) before the class begins by cutting the characteristics apart and making two headings, primary source and secondary source. Place students in mixed ability groups of four. Have them divide the characteristics equally and sort them out one at a time. After they are sorted students should discuss any that they disagree on and make revisions. Have the teacher check the sort when they believe it is correct.

Additional Assessment:

Make sure students understand primary and secondary sources. Have several objects to hold up. Tell students to fold their hands on the desk in front of them. When you hold up an object they are to keep their hands folded, but pull them close to their body if the object is a primary source. That is because the primary source is closer to the facts. If a secondary source object is held up students are to push their folded hands forward on the desk. Secondary sources are farther from the facts. Tell students you are expecting a response from everyone. Be sure to look at each child's signal. After each object, explain the correct answer. You will quickly be able to see who understands and who does not.

9. Assign homework for the night: Ask students to find 4 -5 artifacts (man-made items) from or about them. Explain that these artifacts should represent different time periods in their life. Example: photo of you as a baby, a drawing you made in another grade, a favorite baby toy, a newspaper article about a sporting event, an old Christmas list or letter to Santa, school certificate or award, stuffed toy, etc. Have students bring the items in a bag to the classroom.

Day 2:

1. Use the Primary and Secondary Source sort as a warm up. Either have the teams redo or just place the characteristic strips on an ELMO or overhead and have the students identify whether or not they are primary or secondary. Teachers could use a symbol such as thumbs up for primary and thumbs down for secondary.

2. Have the students display their artifacts without their sketch. Place students in pairs. Give each student the worksheet, What Can We Learn From the Past? Have students examine their partner's artifacts and complete the worksheet. The worksheet will serve as a graphic organizer for a writing the students will complete. Tell students they are investigating the life of their partner. The graphic organizer is where they are to collecting historical data that they will use as evidence in the historical account they will write later. Their task is to try to come as close to the truth about their partner's life as

possible using the artifacts. Be sure to discuss the meanings of the word "observation" and "inference". Explain that an observation is a fact, something you can be positive of based on looking at an object. An example of an observation would be to look at a blanket and say it is made of cloth. An inference is something that you are guessing about based on looking at an object. An example of an inference would be to say that whoever used the blanket lived in a cool climate.

3. Distribute C-R-A-F-T to each student. Introduce the C-R-A-F-T graphic organizer with the following explanation:

C= Context – Where are you getting the information for your writing?

R= Role – What role will you need to take on to complete this writing?

A= Audience – Who will be the reader of this writing?

F= Form – What form will the writing take?

T= Topic – What will the subject of the writing be?

S= Strong Verb – What is the intention of the writing?

After students complete the graphic organizer, they will complete a writing to summarize their historical data. Use the following CRAFTS to have students create a historical account

C= Partner's artifacts

R= Historian

A= Your partner

F= Letter

T= Historical account of partner's life to show change over time in your partner's life

S= to inform

Explain to students that a **historical account** is a description or explanation of something that happened in the past.

Give students time to complete their letter. Allow them the opportunity to share their letters with their partner. Have partners discuss how accurate their accounts are.

4. Have each student draw a sketch of their items on a piece of paper. Also, they should write a sentence about each artifact on a separate piece of paper. Also, on the paper, identify the artifacts as primary or secondary source if possible.

5. Hang the students' sketches along the wall. Make sure that the students have not written their names on the front of the sketch. Collect the letters and shuffle them. Pass them out so that each student gets a paper that is not the one they wrote or that is the one written about them. Have the students take a gallery walk of the sketches. See if students can use the historical account and match up the writing with the correct sketch.

6. Debrief by discussing with students how historians use primary sources to tell the stories of the past. Collect the writings for an assessment. Using the CRAFTS rubric to score.

7. **Assessment:** Use the following quote (primary source) to have students make a written inference about the attitude President Lincoln wanted the country to have for the people living in the South. Have students analyze the quote to gain an understanding of what he wanted people to strive for during Reconstruction. Teachers might also want to ask students if this is a primary source or a secondary source.

"With malice toward none: with charity for all…let us strive on to finish the work we are in: to bind up the nation's wounds and achieve a lasting peace."

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Additional Requirements:

- Lessons must be typed.
- One copy must be submitted on disk [Microsoft Word if possible].
- Number the pages and procedures.
- Include copies of assessments and any handouts. Handouts must be numbered and titled for easy identification (e.g. Handout 1).