



# Inquiry with Primary Sources

*This TPS micro-credential is the recommended starting point for educators with no foundational training in teaching inquiry with primary sources from the Library of Congress.*

## Competency

Educator uses inquiry to engage learners in analysis of primary sources to promote student empathy, foster understanding of multiple perspectives, deepen content knowledge, and enhance critical thinking skills.

## Key Method

Educator curates relevant and appropriate primary source sets to develop and analyze an inquiry-based primary source learning activity.

## Method Components

### Inquiry Learning

Inquiry is a process of active learning that is driven by questioning and critical thinking that leads to increased student engagement and deeper understanding of content. Inquiry learning is a recursive and reflective process.

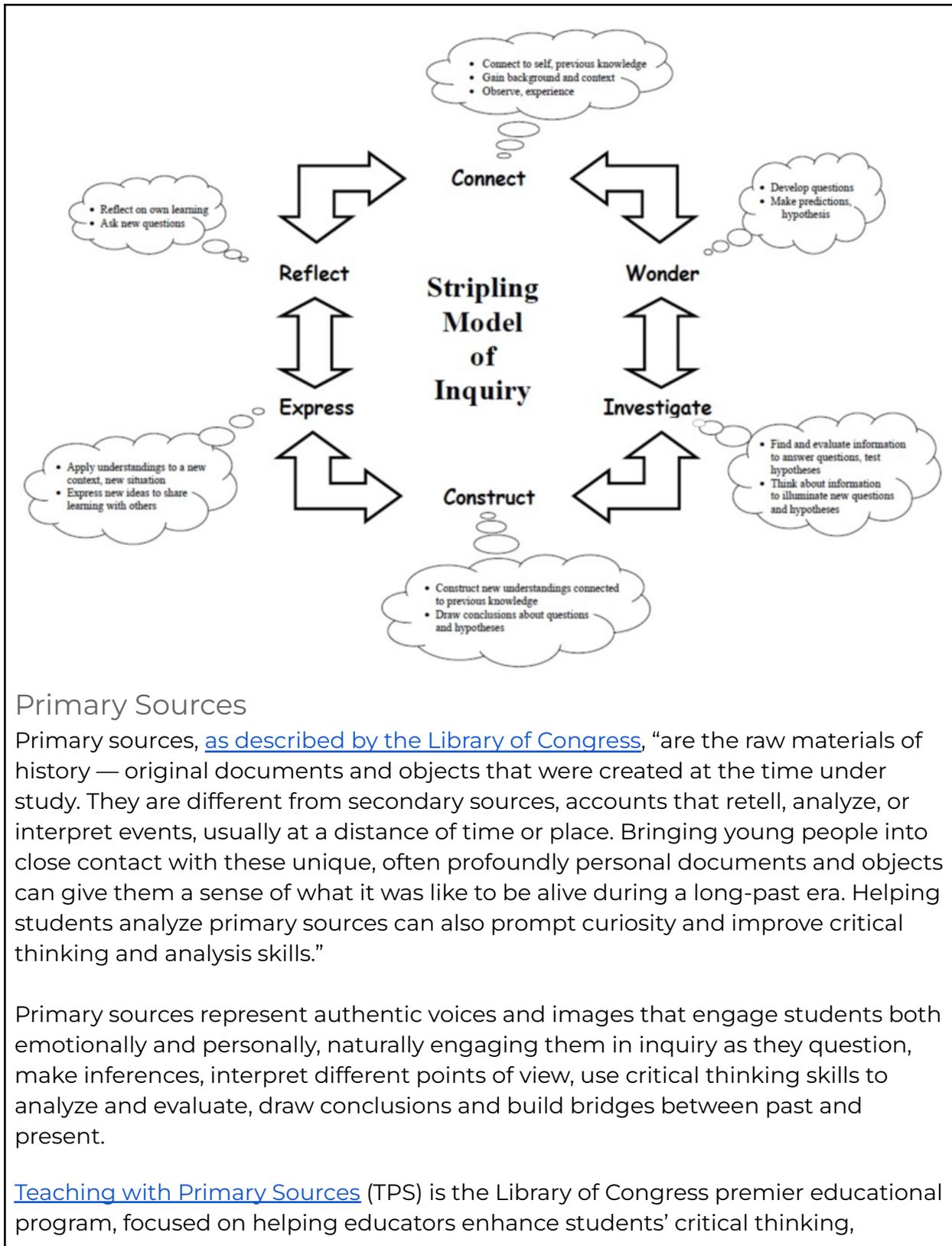


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## Primary Sources

Primary sources, [as described by the Library of Congress](#), “are the raw materials of history — original documents and objects that were created at the time under study. They are different from secondary sources, accounts that retell, analyze, or interpret events, usually at a distance of time or place. Bringing young people into close contact with these unique, often profoundly personal documents and objects can give them a sense of what it was like to be alive during a long-past era. Helping students analyze primary sources can also prompt curiosity and improve critical thinking and analysis skills.”

Primary sources represent authentic voices and images that engage students both emotionally and personally, naturally engaging them in inquiry as they question, make inferences, interpret different points of view, use critical thinking skills to analyze and evaluate, draw conclusions and build bridges between past and present.

[Teaching with Primary Sources](#) (TPS) is the Library of Congress premier educational program, focused on helping educators enhance students’ critical thinking,



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analytical skills, and content knowledge using the Library's collections of millions of digitized primary sources.

## Supporting Rationale and Research

### Introduction to Primary Sources

Engaging All Learners with Primary Sources, *TPS Journal* Vol. 2, No. 1, Winter 2009.

<https://www.loc.gov/static/programs/teachers/about-this-program/teaching-with-primary-sources-partner-program/documents/differentiated-instruction.pdf>

### Inquiry & Primary Sources

Rasmussen, Chris, et al. Four Goals for Instructors Using Inquiry-Based Learning, *Notices of the AMS*, Volume 64, Number 11, December 2017.

<https://www.ams.org/publications/journals/notices/201711/rnoti-p1308.pdf>

Stripling, Barbara. Inquiry: Inquiring Minds Want to Know, *School Library Media Activities Monthly*, Volume XXV, Number 1, September 2008.

<https://www.teachingbooks.net/content/InquiringMindsWantToKnow-Stripling.pdf>

Teaching Inquiry with Primary Sources, *TPS Journal* Vol. 2, No. 3, Summer 2009.

<https://www.loc.gov/static/programs/teachers/about-this-program/teaching-with-primary-sources-partner-program/documents/inquiry-learning.pdf>

### Selecting Primary Sources

Beyond Typescript and Photographs: Using Primary Sources in Different Formats, *TPS Journal*, Vol. 4, No. 2, Fall 2011.

[https://www.loc.gov/static/programs/teachers/about-this-program/teaching-with-primary-sources-partner-program/documents/ps\\_formats.pdf](https://www.loc.gov/static/programs/teachers/about-this-program/teaching-with-primary-sources-partner-program/documents/ps_formats.pdf)

Tally, Bill. Choosing (and Using) Images for Primary Source Inquiries, Education Development Center for Children and Technology.

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Us6yUn9Z4nTs-blm247Y9JD-eBCxMLuM/view>

### Analyzing Primary Sources

Roberts, Scott L. and VanDeusen-MacLeod, Betsy. The Jigsaw Revisited: Common Core Social Studies and English Language Arts Integration, *Social Studies Research and Practice*, Volume 10, Number 2, Summer 2015.

<http://www.socstrpr.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/MS06599-Roberts-et-al.pdf>

Scope and Sequence of Cognitive Tasks Associated with Teaching with Primary Sources, TPS Mississippi.



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<http://www.msstatetps.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/TPS-Mississippi-Cognitive-Tasks-SEP-2019.pdf>

Strategy Focus: Gallery Walk, *TPS Journal*, Vol. 3, No. 3, Summer 2010.

<https://www.loc.gov/static/programs/teachers/about-this-program/teaching-with-primary-sources-partner-program/documents/english-language-elementary-activity.pdf>

## Resources

Introduction to Primary Sources

[Primary Source Learning: What Are Primary Sources? - Citizen U Primary Source Nexus](#)

[EIU Teaching with Primary Sources](#)

[Getting Started with Primary Sources | Teachers | Programs | Library of Congress](#)

[Teacher Resource: Copyright Quick Check](#)

[Using Items from the Library's Website: Understanding Copyright | Legal](#)

[Primary Source Learning: Taking the Mystery Out of Copyright](#)

*Note: This curated set of links has been included in the event you would like to explore additional copyright resources for teachers and students.*

[Using Sources: Citing Digitized Sources from the Library - Citizen U Primary Source Nexus](#)

Inquiry & Primary Sources

Teacher Resource: Inquiry & Primary Sources, Library of Congress.

- [Teacher Resource: Inquiry & Primary Sources Overview | Library of Congress](#) (3:39 minutes)
- [Teacher Resource: Inquiry - Connect | Library of Congress](#) (4:17 minutes)
- [Teacher Resource: Inquiry - Wonder | Library of Congress](#) (1:56 minutes)
- [Teacher Resource: Inquiry - Investigate | Library of Congress](#) (6:15 minutes)
- [Teacher Resource: Inquiry - Construct | Library of Congress](#) (3:45 minutes)
- [Teacher Resource: Inquiry - Reflect | Library of Congress](#) (2:59 minutes)

[Teaching with Primary Sources Made a Real Change](#) (4:16 minutes)



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[Primary Source Learning: Information Literacy & Inquiry](#)

## Locating Primary Sources

[Teacher Resource: Shortcuts to Primary Sources](#) (1:23 minutes)

[Classroom Materials at the Library of Congress, Available Online, Primary Source Set](#)

[Finding Resources: LOC.gov Teachers Section, Citizen U Primary Source Nexus.](#)

[Finding Resources: Exploring the Digital Collections - Citizen U Primary Source Nexus](#)

[Finding Resources: Searching Across LOC.gov - Citizen U Primary Source Nexus](#)

[Theme-based Resources - Citizen U Primary Source Nexus](#)

[TPS Spotlight: TPS Teachers Network - Citizen U Primary Source Nexus](#)

[Primary Source Tracker Template](#)

## Selecting Primary Sources

[Selecting Primary Sources for the Classroom: Considering Moment of Use | Teaching with the Library of Congress](#)

[Selecting Primary Sources, Part II: Considering Historical Context | Teaching with the Library of Congress](#)

[Selecting Primary Sources, Part III: Thinking about Perspective | Teaching with the Library of Congress](#)

[Selecting Primary Sources That Deal with Difficult Issues](#)

[Selecting, Excerpting & Modifying Primary Sources](#)

[Selecting Primary Sources: Learning Activity Criteria](#)

[Selecting Primary Sources: Criteria for Classroom Use](#)



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## Prepping Primary Sources

[Selecting Primary Sources, Part IV: Considering Quality | Teaching with the Library of Congress](#)

[Using Sources: Saving High Resolution Images - Citizen U Primary Source Nexus](#)

[Using Sources: Printing High Quality Black & White Primary Source Images](#)

[Using Sources: Chronicling America Newspaper Pages - Citizen U Primary Source Nexus](#)

[Using Sources: Viewing, Saving & Printing Maps - Citizen U Primary Source Nexus](#)

## Analyzing Primary Sources

[Primary Source Analysis Tool](#)

[Analyzing Primary Sources: Tools & Guides](#)

*Note: You are not required to review all the resources contained in this blog post; use those most pertinent to you.*

## Reviewing an Inquiry with Primary Sources Activity

[Peer Review Template for Inquiry with Primary Sources Activity](#)

[Analysis of Inquiry with Primary Sources Activity Template](#)

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# Submission Guidelines & Evaluation Criteria

*To earn the micro-credential, you must receive a passing score in Parts 1 and 3, and receive proficiency for all components in Part 2.*

## Part 1. Overview

(500-1,000 words)

*Please copy and paste the following contextual prompts and questions into a document and respond to them without including any identifying information.*

1. Describe your and your school's current use of primary sources, including typical means of access, differentiation of use of primary versus secondary



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sources in instructional activities, and advantages, as well as challenges of integrating primary sources into instruction.

2. Define inquiry-based learning as you understand it in the context of your school and/or district mandates. Then describe inquiry-based strategies and methods that you have used in your own teaching, as well as challenges you have faced integrating inquiry into instruction.
3. List the grade(s) and subject(s) that you teach, along with general information about your class composition. What challenges have you experienced, or imagine you might have, when searching for and selecting primary sources for student use that honor them and their lived experiences?
4. Identify a few challenges and successes you have had, or imagine you might have, when facilitating primary source analyses with students.
5. Identify a few areas of your curriculum where integration of primary source learning could be used to promote student empathy, foster understanding of multiple perspectives, deepen content knowledge, and enhance critical thinking skills. Explain why you chose the areas you identified.

**Passing:** Responses provide reasonable and accurate information that address current use of primary sources and inquiry learning, challenges to tackle, and areas of instruction that could be enhanced through inquiry-based learning with primary sources.

## Part 2. Artifacts

To earn this micro-credential, please submit the following **5** artifacts as evidence of your competency in this area. *Please do not include any identifying information for you or your students.*

### **Artifact 1: Primary & Secondary Sources Mini-lesson Outline**

Create a 1-2 page outline of a mini-lesson that teaches your students about primary sources and how they differ from secondary sources.

(See rubric for specific requirements.)

Upload your completed mini-lesson outline.

### **Artifact 2: Ready-made Primary Source Set Review**

1. Investigate the Library's ready-made [primary source sets](#), and select a set with a topic that your students will find engaging and relates to a current lesson/unit that you teach.



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2. Read the teacher's guide, and review the different primary sources in the set. Think about how you might use two or more of the primary sources in the set to appeal to and meet the specific needs of your students by differentiating learning through content, process, or product.
3. Write an email (200-400 words) that you could send to an administrator, department chair, or another colleague that identifies the primary source set; describes the particular primary sources from it that you think would engage students; provides an explanation of why the selected sources meet student needs; and gives an example of how you would use inquiry to integrate the primary sources into instruction.

(See rubric for specific requirements.)

Copy your email into a document and upload it.

### **Artifact 3: Activity Plan & Supporting Materials**

Curate an individual primary source set related to a topic of your choice that aligns with a current lesson/unit that you teach or a new lesson that you would like to incorporate into your curriculum. You may expand on the sources you selected for Artifact 2 or select a new set (see Resources: Locating Primary Sources). Use the [Primary Source Tracker](#) to help organize your research. The source set must include at least 4-6 sources from the Library of Congress meeting the following requirements:

- at least 2 different primary source formats (e.g., photo, oral history, text, song etc.)
- at least 2 sources representing different perspectives (i.e., alternate or contrasting views)

Be sure to experiment by completing your own analysis of 2 primary sources that represent different formats and perspectives, and briefly describe how the process informed your activity plan.

Then create a plan for an inquiry learning activity using the primary source set, or a subset of it, that aligns with your curriculum, standards, and students' developmental levels and lived experiences.

The activity plan may be written in lesson plan format or in narrative form. In either case, the plan must include the components listed below.

- Identification of activity topic
- Identification of target grade(s)
- 30-100 word overview of the activity



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- List of activity materials, including citations of at least two primary sources of different formats that provide varying perspectives
- Guiding questions for each primary source students will analyze (see [primary source analysis guides/prompts](#))
- Link to the Library's primary source analysis tool or a modified version of it
- Identification and description of the purpose(s) for using the curated primary source set, or a subset of it, with your students (see the [Criteria for Classroom Use](#) blog post)
- Steps you will take to approach sensitive or controversial issues presented by any of the sources, if applicable
- Reasons for excerpting or modifying any of the sources, if applicable
- Identification and description of the phase(s) of inquiry and skills/strategies your activity will focus on with the primary source set or with each individual primary source (see pp. 2-4 of the [Teaching Inquiry with Primary Sources article](#)).
- Description of the activity flow
- Explanation of how the activity integrates into a larger lesson or unit

(See rubric for specific requirements.)

Combine all of the following required items into one document for uploading:

1. Completed Primary Source Tracker
2. Two examples of educator-completed primary source analyses with a brief description of how the process informed your activity plan  
*NOTE: You may wish to take pictures of both the completed tools and insert them into your artifact document.*
3. Completed Activity Plan

#### **Artifact 4: Activity Evidence**

If possible, implement your inquiry with primary sources activity with your students, and submit 4-6 examples of student work, at least 1 for each primary source analyzed and, if possible, of different levels (e.g., emerging, competent, advanced).

If you are unable to implement the activity, identify 2 colleagues willing to complete a peer review of your activity plan. Provide each with a copy of your activity plan and a copy of the [Peer Review Template for Primary Sources & Inquiry Activity Plan](#). Be sure to point out any specific areas where you'd like targeted feedback.

(See rubric for specific requirements.)



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Combine each piece of evidence into one document for uploading.

*NOTE: If you have handwritten student work or completed peer reviews, simply take pictures of each piece of evidence and insert the files into a single document.*

### **Artifact 5: Activity Analysis**

After reviewing student work or the peer reviews, download or make a copy of the [Analysis of Inquiry with Primary Sources Activity Template](#) and use it to discuss what the process was like for you to teach or receive feedback and use it to discuss what the process was like for you to teach or receive feedback and how you'll modify your lesson plan as a result.

(See rubric for specific requirements.)

Upload your completed activity analysis.



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## Part 2. Rubric

	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>Basic</b>	<b>Developing</b>
<b>Artifact 1: Primary &amp; Secondary Sources Mini-lesson Outline</b>	<p>Mini-lesson outline (1-2 pages) includes all of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a definition of a primary source</li> <li>examples of different types of primary sources</li> <li>a definition of a secondary source</li> <li>examples of different types of secondary sources</li> <li>a hands-on opportunity for students to work though differentiating between primary and secondary sources</li> <li>a means to assess student mastery of the concepts</li> </ul>	<p>Mini-lesson outline (1-2 pages) includes most, but not all, of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a definition of a primary source</li> <li>examples of different types of primary sources</li> <li>a definition of a secondary source</li> <li>examples of different types of secondary sources</li> <li>a hands-on opportunity for students to work though differentiating between primary and secondary sources</li> <li>a means to assess student mastery of the concepts</li> </ul>	<p>Mini-lesson outline is less than 1 page and includes some of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a definition of a primary source</li> <li>examples of different types of primary sources</li> <li>a definition of a secondary source</li> <li>examples of different types of secondary sources</li> <li>a hands-on opportunity for students to work though differentiating between primary and secondary sources</li> <li>a means to assess student mastery of the concepts</li> </ul>
<b>Artifact 2: Ready-made Primary Source Set Review</b>	<p>Review includes all of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>is written in the form of an email (200-400 words)</li> </ul>	<p>Review includes most, but not all, of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>is written in the form of an email (200-400 words)</li> </ul>	<p>Review includes some of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>is written in the form of an email (200-400 words)</li> </ul>



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	<p>clearly addresses one of the specified target audiences</p> <p>title and link to a primary source set from one of the Library's ready-made primary source sets</p> <p>description of and links to two or more specific sources contained within the selected set that would engage students</p> <p>explanation of why the selected sources meet student needs by differentiating learning through content, process, or product</p> <p>illustration of how inquiry would be used to integrate the primary sources into instruction</p>	<p>clearly addresses one of the specified target audiences</p> <p>title and link to a primary source set from one of the Library's ready-made primary source sets</p> <p>description of and links to two or more specific sources contained within the selected set that would engage students</p> <p>explanation of why the selected sources meet student needs by differentiating learning through content, process, or product</p> <p>illustration of how inquiry would be used to integrate the primary sources into instruction</p>	<p>clearly addresses one of the specified target audiences</p> <p>title and link to a primary source set from one of the Library's ready-made primary source sets</p> <p>description of and links to two or more specific sources contained within the selected set that would engage students</p> <p>explanation of why the selected sources meet student needs by differentiating learning through content, process, or product</p> <p>illustration of how inquiry would be used to integrate the primary sources into instruction</p>
<b>Artifact 3: Activity Plan &amp; Supporting Materials</b>	Primary Source Tracker includes 4-6 primary sources from the Library of Congress	Primary Source Tracker includes 2-4 primary sources from the Library of Congress	Primary Source Tracker includes 1-2 primary sources from the Library of Congress



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	<p>Evidence of at least 2 educator-completed primary source analyzed with a brief description of how the process informed the activity plan.</p> <p><b>Activity plan includes all of the following:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>identification of activity topic</li> <li>identification of target grade(s)</li> <li>30-100 word overview of the activity</li> <li>list of activity materials, including citations of at least two primary sources of different formats that provide varying perspectives</li> <li>guiding questions for each primary source students will analyze</li> <li>link to the Library's primary source analysis tool or a</li> </ul>	<p>Evidence of at least 2 educator-completed primary source analyzed with no description of how the process informed the activity plan.</p> <p><b>Activity plan includes most, but not all, of the following:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>identification of activity topic</li> <li>identification of target grade(s)</li> <li>30-100 word overview of the activity</li> <li>list of activity materials, including citations of at least two primary sources of different formats that provide varying perspectives</li> <li>guiding questions for each primary source students will analyze</li> <li>link to the Library's primary source analysis tool or a</li> </ul>	<p>Evidence of 1 educator-completed primary source analyzed with no description of how the process informed the activity plan.</p> <p><b>Activity plan includes some of the following:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>identification of activity topic</li> <li>identification of target grade(s)</li> <li>30-100 word overview of the activity</li> <li>list of activity materials, including citations of at least two primary sources of different formats that provide varying perspectives</li> <li>guiding questions for each primary source students will analyze</li> <li>link to the Library's primary source analysis tool or a modified version of it</li> </ul>
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	<p>modified version of it</p> <p>identification and description of the purpose(s) for using the curated primary source set</p> <p>if applicable, identification of steps to approach sensitive or controversial issues presented by a particular source</p> <p>if applicable, description of reasons for excerpting or modifying sources</p> <p>identification and description of the phase(s) of inquiry and associated skills/strategies used with the primary source set or each individual primary source</p> <p>description of activity flow</p> <p>explanation of how the activity integrates into a larger lesson or unit</p>	<p>modified version of it</p> <p>identification and description of the purpose(s) for using the curated primary source set</p> <p>if applicable, identification of steps to approach sensitive or controversial issues presented by a particular source</p> <p>if applicable, description of reasons for excerpting or modifying sources</p> <p>identification and description of the phase(s) of inquiry and associated skills/strategies used with the primary source set or each individual primary source</p> <p>description of activity flow</p> <p>explanation of how the activity integrates into a larger lesson or unit</p>	<p>identification and description of the purpose(s) for using the curated primary source set</p> <p>if applicable, identification of steps to approach sensitive or controversial issues presented by a particular source</p> <p>if applicable, description of reasons for excerpting or modifying sources</p> <p>identification and description of the phase(s) of inquiry and associated skills/strategies used with the primary source set or each individual primary source</p> <p>description of activity flow</p> <p>explanation of how the activity integrates into a larger lesson or unit</p>
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<b>Artifact 4: Activity Evidence</b>	<p>Activity evidence includes 1 of the following 2 options:</p> <p>4-6 examples of student work with primary sources, at least 1 for each primary source in the curated set</p> <p>2 completed peer reviews</p>	<p>Activity evidence includes 1 of the following 2 options:</p> <p>3-4 examples of student work with primary sources, at least 1 for each primary source in the curated set</p> <p>2 completed peer reviews</p>	<p>Activity evidence includes 1 of the following 2 options:</p> <p>1-2 examples of student work with primary sources</p> <p>1 completed peer review</p>
<b>Artifact 5: Activity Analysis</b>	<p>Activity analysis (400-800 words) includes all of the following:</p> <p>function and impact of inquiry learning</p> <p>function and impact of selected primary sources in supporting inquiry</p> <p>key takeaways from student work or peer feedback</p> <p>changes or adjustments for the future</p>	<p>Activity analysis (400-800 words) includes all of the following:</p> <p>function and impact of inquiry learning</p> <p>function and impact of selected primary sources in supporting inquiry</p> <p>key takeaways from student work or peer feedback</p> <p>changes or adjustments for the future</p>	<p>Activity analysis (400-800 words) includes all of the following:</p> <p>function and impact of inquiry learning</p> <p>function and impact of selected primary sources in supporting inquiry</p> <p>key takeaways from student work or peer feedback</p> <p>changes or adjustments for the future</p>

### Part 3. Reflection

(300-600 words)

*Please copy and paste the following reflective prompts and questions into a document and respond to them without including any identifying information.*



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Consider how your understanding of inquiry-based learning with primary sources has evolved. If it helps organize your thoughts, try using the sentence stem, “I used to think.... Now I think....” Then address the following:

- Describe how you used, or will use, inquiry learning to engage your students in analyzing primary sources to promote student empathy, foster understanding of multiple perspectives, deepen content knowledge, and enhance critical thinking skills. How did the activity work, or how do you anticipate it will work with your students?
- How can you improve the facilitation of primary source analysis and inquiry learning with students in the future?
- Create an agenda you could use to talk to a group of colleagues about inquiry-based learning and its value in the context of teaching with primary sources from the Library of Congress. Be sure to include a title and setting (i.e., informal collaboration session or more formal professional development event).

**Passing:** Reflection provides evidence that this micro-credential has had a positive impact on both educator practice and student success, specific actionable steps regarding how the educator will continue to build on this competency, and steps to advocate for the efficacy and value of learning with primary sources and inquiry.

## Credits

This micro-credential was developed with content and expertise from Citizen U as part of the Barat Education Foundation Library of Congress TPS program grant and in collaboration with TPS Consortium members Emerging America, Collaborative for Educational Services and Inquiry in the Upper Midwest, Minnesota Historical Society.

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Inquiry *in the*  
Upper  
Midwest 

 MINNESOTA  
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SOCIETY



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