PRIMARY SOURCES:
THE MARTYRED PRESIDENT:
ABRAHAM LINCOLN

SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION/ POLK COUNTY, FLORIDA PUBLIC SCHOOLS
JUNE 10, 2009
BACKGROUND

- Historian for history of the Smithsonian
- Use primary sources from SI Archives in work
- Wide range of media
- Smithsonian is digitizing its primary sources to make them available on the web
- Smithsonian is part of the City of Washington - observer of events here
WHAT IS A PRIMARY SOURCE?

- Any original source of information that provides a direct or first-person connection to a historical event
- Documents such as letters, diaries, birth certificates, receipts, news clippings, etc.
- Photographs, paintings, and drawings
- Objects, such as clothing, furnishings or tools
- Oral history interviews, home movies, etc.
PRIMARY VS. SECONDARY SOURCES

- Primary sources have a first-person relationship to historical events
- Secondary sources are summaries, second-hand accounts, analyses, etc.
- Shades of gray, degrees of primary sources
- One source can contain primary and secondary information
- Primary vs. secondary may depend upon the question you are asking
- Primary sources may contain conflicting information that must be resolved
Why use primary sources in your classroom?

- Speak to you in a first-person voice
- Bring history alive
- Bring historic figures to life as real people
- Provide an individual’s view of historic events and times
- Tell stories about how people lived and coped in the past
- Provide engaging stories for students to read
Improve reading comprehension & literacy skills
Develop observation and visual analysis skills
Enhance vocabulary
Teach life skills, how people coped with hardships in the past
Develop critical skills as older students are asked to compare and evaluate point of view and information in the primary sources
TEACHER ACCESS

- World Wide Web
- Use with care!
- Good Sites, see handout in packet:
  - Smithsonian Institution site
  - American Memory site, Library of Congress
  - History Matters site, George Mason Univ.
  - National Endowment for Humanities, edsitement
  - The Digital Classroom, National Archives
- All available for use without restriction
Smithsonian Institution Archives

PRIMARY SOURCES FOR THE CLASSROOM

Explore Internet resources of Smithsonian Archives: diaries, letters, and photographs that can be used in the classroom.

Visit our website at: www.siarchives.si.edu
our archives catalog at www.siris.si.edu
and Smithsonian history catalog at www.siris.si.edu

Learn about Civil War Diary, Free blacks, Snowflake Bentley, Wright Bros., explorers, and rocket inventor, with curriculum guide and transcripts

http://siarchives.si.edu/history/exhibits/documents/index.htm
Smithsonian Scrapbook: Letters, Diaries & Photographs from the Smithsonian Archives

Examine panoramic images of the Canadian Rockies

http://siarchives.si.edu/techscws/walcott/index.htm
Beauty in Service to Science: Walcott panoramas

View pictures of Smithsonian since 1850s

http://siarchives.si.edu/history/exhibits/historic/index.htm
Historic Pictures of Smithsonian
ANALYZING PRIMARY SOURCES

- Is this document/photograph a primary source?
  - First-person, eyewitness, participant
  - If not, does it have historical value?
- Who created this document?
- When and where was this document created?
- Why was this document created?
- Who was the intended audience?
- What was the point of view of the creator?
RESOLVING CONFLICTS IN PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SOURCES

- Conflicts among sources are not unusual
- How to resolve?
  - Reliability - - internally consistent
  - Validity - - compare with other sources
  - Look at point of view, motivation
  - First person vs. second-hand
  - Physical evidence
  - Preponderance of evidence
ASSASSINATION OF PRESIDENT LINCOLN

- President Abraham Lincoln was shot on April 14, 1865, at Ford’s Theater by John Wilkes Booth
- Shocking public event similar to September 11th in public impact
- How did the public learn of the shooting?
- How do we know about what happened at Lincoln’s deathbed?
LINCOLN'S ASSASSINATION

- Newspaper accounts of the shooting
- Special editions of newspapers
- Confusion over actual events initially
- Official news releases vs. personal reports
Visual images of shooting and death in popular press
No photographs of events such as Lincoln in bedroom
Graphics based on verbal accounts
Drama vs. accuracy vs. symbolism
LINCOLN’S ASSASSINATION: Mary Henry’s Diary

- Diary accounts give us personal view of event and its impact
- Mary Henry (1834-1903) lived in Smithsonian Castle
- Visited Dr. Gurley, minister to Lincoln and Henry families
JOSEPH HENRY & FAMILY,
by Titian Peale, 1862
HENRY APARTMENTS IN CASTLE, by Titian Peale, 1862
MARY HENRY’S STUDIO, 1878
Entries for April 15 and 18, 1865

Entry for April 15, 1865, gives Mary’s first person account of her reaction to the news, views of Lincoln himself, and musings on political implications.
Entry for April 18, 1865

Visited Dr. Gurley on afternoon of April 17th, two days after Lincoln died

Mary wrote down Dr. Gurley’s recollections of Lincoln’s actual moment of death
Analysis of news clippings that announce the shooting of Lincoln and give updates on his condition

Questions:
- Is this a primary source?
- Who created, where, when and why?
- Is it historically valuable?
- Is it reliable?
“Another Account,”

The New York Times,

April 14, 1865
“Awful Event,”

The New York Times,

April 15, 1865
TELEGRAM EXTRA.

ASSASSINATION OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

J. WILKIE BOOTH THE ASSASSIN.

Secy. Seward and his Son Frederick Wounded.

We are indebted to Mr. Smith, Telegraph Operator, who kindly furnished us with the following particulars of the assassination of President Lincoln.

WAR DEPARTMENT, 1.30 A. M.} April 15th, 1865.

MAJ. GEN. DIX.

This evening about 9.30 P. M. at Ford's Theatre, the President while sitting in his private box with Mrs. Lincoln, Miss Harris, and Maj. Rathburn, was shot by an assassin who suddenly entered the box and approached behind the President; the assassin then leaped upon the stage brandishing a large dagger or knife, and made his escape in the rear of the Theatre. The pistol ball entered the back of the President's head and penetrated nearly through the head. The wound is mortal. The President has been insensible ever since it was inflicted and is now dying.

About the same hour an assassin, whether the same or another, entered Mr. Seward's house and under pretence of having a prescription was shown to the Secretary's sick chamber. The Secy was in bed. A nurse and Miss Seward with him. The assassin immediately rushed to the bed, inflicted two or three wounds in the neck and two on in the face. It is hoped the wounds may not be mortal. My apprehension is that they will prove fatal. The noise alarmed Mr. Frederick Seward who was in an adjoining room, and hastened to the door of his father's room where he met the assassin, who inflicted upon him one or more dangerous wounds.

The recovery of Frederick Seward is doubtful. It is not probable the President will live through the night.

General Grant and wife were advertised to be at the theatre this evening, but he started to Burlington at 6 o'clock this evening.

At a Cabinet Meeting at which General Grant was present to-day, the subject of the state of the country and the prospects of a speedy peace was discussed. The President was cheerful and hopeful, spoke very kindly of Gen. Lee and others in the Confederacy and the establishment of Government in Virginia.

All the members of the Cabinet except Mr. Seward are now in attendance upon the President. I have seen Mr. Seward but he and Frederick are both unconscious.

(Signed) EDWIN M. STANTON, Secretary of War.

President Lincoln died at 7,30, this A. M.

LATER.—6 P.M. A dispatch just received says the Vice President took Oath of Office as President to-day. He desires to retain the present Secretaries of Department, and wishes them to proceed to their duties as heretofore. Wm. Hunter, Esq., was appointed Secretary of State during illness of Secretary Seward and Assistant Secretary. The case of former unchanged through hopeful, and latter still dangerous.—The murderers have not yet been apprehended.
Primary or secondary?

Often secondary, second-hand

Depends on question

Some primary, such as government bulletins

Primary, if question is what was information was available or what were public reactions?
PRIMAR Y SOURCES
GROUP EXERCISE

- GROUP 1: DIARY GROUP: Mary Henry diary entries and transcripts

- GROUP 2: VISUAL IMAGE GROUP: Analyze images of Lincoln in Petersen house at his death
BREAK OUT EXERCISE:
Each group will:

✓ Look at document/image carefully.
✓ Answer highlighted primary source questions.
✓ Discuss all questions.
✓ Prepare answers to highlighted questions assigned to your group.
BREAK OUT EXERCISE QUESTIONS - DOCUMENTS:

- Is this document a primary source?
- Who created this document?
- When and where was this document produced?
- Why was this document produced?
- Who was the intended audience?
- What was the point of view of the creator?
- Summarize the contents.
BREAK OUT EXERCISE QUESTIONS – PHOTOGRAPHS & DRAWINGS:

✓ Is this image a primary source?
✓ Why was this image created?
✓ When and where was this image created?
✓ Who was the intended audience?
✓ What was the point of view of creator?
✓ What is going on in this image? Analyze body language, clothing, objects and activities.
BREAK OUT EXERCISE QUESTIONS – CONFLICTING EVIDENCE

- Apply courtroom standards - first-person, second-hand, hearsay, physical evidence
- Normal part of detective work in crimes and in history - initial conflicts pose challenge but make project interesting
- Sort through, look for mistakes, quality of evidence, reliability, validity, and preponderance of evidence
BREAK OUT GROUP EXERCISE:

- After break-out groups examine their documents, have the entire group come back together.
- Have each break-out group discuss assigned questions.
- Discuss all sets of primary sources together.
MARY HENRY'S DIARY
APRIL 15, 1865

1865

Were rewarded by a speech from Mr.
Beard and another from some others.
He did not recognize. After dinner
in the dining room, the President,
The Army, The Navy, and I to the Peace
Board and inspected the patients
from off the hundreds long line of
Holly Pond. The Flag Bore it.

The 4th of July, we watched. The morning
by an announcement. All the bells
made our hearts stand still with
apprehension. The President was
up last night on the theater.

When the morning papers came to
the door, still alive although
little or too helped were entertained
of but to cover our heads the church
bells did not. The President was present.

I was with the country's own
Health, if so, although generous
was given. He was an honored race.
Remarkable and kind, and in the
present crisis ready to follow the
such a brave route. The defeated
PHOTOGRAPH OF ROOM IN PETERSEN HOUSE WHERE LINCOLN DIED
EARLY VIEW OF LINCOLN'S DEATHBED
CHAPPEL’S DEATH OF LINCOLN
FULL GROUP EXERCISE:

✓ When you combine these primary sources, is the whole greater than the sum of its parts?
✓ Does one form of evidence shed light on other forms of evidence?
✓ Does one document help you evaluate the quality of information in other documents?
✓ Are there conflicts between the various accounts? If so, how can you account for those conflicts?
✓ What do these documents tell you about reactions to important events, such as Lincoln’s assassination?
How does reading this document differ from studying a biography of Lincoln?

What are its strengths as an educational tool? What are its weaknesses?

How could you use a document like this in your classroom?
How can letters/photographs/diaries/news clippings, etc., be used in your classroom?

- Have students use contemporary materials to bring today’s heroes to life.
  - Take a series of photographs
  - Clip articles on a topic from newspaper
  - Talk to a hero in their own community
  - Keep a diary with their thoughts about someone they look up to
  - Create a drawing of an event they witnessed
  - Interview another student about an event they participated in
Impact of Primary Sources on Students

- Improve reading comprehension & literacy skills
- Enhance vocabulary
- Develop observation and visual analysis skills
- Teach coping/life skills
- Create a realistic understanding of heroes and great public figures
- Raise awareness of their own role in history and historic events they participate in
- Develop critical skills as older students are asked to compare and evaluate the point of view and information in the primary sources