

## “Using Primary Sources” Presentation Notes, FAQs, and Activity Directions

Slide #	Notes
1	Distribute handouts. Note that many teachers are reluctant to utilize primary sources. This is regrettable, because primary sources can pay substantial dividends in terms of student understanding of, and appreciation for, history. So why are they reluctant? Not only can primary sources be challenging to use, not everyone is even clear on what they are...
2	The key element here is <u>immediacy</u> .
3	The key element here is <u>distance</u> .
4	Now we know what they are, but ...
5	The simplest answer is...
6	Note that there are detailed references to the History-Social Science and English-Language Arts Standards in the “Standards References to Primary Sources” handout.
7	We don’t expect our students to grow up to be historians. But just as students learn writing by <u>doing</u> writing, and learn science by <u>doing</u> scientific experiments, they also learn history by <u>doing</u> history. As history teachers you’re expected to teach the <u>discipline</u> of history, not just the content.
8	
9	Primary sources make history “real.” (Consider exhibiting at this point a primary source you have used in class to make the past “come alive,” and describe how it affected your students.)
10	(Again, try to illustrate this point from your own experience – show how your students evaluated evidence, detected points of view, etc.)
11	...concepts like: history reflects someone’s interpretation of events. This point isn’t so clear to students using a textbook – textbooks strive for an “objective” tone. But no matter how objective a historical account may seem, it is still subjective – and primary sources can be used to underscore this concept.
12	...skills that have application far beyond the study of history. We live in an information age: we must equip our students to retrieve, evaluate, and use information. Working with primary sources can accomplish this.
13	(Give some examples of the special collections that exist in libraries and historical societies in your area.)
14	(Perhaps involve your audience by asking them to list some examples.)
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17	...who was the intended audience?
18	...has it been translated? What problems might this present?
19	...events occur some place – underscore the connection between history and geography.
20	...i.e. not just the date, but the context. (Ask: how can that help us understand the meaning of a primary source?)
21	
22	Note that this is all one web address. The National Archives website is a great resource – it contains stuff especially for teachers. You might consider downloading and distributing sample worksheets from the National Archives along with the rest of your handouts.
Between 22 & 23	Show the “Scarred Slave” photograph, or substitute some other visual primary source.
23	You might need to make up other questions if you show a different visual image. Show the “Scarred Slave” photograph (or other image) again; have teachers answer the questions.
24	But like any good tool, primary sources must be used with caution. Remember, too, the earlier point: primary sources offer someone’s interpretation of the past.

## Questions

The most frequently asked questions on primary sources relate to what's available locally and on the Internet. You should give this a little thought in advance of your presentation (you might even want to create your own handout of local resources). Such questions also offer a great opportunity to involve members of your audience actively in your presentation, by asking them to share information on where they found primary source materials that they have used successfully with students.

## Activities

- Divide the teachers into pairs or small groups by grade level (K-5, 6-8, 9-12).
- Distribute the appropriate activity materials to each group.
- Ask each group to:
  - 1) identify Standards that their primary source materials can help explicate,
  - 2) develop an assessment that addresses those Standards, and
  - 3) describe an activity leading to that assessment that would involve their students using some or all of the primary source materials.
  
- Remind the teachers not to ignore the “History and Social Science Analysis Skills.”