

THINKING HISTORICALLY

Using primary sources

- Primary sources are described as the “raw material of history”. The material is created at the time the history is being made.
- Primary sources are the artistic, social, scientific and political thoughts and achievements produced by people living during a specific period.

Primary Sources

- personal correspondence and diaries
- works of art and literature
- speeches and oral histories
- audio and video recordings
- photographs and posters
- newspaper ads and stories
- laws and legislative hearings
- census or demographic records
- plant and animal specimens
- coins and tools

What are primary sources?

- Our History is
 - the collective Stories of our past
 - about cause and effect
 - forming questions & seeking answers
 - creating and defending arguments
 - engaging in debates
 - gathering evidence and making your case
- ❖ **And our history is written/recorded based on Primary Sources**

Why use Primary Sources?

- Concept of “**Change over Time**” is part of this thinking
 - Have things changed?
 - How have things changed?
 - Why did they change?

Thinking Historically

- Concept of “**Context**” is part of this thinking
- What events set the stage for the historical event?
- How are texts, events, individual lives and contextual struggles interwoven?
- Can you tell the differences among: Fact, Fiction or Creative memory?

Thinking Historically

- Concept of “**Causality**” is part of this thinking
- Are arguments presented for the “causality” based on primary sources?
- Have you looked at multi factors that shaped the event?
- What are you using to formulate arguments for the causes of an event or **the** cause(s) you determine to be first or foremost over others?

Thinking Historically

- Concept of “**Contingency**” is part of this thinking. The world is an amazingly connected place.
- How could the change in one prior condition lead to a different outcome?
- How diversified is your thinking about the causes of the event?
- Can you personally see that if the past is contingent on prior events, then the future is up for grabs?

Thinking Historically

- Concept of “**Complexity**” is part of this thinking. The world is a messy place
- How do you make sense of a world you were not directly involved with?
- How do you do deal with information that is confusing?
- How do you avoid “mental traps” such as the need to put history in order, or remembering things the way you want to instead of how they were?
- What do you do to understand the past on its on terms?

Thinking Historically

Historical thought can be fluid if you:

- avoid letting the process become little more than a check list
 - you contemplate the information
- . . . and it helps if you care about the information

Thinking Historically

- Thinking historically is about analysis - - -
(not memorization of facts)
- It's about thinking long and hard about important questions - - -
(not oversimplifying the concept that the past is a prelude to the future)
- It's about uncovering the human qualities of historical figures - - -
(not just creating a cast of heroes and villains)

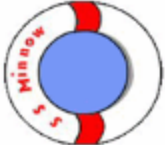

Thinking Historically

The processes and concepts presented in this lesson can be achieved through the use and examination of primary sources

Thinking Historically

- Any source used in a report, needs to be correctly documented. Be sure you know how to do that

Library of Congress has good information on how to cite your sources. This information is available on the MHS Library Web Page under PRIMARY SOURCE INFORMATION

PRIMARY SOURCE INFORMATION	
	<p>Primary Sources - Kathleen Shrock. Kathy Shrock's "Guide to Everything" includes a list of internet links to primary sources. Connect to standard sites such as: Library of Congress; National Archives; or National Park Service. Primary sources listed by discipline as well as links to Super Sites can also be located from her page.</p>
 LIBRARY OF CONGRESS	<p>Citing Primary Sources Correctly cite your primary sources using MLA (or Chicago) style. This link to Library of Congress provides step-by-step directions on how to cite a multitude of primary sources along with examples.</p>

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The material in this ppt based on the article by

Thomas Andrews and Flannery Burke, "What does it mean to Think Historically?" *Perspectives* (January 2007), online at <http://www.historians.org/perspectives/issues/2007/0701/0701tea2.cfm>

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Created by

p.r. christensen

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