

# **Teaching with Primary Sources**

Victor Salazar/Rachel Wood

# What is a primary source?

- 5 minutes per group to decide definition

# What is a primary source?

- First hand evidence or testimony
- Often created concurrently with events being described
- But can also include memoirs, autobiographies, and oral histories that are later recorded
- Content, not format
- What does this include?

A primary source is NOT

- A textbook
- Certain scholarly research articles: an article about WWII v. an article by an anthropologist in the Kalahari about the people he studied
- A documentary film, or anything that has been interpreted already

# Why should we use primary sources in the classroom?

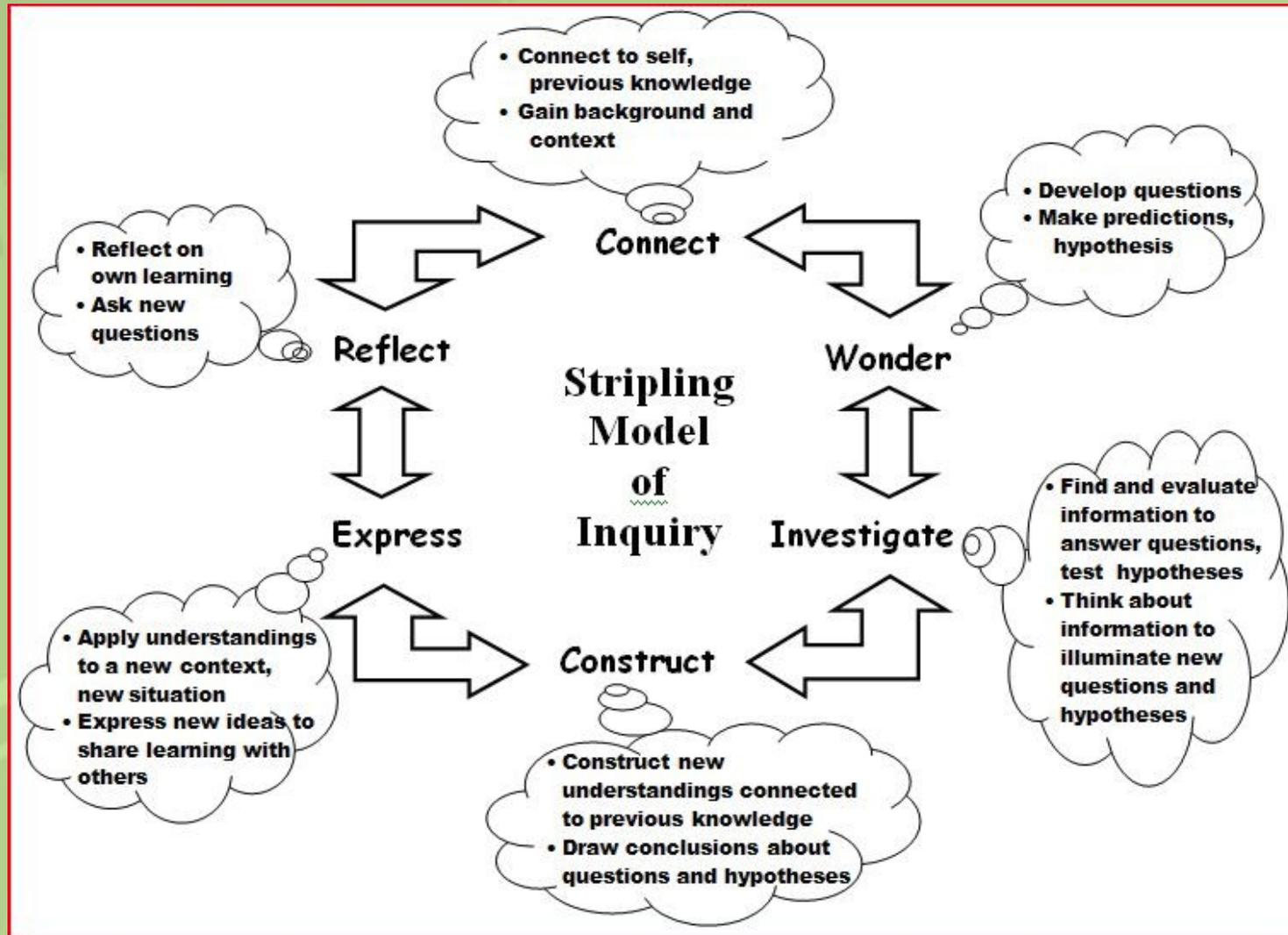
- Seeking to understand the nature of a primary source (who created it, what it represents, why it was created) increases critical thinking
- Emotional and personal connection with primary sources can increase historical thinking
- Engagement with authentic historical voices, conflicting points of view, and the multifaceted nature of history

# “History in the Raw”

According to the National Archives, “Primary sources force students to realize that any account of an event, no matter how impartially presented it appears to be, is essentially subjective.”

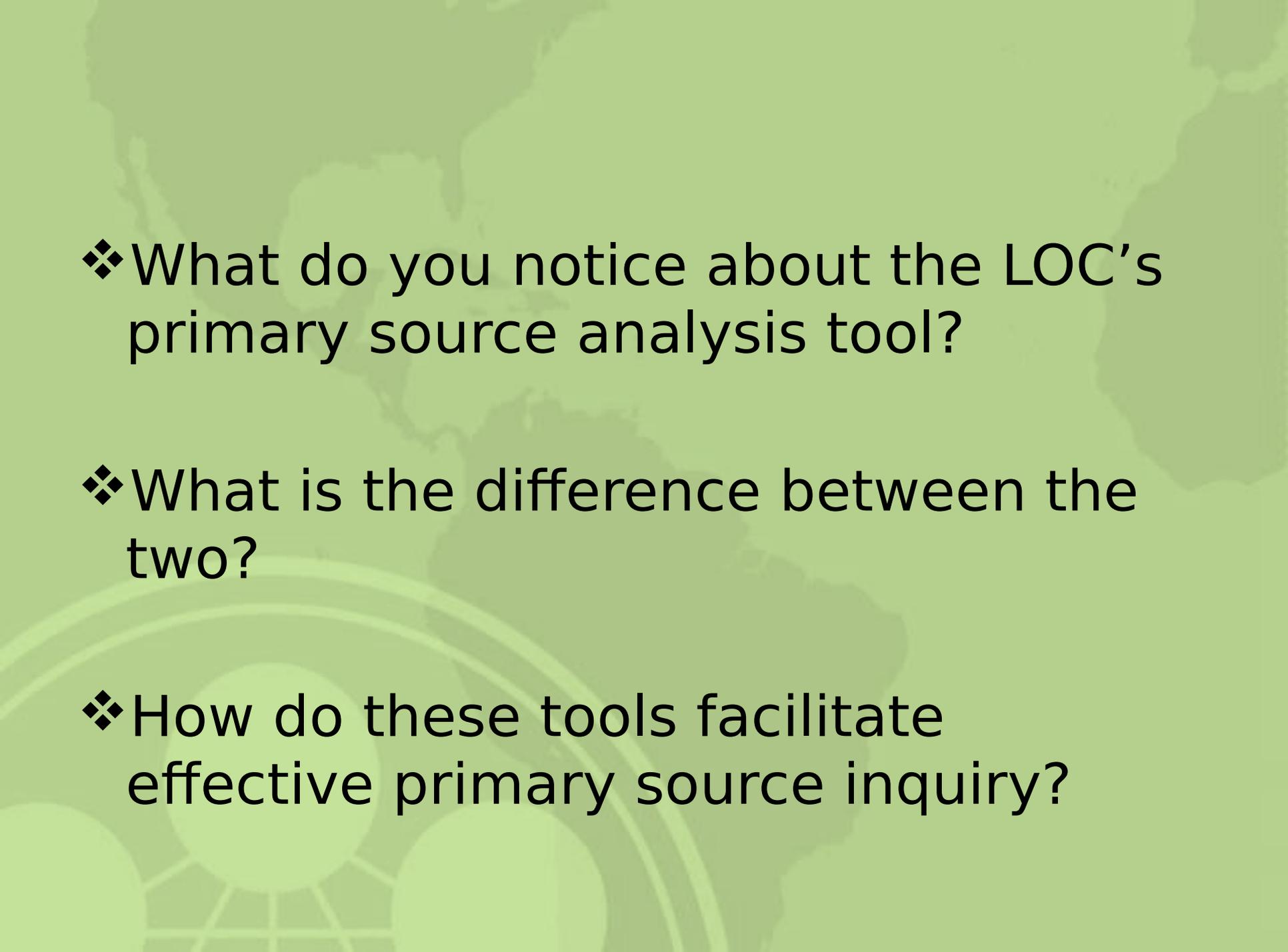
Why is this  
important?

# Barbara Stripling's model of inquiry:



What do you notice about the Stripling Model?



- 
- ❖ What do you notice about the LOC's primary source analysis tool?
  - ❖ What is the difference between the two?
  - ❖ How do these tools facilitate effective primary source inquiry?

# Observe

Students should spend time observing.

A method for increasing the time spent “seeing”

involves revealing only portions of a primary document at a time.

Go slowly through the observation stage. Revisit the

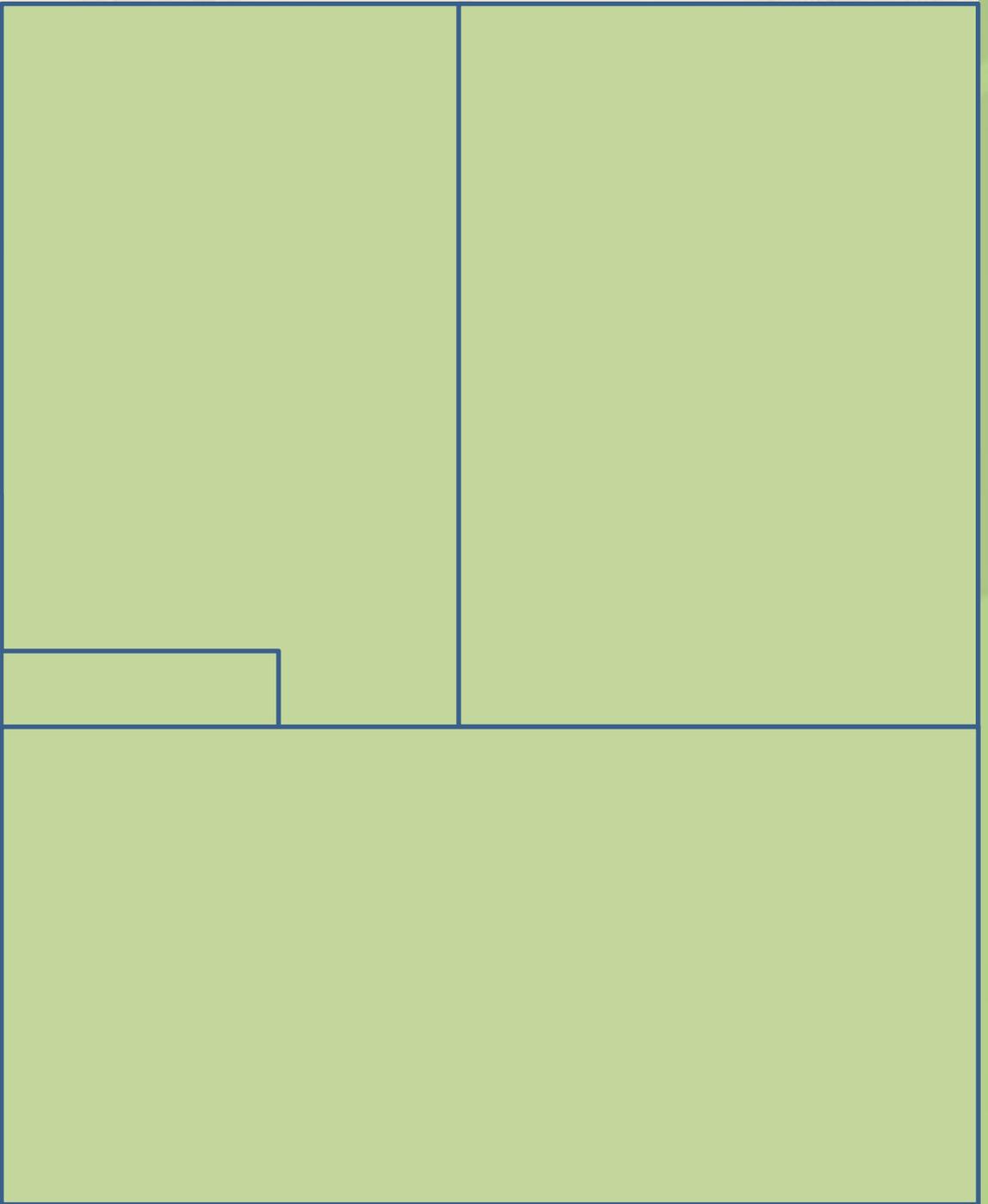
# What kinds of questions can we ask?

# **Observe**

You can ask students to hone in on particular things they say they see.

Students might engage in reflection or inference at this point, but you should guide them back to observation.

How do we prevent students from jumping to “Reflection?”



# Reflect

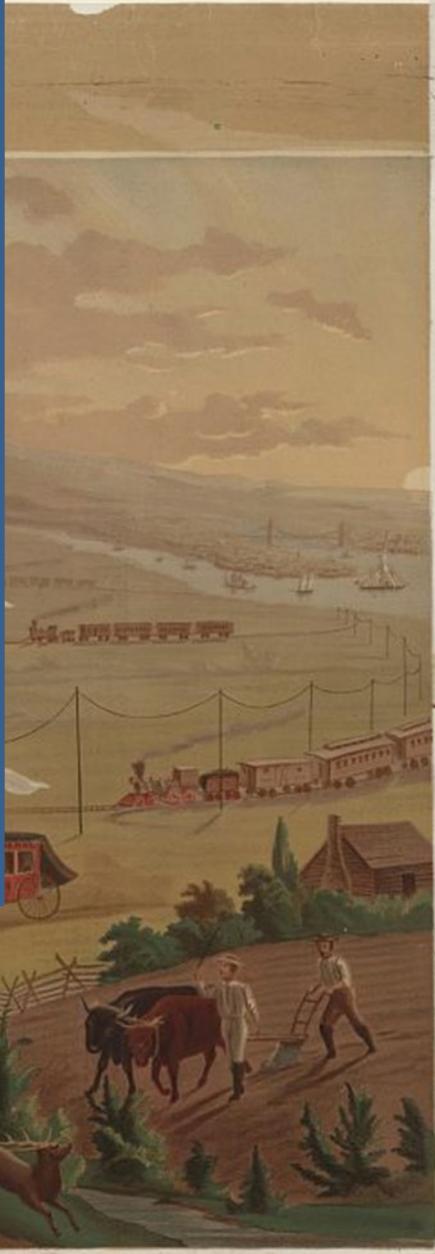
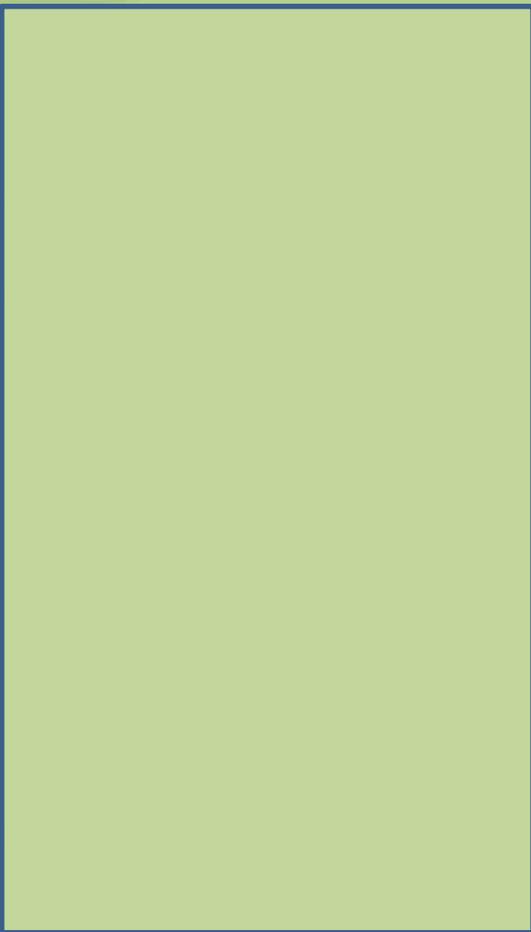
After recording observations, have students reflect on what they have observed.

This can be done after each tile is removed from the source being studied and after the entire source has been revealed.

Reflect and Observe should be fluid steps that can be toggled back and forth between.

Ask questions such as:

- ❖ Based on what you noticed, what do you think is happening in this image?
- ❖ How do you feel observing this image?
- ❖ What is the atmosphere of the image?
- ❖ Is it true to life?
- ❖ Does it remind you of anything?
- ❖ What ideas is the image trying to express?
- ❖ What do you think the creator of the image was trying to do by creating it?



# Question/ Wonder

After recording reflections, students should begin to formulate their own questions about the work.

Questions can be tightly focused or very broad.

All questions are valid. The more questions the better; use the “ground rules” on this page to make sure students are actively questioning.

How do we foster wondering?

- ❖ Ask as many questions as they can
- ❖ Forego judging, answering, or discussing any of the questions
- ❖ Change any statement to a question
- ❖ Record all questions exactly as they thought of them



# Why do we want students to question?

- ❖ Questioning is a fundamental skill for learning
- ❖ Being able to question any material is the basis of effective inquiry
- ❖ Question-building cultivates higher-order thinking skills
- ❖ Additionally, having students generate their own questions about content **can help drive your instruction to better serve student needs**, avoiding teaching something they may already understand and clueing you in when they need additional help.

## **Further Investigation**

Refine questions, combine questions, eliminate closed-ended questions. Identify questions worthy of further research.

Develop a strategy for investigation.

Age and capacity driven.

Ask students to:  
Identify the most intriguing of their questions.

This can be a class discussion, but also provides an opportunity for group work.

You might provide more primary sources where they can then research their questions.

# Further Investigation

How might you use further investigation in your classrooms?

What kinds of projects might you do?  
(Exercise: 5-7 mins to brainstorm projects)

# Virtual Visit to Library of Congress

## [Introduction](#)

# Break

- Move to Computer Lab, Rm 318

# Using the Library of Congress

- LOC.gov
- Teacher's Page <http://www.loc.gov/teachers/>
  - ❖ Classroom Materials include Primary Source Sets and teacher produced lesson plans, as well as compilations of information and sources designed to generate ideas for lessons
  - ❖ Browsing by Topic
  - ❖ Browsing by Standard

# American Memory

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/index.html>

- ❖ Collections of primary sources organized by topic
- ❖ Once you open a collection, you can browse by various filters- date, creator, subject matter.
- ❖ Gallery view allows you to view the documents by their digital images

# Prints and Photographs Online Catalog

<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/>

- ❖ Prints and photographs organized by format, topic, and creator
- ❖ For instance, World War I posters, Daguerreotypes, baseball cards, political cartoons
- ❖ Easy to use to find a source for a Do Now Activity

# Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers

<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/>

- ❖ Search through digitized newspapers by state, year of publication, and topic.
- ❖ Topics in Chronicling America provides a working list of widely covered topics and is updated frequently.
- ❖ The Sinking of the Maine, World War I, Flappers

# National Jukebox

<http://www.loc.gov/jukebox/>

- ❖ Public access live streams of historical recordings.
- ❖ Allows you to make customizable playlists, search by topic, time, musician, or genre
- ❖ Jukebox Day by Day is a fun way to explore historical music every day or on student's birthdays
- ❖ Playlists of Recordings includes pre-made playlists pertaining to particular eras or ideas- i.e., temperance and prohibition, and the Foxtrot

# World Digital Library

World Digital Library <http://www.wdl.org/en/>

- ❖ Developed through a joint effort between the LOC and UNESCO to create an internet-based, free of charge, easily accessible collection of the cultural resources of the world's countries and peoples.
- ❖ Launched in 2009.
- ❖ Metadata, supporting content, and navigation content are translated into 7 languages, including Arabic, Russian, and Spanish.

# Navigating the WDL

- ❖ Browsing the WDL can be overwhelming.
- ❖ Unlike the LOC, it is somewhat easier to browse by place or time rather than for a specific type of source.
- ❖ Browsing by topic can and does often result in sources that are in languages other than English.
- ❖ The Maps collection and Prints and Photographs collection will typically yield the most classroom friendly sources.

# Let's Practice

Go to [loc.gov](http://loc.gov), select from either the American Memory or Prints and Photographs collections, and select a source you think you could easily build into a lesson.

After you make a selection, think about why you picked that source. Are there any constraints to the source you selected?

# Selecting the Best Source

**Content:** Will the material make students want to know more?

**Age-appropriateness:** Is the content too complex for your students?

**Length:** Will the length of the material affect comprehension? Will an excerpt be more effective?

**Legibility of Handwriting:** Can it be easily read? Could you provide a transcript of the material to overcome readability issues?

# Selecting the Best Source

**Reading Level of Students:** Find the balance of challenging and comprehensible.

**Prior Knowledge:** Are there archaic terms that need to be defined? What sort of historical context needs to be established?

# Pre-Reading Strategies for Primary Documents

- **Author or Creator Consideration:**

Context for a source that includes the author, date, historical situation, and maybe even a little background on the author can help students attack a source more strategically.

- **Knowledge Rating:**

Creating a chart where students must evaluate their own knowledge of topics or concepts related to the document can assist the teacher to establish the context **and** involve students in knowing what they know.

# During Reading Strategies

- **A Cloze Reading or Content Inventory:**  
This strategy engages students in evaluating their own content comprehension. Two readings are conducted. The first reading is to discover “What happened?” Then students are given the same document with missing terms, concepts, or phrases, and asked to fill in the blanks. Students respond with what they think best fits the blank.

# Post-Reading

- **History Frames:**

Draw on skills commonly applied to English and Literature. History Frames ask students to pick out the elements of a primary source like they would dissect a novel: Characters, Setting, Plot (Problem, Events or Episodes, Resolution or Outcome), and Theme (Personal Truth or Universal Truth)

Story Mapping

# HISTORY FRAME

<b>TITLE OF EVENT:</b>	<b>PARTICIPANTS / KEY PLAYERS:</b>
<b>PROBLEM or GOAL:</b>	<b>WHERE:</b> <b>WHEN:</b>
<b>KEY EPISODES or EVENTS:</b>	<b>RESOLUTION or OUTCOME:</b>
	<b>THEME/LESSON/So What?</b>

# Map Activity Ideas

**Beginner:** Use a single map and ask students to describe the map in their own words.

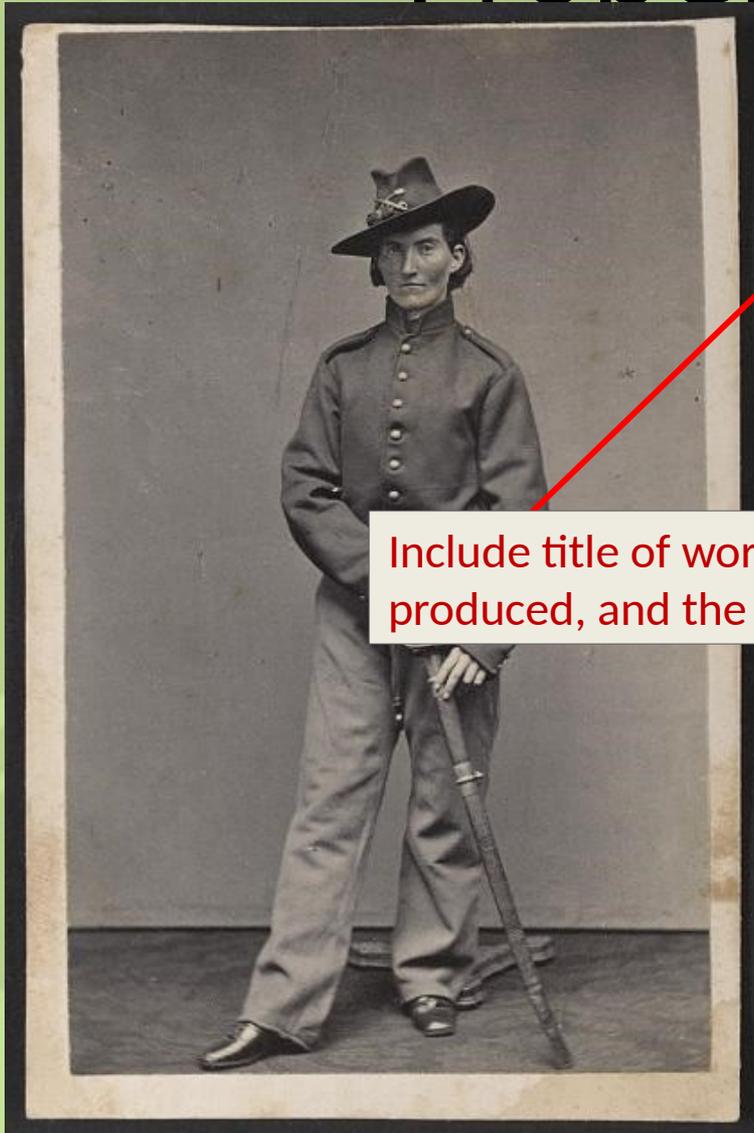
**Intermediate:** Present students with a series of several related maps from different time periods and ask them to find patterns or order them chronologically. Have them describe their thinking process and illustrate the clues they used.

**Advanced:** Give students the same set of maps but ask them to draw conclusions about similarities and differences between the maps. Ask them to detail the changes over time.

# Avoid

- ❖ Making multiple copies of any work that could substitute for the purchase of said work
- ❖ Copying and using the same work repeatedly for more than one semester
- ❖ Copying and using the same work for different courses at the same or different institutions

# Proper Citations



Frances L. Clalin 4 mo. heavy artillery Co. I, 13  
mo. Calvary Co. A. 22 months, 1825

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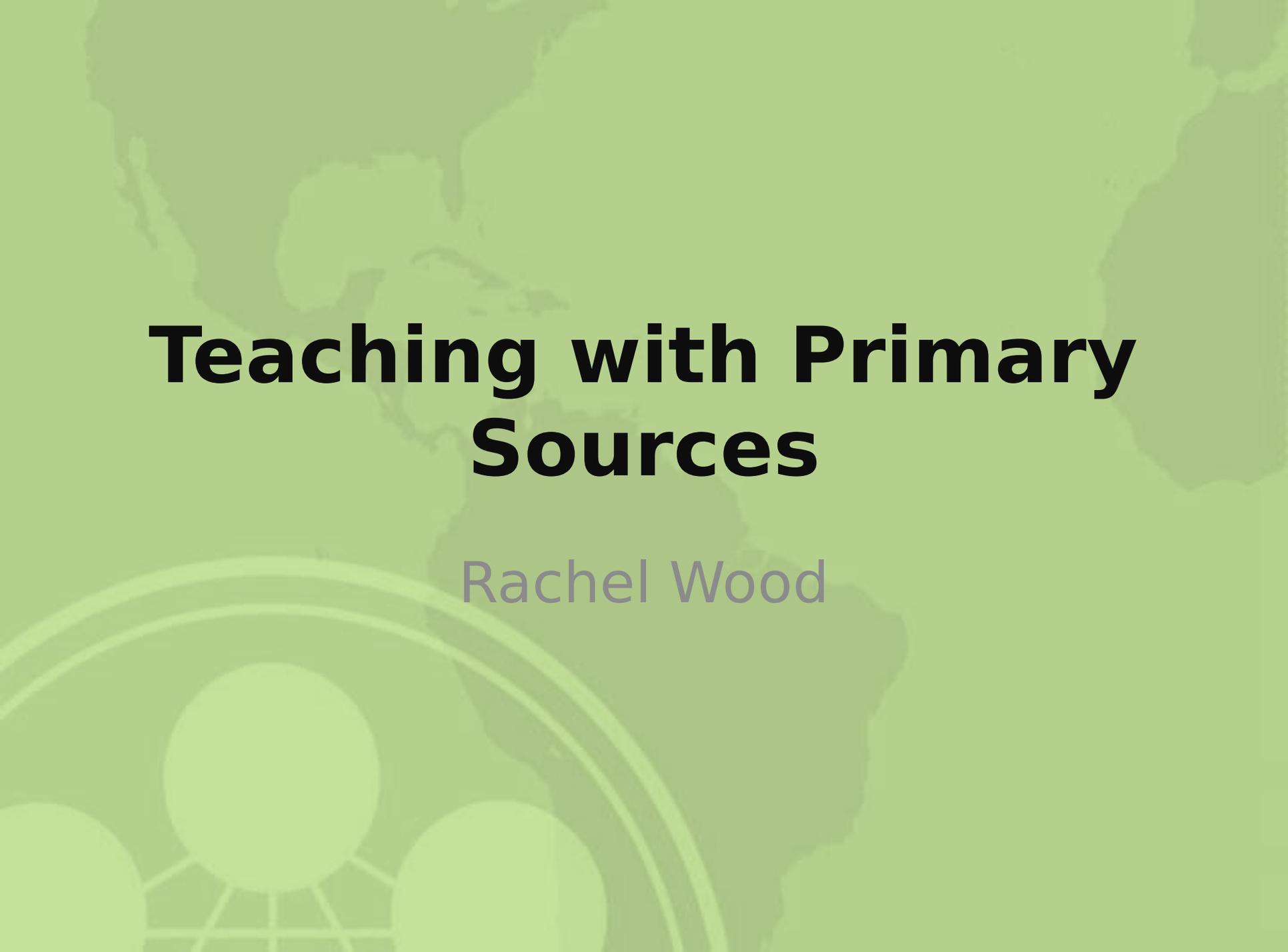
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Include title of work, date  
produced, and the digital ID.

This is the persistent URL, meaning it  
will always link to this image.

# So why bother?

We all want the same end....We want students to *Touch History*.

The background of the slide is a light green color. It features a faint, stylized world map in a darker shade of green. In the bottom-left corner, there is a graphic of a globe with latitude and longitude lines, also in a light green color.

# **Teaching with Primary Sources**

Rachel Wood