
The State Historical Society of Missouri

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*The Curriculum
Standards for
Missouri,
Illinois, and the
National
Council for the
Social Studies
are listed at the
end of each
lesson plan.*

Lesson Two: Researching with Primary Sources Learning to use Digitized Databases

Rationale:

It is important for students to learn what resources are available to them and how they can use those resources to research and gain knowledge on various subject matters. Digitalized databases provide a wealth of knowledge at one's fingertips and the sooner students know how to access those resources, the better researchers they will become.

Grade/Subject:

This lesson will work for any Social Studies class grades 6-12, but it will be more important to understand whether or not your students are already proficient in research. Teaching students these tools earlier in life will benefit them for longer, but refresher courses are always helpful. Never assume your students do or do not know how to research.

Duration:

This lesson should take 4-5 class periods depending on research and presentation time

Objectives:

1. Students will be able to successfully research subjects using digitalized databases.
2. Students will be able to use primary sources found during research to create and present projects.

Assessing Prior Knowledge:

1. Discuss with the students what methods of research they have used in the past, including successes and failures.
2. Chart the sources and web sites that they have used on the board, along with why they use those sources.
3. Ask your students how much they have used internet databases such as The National Archives and Missouri Digital Heritage.



It's not just a day...it's an experience

National History Day in Missouri is an educational outreach program of The State Historical Society of Missouri and the University of Missouri Western Historical Manuscript-Columbia.

Instructional Activities:

Note: Generally your school district will have subscribed to certain databases like LexisNexis Academic and Proquest for your students' use. If you are not sure if your school provides such databases, please speak with your librarian.

1. Inform the class that they will each be researching a topic based on information being taught at the time. The teacher can either assign topics, or allow students to choose their own. The students do not need to know their topic before going to the library, but ask them to be thinking about a few they might want to use.
2. Take your students to the library where everyone, or almost everyone, has access to a computer.
3. Provide your students with a list of various databases that can be used to research and find primary documents. Be sure to include information about what materials the databases contain, for easy use by the students. Be sure to include any databases available to your students at your school, or urge them to go to the public library if none are available at the school. This list should include but is not limited to the following:
 - a. The National Archives: www.nara.gov
 - b. Missouri Digital Heritage: <http://www.sos.mo.gov/mdh/>
 - c. Missouri State Archives: <http://sos.mo.gov/archives>
 - d. Harry S. Truman Library and Museum: www.trumanlibrary.org
 - e. The Avalon Project, Yale Law: <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/avalon.htm>
4. Give short introductions to a few of the best sites, and provide useful tips for researching.
 - a. The use of quotes ensures that the words will always be used in that order.
 - b. The use of an * will allow for multiple searches.
 - i. For example, a search for histor* would include: history, historians, and historical.
 - c. Sort by *relevance* rather than *date added*.
 - d. Do multiple word searches.
 - i. For example, during a search for prisons one could also use the words incarcerated and penitentiary system.
5. Let your students get used to using these search engines, and make sure to come around to answer any questions they might have. Require that they have an approved topic by the end of the class period.
6. Allow your students to research their topics, and require that they have at least five sources, with only one being a secondary source.
7. Have them put together presentations and present them to the class.

Assessment:

1. Have the students write a reflection about the difference in quality of their projects using the digitalized databases against the sources they used to use.

Missouri Show-Me Standards addressed:

Performance Goal 1:

#2: Conduct research to answer questions and evaluate information and ideas.

#4: Use technological tools and other resources to locate, select and organize information.

Performance Goal 2:

#1: Plan and make written, oral and visual presentations for a variety of purposes and audiences.

Illinois State Learning Standards addressed:

16.A.5a (Late High School): Analyze historical and contemporary developments using methods of historical inquiry.

16.A.1b (Early Elementary): Ask historical questions and seek out answers from historical sources.

16.A.3b (Middle/Junior High School): Make inferences about historical events and eras using historical maps and other historical sources.

16.A.3C (Middle/Junior High School): Identify the differences between historical fact and interpretation.

National Council for the Social Studies Thematic Strands Addressed:

Theme I: Culture

Theme II: Time, Continuity, and Change

Theme IV: Individual Development and Identity