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Elementary Grades

Analyzing Visual Primary Sources

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	iv
Lecture Notes.....	S1
Student Handouts.....	H1

Introduction

Primary sources are the building blocks of history. Using these sources to introduce students to historical periods offers students the opportunity to become historians themselves—to analyze the evidence, form hypotheses, and learn how to support arguments based on evidence. They learn what it means to interpret the past in ways that provide meaning for the present. Textual primary sources can often be difficult for students to engage with because they are often couched in unfamiliar language from a different historical era. Visual primary sources can prove more appealing and accessible to students, and they also involve different types of “reading” skills.

How to Use This Product

This PowerPoint® presentation is designed to walk students through the process of primary source interpretation. Slides help to focus students’ attention and train them how to “read” visual primary sources. Targeted questions and enlarged insets from images help to train students to see deeper into the historical record, to uncover evidence that, though plainly before their eyes, is not always obvious at first glance.

The posters provide visual reinforcement for the images analyzed in the presentation. Use them before or after the PowerPoint® analysis for either pre- or post-reading activities.

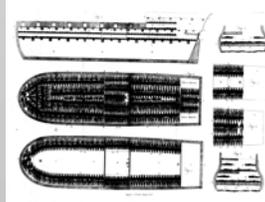
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We look forward to hearing from you.

Dr. Aaron Willis
Chief Education Officer
Social Studies School Service

Analyzing Visual Primary Sources



Elementary Grades

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Drawings and photographs can teach us a good deal about events, people, and places in United States history. This presentation shows ten pictures from different time periods. You'll examine some of the details of these pictures to learn more about what went on during these times.

Table of Contents



- Native Americans Before the Colonies



- European Views of the “New World”



- The French and Indian War



- The Colonial Home



- School in Colonial Times

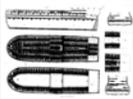
Table of Contents, continued



- The Boston Massacre



- The Constitution



- Slavery



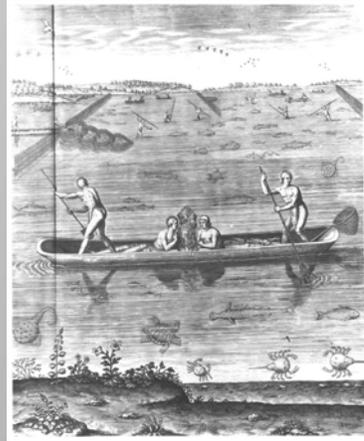
- Frontier Life



- Immigration

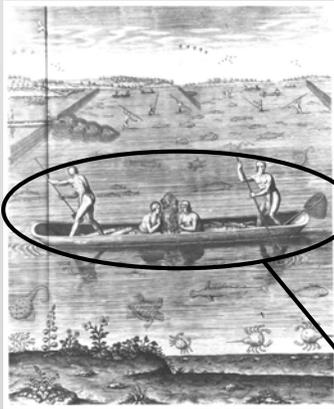
Native Americans Before the Colonies

- Explorers scouted the East Coast
- Drawing of Roanoke Island in 1585



Before European colonists arrived, explorers scouted out the eastern coast of what is today the United States. They wrote and drew pictures of many things they saw. This picture was drawn by John White, an English artist who went on the first expedition to Roanoke Island, Virginia, in 1585.

Analyzing Visual Primary Sources



- Who do you think is on the boat?
- What are they doing?

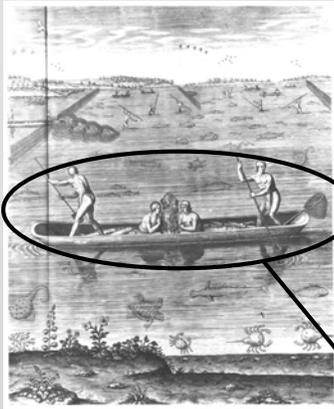


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5

This is a picture of Algonquian Indians fishing and preparing fish they have caught. The man on the right is paddling the boat. He might also use his paddle to catch fish. Behind him is a fishing net. The man on the left has a different kind of paddle. This paddle might be used for moving the boat, or it might be used to club fish, turtles, or crabs. The people in the middle are tending a fire, perhaps to cook some of the fish they have caught. You can see many fish in the bottom of the boat.

Analyzing Visual Primary Sources



- What do the people look like?
- What are they wearing?
- Describe their hairstyles.



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6

The people are rather light-skinned. The two men who are standing are in excellent physical shape, with strong muscles. The standing men wear nothing but pouches wrapped around their waists. The people who are sitting may be wearing pouches, or they may be wearing another type of clothing below the waist. All but one of the people have what we would call “mohawk” hairstyles. It is possible that the person sitting to the right of the fire is a woman, but it is hard to tell. Fishing was generally a man’s job in Algonquian society.