

Civil War Photography: Photography as a Primary Source

GRADES 4-7

THE CIVIL WAR TRUST AND THE CENTER FOR CIVIL WAR PHOTOGRAPHY

This lesson can be done with 3D photos or regular photos. Both have been provided.

Order Your 3D Glasses »

Approximate Length of Time: Approximately one 45 minute class period

Goals:

Students will learn how to utilize primary sources to study an historic event.

Objectives:

1. Students will be able to explain why photographs are a primary source.
2. Students will be able to list at least one piece of information about a historic event using a photograph.

Materials:

Photography as a Primary Source Interactive Worksheet

Photography as a Primary Source Interactive Worksheet Answer Key

Photography as a Primary Source Assessment

Photographs

Optional: bring in some older pictures you have to show your students

3D Materials Needed:

3-D glasses

Photography as a Primary Source Interactive Worksheet 3D

Photography as a Primary Source Interactive Worksheet Answer Key 3D

Photography as a Primary Source Assessment 3D
3D Photographs

Vocabulary:

Primary Source - a document, account, or object created during a historic event, which is then used to study that event or time period.

Anticipatory Set/Hook:

Ask your students, "Have you ever looked at old pictures of your parents or grandparents? Is there anything you notice in these pictures? (hair, clothes, places)"

*If you have brought in old pictures, show them to your students following this question.

Ask your students, "Do you think looking at old pictures can tell us things about the past? What is something you could learn about the past when looking at an old photo?"

Explain that today they are going to be looking at old photographs to look for clues about the past.

Procedure:

For the procedure use the *Photography as a Primary Source Interactive Worksheet 2D* or 3D.

Students will record their responses on the worksheet throughout the lesson.

Introduction-

Ask your students, "When we are studying a time or event in history and we use a piece of writing (document) or interview from that time what would do we call it?
Do you think photographs are a primary source?"

Define primary source as a class and have students write the definition on the worksheet.
(Worksheet #1)

Explain that the Civil War was the first major war to be documented using photography.

Explain that today historians use photographs from the Civil War to study the war. They find clues about who was there, what equipment was used, what the landscape was like, and even how people behaved. We can learn about the war by studying these photographs as well.

Ask your students, "What do you think this photos can tell us about the war?"

Activity-

Show the first photograph, either in 2D or 3D, and go through the questions with your students. The Photography as a Primary Source Worksheet and Assessment Answer Key 2D or 3D will provide you with the information for each photograph.

Go through question #1 with photograph #1 as a class

2D Photos - Photo #1 Photo #2 Photo #3 Photo #4

3D Photos - Photo #1 Photo #2 Photo #3 Photo #4

Use your answer key to discuss and explain what would have been acceptable answers. As you can see, just like historians your students are not always going to know the correct answers, but the exercise is really asking them to make a judgment and support it with a logical explanation based on their knowledge of history.

Use the worksheet to go through the remaining photographs, either as a class, or in groups. (Questions #2-#4)

Closure:

Ask your students, "How are primary source documents important in studying history?"
"What kinds of things can photographs tell us about an historical event?"

Assessment:

Gather worksheet

Provide students with the Assessment Worksheet 2D or 3D which contains questions for the final photograph.

2D Assessment Photo

3D Assessment Photo

Modification Ideas:

Allow students to work with partners or in small groups during the assessment.

Allow one student to read the questions aloud for another, or have them take turns reading to each other.

Gifted or advanced students may be directed to the Center of Civil War Photography at <http://www.civilwarphotography.org/> where they can learn more about Civil War photography. The online exhibit, wet-plate photography demonstration is a great place to begin.