

Building Primary Source Sets for Students and Teachers

Franky Abbott, Curation and Education Strategist, DPLA

Ella Howard, Associate Professor of History, Wentworth Institute of Technology

Digital Commonwealth Conference | April 4, 2017

What is DPLA?

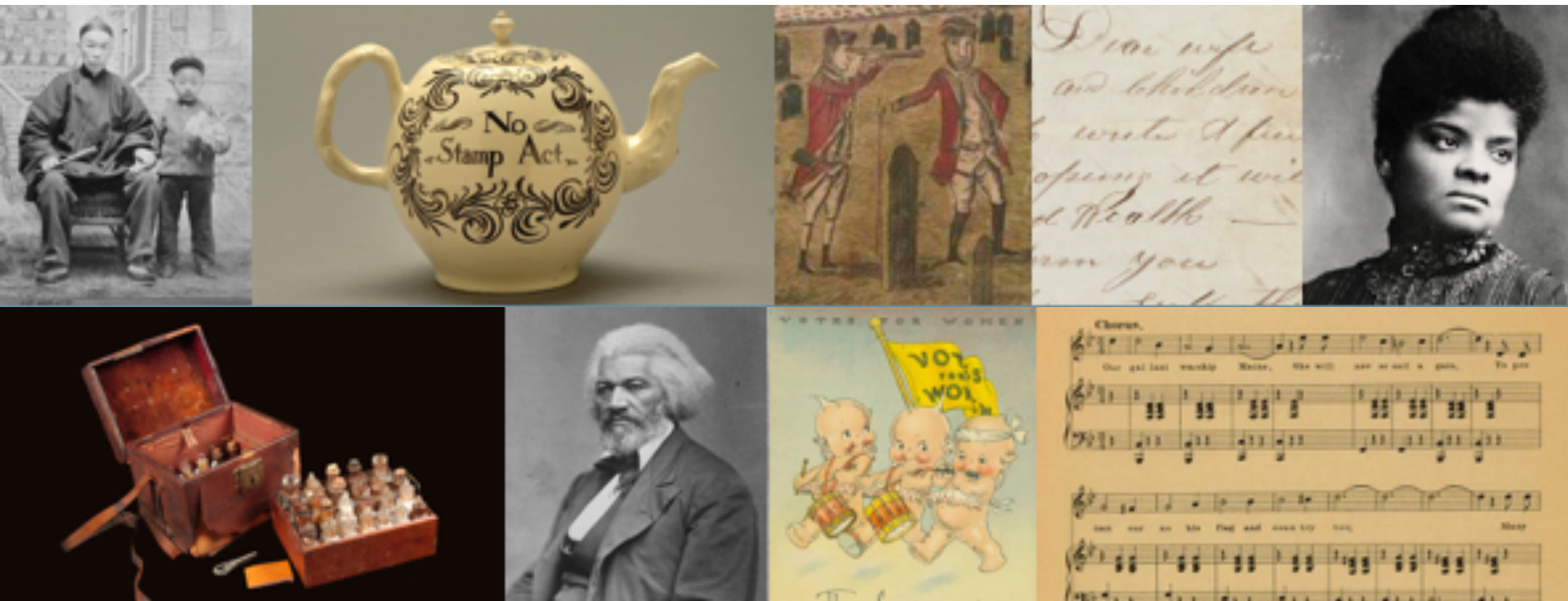
- A free, national digital library that provides access to materials from libraries, archives, and museums across the US
- A network of partners who make their content available through a single website



Courtesy of David Rumsey

What does DPLA offer?

- Cultural heritage materials
- Rich and varied primary sources
- American history and culture and more



What does DPLA offer?

- National and local sources
- Vetted and described by information professionals



+



Value of Primary Sources

- Context, context, context!
- Support for inquiry-based instruction
- Material for digital storytelling, DBQs, timelines, and other research projects



What are the DPLA Primary Source Sets?

- **Topic-based “highlight reels”**

Topical collections of primary source images, documents and text excerpts, audio/video clips, and more

- **For Middle School through Higher Ed**

Designed to be used in grades 6-12 and early years of higher education to add richness to units of study and opportunities for students to consider primary sources

- **By Teachers, For Teachers & Students**

Created by secondary and collegiate educators who comprise the DPLA’s Education Advisory Committee

- **100 interdisciplinary topics**

Currently 100 topics in US history, American literature, World History, History of Science & Technology, and Art History

Exploring the Primary Source Sets

[Share](#)

Primary Source Sets

Digital Public Library of America (DPLA) Primary Source Sets are designed to help students develop critical thinking skills by exploring topics in history, literature, and culture through primary sources. Drawing online materials from libraries, archives, and museums across the United States, the sets use letters, photographs, posters, oral histories, video clips, sheet music, and more. Each set includes a topic overview, ten to fifteen primary sources, links to related resources, and a teaching guide. These sets were created and reviewed by the teachers on the DPLA's [Education Advisory Committee](#). Read about our [education projects](#), [suggest a new topic](#) for a primary source set, and contact us with feedback at education@dp.la.

Subject:

Time Period:

Sort by:



Women in the Civil War

Civil War and Reconstruction (1850-1877) US History Women



Ida B. Wells and Anti-Lynching Activism

The Emergence of Modern America (1890-1930) US History

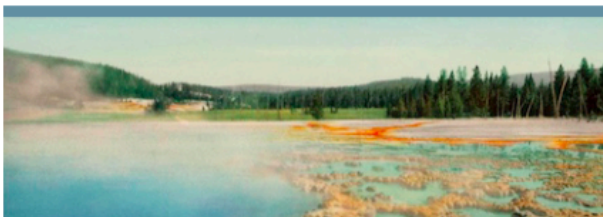
African Americans Women



The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian by Sherman Alexie

Contemporary United States (1968 to the present) American Literature

Native Americans



Environmental Preservation in the Progressive Era

The Emergence of Modern America (1890-1930) US History



ACT UP and the AIDS Crisis

Contemporary United States (1968 to the present) US History



World War I: America Heads to War

dp.la/primary-source-sets

Finding the right DPLA Primary Source Set

You can use filters to browse Primary Source Sets by:

Subjects, such as:

- US History, American Literature, World History
- Migration, Women, Native Americans, Science and Technology

Time Period, such as:

- Civil War and Reconstruction
- Great Depression and World War II



Courtesy of Atlanta History Center via Digital Library of Georgia

Front page of a Primary Source Set

The Underground Railroad and the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 Primary Source Set

By Lakisha Odum, New York City Department of Education

Teaching guide

[Teaching Guide: Exploring the Underground Railroad and the Fugitive Slave Act](#)

The Underground Railroad (1850-1860) was an intricate network of people, safe places, and communities that were connected by land, rail, and maritime routes. It was developed by abolitionists and slaves as a means of escaping the harsh conditions in which African Americans were forced to live, and ultimately to assist them in gaining their freedom. Although securing one's freedom was challenging, many enslaved persons escaped to free states in the North and to Canada. Free African Americans, however, faced the threat of being returned to a slaveholder as a result of the The Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, which required that all escaped enslaved persons be returned, upon capture, to their masters. This primary source set provides teachers and students with resources that reveal the myriad sacrifices enslaved people made in order to gain their freedom, the effects of the Fugitive Slave Law on the lives of free African Americans, and the community that was built among abolitionists and enslaved people.



A map of the nineteenth-century Underground Railroad created in 2005.



An excerpt from *Scenes in the Life of Harriet Tubman* by Sarah H. Bradford, 1869.



A 1872 drawing of Maria Weems, an African American woman who escaped slavery in 1855 wearing male attire.

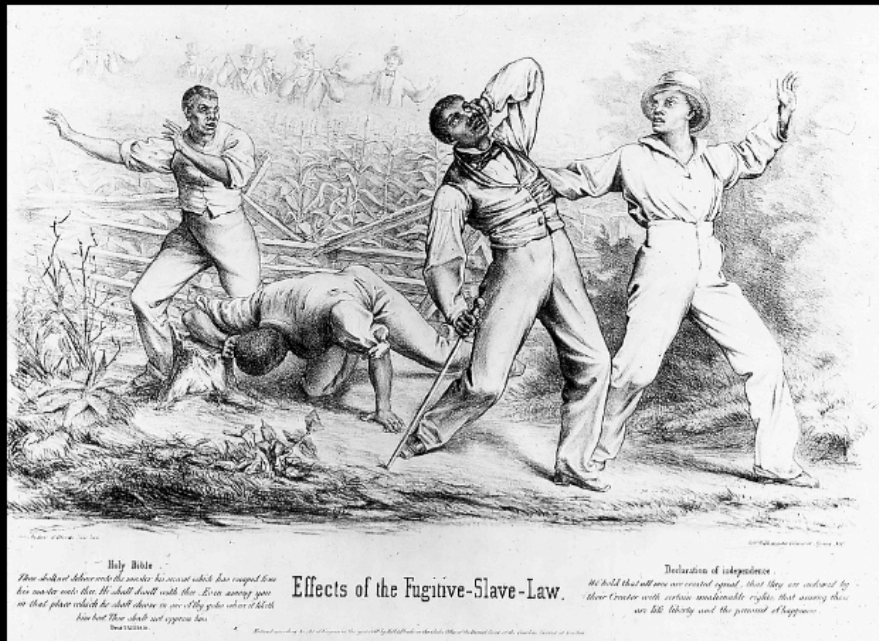


Isaac Kram, a fugitive disguised as her brother



Source Page

An 1850 political cartoon, “Effects of the Fugitive Slave Law,” showing four escaped slaves being recaptured by armed white men.



For this source, consider:

- the author's point of view
- the author's purpose
- historical context
- audience

Citation information

"Civil War. Effects of the Fugitive Slave Law, Cartoon from Newspaper," Digital Public Library of America, <https://dp.la/item/a6677bab0f3f1e769ab473e1db98a50>.

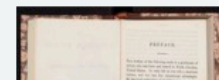
Courtesy of New York State Archives via Empire State Digital Network.

[View the description of this item in DPLA](#)

[View this item on Empire State Digital Network](#)

Space for additional description and/or transcription as needed.

More primary sources about **The Underground Railroad and the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850**



Teaching Guide

Teaching Guide: Exploring the Underground Railroad and the Fugitive Slave Act

By Lakisha Odum, New York City Department of Education

This teaching guide helps instructors use a specific primary source set, [The Underground Railroad and the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850](#), in the classroom. It offers discussion questions, classroom activities, and primary source analysis tools. It is intended to spark pedagogical creativity by giving a sample approach to the material. Please feel free to share, reuse, and adapt the resources in this guide for your teaching purposes.

Discussion questions

1. Consider [The Fugitive Slave Law and its Victims](#), the [political cartoon](#), the drawing called “[Operations of the Fugitive-Slave Law](#),” and the [drawing of a woman leaping](#). What do these show about the experiences of fugitive slaves? What were the different ways fugitive slaves fought against being sold back into slavery?
2. Harriet Tubman is known for the integral role she played in the Underground Railroad, but there are details about her work that many are unaware of. Based on the [biography](#), explain Harriet Tubman’s role in educating free African Americans. What do we learn about her character based on Frederick Douglass’s letter? What are some details from the text that support the assertion that Tubman was “one of the best and bravest persons on this continent?”
3. After reading the [Fugitive Slave Bill](#), explain what repercussions abolitionists faced if they were caught helping a fugitive slave. Why did abolitionists take such risks? Consider details of abolitionist assistance in [Running a Thousand Miles for Freedom](#), [The Underground Railroad from Slavery to Freedom](#), and [A Woman’s Life Work](#), as well as the evidence of the [poster](#).

Classroom activities

1. **Upper Elementary/Middle School:** The [picture and narrative of Lear Green](#) can be paired with the picture book *Henry’s Freedom Box* by Ellen Levine, which allows students to examine the Underground Railroad from the perspective of a child. Ask students to create a journal from the perspective of a fugitive slave child, using information from this set and *Henry’s Freedom Box*. The following questions can help students develop their journal entries: What were some fears children had while trying to escape slavery? What motivated them to remain resilient? What do we learn about the importance of liberty and freedom based on these texts?

Primary source set

This teaching guide is a companion to [The Underground Railroad and the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850](#)

Primary source analysis

For each source, ask students to indicate:

- the author’s point of view
- the author’s purpose
- historical context
- audience

For inquiry-based learning, ask students to:

- explain how a source tells its story and/or makes its argument
- explain the relationships between sources
- compare and contrast sources in terms of point of view and method
- support conclusions and interpretations with evidence
- identify questions for further investigation

Additional tools

- [Document Analysis Worksheets](#) from the National Archives

Road to Revolution: 1763-1776

Primary Source Set

By James Walsh, Scott County High School, Georgetown, Kentucky

Teaching guide

[Teaching Guide: Exploring the Road to Revolution](#)

After the conclusion of the French and Indian War in 1763, relations between the American colonists and the British Crown and Parliament quickly deteriorated. By 1776, many of the colonists, and representatives of all 13 colonies, were ready to declare their independence and take up arms. This set of sources focuses on a selection of events, legislation, and perspectives from both sides during this time period. The documents, images, and artifacts help the student-historian understand the process of going from loyal subjects of the British Crown to rebels willing to risk their lives. Through this inquiry, together with other knowledge, the student should be able to understand the background of America's Revolution and some of the factors leading to all revolutions. Students can answer the question, "Would you have revolted?"



The Proclamation Act of 1763 ("The King's Proclamation"), from a collection of British legislative acts.



The text of the 1765 Stamp Act, from a pamphlet printed in 1895.



A journal from the Congress of American Colonies in 1765, gathered in response to the Stamp Act.



An illustration of a Stamp Act protest in 1765.

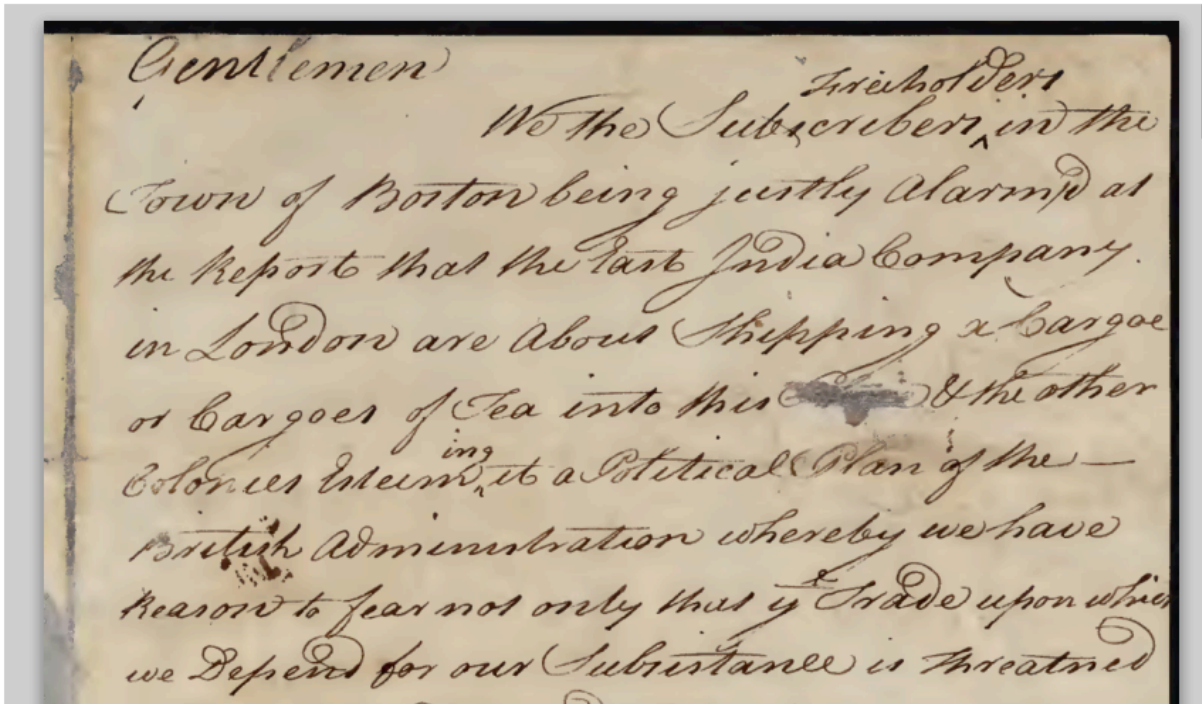


A "No Stamp Act" teapot, circa 1766-1770.



A British text justifying taxation, 1766.

A letter from Samuel Adams, Paul Revere, and others requesting a town hall meeting to consider the Tea Act, 1773.



For this source, consider:

- the author's point of view
- the author's purpose
- historical context
- audience

Citation information

"Letter to Selectmen requesting town meeting to consider Tea Act," Digital Public Library of America, <http://dp.la/item/b747b0d7ab8bd370f301e3715e2b9dd6>.

Courtesy of Boston Public Library via Internet Archive.

[View the description of this item in DPLA](#)

[View this item on Internet Archive](#)

Discussion question #5:

After reading the [letter from Samuel Adams, Paul Revere, and others](#), reflect on what events or actions may have been planned or considered at this meeting. What organizations may have attended or planned the meeting?

Women's Suffrage: Campaign for the Nineteenth Amendment

Primary Source Set

By Franky Abbott, Digital Public Library of America and Hillary Brady, Digital Public Library of America

Teaching guide

[Teaching Guide: Exploring the Campaign for the Nineteenth Amendment](#)

On August 18, 1920, Congress ratified the Nineteenth Amendment, giving women across the country the right to vote. This historic moment was largely the result of the work of activists and organizations advocating for universal voting rights. While these efforts started earlier, work for the amendment was the culmination of a twentieth-century women's suffrage movement. This movement faced formidable political and social opposition and delay in moments of national concern like World War I. This set of primary sources—photos, advertisements, maps, and other documents—sheds light on that struggle toward the Nineteenth Amendment.



"Votes for women," a 1912 suffrage map showing the status of women's suffrage in each state.



An anti-suffrage lithograph illustration. It reads: "The home or street corner for woman? Vote no on woman suffrage."



An anti-suffrage postcard from a campaign to reach government officials, 1916.



A 1914 poster for the International Woman Suffrage Alliance. It reads, "Men! Give women votes to protect the children!"

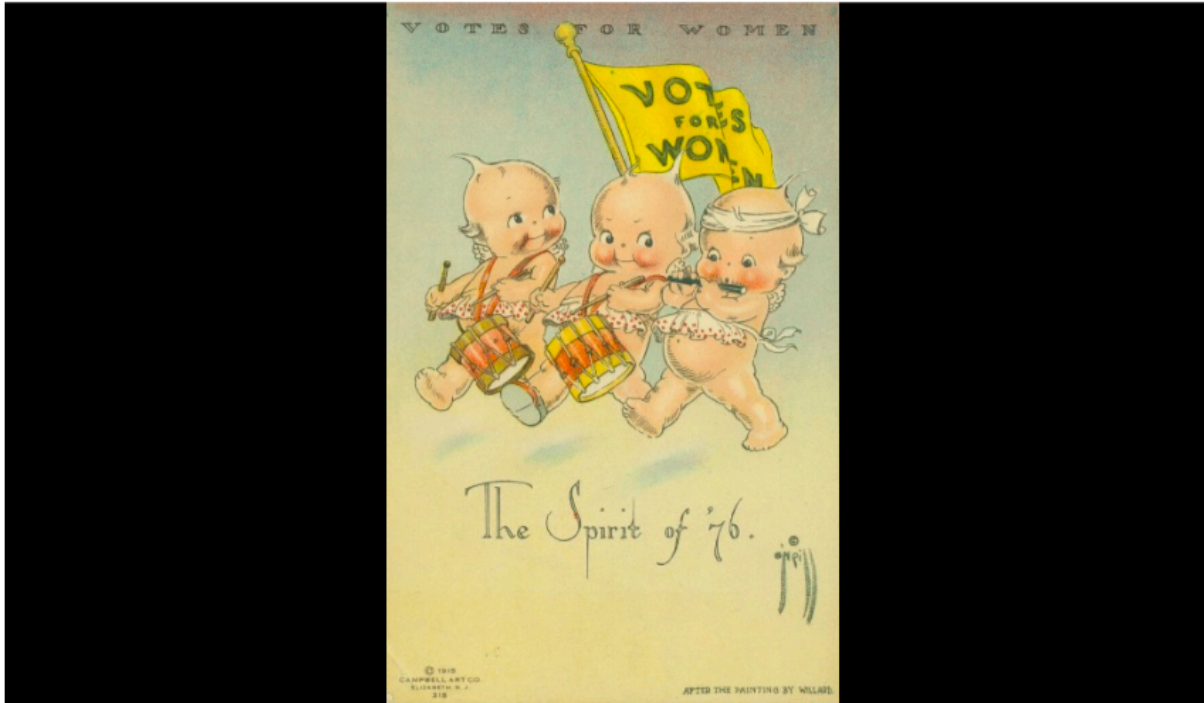


A flyer listing reasons for a constitutional amendment, printed by the National American Woman Suffrage Association, July 1918.



The House of Representatives' joint resolution on the Nineteenth Amendment.

A 1915 postcard of Kewpie dolls titled “Votes for Women: The Spirit of ’76.”



For this source, consider:

- the author's point of view
- the author's purpose
- historical context
- audience

Citation information

“Postcard of Kewpies titled ‘Votes for Women: The Spirit of ’76,’ 1915,” Digital Public Library of America, <http://dp.la/item/3c41c7265f7ae47edbcf8245b219f542>.

Courtesy of Missouri History Museum via Missouri Hub.

[View the description of this item in DPLA](#)

[View this item on Missouri Hub](#)

Discussion question #4:

Why was the postcard such a popular method of communication for both suffragists and anti-suffragists? What are its advantages? With the [1915 postcard of Kewpie dolls](#), which strategies was the National Woman’s Party using to appeal to readers?

The Crucible by Arthur Miller

Primary Source Set

By Susan Ketcham, East Central High School, St. Leon, Indiana

Teaching guide

[Teaching Guide: Exploring *The Crucible*](#)

Inspired by the House Un-American Activities Committee and the McCarthy trials of the 1950s, Arthur Miller wrote *The Crucible*, a play set in 1692 Salem, Massachusetts during the height of the mass hysteria known as the Salem witch trials. What did these two events nearly 250 years apart have in common? Both the hunt for communists in the 1950s and the hunt for witches in 1692 seemed to be provoked by hidden agendas, iniquitous motives, and little factual evidence. While Miller based his play on the historical accounts of the Salem witch trials, using the names of the people involved, it is a work of fiction. In order to appeal to theatergoers, Miller makes a love triangle the driving force behind the hysteria. However, the play retains Miller's message about what happens when checks and balances are overlooked, fear becomes the driving force behind accusations, and people are guilty until proven innocent. This primary source set includes photographs, transcripts, text documents, and footage that provides context for thematic elements within *The Crucible*.



Map of Salem Village in 1692, including places of interest and landowners, adapted from a map created by W. P. Upham in 1866.



An excerpt from *Strange Phenomena of New England in the Seventeenth Century*, from the writings of Reverend Cotton Mather.



An excerpt from a narrative of several accounts from Salem Village concerning witchcraft, 1692.



A photograph of Gallows Hill, Salem, where witches were hanged.



An excerpt from records of the Salem witch trials, copied in 1864 from original documents, on the examination of Susanna Martin.



An excerpt from records of the Salem witch trials, copied in 1864 from original documents, on the examination of Mary Warren.

Map of Salem Village in 1692, including places of interest and landowners, adapted from a map created by W. P. Upham in 1866.



For this source, consider:

- the author's point of view
- the author's purpose
- historical context
- audience

Citation information

Upham, William P. "Map of Salem Village 1692," Digital Public Library of America, <http://dp.la/item/5589fed8366ea4e45338cdebb8232f1c>.

Courtesy of Boston Public Library via Digital Commonwealth.

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More primary sources about *The Crucible* by Arthur Miller



An excerpt from *Strange Phenomena of New England in the Seventeenth Century*, from the writings of Reverend

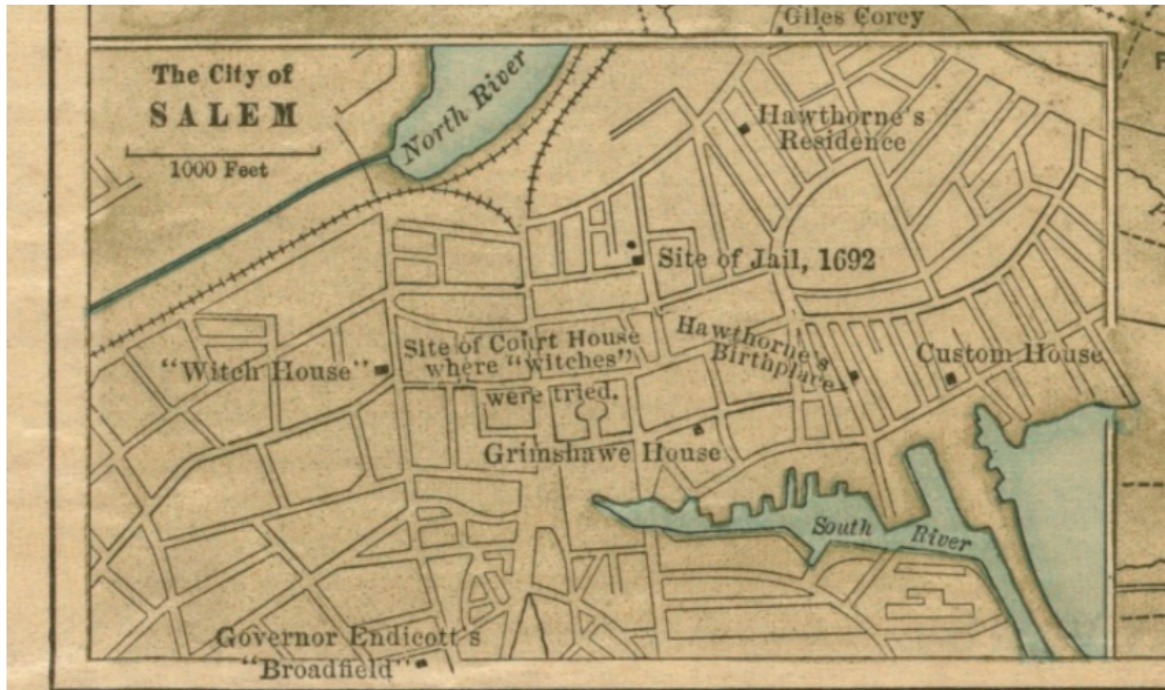


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Courtesy of Boston Public Library via Digital Commonwealth.

[View the description of this item in DPLA](#)

[View this item on Digital Commonwealth](#)

Classroom Activity:

Ask students to label the [map of Salem Village](#) with specific scenes from *The Crucible* where the action takes place. Students should determine if the scene is part of the exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, or resolution.

The Black Power Movement

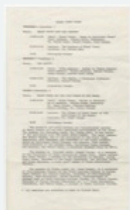
Primary Source Set

By Lakisha Odum, New York City Department of Education

Teaching guide

[Teaching Guide: Exploring the Black Power Movement](#)

The Black Power Movement of the 1960s and 1970s was a political and social movement whose advocates believed in racial pride, self-sufficiency, and equality for all people of Black and African descent. Credited with first articulating "Black Power" in 1966, Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee leader Stokely Carmichael represented a generation of black activists who participated in both Civil Rights and the Black Power movements. By the mid 1960s, many of them no longer saw nonviolent protests as a viable means of combatting racism. New organizations, such as the Black Panther Party, the Black Women's United Front, and the Nation of Islam, developed new cultural, political, and economic programs and grew memberships that reflected this shift. Desegregation was insufficient—only through the deconstruction of white power structures could a space be made for a black political voice to give rise to collective black power. Because of these beliefs, the movement is often represented as violent, anti-white, and anti-law enforcement. This primary source set addresses these representations through artifacts from the era, such as sermons, photographs, drawings, FBI investigations, and political manifestos.



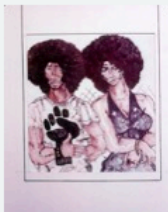
An excerpt from the agenda for the Black Power Forum, the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 1967.



A photograph of participants at the Black Power Forum, University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 1967.



A 1969 sermon by Robert Hamill entitled "Black Power and White Response."



A drawing of a black man and woman, the man wearing a shirt with a Black Power fist, circa 1970-76.

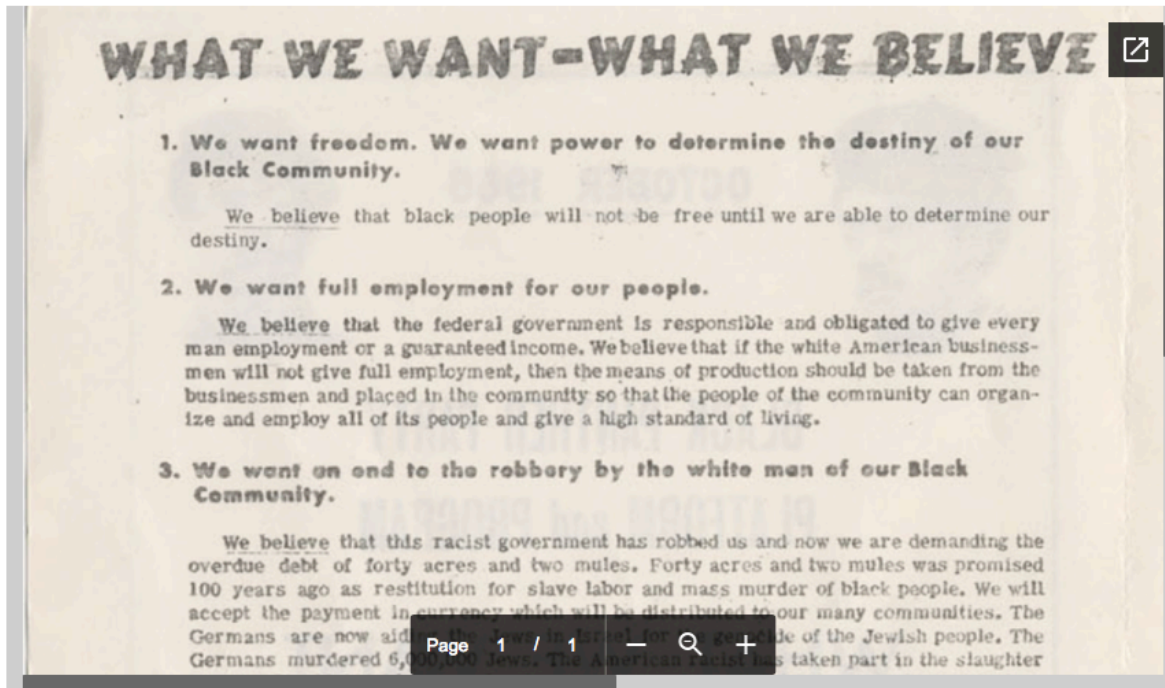


A photograph of a young man pointing to a blackboard which says "black is back," circa 1970-76.



An excerpt from the Federal Bureau of Investigation's report on the Winston-Salem chapter of the Black Panther Party, circa 1969-76.

A copy of the Black Panther Party Platform and Program, 1966.



For this source, consider:

- the author's point of view
- the author's purpose
- historical context
- audience

Citation information

"Black Panther Party Platform and Program," Digital Public Library of America,

<http://dp.la/item/8180a9e971c46037acff946e1be41e56>.

Courtesy of University of California Berkeley, Bancroft Library via California Digital Library.

[View the description of this item in DPLA](#)

[View this item on California Digital Library](#)

Discussion question #3:

Using the [Black Panther Party Platform](#), explain what resources and opportunities the Party members wanted for the African American community.

Implementation Ideas from Teachers



Courtesy of Cooper Hewitt,
Smithsonian Design Museum

Practice Document-Based Questions

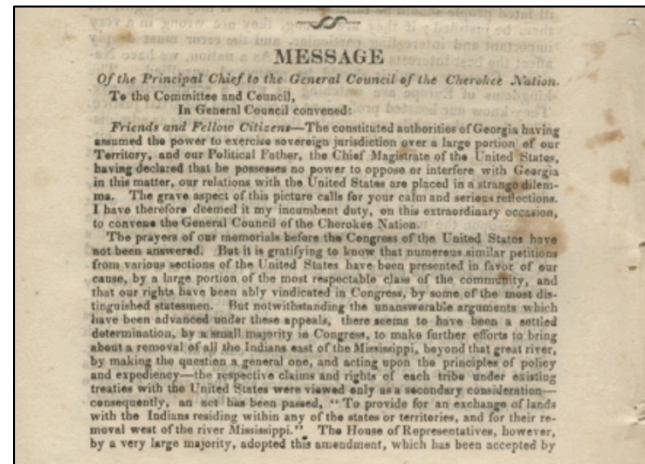
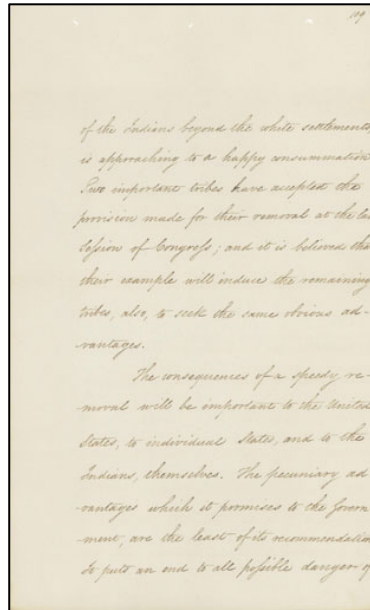
Document-Based Questions (DBQs) ask students to use source evidence to support an argument or position.

Pull sources from the sets to devise a DBQ for your students or assign a DBQ from one of the teaching guides. Use a shorter selection or the whole excerpt.

The growing appreciation of the national assets found in the national parks and monuments is evidenced by the vast increase of visitors. The great trend toward the parks means retaining in this country the millions expended by our tourists in foreign travel previously spent abroad. This economic value of the parks is only recently coming to be realized. It is a factor of importance, in addition to the benefits to our people in their outdoor education and exercise. With equal scenery we are lagging far behind the European countries, notably Switzerland, and are outclassed by the development of park travel and park use in Canada.

Excerpt from the 1916 Congressional bill that established the National Park Service from [Environmental Preservation in the Progressive Era](#).

Example

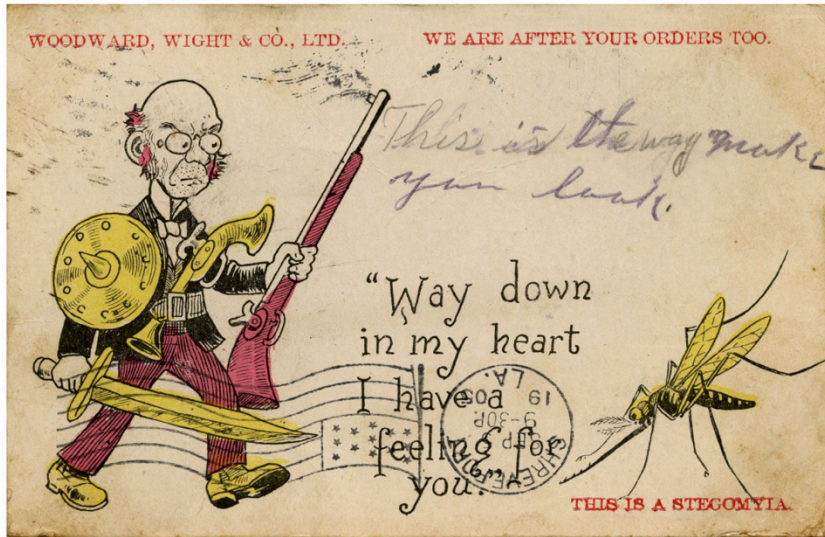


Discussion question #4 from [Jacksonian Democracy?](#):

“Using [Andrew Jackson’s message to Congress concerning Indian Removal](#) and the [1830 pamphlet by the Cherokee nation](#), explain whether Indian Removal was a democratic action taken by the federal government or an invasion of Cherokee sovereignty.

Introduce a topic

Ask students to analyze, interpret, or respond to a specific primary source from the sets to kick off your class session or lesson unit. Or let students pick a source!



Use an opener to engage prior knowledge, practice primary source analysis, and establish a purpose for learning.

A postcard showing an armed man taking on a disease-carrying mosquito, 1905, from **The Yellow Fever Epidemic of 1878**.

Example

Begin your unit on late nineteenth century immigration [this photograph](#).

What does it reveal about the experience of immigrating to the US? What questions does it raise?



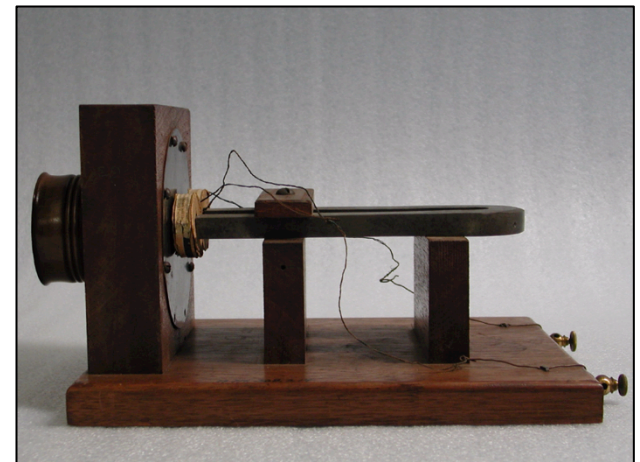
A photograph of immigrants arriving at Ellis Island, ca. 1900.
from [Immigration and Americanization, 1880-1930](#).

Build students' independent research skills

Have students pick a set and use the sources in their next research project on that topic.

For a more focused selection, try a thematic subset like

[Science and Technology](#) or [Women](#).



Alexander Graham Bell's 1876 "large box" telephone from [The Invention of the Telephone](#).

Experiment with a classroom activity

Each teaching guide has at least one classroom activity. Try a new way of bringing primary sources to life in your classroom.

Examples:

Create – Students create a vintage radio or TV advertisement in small groups to raise awareness about polio prevention in [the activity](#) from [There is No Cure for Polio](#)

Debate – Students teams stake a claim and debate each other in [the activity](#) from the [Texas Revolution](#) set.

Contextualize current events

Use the primary source sets to help students make connections between past and present.

Examples:

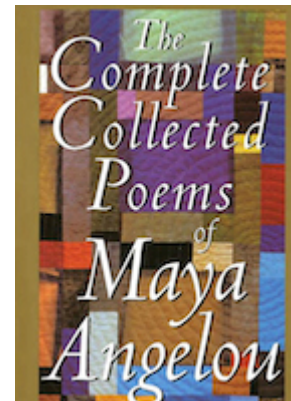
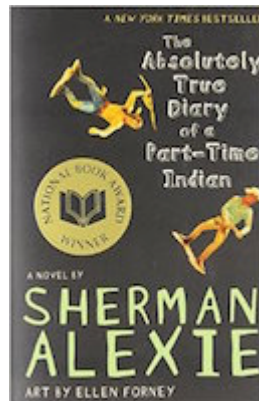
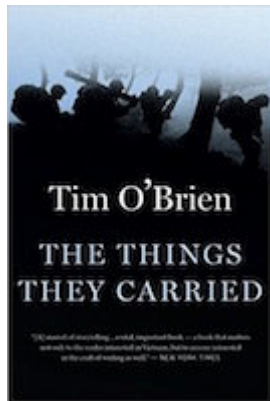
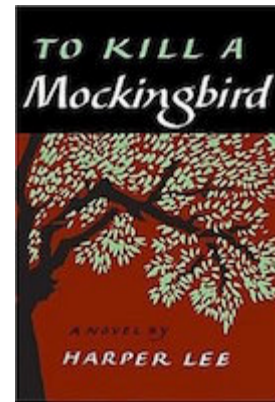
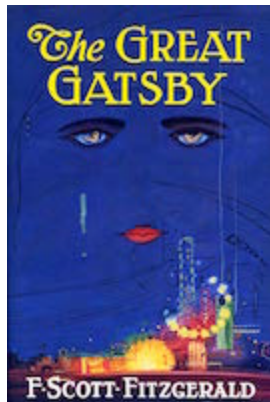
[Ida B. Wells and Anti-Lynching Activism](#) may offer an important historical counterpart to the #BlackLivesMatter Movement.

Sets on the [Fifteenth Amendment](#) and [Fannie Lou Hamer and the Civil Rights Movement in Mississippi](#) could help contextualize voting rights activism today.

Sets on [immigration](#) provide a historical lens for contemporary news stories about immigration of Latinos, Muslims, and Syrian refugees.

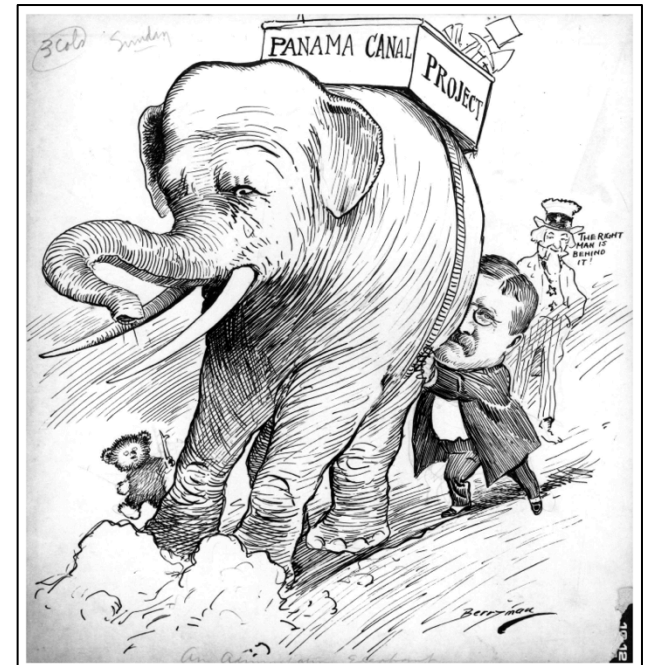
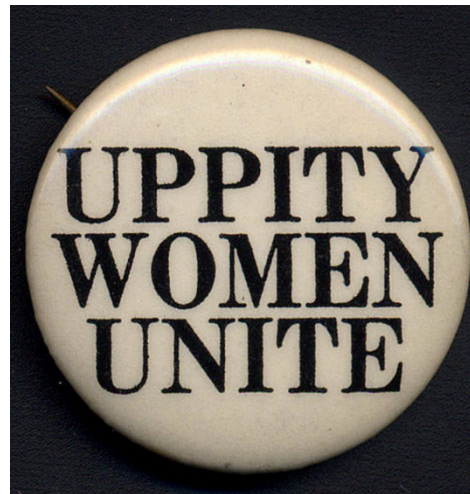
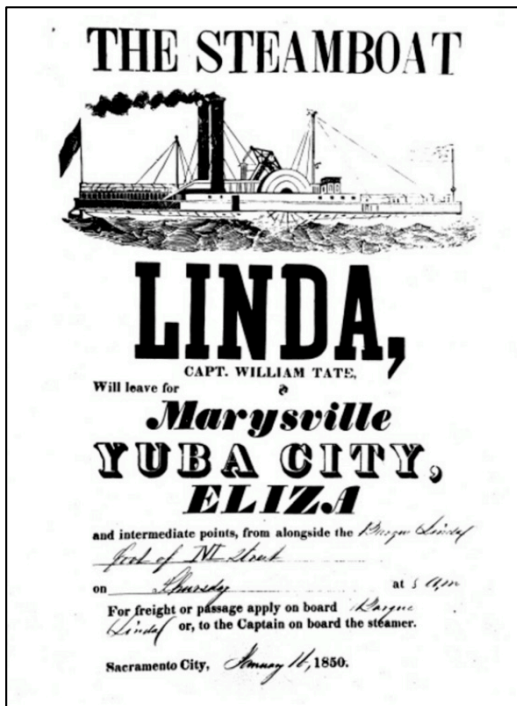
Contextualize literature

Use the primary source sets to teach works of literature in historical and cultural context.



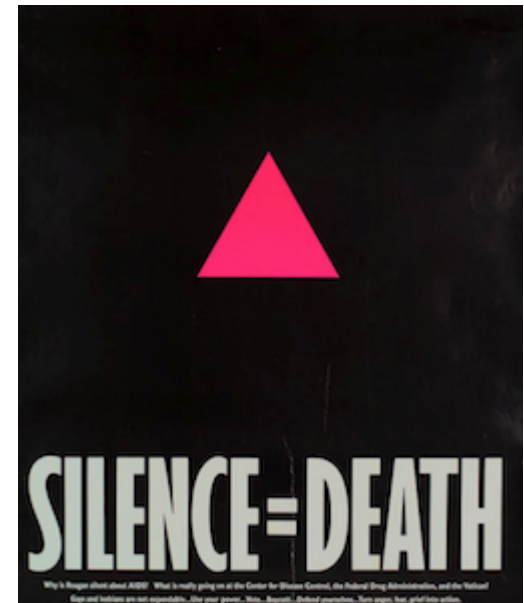
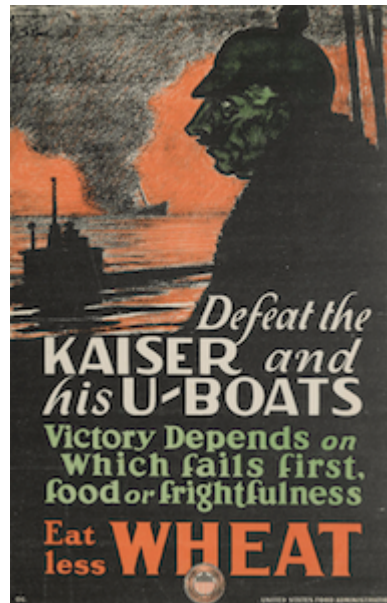
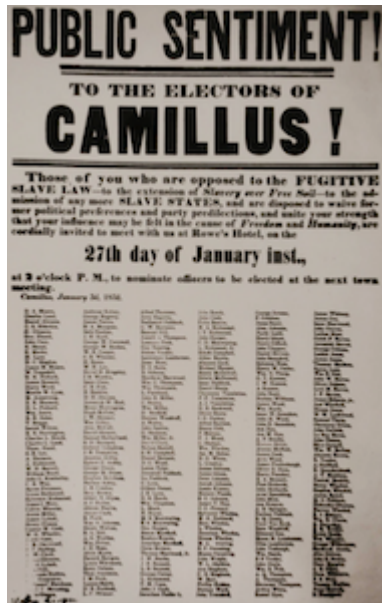
Compare media

Select examples of a type of media (postcards, posters, buttons, pamphlets, political cartoons, advertisements, etc) featured throughout the sets and analyze how they communicate a message to their audiences.



Example

For example, analyze three posters from the sets to introduce students to visual reading and build interpretation skills.



What makes a poster powerful? Who is its audience? How does it share its message? Why pick a poster to share a message?

Future Primary Source Sets

60 new sets by Dec
2018

New EAC members

Anyone can suggest
new topics



Courtesy of the University of Virginia Library.



BUILDING PRIMARY SOURCE SETS FOR STUDENTS AND TEACHERS

Ella Howard
Associate Professor of History
Wentworth Institute of Technology



Education Advisory Committee



- K-12 Teachers
- College Professors
- Librarians
- Learning Objectives

Immigration and Americanization, 1880-1930

Primary Source Set

By Ella Howard, Armstrong State University, Savannah, Georgia

Rectangular Snip

Teaching guide

[Teaching Guide: Exploring Immigration and Americanization, 1880-1930](#)

Between 1880 and 1930, approximately 28 million immigrants entered the United States. In contrast to earlier waves of immigrants, most of whom had originated in western and northern Europe, this group arrived from eastern and southern Europe. As they entered through Ellis Island in New York Harbor and made their way into various new lives—in cities and rural areas coast to coast, from urban tenements to Midwestern farms to seaside towns— they encountered mixed reactions from existing Americans. They also entered into a political climate that was charged by the sweeping immigration restrictions placed on the Chinese in 1882 through the Chinese Exclusion Act. While some Americans favored immigration, many opposed it, and responded during the 1920s by pressing for a tightening of the nation's borders. This set of photographs, plays, and primary sources allows users to immerse themselves in the debates that surrounded turn-of-the-century immigration and to consider the nature of Americanization.



A photograph of immigrants arriving at Ellis Island, ca. 1900.



A photograph of immigrants arriving at Ellis Island, ca. 1925.



An excerpt from a 1913 play for community or church groups to stage about the immigrant experience.

A postcard of a street scene in New York City's Lower East Side, ca. 1900.



For this source, consider:

- the author's point of view
- the author's purpose
- historical context
- audience

Citation information

"The Ghetto, New York," Digital Public Library of America,
<http://dp.la/item/cb00e13651fb6e7bb691d39cc41c854e>.

Courtesy of College of Charleston Libraries via South
Carolina Digital Library.

[View the description of this item in DPLA](#)

[View this item on South Carolina Digital Library](#)

Rise of Conservatism in the 1980s

Primary Source Set

By Ella Howard, Armstrong State University, Savannah, Georgia

Teaching guide

[Teaching Guide: Exploring the Rise of Conservatism](#)

During the 1980s, the political center of the United States continued to shift toward conservatism. Under the Reagan administration, the nation remained committed to fighting the Cold War, through traditional methods of diplomacy and military intervention as well as the development of new technologies. On the domestic front, the Reagan administration struggled against the crises of HIV and AIDS, homelessness, and the epidemic use of crack cocaine, while also taking a hardline stance against powerful labor unions. This set of speeches, interviews, political cartoons, and artifacts allows you to explore the rise of conservatism in these areas, as well as the critiques that were posed by activists and politicians. How was conservatism redefined during the 1980s?



An excerpt from a 1987 interview on foreign policy with Reagan administration official Kenneth Adelman.



A 1985 description of the Reagan administration's Strategic Defense Initiative.



An excerpt from a 1988 interview with Albert Carnesale about the Reagan administration's foreign policy and legacy.



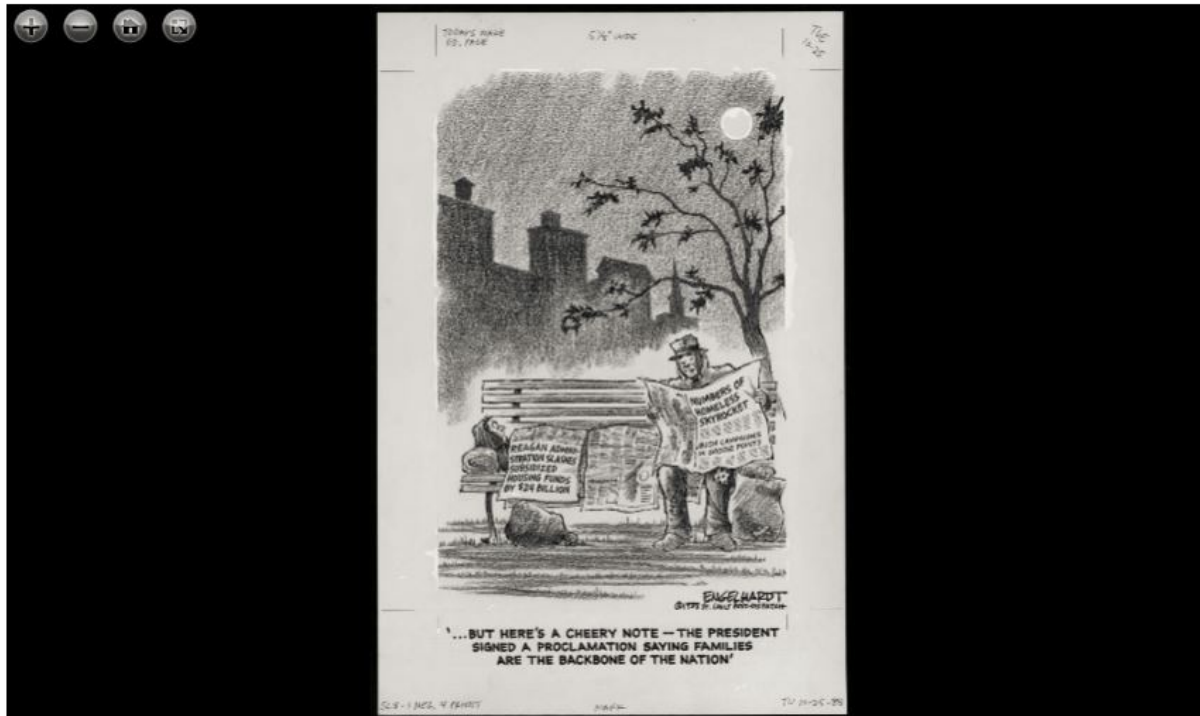
Rise of Conservatism in the 1980s

Contemporary United States (1968 to the present)

US History

Law & Government

A 1988 cartoon satirizing the Reagan administration's policies on homelessness.



For this source, consider:

- the author's point of view
- the author's purpose
- historical context
- audience

Citation information

Engelhardt, Tom, "But here's a cheery note - The president signed a proclamation saying families are the backbone of the nation," Digital Public Library of America, <http://dp.la/item/59a1326ccb6aa3f32ffca16aa8b707de>.

Courtesy of The State Historical Society of Missouri via Missouri Hub.

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Classroom Uses

- Supplement textbook
- Foster discussion
- Writing assignments
- Springboard for research
- Information literacy

Benefits

- Efficient use of time
- Efficient use of energy
- Allows self-directed learning