

Instruction Session Lesson Plan  
Finding Primary Resources: American Memory  
Part 2 of Researching and Writing for History

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## Introduction

The following lesson plan is based on educational psychologist Robert Gagne's Events of Instruction model. Gagne "identified nine instructional events and corresponding cognitive processes that can be used to support learning. They are often used as a framework for instructional development when the acquisition of intellectual skills is the goal of instruction" (Pennsylvania State University, 2009). The nine events include:

Gaining attention; informing learners of the objective; stimulating recall of prior learning; presenting the stimulus (content); providing learning guidance (telling students the best way to learn the material you are presenting); eliciting performance (opportunities to practice); providing feedback (information about how to improve); assessing performance (exam, tests, quizzes, papers); and enhancing retention and transfer (activities to help students remember and to extend the learning, transfer it to other scenarios). (Pennsylvania State University, 2009)

Using a template that was created by Erin Hagar of the Center for Teaching and Learning, Montgomery College as a guide, below is a lesson outline based on the Gagne model with additional commentary about why certain choices were made (Pennsylvania State University, n.d.).

**Title of Session:** Finding Primary Resources: American Memory (Part 2 of Researching and Writing for History)

**Venue:** online via Elluminate web conferencing software

**Duration:** 20 minutes

**Audience:** declared history majors at a university

**Materials:**

- PowerPoint presentation
- access to the Library of Congress' American Memory website (in case technology fails, the PowerPoint has some screen captures)

**Preparation:**

- upload PowerPoint presentation
- create a Whiteboard space for activity with the directions of the activity and names of students with assigned topic areas

**Learning outcomes:** At the end of the session, students will have:

- Learned about the American Memory project (what it is, when it started, etc.)
- Learned how to search for primary resources on the American Memory website

-Become familiar with some of the collections by exploring one for yourself and hearing about what your classmates explored.

**Standards:****The previous part of this lesson covered:**

-Competency 1 of the ACRL *Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education* (2000): “The information literate student determines the nature and extent of the information needed.”

*Specific performance indicator:*

2. The information literate student identifies a variety of types and formats of potential sources for information.

*Specific outcomes include:*

- e. Differentiates between primary and secondary sources, recognizing how their use and importance vary with each discipline
- f. Realizes that information may need to be constructed with raw data from primary sources

**This part of the lesson covers:**

-Competency 2 of the ACRL *Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education* (2000): “The information literate student accesses needed information effectively and efficiently.”

*Specific performance indicators:*

1. The information literate student selects the most appropriate investigative methods or information retrieval systems for accessing the needed information.

*Specific outcomes include:*

- c. Investigates the scope, content, and organization of information retrieval systems
- d. Selects efficient and effective approaches for accessing the information needed from the investigative method or information retrieval system

3. The information literate student retrieves information online or in person using a variety of methods.

*Specific outcomes include:*

- a. Uses various search systems to retrieve information in a variety of formats
- d. Uses surveys, letters, interviews, and other forms of inquiry to retrieve primary information

5. The information literate student extracts, records, and manages the information and its sources.

*Specific outcomes include:*

a. Selects among various technologies the most appropriate one for the task of extracting the needed information (e.g., copy/paste software functions, photocopier, scanner, audio/visual equipment, or exploratory instruments)

### **Gaining Attention/Recalling Prior Information (Slides 1-2)**

-greet students, thank for attendance

-indicate to classmates that this session is taught with declared history majors at a university in mind

-“remind” students that this is Part 2 of Researching and Writing for History Majors. The first lesson was a conceptual lesson about historical writing and a discussion about the importance of using primary and secondary sources (slides 1 and 2)

-This lesson is a procedural lesson sharing one tool that has primary resources that students can access for their research projects, the Library of Congress’ American Memory Project.

### **Informing Learners of the Objective (Slide 3)**

-Go over learning objectives (slide 4)

-Indicate that this lesson covers Competency 2 of the ACRL *Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education* (2000): “The information literate student accesses needed information effectively and efficiently.” To be true lifelong learners, you need to be able to find information and know how to look for it. In this case, as history students, you need to know about what tools to use to find primary resources and how to find information within the tools.

### **Presenting New Material (slides 5, 6-10 not viewed individually but follows with information that will be shared via application sharing)**

The material will be presented in a PowerPoint presentation, which serves as a guide and instructional reference document after the lesson is over. Due to time, not everything in the slides can be shared, but the students can use this information when they search for information on American Memory at a later time. These slides cover different ways to perform searches to find collections.

-Discuss the background about the American Memory project, use slide 5 as guide and share (through application sharing; link is in slide 5’s note section and will also be shared in chat window) the specific webpage to be viewed:

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

-There are a variety of ways you can search on American Memory (go over options during demonstration; mention the search tips and the link to the American memory search guide on slide 11).

-Demonstrate finding audio interviews of former slaves under the “African American History” topic. This topic is not assigned to any students for the activity.

-Click on “African American History” link

-presented with a number of collections, 17 in all

- I will click on Slave Narratives ~ Audio Interviews ~ 1932-1975.

-Brief description of collection

-Some of the audio files are difficult to hear, but there are transcriptions.

-Select Isom Moseley interview, show information about the interview, play file

### **Eliciting and Assessing Student Performance (slide 12):**

-Class activity

Although this was a rather quick overview, I would like for you all to get a chance to explore some collections while in class. In this class activity, I want each of you to explore a different topic. Because of time, I took the liberty of assigning topics for each of you to explore; you can find your names on slide 12 of the PowerPoint. I will go back to the PowerPoint now as well.

Performing Arts: Beth B.

Native American History: Joe B.

Presidents: Pamela H.

Maps: Kaitlin H.

Sports, Recreation: Jennifer H.

Technology, Industry: Ann M.

Literature: Dolly M.

Women’s History: Laura R.

Architecture, Landscape: Addie R.

Environment, Conservation: Laura W.

If your name doesn't have an assigned topic, choose whatever you would like. I'll give you about 5 minutes to find a primary resource within your assigned topic and report back to the class. Each of you will share a little about the resource you found (From what collection? Description? What is the image or audio file?). As soon as you are ready, please raise your hand on Elluminate. We will go in order of raised hands. Each of you can copy/paste your image to the whiteboard, or you can provide the link in the chat box. Does anyone have questions about the activity?

### **Enhancing Retention and Assessing Instructor Performance**

- Thank students for sharing their finds
- Review (slide 13)
- Questions, comments (slide 14); I look forward to reading your critical feedback in D2L as well.
- Thank students for attending the session and participating

### **Discussion About the Lesson**

The following discussion of the above lesson plan is taken from an earlier paper written in LIBR 287 this term.

#### *Theory*

This lesson is modeled on a constructivist approach to teaching. Constructivism holds that learning “is a process in which learners construct meaning rather than merely take in ideas and memorize them. The constructivist model depends quite a bit on social interactions that allow learners to test their understandings against those of others” (Grassian & Kaplowitz, 2009, p. 31).

In “A Principal of Uncertainty for Information Seeking” (1993), Kuhlthau, one of the leading experts in the information literacy field, provides a background of the constructivist theories that have shaped her own work, particularly those of Dewey (1933), Kelly (1963), and Bruner (1973). Dewey “reveals that deep thinking and reflection are an integral part of the constructive process” (Kuhlthau, 1993, p. 340). Kelly “emphasizes the disruptive impact of new information to a person’s system of constructs and the resulting increase of uncertainty in the early phases of the process of construction” (Kuhlthau, 1993, p. 341). Bruner, in turn, “emphasizes the task of interpreting as being central to construction. Merely gathering information is not enough” (Kuhlthau, 1993, p. 343). With these theories in mind, it is clear that the lecture based approach to learning does not allow for students to make sense of the material as it is presented.

As mentioned above, the constructivist approach to learning also employs social interactions. Although aimed at the K-12 learning environment, the American Association of School Librarians’ (AASL) *Standards for the 21<sup>st</sup>-Century Learner* (2007) indicates that “[l]earning has a social context. Learning is enhanced by opportunities to share and learn with others” (p. 3). Sociocultural learning theories emphasize this group dynamic.

[L]earning is enhanced when knowledge is shaped by the activities and perspectives of the group. There will be an opportunity for more academically capable students to assist those who are less capable. In adult learning situations, the teacher becomes the facilitator whose responsibility is to create a climate to foster collaborative learning. (Wang, 2006, p. 151-152).

While higher education is a field generally characterized by passive learning through lecture-style, this lesson incorporates lecture with visual aids, allows for the visual demonstration the different search features of American Memory, while introducing students to primary source material, and also allows students to process and reflect on the material by performing their own search. The students will also be able to share what they have found with one another, adding a social element. Having students perform their own search and report back to class also checks for student understanding of the material taught prior to the class activity.

### *Motivation*

This lesson is designed with declared history majors in mind. In the first half of the lesson, the students will have learned about the importance of using both primary and secondary resources in the historical writing they will be doing in the discipline. In this half of the lesson, students will learn about one resource that has primary sources that they may be able to use in their coursework. Many students generally do not know exactly what resources are available to them, particularly those with primary resources. American Memory is not only an interesting tool on its own, but it provides an answer for students who “just don’t know where to go” when they decide that their information need is a primary resource relating to topic x. The Association of College and Research Libraries’ (ACRL) *Information Literacy Standards for Higher Education* (2000) indicates that one of the components that make an information literate student is that he or she “... accesses needed information effectively and efficiently.” Once the student knows his or her information need (a primary source), he or she “selects the most appropriate investigative methods or information retrieval systems for accessing the needed information (in this case, American Memory),” and is able to retrieve the information needed (the link, file, or image of the primary source). This lesson, in particular, shows history students how to find primary sources effectively and efficiently, which is crucial to their work. Although this part of the lesson is more procedural, it nonetheless provides the illustration for the more conceptual first half of the lesson.

## References

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