

Archive Working Group - Lesson Plan

Focus Questions

What is the archive? How is it created? How can we use it?

Lesson Objective

Emphasize the exploratory and constructed nature of the archive

- Understand not only what it is, but how to navigate it
- Think about how expansive of a category “data” actually is
- Emphasize discovery - model the work of a historian on a smaller scale.

Lesson Standards

- **RH1:** Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the source as a whole.
- **WHST4:** Write responses to texts and to events (past and present), ideas, and theories that include personal, cultural, and thematic connections.
- **11-12SL4:** Present claims, findings, and supporting evidence, conveying a clear and distinct perspective; alternative or opposing perspectives are addressed; organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

Motivating Students / Introducing Concepts (Lesson Pt. 1)

- What does an archive look like in our own lives? How do we create the archive every day?
 - Ask students what they think an archive even is? Have they ever been to one? What do they imagine when they hear the term?
- Begin class by setting aside 15 minutes for students to search through their backpacks for a single item they would want to represent them in a time capsule. Have them explain why they chose that particular item and what they think it represents. Then have a neighboring student explain what they think that item represents.
 - Use this exercise to model how the archive is formed under limitations, we do not always get to choose what we leave behind and we cannot control what others will make of our traces.

Model / Teach (Lesson Plan Pt. 2)

- Important Terminology
 - Primary and Secondary Sources
 - Multiple Perspectives
 - Keywords
 - Reliability
- Present small, curated examples from the archive based on common theme (environment, politics, urban renewal) or geography (local neighborhoods, suburban vs. urban areas)
 - SEE: What themes do you see? What commonalities and differences exist within this set?
 - THINK: What keywords would I use to compile a similar set? What other ways might I encounter these same materials?
 - WONDER: How do keyword searches limit what we find? What biases do we reinforce when we use the archive this way? How might we resist this tendency?
- Explain how to use maps/keywords to find essays
 - Discuss advantages and disadvantages of using keyword searching
 - Explain how anachronistic words may affect searches
 - Ask students to brainstorm ways to refine their search

Group Work

- Have students consult worksheet: [Analyze a Written Document - Library of Congress](#) and fill out for one of the essays
- Cross referencing with other archives/databases
 - Find one document through the national archives' online database related to the essays reviewed, explain how the documents complement each other
 - Review how to find reliable and accessible sources that compliment their interests

Assessment

- What is a reliable archive / how can you tell the source you are looking at is reputable?