What’s in the March Newsletter from the TPS Journal?
See all TPS Journals at http://www.loc.gov/teachers/tps/quarterly/archive.html

Learning Activity – Elementary Level
Stars, Stripes and Symbols of America: Comparing our Flag, past and present
In this activity, students will learn about an important national symbol: the American flag. Students will analyze an image of an American flag from the post-Civil War era (1865-7) and compare its details (i.e., the stars and stripes) to those of our nation’s flag today.

Learning Activity – Secondary Level
Evaluating Differing Opinions in Political Cartoons
The purpose of this activity is to facilitate students’ higher-order thinking skills through the analysis of issues presented in political cartoons. Students will identify sources of information about current issues. They will analyze three political cartoons related to the women’s suffrage movement, and determining the cartoonists’ stands on the issue.

Evolution of the Conservation Movement
Collection Connections
The Evolution of the Conservation Movement, 1850-1920, is a multimedia collection that documents the movement to conserve and protect America’s natural heritage. It contains authors’ works, lithographs, engravings, an album of an Alaskan expedition, and records of legislation establishing national forests and parks. The CCSS aligned information in the Critical Thinking section works well within the LDC framework.

Literacy Design Collaborative
Common Core State Standards
Library of Congress Collection Connections
The Literacy Design Collaborative (LDC) is a framework for incorporating literacy into middle and high school content areas. It is an approach to literacy that allows teachers to add their content on top of a literacy foundation. The benefit is that a literacy component is integrated into a course as opposed to being an add-on. The hope is that this approach will help high school graduates develop the literacy skills necessary for success in the 21st Century workplace.

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) are focused sharply on literacy and designed to prepare graduating high school students to be college-and-career-ready. The LDC framework allows teachers to easily merge CCSS literacy standards with subject area standards. The result for teachers is a curriculum that is both literacy-based and content rich.

CCSS also place emphasis on the use of primary sources for research, analysis, and writing, i.e., literacy elements. The Library of Congress’ Collection Connections now align with CCSS and fit well into the LDC framework, thereby offering a plug-and-play way to advance literacy and enrich content.

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http://www.calu.edu/business-community/teaching-primary-sources/
How did you first learn about the Library of Congress Teaching with Primary Sources Program?
The TPS program was promoted by my department head at the high school where I teach, and I knew that several colleagues who participated in the program the year before had enjoyed their experiences. So I was encouraged to go for it as a professional development opportunity.

What motivated you to participate in TPS Workshops in your local area?
I was primarily motivated by a long-time desire to visit the Library of Congress. And through the TPS program my wish came true—digitally! When you visit the Library’s Web site, you’re not restricted by your physical location and can bring its resources to your students.

Tell us about the first time you tried using primary sources in your classroom?
I wanted my students to learn about the early exploration of the Americas from a different perspective. Students always think American history starts with Jamestown because that is the historical perspective they are taught. I had my students examine 500-year-old Spanish-language documents and maps available via the Library of Congress Web site’s Global Gateway, which features multilingual resources on world culture. My students thought these documents and maps were "really cool."

See the full article at: http://www.loc.gov/teachers/tps/quarterly/critical_thinking/spotlight.html

Get resources from the Teacher’s Page at the Library of Congress
http://www.loc.gov/teachers/

TPS JOURNAL FEATURE ARTICLE

Primary Sources: Gateways to Enhancing Critical Thinking in the Classroom
By Caroll Van West, Ph.D.
Center for Historic Preservation, Middle Tennessee State University

Teachers are in constant need of tools that will empower their students to explore and dig deeper into subjects and issues that matter most to them. Primary sources, which are now available in unprecedented numbers online, are powerful tools for just such empowered teaching. Not only do primary sources provide rich cultural context and unique insights into past eras; if used effectively, primary sources can be the key to making the basics of critical thinking—asking questions, seeking answers, and drawing conclusions—central to teaching.

Primary sources surround us. They are in the landscape around us—historical sites, museums, town squares, historic architecture. They are bound in collections at the school or local library. They are in the voices and traditions of our communities—oral histories, folklife, and festivals. In the humanities, for instance, primary sources directly link students to the participants and witnesses of important past events. Primary sources humanize past traditions and supply the language, emotions, attitudes and values of past peoples. These original materials allow students to experience, and ask questions about, the past in a way that cannot be matched by the best textbook or any other secondary source.

The true power of primary sources emerges, however, when teachers use them to spur critical thinking by students. To use primary sources most effectively, educators must ask questions that will prompt students to draw from their own experiences and knowledge, to explore and think about what is before them. Questions of creator bias, purpose, and point of view may challenge students’ assumptions.

See the full article at: http://www.loc.gov/teachers/tps/quarterly/critical_thinking/article.html