Teaching with Primary Sources

Resources for Thinking about Teaching with Primary sources

Erik Anderson, San Antonio College:
1. The work of the Stanford History Education Group on online information literacy has some important insights for getting students to think critically about information online search including digitized primary sources. More broadly anything from the Stanford History Education Group such as their Reading List a Historian project is very useful.

And https://sheg.stanford.edu/list-reading-historian-lessons


3. KoDavid Korbin's Beyond the Textbook is a good short introduce to teaching with primary sources.

David Kobrin, Beyond the Textbook: Teaching History Using Documents and Primary Sources, (Heinemann, 1996).

Gene Preuss, University of Houston Downtown:


Favorite Primary-Source Resources

Erik Anderson, San Antonio College:
1. One of my go-to sites for lesson plans and project idea, most of which revolve around primary sources is https://edsitement.neh.gov/subject/history-social-studies. For example Mapping Colonial New Land has student explore the changing political of colonial New England through historic maps. https://edsitement.neh.gov/lesson-plan/mapping-colonial-new-england-looking-landscape-new-england

2. I have been trying to develop activities that would allow students to do original archival research in a community college setting. One I project that I have been doing with my classes is locating and mapping racially restrictive housing covenants and comparing them to HOLC maps. You can find many of those HOLC maps here https://dsl.richmond.edu/panorama/redlining/#loc=4/36.71/-96.93&opacity=0.8 but
some like those for San Antonio need to be found in more local collections like this
http://digital.utsa.edu/cdm/landingpage/collection/p16018coll12/

To find restrictive covenants you can use county record which are generally digitized in large
counties here in Texas for example: https://bexar.tx.publicsearch.us/ or
http://www.tccsearch.org/RealEstate/SearchEntry.aspx

Most of these county records allow you to limit search to Restrictions which should bring up
racially restrictive covenants from before or in some cases even after they become non-
enforceable in 1948.

3. From my colleague Dr. Marianne Buneo: The first thought I have when thinking about teaching
with primary sources (depending on how one thinks about oral histories) is the Voces Oral
History Project out of UT Austin: https://voces.lib.utexas.edu/
The project started out collecting oral histories of World War II-era Mexican Americans, and has
grown to collect oral histories of Latinos and the Korean Conflict, the Vietnam Conflict, and
now social and political activism more broadly defined. At one point the website provided a
transcript of the interview, a written synopsis, as well as images of pics, diaries, maps, etc. I've
used their materials to teach oral history as a methodology.

4. The Voyage of the Slave Ship Sally is a detailed account of one American Slave trading voyage
with all the documents such as manifests and log books the record the details of the voyage.
http://cds.library.brown.edu/projects/sally/timeline.html

5. The Website Musical Passage explores African music performed for a British visitor in 1688
http://www.musicalpassage.org/#home It contains images of the original text which recorded
the music, and contemporary performances of the music.

6. For those interested in ways of using primary sources along with accessible secondary sources
you can find some exercises call “Thinking Like a Historian” I developed for the David Shi
textbook America: the essential learning edition, (W.W. Norton, 2018). These exercises ask
students to evaluate short historical argument using primary sources materials.

Gene Preuss, University of Houston Downtown:
1. Stanford History Education Group’s Historical Assessments of Thinking (HATs), although I usually
find myself adapting them somewhat for a university audience, and for Texas
history: https://sheg.stanford.edu/history-assessments
2. Carl Becker’s 1931 AHA Presidential Address “Everyman His Own Historian.” I think it’s a great
resource I’m going to make my students read because it really speaks to the critical thinking
aspect, and that history is interpretation bounded by the facts we have access to:
https://www.historians.org/about-aha-and-membership/aha-history-and-
archives/presidential-addresses/carl-l-becker

For sources, since I teach quite a bit of Texas history, I use:
1. The Portal to Texas History (https://texashistory.unt.edu/),
2. The Dallas Morning News Historical Database,
3. The National Archives (https://www.archives.gov/) especially their document analysis worksheets (https://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/worksheets), and
4. the Library of Congress (https://www.loc.gov/).
5. For Great Britain, I like (https://www.parliament.uk/) which has many primary sources, including Hansard’s transcripts of parliament.
8. The Texas Archive of the Moving Image has historic films and images https://www.texasarchive.org/library/index.php/Main_Page
10. K-12 Educator Resources at the Institute of Texan Cultures http://www.texancultures.com/resources/
11. The Southwest Collection/Special Collections Library at Texas Tech University’s SWC Digital Collections https://swco-ir.tdl.org/
12. The Texas Historical Commission https://www.thc.texas.gov/
13. The THC YouTube Channel has many well-produced short instructional videos https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCAF3XhIGKuZHAMLICCH7pQ