

ALBUM [HISTORIOGRAPHY AND SUPPORTING THE HISTORICAL READ](#)

Album Description

The Library of Congress' online collections are an ideal “sandbox of inquiry” where students can engage in historical thinking, not through a packet of documents, but in an accessible online setting ideal for exploration. This album explores how Library of Congress collections and Teaching with Primary Sources resources (including the TPS Teacher's Network) can be leveraged to design curriculum which supports student understanding of historiography and engagement in the historical read.

Background:

Historians are concerned with constructing a truthful account of the past, with reference to the sources available and the inquiry questions asked (Appleby et al., 1994). Research investigating the cognitions of historians indicates that historians use their purpose and theory of history when analyzing and interpreting sources as evidence, a cognitive process which Leinhardt and Young (1994) call the *historical read*. Despite the central place of this cognition to the procedural thinking of historians, historical thinking curriculums rarely engage students in the historical read. Instead, source work is often presented as an isolated skills activity designed to support student evaluation of the reliability of pre-selected source documents, rather than their usefulness in answering inquiry questions relative to a frame of interpretation (Evers et al., 2025). Such activities can distort student conceptions of evidence and truth in history and leave students ill-prepared to navigate the complexities of historical representation in school and everyday life. While historical accounts may clash on the basis of “biased” factual inaccuracies, history is inherently positioned and accounts differ due to different interpretations of the significance of sources, events, and perspectives from the past (Jenkins, 1991, King, 2020, Low-Beer, 1967). When engaging in the historical read, historians draw on differing theoretical commitments and methodological approaches to interpret sources and construct historical accounts. The historical read is deeply related to *historiography*, or the ways in which historians have interpreted sources and constructed accounts of the past across time (Popkin, 2021). Despite their central place in the historical discipline, historiography and historical methodologies are overlooked in K-12 curricula (Marcyk et al., 2022). The questions arises: how can the Library's online collections and TPS educational resources support teachers in the challenging task of instructing students in historiography and engaging them in the historical read? By creating this album, I hope to answer this question. I look forward to the feedback and ideas of others in the Network as I begin my exploration!

Guiding Quotes

Historical read invokes the interpretive stance assumed by historians, which includes their global sense of historical purpose and their theory of history. Different historians have different notions of the purpose of history... Different historians also have different theoretical positions. For example, a Marxist historian, a feminist historian, and an economic historian, each constructing explanatory narratives of the same series of events, would emphasize different aspects. (Leinhardt and Young, 1996, p.449)

Students of history should be exposed to historical texts of all kinds, **diverse primary documents as well as the interpretive narrative accounts constructed from them.** These texts should be vibrant, positioned, and moving rather than anemic, neutral, and dull and should have a clear historical voice and stance. ... From **the discovery that texts are positioned, we expect students to see that history is interpretive, to understand that historians have intentions and theories, and eventually to develop their own historical stance and sense of historical purpose** (Leinhardt and Young, 1996, p. 480).

Aims:

- Introduce students to diverse historical methodologies and the concepts of academic and “popular”

- Facilitate students' analysis of how academic and popular historiography shape our understanding of the past, supporting their awareness of themselves and their world as situated in time and asking the question, "Why this historical narrative now?"
- Support student development of a disciplinary conception of evidence
- Support students' selection and analysis of sources through multiple frames, developing their understanding of the interpretive nature of history and importance of historiographical knowledge to the historians' craft

Audience: Secondary History and Social Science educators

Readings/Resources:





Popkin, J. D. (2020). *From Herodotus to H-Net: The story of historiography* (2nd ed.). Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780190077617.001.0001>


Teaching History "What have historians been arguing about?"

References:

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- King, L. J. (2020). Black history is not American history: Toward a framework of Black Historical Consciousness. *Social education*, 84(6), 335-341.
- Leinhardt, G., & Young, K. (1996). Two texts, three readers: Distance and expertise in reading history. *Cognition and Instruction*, 14(4), 441–486. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3233783>
- Low-Beer, A. (1967). Moral judgments in history and history teaching. In Burston, W.H. & Thompson, D. (Eds.). *Studies in the Nature and Teaching of History*. Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Marczyk, A. A., Jay, L., & Reisman, A. (2022). Entering the historiographic problem space: Scaffolding student analysis and evaluation of historical interpretations in secondary source material. *Cognition and Instruction*, 40(4), 517–539. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07370008.2022.2042301>

Teaching Notes:

 [Sara Evers](#) , This album is a welcome addition to our growing Leadership collection of albums. I don't believe any of our participants in the past have explored historiography. However, a quick search of the entire Network will give you links to 13 Discussion Comments here in the network.  [Cheryl Lederle](#) ,  [Michelle Zupan](#) and  [Mary Alice Anderson](#) are TPS colleagues you will want to follow.

Would you add a description for the class you are planning to use this with along with a brief description of your students? I remember working with you in 2022 when you co-taught a Social Studies Methods Class with  [David Hicks](#) and supervised the students in field placements. The Library of Congress primary sources were a major part of that course. One of your students wrote this in a reflection essay, "The Library of Congress user interface and tools allow younger audiences to grapple with the kinds of sources that actual historians would be dealing with. Many of the other research databases are aligned to collegiate-level or individualized research." Andrew hoped to send the secondary students in his field placement into the LOC.gov archives to select their own primary sources for a "Historical Read".

This was a game changer for me and I think your album could be a game changer for both Methods Professors and Classroom Teachers. As it evolves I hope you will share it with the TTI Methods professors who are currently enrolled in the [Transformative Teaching Institute](#) here in the Network.

Two more resources you may want to check out for this album are:

[AFC's New Story Map and Research Guide for Higher Education](#)

A Blog

[AFC's Higher Education Resources Research Guide](#) A Research Guide

--Ann



Teaching Notes:

This [learning resource](#) might be helpful when introducing the concept of historiography to students.



Teaching Notes:

This statement especially caught my eye:


While historical accounts may clash on the basis of “biased” factual inaccuracies, history is inherently positioned and accounts differ due to different interpretations of the significance of sources, events, and perspectives from the past (Jenkins, 1991, King, 2020, Low-Beer, 1967

I think about in the context of major topics and events (Native American History, conflicts, and current situations) as I have been learning more about the Dakota history.

Historiography is a new word for me; it sounds very academic and serious but I think it also applies to I think about it in the context of "little" incidents such as the story about the [Martha's Vineyard liberty pole](#) I shared earlier. Between hearing a historian tell the story, reading, and searching the Library of Congress and another museum I discovered multiple interpretations of a story.



Teaching Notes:

Thanks,  [Mary Alice Anderson](#) for putting "historiography" into the context of little incidents that may have made it into a K-12 classroom. This is a new word for many of us and it helps to think about it as it applies to TPS and primary sources. It was first brought to my attention by a middle school student working on a National History Day project and then by a pre-service teacher in a college classroom who wanted to teach his field placement secondary students to search the LOC.gov archives and find primary sources from multiple perspectives. I am expecting to learn more from this album.



Teaching Notes:

Hi Ann,

I'm so glad you reminded me of what Andrew wrote about students searching and selecting sources in the Library's online archives. Thank you for your help getting started on this topic. When I have something more complete, I will share with the TTI group. :)

Sara



Teaching Notes:

This is great. Thank you so much!

Teaching Notes:

I appreciate your exploration of the serious and academic nature of historiography. We often describe our desired goal for history education as developing students' ability to "think like a historian" or "do history" as a historian would. But is this really accurate to our vision as history educators? What do we take for granted when we describe our vision for history education this way? I am reminded of this quote:

Historical thinking...comes from the work of historians. It is rooted in how they tackle the difficult problems of understanding the past, how they make sense of it for today's society and culture, and thus how they get their bearings in a continuum of past, present, and future. As history educators, our goal is to enable students to begin to do the same, in a step-by-step process that is challenging but not overwhelming. Otherwise, in the reading of history, they remain simply the passive, and often unwilling, recipients of someone else's work. (Seixas & Morton, 2013, p.7)

A historian's work is complex, the result of many years of study, and, in the context of a twelve-year-old's life, often esoteric! As Seixas and Morton (2013) highlight, the work of historians must be recontextualized for the k-12 classroom. I ask myself, why is it important that k-12 students develop an understanding of historiography and engage in the historical read? What is essential for students to learn in the history classroom? I think your example answers my questions. Accounts of the past are not limited to school learning. Historical narratives are often contradictory, wrapped up in identity, and told and retold for purposes other than relaying the "truth." Involving students in the process of articulating and consciously utilizing a theoretical framework/specific approach (e.g., history from below, local history) in the selection and interpretation of sources can help them not only construct historical accounts but de- and re-construct the historical narratives they encounter in their school and everyday life. By involving students in reflection on the *how* (How were these sources selected? How has this topic been researched and written about in the past?) and *why* (Why was this history told? Why do I consider these sources helpful to understanding the past?) of history I hope to support students in making sense of the difference between history and the past.

CASE: TOPICS IN 8TH GRADE CIVICS- CITIZENSHIP & MEXICAN DEPORTATIONS DURING THE GREAT DEPRESSION

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Immigration and Relocation in U.S. History

The history of the United States has always been shaped by peoples and communities who came to its shores or moved within its borders. Some sought a better life, some fled oppression, and some were moved against their will. This presentation uses Library of Congress primary sources to explore moments and experiences from several of these communities.





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Teaching Notes:

I am working with a practicing teacher to create curriculum that incorporates historical inquiry into an 8th grade Civics class. The teacher is interested in engaging students in reading across sources, including sources in archives and collections and academic texts. He believes incorporating historical instruction into Civics education can help students develop a nuanced understanding of the constructed and changing nature of Civic institutions. Students will investigate topics like due process, climate change, and citizenship through different interpretive lenses such as: indigenous perspectives on history, political history, history from below, and women's and gender history.

As a starting point, he would like to create a historical inquiry about Mexican deportations during the Great Depression to use when teaching about citizenship. In this post, I will explore how Library of Congress online collections can support this inquiry.

[6 - 8](#) [Social Studies/History](#)

Lesson outline:

This lesson is a teacher-led introduction to selecting sources from loc.gov. The teacher will guide students step-by-step through the process of source location and selection, employing a “think aloud” strategy to model the historical read of historians working from different theoretical and methodological approaches. Completed as a whole group, students will use the collected information to answer the Essential Question: How do accounts of Mexican Deportation during the Great Depression differ depending on the approach to interpretation used by the historian?

In later lessons, students will be given more autonomy in the process of research. We plan to select subjects with robust and easy to find collections like the U.S. Civil Rights movement. As part of our project we will adapt scholarly descriptions of historical methodologies (like those below) to be appropriate for a middle school student.

Lesson Topic: Deportation during the Great Depression

Essential Question: How do accounts of Mexican Deportation during the Great Depression differ depending on the approach to interpretation used by the historian?

Search criteria: 1929-1939 (Great Depression), Mexican immigrants, Mexican-Americans, Immigration, Relocation, Deportation

[Depression and the Struggle for Survival](#) was used as a starting place for this activity. Sources were selected by exploring related items to the sources included in the article.

Source(s)	Methodology/theoretical approach	Rationale for selection for method/frame
<p>Not Identified, and Robert Hemmig. <i>Group of children posing under sign that reads "U.S. Department of Agriculture Farm Security Administration Farm Workers Community"</i>. California El Rio, 1941. El Rio, California. Photograph. https://www.loc.gov/item/toddbib000400/.</p> <p>Delano, Jack, photographer. <i>Topeka, Kansas. Two Mexican workers employed at the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad locomotive shops</i>. Topeka Shawnee County United States Kansas, 1943. Mar. Photograph. https://www.loc.gov/item/2017847207/.</p>	<p>History from below</p> <p><i>Approach to historical interpretation</i></p> <p>“History from below seeks to take as its subjects ordinary people, and concentrate on their experiences and perspectives, contrasting itself with the stereotype of traditional political history and its focus on the actions of 'great men'. It also differed from traditional labour history in that its exponents were more interested in popular protest and culture than in the organisations of the working class” (The Institute of Historical Research, 2008).</p>	<p>These sources show working people and children, two groups left out of “great man” narratives. Rather than immigration and deportation through the actions of enacting deportations through policies, these sources to investigate the experiences of the working people who were relocated.</p>
<p>Lange, Dorothea, photographer. <i>Mexican migrant woman harvesting tomatoes. Santa Clara Valley, California</i>. United States California Santa Clara County Santa Clara Valley, 1938. Nov. Photograph. https://www.loc.gov/item/2017770798/.</p> <p>Lange, Dorothea, photographer. <i>Ranch camp for pea pickers. Near Milpitas, Santa Clara County, California</i>. United States Santa Clara County California, 1939. Apr. Photograph. https://www.loc.gov/item/2017771835/.</p>	<p>Indigenous Perspective</p> <p><i>Approach to historical interpretation</i></p> <p>Historical interpretation centers around the central theme of the relationship between humans and the land and non-humans, the local landscape is an expression of both time and place, and a circular conception of time (Marker, 2011).</p>	<p>These sources depict the landscape upon which Mexican immigrants lived and worked. They show Mexican workers interacting with the landscape during the production process.</p>

<p>Lange, Dorothea, photographer. <i>Privy in cheap migratory camp. San Joaquin Valley, California.</i> United States California San Joaquin Valley, 1936. Nov. Photograph. https://www.loc.gov/item/2017769626/.</p> <p>Russell, Lee, photographer. <i>Mexican women separating meat from shells. Pecan shelling plant. San Antonio, Texas.</i> 1939. Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division. https://www.loc.gov/resource/cph.3c30262/</p> <p>Guide to Pecan Worker's Strike</p> <p>Lange, Dorothea, photographer. <i>Mexicans entering the United States United States immigration station, El Paso, Texas.</i> El Paso United States El Paso County Texas, 1938. June. Photograph. https://www.loc.gov/item/2017770594/.</p>	<p>Women’s and gender history</p> <p><i>Approach to historical interpretation</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Women-oriented: The experiences of women are valued and researched. Multiple gender perspectives are used to construct historical narratives. <p>Gender as a category for historical analysis: Historical investigation asks questions about the relationship between gender and power. Historical narratives represent women as active agents whose experiences are important to the study of the past.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender as a geographic and historical construction: Historical investigation examines how gender is defined across time, culture, and place. Historical narratives do not represent gender identity as static or universal concepts. • Spatial analysis of the intersection of race and gender: Historical investigation asks questions about the gendered dynamics of cross-cultural encounters and includes analysis of the intersection of race and gender” (Evers et al., 2025, p.8). 	<p>These sources depict w</p> <p>They showcase cross-c</p> <p>encounters between wo</p> <p>Americans through the</p> <p>of the immigrant exper</p>
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Reference Link: <https://www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/immigration/>



TAKE CHANCES, GET MESSY, AND MAKE MISTAKES! SCAFFOLDING STUDENT SOURCE SELECTION ON LOC.GOV


A screenshot of the Library of Congress Research Guides website. The header includes the Library of Congress logo and the text "RESEARCH GUIDES". Below the header is a navigation bar with links: "Library of Congress / Research Guides / Multiple Research Centers / Using the Library of Congress Online: A Guide for Middle and High School Students / Introduction". The main content area is titled "Using the Library of Congress Online: A Guide for Middle and High School Students" and includes a brief description of the site. On the left is a sidebar with a table of contents: "Introduction", "Types of Sources", "Search Strategies", "Primary Sources", "Secondary Sources", and "Citations & Formatting". The "Introduction" section is expanded, showing text about the website's resources and a photo of a workshop. A "General Inquiries" button is at the bottom left.

Teaching Notes:

In this post, I explore ideas for scaffolding student selection of sources which are "vibrant, positioned, and moving" (Leinhardt & Young, 1996, p.480). During TPS Leadership course, my peers and I discussed the value of:

- "failing" to locate sources,
- experimenting with different searching procedures, and
- an exploratory, organic, and iterative approach to research.

Several ideas and resources emerged from our conversation and assistance from TPS ER facilitators/mentors.


1.  [Rebecca Ward](#) reminisced about "wikiracing" in her younger days and wondered if the game could be adapted for the loc.gov collections. In the original wikiracing game, students try to navigate from an initial topic to a goal topic by clicking on blue links within Wikipedia. The game required students to deduce how topics might be connected, finding a trail between topics through connections like geography or time period. What might this look like in the Library's online collections and how can it increase student familiarity with the site and encourage exploration?

Procedure:

1. Instruct students to use an Advanced Google Search to find a source in the Library archives that represents them in some way. Debrief the Google search feature and it's affordances.
2. Introduce the Library collections' global search features. Explain that students will be playing a game where they are tasked with connecting their original source to a source about a different topic of study by clicking on blue links ONLY. No search bar allowed!
3. On your marks, get set, go! Students race to connect their source to a source about the selected topic.
4. Reflection and Processing: Instruct students to free write about their experience searching the archives. *How difficult was it to find a source about the targeted topic? What strategies did you use? What did you see along the way? Did you get distracted by something interesting? List three sources/pages you would like to revisit.* Facilitate a class discussion about the process and co-construct a list of search



procedures.

2.  [Subarna Basu](#) shared ideas for searching with young learners, including a search strategy bookmark with spaces for students to fill in with "what do I want to learn," "what words will I type in the search bar," and "what do I see." This strategy, leveled for k-2 learners, helps students make a research plan and evaluate search results for their usefulness to the inquiry.

3. Search strategies:

[Library of Congress Global Search](#)

Use the format selection menu to select a type of primary source (e.g. map, photograph, etc.). Once your results list appears, use the filters in the left menu to narrow your search by date, location, collection, exhibit, or access availability.

[Advanced Google Search](#)

Type your search term followed by site:loc.gov to limit your Google search to the Library of Congress website. (Note: there is no space after site:) Reminder: searching Google without limiting to loc.gov results in items from across the internet.

4. National History Day Guidance for Finding Sources in the Library of Congress online archives (grades 6-12):

By Topic:

<https://nhd.org/en/by-topic/library-of-congress-resources/>

Finding, Analyzing, and Constructing History: A Research Guide for Students

<https://nhd.org/en/resources/student-research-guide/>

Guide to Student Research and Historical Argumentation:

<https://nhd.org/en/resources/guide-to-student-research-and-historical-argumentation/>

[Pre K - 2](#) [3 - 5](#) [6 - 8](#) [9 - 12](#) [Social Studies/History](#)

Reference Link: <https://guides.loc.gov/student-resources>



HISTORICAL METHODOLOGIES JIGSAW USING LIBRARY OF CONGRESS RESEARCH GUIDES



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Index of Library of Congress Research Guides

Research guides to the Library's collections, as well as subject guides prepared by Library of Congress staff, are listed below. More online guides covering other Library of Congress collections are available via the [LC Bibliographies, Research Guides and Finding Aids page](#).

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Teaching Notes:

Students are often left out of the process of source selection. The Library of Congress research guides can be an important scaffold in student selection of sources and development of contextual information.

A case example of this activity is presented in another album entry.

Learning activity: Historical Methodologies Jigsaw

Step 1: Introduce students to the concept that historians use different methodologies to interpret the past (e.g., history from below, political history, cliometrics)

Step 2: Select a subject for investigation from the Library's research guides. Guide students in the creation of inquiry questions that would be of interest to a historian using a specific historical methodology to study the historical topic. The Question Formulation Technique can be used to scaffold this step.

*Guiding question for selecting a subject in the research guide: Does this subject guide include multiple sources for students to observe/read, evaluate, and select for use in a historical inquiry?

Step 3: Using the research guide for the subject as a starting place, instruct students to select 2-3 primary and secondary sources that would help a historian working from their methodological lens to answer their inquiry questions.

Step 4: Scaffold students' analysis of their selected sources in relation to the questions developed during Step 2.

Step 5: Jigsaw students using different methodologies together, have them compare the questions asked, sources selected, and answers constructed from analysis.

Step 6 (Reflection and Processing): Lead a whole group discussion about how a historian's approach to research impacts what we know about the past. Discuss why it is important for historians to draw from multiple methodologies when interpreting the past. *Whose perspectives are emphasized in the various*



approaches to interpretation? Whose are missing?

Question to ponder:

In addition to related archival sources, the research guides include secondary accounts of many historical topics written by Library staff and links to online publications and books about the topics. In a college classroom, the books listed in research guides might become the starting point of an annotated bibliography and historiographical essay assignment. How can we reimagine these historiography learning activities for k-12 learners?

Readings/Resources:

[Making History "Themes and Approaches to the Discipline"](#)

[New American History "Why History Matters"](#) This teaching resource offers upper high school students a primer on historiography and historical methods

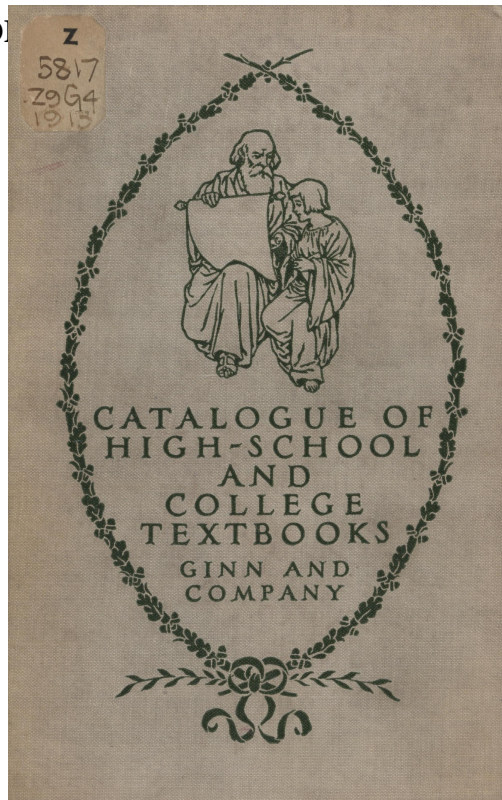
[Silence in the Archives: Women's History & Primary Sources Network Album](#) This album explores how the questions we ask shape the history we tell.

[6 - 8](#) [9 - 12](#) [Social Studies/History](#)

Reference Link: <https://guides.loc.gov/>

WORK


SOURCES



Teaching Notes:

Image: Ginn & Co, F. (1913) *Catalogue of High-School and College Textbooks*. [Boston, New York etc. Ginn and company] [Pdf] Retrieved from the Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/13009453/>.

Working with Secondary Sources

This entry was created in collaboration with TPS Consortium Member,  [Kristin Mann](#). Kristin is a historian who teaches history and Methods of History and Social Science education courses at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock. I asked her to provide feedback on my album and she gave me some suggestions from her undergraduate history courses for introducing students to historiographical debates and different approaches to historical interpretation.

Kristin offered this advice: "I think that using older digitized books that narrate history is another way of getting at historiographical approaches, or using excerpts from history texts for different audiences or written from particular perspectives. Especially when we use footnoted books and then trace the sources backwards, we can see what types of sources are used to build an argument."

She developed the following inquiry module to introduce students to historiography, differing secondary source interpretations, and different forms of evidence: [How should we characterize the missions of Northern New Spain?](#)

More resources for identifying historiographical debates:

- [History Compass](#): An open-source journal that provides peer-reviewed summaries of current research



- [Oxford Bibliographies](#): Provides research guides for various topics
- ["A Study in Second Class Citizenship": Race, Urban Development, and Little Rock's Gillam Park, 1934-2004 by John A. Kirk](#): An article used by Kristin in her historical methods class

The primary source, *Catalogue of High-School and College Textbooks*, illustrates how the Library's online collections can be used to locate sources that contain changing historical narratives across time. Additionally, this source can be used to introduce preservice social studies teachers to the historical read as a historical thinking process. Historical thinking is not neutral or universal. Historians draw on different theoretical and methodological approaches when studying the past and historical interpretations change across time. It is important to help students de- and re-construct narratives in academic and popular historical culture. By analyzing the cover of this catalogue, students can make inferences about whose history is represented in early 20th century textbooks and how historians during this time period approached the study of the past.

Reference Link: <https://www.loc.gov/item/13009453/>