



Constructing Curriculum Materials from Primary Source Archival Materials

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❖ Questions to Address

- How can we teach students to think historically?
- How can we help teachers learn how to use primary documents effectively in their classroom?
- What is the significance of using primary sources in a history curriculum?

❖ Research Methods Used

- Examine current research on teaching with primary sources and how to teach students to think historically
- Identify existing curricular materials that educators use to help students analyze primary sources and think historically
- Interview local secondary-level educators on what primary sources and teaching techniques they use in their classroom to engage students in historical thinking

❖ Goals of the Project

- Develop instructional materials using digitized issues of *The Comenian* that future educators and students can use to help them analyze primary sources.
- Construct a web page on the Reeves Library site where the curricular materials developed by me and the WWI issues of *The Comenian* will be uploaded. These materials will be fully accessible for anyone anywhere to download and use in the future.

❖ The Comenian

- For the purposes of this project, we have decided to focus on the issues from the World War I era (1914-1919).
 - ◎ Why are we using these particular years for our project?
 - Given that this year marks the centennial (100-year) anniversary of the start of the war (1914), we found it fit to do this project as a way to commemorate the event.
 - The articles found in the *Comenian* are all written by college students who were attending Moravian during WWI and provide a unique, local, individualized perspective of the war.
 - ◆ Allow us to see what the college community was thinking about or feeling at the time of the war; topics range from the war to sports and local happenings

❖ Findings from The Comenian

- Earlier issues offer a neutral or impartial perspective of the war
- Later issues support the war effort in Europe.
- Ideas of bravery, loyalty, and honor are used as propaganda to persuade young men to enlist in the army.
- Social and religious aspects are prevalent in the articles of the war
 - ◎ i.e. the interests of the Moravian Church, impact of the war on families of young men and the economy, caring and thinking about our “brethren” in battle

❖ Teacher Interviews

- I conducted 30-minute interviews with seven local secondary level educators from the Lehigh Valley about their use of primary sources in their classroom and what they believed their importance is.
 - ◎ What types of materials, sites or digital resources do you use in your teaching?
 - ◎ What strategies do you use to help your students better comprehend and analyze these materials?
 - ◎ What do you believe is the importance of or reason for using primary sources in history or other classes in general?

❖ Results of the Interviews

- Teachers use primary sources frequently in their classroom
- Variety of sources used:
 - ⊙ Documents, letters, newspaper articles, political cartoons, images, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Library of Congress, National Archives, etc.
- Strategies used:
 - ⊙ Class discussions, group work, individual research, adapting materials into more comprehensible texts, analysis worksheets, KWLs, graphic organizers, etc.
- Importance of primary sources?
 - ⊙ Help their students accomplish upper-level critical thinking and reading skills
 - ⊙ Increase student interest in history by make history more relative, or alive, to their students and not so cut-and-dry.
 - ⊙ Students learn to personally empathize with history and gain new understandings or insights at past individuals' lives.

❖ Understanding the Difference between Primary and Secondary Sources

- **Secondary Sources:** any source that is produced *after* a particular event or period has passed by someone who did not experience the events first-hand.
 - **Examples:** scholarly articles, journals, and books
- **Primary Sources:** any source that is produced by someone who lived through or participated in a particular event *during* the specified time period
 - **Examples:** Documents, diaries, newspapers, obituaries, speeches
- Primary sources are original materials on an event on which other research is based, whereas secondary sources are based from the interpretations of these sources and the works of others.

❖ Why use Primary Sources?

- They teach students to not take what they read in a textbook at face value and show them that there are in fact multiple interpretations to a single event.
- They “humanize” history, or in other words, bring history to life by giving students and researchers insights into the time period being studied; history becomes less cut-and-dry.
- They help students learn to think historically by allowing them to evaluate, challenge, and develop their own conclusions and generalizations of the data presented.

❖ Considerations for Using Primary Source Materials

- Materials used should be age and grade appropriate, and user-friendly
- Shorten the length of documents by omitting unnecessary paragraphs, sentences, or words to make the text more comprehensible to students.
 - ⊙ ****Warning:** When doing this, be careful not to change the meaning or spirit of the original version
- Identify the source of each material and define difficult or outdated terms for students.
 - ⊙ Bold key terms and include words banks and footnotes for students to further their comprehension of the materials.

❖ Creating Curricular Material

- I took into account the considerations for using primary sources mentioned earlier, the information I received from the teachers I interviewed, and numerous online sources I looked at to consider what material would be most appropriate for each article I used.
 - I have done a total of twenty curricular guides including KWLs, comparative charts, image analysis worksheets, and worksheets that ask content and context-based questions.



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