Reflective Teaching Application
Prepared for Dr. Dave Lonich & Mr. Nik Roberts
California University of Pennsylvania

Teaching with Primary Sources
Act 48 continuing education

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As a teacher in today’s high-tech, fast-paced educational system, I believe it is very important to make history ‘come alive’. We teach in a society where information from centuries ago or seconds ago is readily available at our fingertips. With the ability to reach for supplements to our lesson plans so quickly, it is not only beneficial to the students to do this but to ourselves, the teachers.

Each time we prepare a lesson and can provide supplemental material to our students that are not in a textbook, but in the form of a video feed, an audio recording, journal copy, or a picture, we are giving the students a chance to relive the history that they are reading. This can make history come alive, something that is very important in helping the students connect with the historical concepts they are grasping.

Museums can easily take the opportunity to provide further information about the artifacts in their care. They can accomplish the goal of ‘making history come alive’ in several different ways. Providing voice recordings of historical events, life-sized photographs of famous artists, aromas surrounding the area of an event relaying to a fire, tropical flowers, or rain forest are some examples.

This question was beneficial to me as a teacher. It made me consider ways to bring history to life in literature pieces. Often students are bored with literary assignments, claiming that the works are too old or difficult to understand. Perhaps bringing the authors to life by listening to a voice recording of an author reading a passage from a novel, or showing a print of the original manuscript would better help the students connect to the author or poet. A short introduction into the life of the author would provide more insight into the feelings, style, and habits of the said author. Any opportunity to give more knowledge to the students provides a greater ability to reach into their minds.

As a suggestion for the next time this assignment is given, it would be interesting to ask the teachers how they would implement the ideas of using primary sources in other subject areas. Our natural tendency is toward the area of certification in which we teach. To broaden our scope it would be interesting to find how a math teacher might perhaps bring a historical math lesson to life using elements of literature and science or how a reading teacher might teach a group about Robert Frost by including history and music.
Title of the Primary-Sources Activity:
Changes in the funeral and burial services industry throughout the twentieth century.

Subject Area for this Activity:
language arts and history, grade twelve

Brief Summary of the Activity:
This language arts activity is a writing assignment based on the theme of funeral homes and burial changes during the past century. Students will be required to compose a contrast and comparison essay of a minimum of two full pages in length. All students will have the opportunity to view and hear each of the four primary sources provided by the teacher. Using the sources and prior knowledge, students will compose an essay in class. This activity will take place over two class periods, with a third period given for typing the essay. At the beginning of the activity, the teacher will briefly discuss funerals. Students will be given the expectations for the assignment and the timeframe that will be allotted. Students will be reminded to use proper MLA format in writing and citations.

The activity will begin by the teaching projecting an image of an early 1900’s funeral director in front of his business. This photo depicts not only that of a funeral director, but that this same individual also ran a furniture store from this same house. His horse and buggy was used to deliver furniture and lead funeral processions. The students will have their own copy as well. The second source viewed will be that of a funeral procession in 1927 where the grievers are walking and carrying the casket to the cemetery. Students will notice the abundance of flowers held by the people in the procession. Third, the class will be introduced to an artifact from a funeral service held on October 30, 1949. The booklet is a program from a memorial service listing the names of those speaking as well as the hymns sung and the sponsor of the memorial service. Finally, the students will listen to the fourth primary source. The class will listen as the teacher plays a digital recording of a 1961 interview with a funeral director, Mr. Carnie Bragg, discussing his career lifestyle and the changes he has seen. The students will hear him refer to the term ‘funeral home’ in its original sense and learn of how people used to actually host a wake in their own home.

After the students have had sufficient time to see and hear the four primary sources, the teacher will provide them each with a copy of the visual sources and provide the link to hear the digital interview with Mr. Carnie Bragg. The students will begin working on their own to write a contrast and comparison essay using these four sources. The teacher will be looking for ideas within the essays that show how funerals now are similar to those held at the beginning of the twentieth century and how they have changed. By citing the sources, the students should pick up on facts relating that funeral homes no longer serve as secondary businesses, horse and buggy drawn carriages are not used now, funeral processions in the United States do not walk through the streets, and people do not have wakes in their homes anymore. As examples of what the teacher might find in the comparison side of the essays, it might be mentioned that both memorial services then and now use programs, people still send flowers to funerals, black is still a
color of mourning, and funeral directors still live in the same building as their business. To prompt the students, the teacher will ask them how do the people in the photos look, how do they sound, what can you tell me about the paper the memorial booklet is written on and how does this man sound when speaking?

Primary Sources are listed in according to date, which corresponds to presentation.

**Primary Source #1**, from the Donora Smog Museum page at [www.cup.edu](http://www.cup.edu)
J.A. Rabe Furniture and Undertaking, 1905. Found under the section ‘Businesses and Storefronts.’

**Primary Source #2**, from the Library of Congress, [www.loc.gov](http://www.loc.gov)
Chicago Daily News 1927, pallbearers pulling a white casket. Digital ID#0064961

**Primary Source #3**, from the Donora Smog Museum page at [www.cup.edu](http://www.cup.edu)
Memorial Service booklet, Society for Better Living, October 30, 1949. Found under the section ‘Textual Documents.’

**Primary Source #4**, from the Library of Congress, [www.loc.gov](http://www.loc.gov)
“The Funeral Home as a Business: Living with your Business”. Interview with Carnie Bragg, funeral director. Digital ID- http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.afc.afcwip.sla01401

**Pennsylvania Academic Standards:**

Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening 1.5.11

History, U.S. History, 8.2.12