Mark K. Render
Intermediate Unit Library of Congress - Coca Cola
Oral History Project/Action Plan for Learning
Summer, 2010
Instructors: Mr. Nik Roberts, Dr. Dave Lonich

Title: Teaching “Pop Culture” Using Primary Sources: The Coca-Cola Case Study.


Subject/Courses: High School Economics and Marketing Students

Investigative Question: How has Coca Cola changed its’ bottle (container) shape and volume to keep a competitive edge in sales and transportation costs in the world-wide cola market place?

Pa Teaching Standards (3):
(1.) 8.1.6.B Explain and Analyze historical sources
(2.) 1.8.12.B: Conduct inquiry and research on self-selected or assigned topics, issues, or problems using a wide variety of appropriate media sources and strategies. Demonstrate that sources have been evaluated for accuracy, bias, and credibility. Synthesize information gathered from a variety of sources, including
technology and one’s own research, and evaluate information for its relevance to the research question. Demonstrate the distinction between one’s own ideas from the ideas of others, and includes a reference page.

(3.) 6.2.12.B Analyze the effect of changes in the level of competition in different markets.

**Objectives:** Students will be able to:

- Describe the shape and volume size of each researched bottle (can, plastic container) and analyze why the shape and size was created during that time period.
- Hypothesis why the Coke Company used various containers (cans, bottles, plastics, metal) to market their products and facilitate more economic ways to transport their products to a world-wide market.

**Duration:** One class period (45 mins.)

**Materials:**

Research Coca Cola using the Library of Congress website via a Computer.

A Timeline will be used to depict a collection of photographs of various Coke containers (bottles and cans) and transportation vehicles that were used since the conception of the Coke Company.

**Purposeful Sampling** - Employees from the Coca Cola Distribution Center on Rt. 79 near Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania will be utilized as Oral History candidates. Many of these employees have been employed with the Coca Cola Company their entire working life,
several of them for over 40 plus years. Arrangements have been made with the Coca Cola Company to match-up our students with employees of Coke to conduct Oral History Interviews.

**Resources from the Library of Congress:**


**Inquiry-Based Learning:** I will use an Inquiry-Based Learning Model (IBLM) Ask, Investigate, Create, Discuss, and Reflect to complete this Action Plan for Learning (APL) for my economic and marketing students.

**Questions to Ask:** (to begin the lesson) the teacher will ask the students questions about the origins of carbonated soda beverages. What is the students’ favorite soda? Did you ever hear of the Coke-Pepsi challenge? What was the challenge all about? Who won the challenge? What is the best selling soda in the world? Why do you think it is the best seller? How long has sodas been around? Who invented the first soda? Where was the first soda sold? What company is credited with inventing the first soda? Why are sodas so popular? What are the advantages and disadvantages of drinking soda? What is the United States government doing concerning new taxes on sodas? Do you agree with an
additional tax on soda? Who received the rights to sell soda at the new Consol Energy Center downtown Pittsburgh? (Royal Crown RC soda is the correct answer) How did RC beat out big and powerful companies like Coke and Pepsi? How does the shape and size of a container of soda determine its marketing power and sales? How does the shape and size of a container of soda determine the cost of transportation to the market places around the world? How has the Coca Cola Company changed the shape and size of their products to be the most recognized cola company in the world?

**Investigate:** Students will be assigned to various people to conduct an oral history interview that are directly involved in the research and development, packaging and distributing/transportation, advertising and public relations with Coke products; also, the students will interview merchants and consumers of coke products in the Greater Pittsburgh area. These people would include people who work in the Coca Cola plant off of Rt. 79; truck drivers who transport coke to stores; bars, and restaurants; store owners who decide where the coke products are displayed in their businesses for sale, and the everyday people who consume coke products, etc. There are no predetermined set of questions that will be asked, however, will we generate a list of basic questions to be used if necessary to “break the ice,” or get the conversation started so the person being interviewed will be relaxed, settled in their environment, and develop a rapport of trust with the student conducting the interview. Samples of those questions that may be used are as follows: How many years have you been working at the Coca Cola Company? What are some of the different jobs have help during your tenure at Coke? What made
you interested in working for a soda company like Coke? Do you drink Coke on a regular basis? Do you encourage your friends and family to drink Coke?

**Create:** First, we will use the computers in class to investigate the different shapes and sizes of coke containers by using the United States Library of Congress website. A timeline will be created by the students that depict the evolution of the shapes and sizes of coke containers. The students will generate a list of questions to ask the employees at coke who will be interviewed for this oral history project. We will decide together about what questions will be asked to each person being interviewed. All students will share their results with the class and come to their own conclusion about what they have learned about the shape and size of coke containers from the people they interviewed.

**Discuss/Reflect:** The students will bring back to class the results from their oral history interviews and we will compare our answers to come to a collective conclusion about why the shape and size of coke containers has evolved over time. How has Coca Cola changed its’ bottle (container) shape and volume to keep a competitive edge in sales and transportation costs in the world-wide cola market place? Here are some examples of our discussing/reflection/wrap-up questions that were taken from the Library of Congress (#1 citation above) website and will be utilized in our classroom:

- Who created this primary source? (bottle, can, plastic)
- When was it created? (year or decade)
- Where does your eye go first? (color or shape to grab your attention)
- What do you see that you didn’t expect?
What powerful words and ideas are expressed? (slogan or trademark)
What feelings and thoughts does the primary source trigger in you?
What questions does it raise?
What was happening during this time period?
What does the creator do to get his or her point across?
What was this primary source’s audience? (target market plan)
What biases or stereotypes do you see? (looks like other products)

Follow-up questions for the students after the primary discussion:

Ask students to test their assumptions about the evolution of coke containers.
Ask students to find other primary or secondary sources that offer support or contradiction from their oral history conclusions.
Ask for reasons and specific evidence to support their conclusions.
Help students identify questions for further investigation, and develop strategies for how they might answer them.

Assessment: Students will answer an open-ended essay question about the future of coke containers and transportation costs. Students will use their Oral History Interview information they acquired and will speculate/predict on what a Coke container will look like in the future and how they will be transported to a world-wide market. A rubric for scoring/grading this assessment is attached.
## Coke containers and marketing costs in the future

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>4 - Above Standards</th>
<th>3 - Meets Standards</th>
<th>2 - Approaching Standards</th>
<th>Below Standards</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focus or Thesis Statement</td>
<td>The thesis statement names the topic of the essay and outlines the main points to be discussed.</td>
<td>The thesis statement names the topic of the essay.</td>
<td>The thesis statement outlines some or all of the main points to be discussed but does not name the topic.</td>
<td>The thesis statement does not name the topic AND does not preview what will be discussed.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Evidence and Examples</td>
<td>All of the evidence and examples are specific, relevant and explanations are given that show how each piece of evidence supports the author's position.</td>
<td>Most of the evidence and examples are specific, relevant and explanations are given that show how each piece of evidence supports the author's position.</td>
<td>At least one of the pieces of evidence and examples is relevant and has an explanation that shows how that piece of evidence supports the author's position.</td>
<td>Evidence and examples are NOT relevant AND/OR are not explained.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Closing paragraph</td>
<td>The conclusion is strong and leaves the reader solidly understanding the writer's position. Effective restatement of the position statement begins the closing paragraph.</td>
<td>The conclusion is recognizable. The author's position is restated within the first two sentences of the closing paragraph.</td>
<td>The author's position is restated within the closing paragraph, but not near the beginning.</td>
<td>There is no conclusion - the paper just ends.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grammar &amp; Spelling</td>
<td>Author makes no errors in grammar or spelling that distract the reader from the content.</td>
<td>Author makes 1-2 errors in grammar or spelling that distract the reader from the content.</td>
<td>Author makes 3-4 errors in grammar or spelling that distract the reader from the content.</td>
<td>Author makes more than 4 errors in grammar or spelling that distract the reader from the content.</td>
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