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# Research Land History Through Primary Sources

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## Activity Overview

Students will interpret the past and gain a deeper understanding of our relationship to the land using a variety of primary sources.

## Objectives

Students will:

- Read and discuss accounts from Native Americans, pioneers, settlers, and former local residents to understand human experience and relation to land
- Identify and examine various sources of information for constructing an understanding of the past
- Explain different points of view about the same historical event

## Subjects Covered

Language Arts and Social Studies

## Grades

3 through 12

## Activity Time

Depends on nature of search

## Season

Any

## Materials

Primary sources such as diaries, journals, biographies, census records, community newspapers, letters, artifacts, photos and scrapbooks from historical societies, libraries, universities or residents in the community.

## State Standards

### Language Arts:

Use effective reading strategies (A.4.1, 8.1, 12.1)

Read, interpret, and critically analyze literature (A.4.2, 8.2, 12.2)

Read & discuss texts to understand human experience (A.4.3, 8.3, 12.3)

Read to acquire information (A.4.4, 8.4, 12.4)

## Background

Learning about the history of the land through researching primary sources broadens student understanding of how Native Americans, explorers, traders, surveyors, settlers, and former local residents lived on the native landscape. Specifically researching materials from their own geographical region connects the students to the natural and cultural significance of their school restoration.

Local libraries, historical societies, universities, and people in the community are resources for primary source materials. Materials available include diaries, journals, biographies, census records, community newspapers, letters, artifacts, photos and scrapbooks.

## Activity Description

Read various resources then choose one of the following suggestions to interpret the information:

- Describe how a cultural group lived on the land, explain their relationship with the land and ways of interacting with the native ecosystems.
- Describe the changes on the native landscape after European settlement.
- Detail how the land resources influenced lifestyles and attitudes toward the landscape. You may compare and contrast different geographic areas or time periods.
- Read different accounts about local history and then create a time line of significant events. Have each class member complete at least one index card describing a significant event. You can hang the events on a visual timeline using string and clothespins, and then review the events as a group.
- Read accounts from a variety of sources about a single theme such as land use, local foods and diet, styles of dress, professions, lifestyles, and quotes describing the area; then create a time line to illustrate change through time.
- Construct family trees of the first members in the community.
- Describe land uses, local economy, religion, politics, schools, changes in transportation, natural resources in the area, etc., based on information from primary sources.
- Explain different points of view about the same historical event, such as the Native American vs. the pioneer perspective, a woman's view compared to a man's viewpoint, and viewpoints about conflicting use of land.

## Extensions

- As a class project design a display, write a skit or compile quotes based on research of primary sources for a planting celebration day.

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## Research Land History Through Primary Sources (cont.)

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Create or produce writing (B.4.1, 8.1, 12.1)

Conduct then communicate research (F.4.1, 8.1)

### Social Studies:

Identify & examine sources of information about history (B.4.1)

Use timelines to describe history (B.4.2)

Examine biographies (B.4.3)

Compare & contrast contemporary & historical lives (B.4.4)

Identify important political values (B.4.5)

Explain significance of holidays & symbols (B.4.6)

Identify & examine historical events & people (B.4.7)

Compare effects of technology on people & the environment (B.4.8)

Describe cooperation & interdependence (B.4.9)

Explain history of WI Indian tribes (B.4.10)

Use & evaluate primary sources of information (B.8.1)

Employ arguments about historical events (B.8.2)

Describe relationships between historical events (B.8.3)

Explain different interpretations of events (B.8.4)

Determine & support a position about political values (B.8.5)

Analyze political values (B.8.6)

Identify significant historical events and people (B.8.7)

Identify innovations and their effects on society (B.8.8)

Explain need for laws & policies (B.8.9)

- Invite senior citizens to share their memories of the area when they were young or stories they heard from their parents and grandparents.

### **Additional Resources**

- Craver, Kathleen W. (1999). *Using internet primary sources to teach critical thinking skills in history*. Greenwood Press.
- Hopping, Louise and Lorraine Hopping-Egan. (2003). *15 primary source activities: American History*. Teaching Resources; Bk & Poster edition.
- Miller, Robert Lee. (1999). *Researching life stories and family histories*. Sage Publications Ltd.

### **Websites**

- Lee, Corliss and The Regents of the University of California. 08/04. *Library Research: Finding Primary Sources*. <http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/TeachingLib/Guides/PrimarySources.html>
- Abraham, Terry. 05/06. *Repositories of Primary Sources*. <http://www.uidaho.edu/special-collections/Other.Repositories.html>

### **Assessments**

- Describe the attitudes concerning land from three different inhabitants that lived in your region in the past.
- Describe the same event in history from two different perspectives.
- Create a historically authentic short narrative using what you learned through readings and research.