**Seven Strategies for Teaching with Primary Sources**

**Strategy 1: Decide what you’re looking at.**

* To begin with, are you looking at a primary source at all? In the early grades, this may be almost the only primary source issue you deal with. At higher levels, this same issue becomes more complex. When you first look at a primary source, you will need to determine, if possible, exactly what it is- what kind of image or text it is, where it came from, and when.

**Strategy 2: Determine the purpose and audience.**

* The purpose of a source is usually integrally connected with its intended audience, so determining the purpose often means beginning with the audience. A studio portrait, for example, is usually intended to be given to friends and relatives. They are its audience.

**Strategy 3: Look for bias.**

* Looking for bias and understanding how it affects what the text or image communicates is a crucial strategy in viewing a primary source. And bias comes into play on many levels. The personal biases of the author, photographer, or artist are usually reflected in their work.

**Strategy 4: Examine closely the source itself.**

* This means really looking at the details of the material carefully and creatively. If dealing with a primary source is detective work, this is examining the crime scene.

**Strategy 5: Find more information.**

* What else do you want or need to know after examining this source?

**Strategy 6: Consider your own role in the interaction.**

* If you want to understand what you are looking at, you need to know how you’re coloring. Our expectations are very different from those of people living in the past.

**Strategy 7: Compare a variety of sources.**

* Any historical investigation will be more interesting and more accurate if you are able to compare a variety of sources.

Adapted from Examining the Evidence: Seven Strategies for Teaching with Primary Sources

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