

## **CULTURALLY RELEVANT PEDAGOGY USING PRIMARY SOURCES**

### An Introduction

## **VIDEO GUIDE**

### **Description of Video**

See culturally relevant pedagogy experts and master teachers discuss how primary sources support culturally relevant teaching and learning. Lesson excerpts and teacher testimony highlights the ways primary sources challenge students academically, help them connect with and develop their cultural competence, and practice the skills necessary to critique the status quo.

### **Audience**

Elementary teachers and other educators exploring culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) and primary source-work

### **Purpose**

This document offers guidance for viewing the video and implementing primary source analysis and culturally relevant pedagogy in the classroom.

### **Highlights**

- Advantages of teaching with a culturally relevant lens
- Ways primary sources support the three tenets of culturally relevant pedagogy
- Perspectives of teachers in urban, suburban, and rural classrooms serving a wide variety of student populations

### **Pedagogical Framework**

Culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) is a teaching framework established by Dr. Gloria Ladson-Billings at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. This video offers a twist on CRP, arguing that primary sources provide an effective vehicle for students to engage in meaningful learning. Primary sources are raw, unfiltered evidence from the past. When students encounter primary sources, they interpret the past through the lens of their own cultural knowledge. The multiple perspectives primary sources offer are integral to students constructing a richer and more nuanced understanding of their world.

This video provides an introduction to CRP and the ways primary source work to support that framework.

### **Note**

There is no “checklist” for creating a culturally relevant lesson. It is a way of thinking about one’s curriculum and instruction that places students (and their own unique cultural knowledge) at the center of classroom instruction. Titles or lesson ideas offered in this video are intended as examples of what could be used in a culturally relevant lesson.

## Guiding Questions

1. Primary sources have great potential to engage students and draw them into their learning. What characteristics should a primary source have to be engaging and relevant to *your* students?
2. Andrea points out that her students ask their own questions to guide their investigation of primary sources. What can teachers do to draw deep and meaningful questions from their students?
3. Kellie talks about how her students were challenged by a task to sort historical photographs into chronological order and that they were eager to figure out the puzzle. What makes a challenging task engaging? What does a teacher need to provide to make a task appropriately challenging?
4. Theresa states that in order to have academically rigorous instruction, she has to know her students deeply and meet them where they are. What information do you need to know about your students in order to challenge them appropriately? How can you acquire that information?
5. Keitha-Gail points out that all students are ready to be challenged with primary source work. What role can primary sources play in differentiating to students who need to be challenged at different levels? How can teachers find the right balance between challenging and achievable?
6. What responsibility do teachers have to provide windows and mirrors to their students in the content that they teach? How can primary sources provide stories and connections for groups left out in the traditional historical narrative?
7. In many classrooms, teachers often come from different cultural and social groups than the students they serve. Something that is meaningful to the teacher might not always feel meaningful to the students. How do you figure out what your students will find meaningful? What if your students disagree amongst themselves what concepts or issues are meaningful? To what degree are there certain concepts that are universally meaningful?
8. Primary and secondary sources both provide valuable contributions to the study of human society, past and present. Primary sources, however, are unique in their ability to tell stories across wider perspectives because they are not quiet about their bias. What is the difference in experience for a student between reading a secondary source derived from primary sources v. investigating and interpreting a primary source set for themselves?
9. Karina says that the main point of using primary sources in her classroom is to empower her students and help them see that people can make a change, make a difference. This theme is echoed by many other teachers throughout the video. What about seeing sources that reflect students' own history and identity *and* show people who are different from them is empowering? What life skills does this experience imbue?
10. Jehanne says that as a teacher's classroom changes, the curriculum also changes to meeting the needs of the students in front of them. What are some sustainable ways to make your curriculum more flexible and responsive to the lives of your students each year?
11. Further, Jehanne points out that culturally relevant teaching requires teachers to de-center themselves as the holder of knowledge. What are three ways you can de-center yourself as a gatekeeper of knowledge in your classroom?

12. What skills required for primary source analysis are directly transferable to critiquing the status quo? What are the similarities and differences between critiquing a primary source and critiquing a social norm?
13. Geoff says that kids are justice and fairness-minded and goes on to point out that they see a lot of things that adults don't. Why does this make them uniquely qualified to analyze primary sources and, by extension, critique the status quo?
14. Kellie celebrates the fact that primary sources allow her students to draw their own conclusions without her inserting her bias. However, when students draw their own conclusions, they also often develop some misconceptions. How do you address misconceptions without reclaiming the tenuous power students gained by forming their own interpretations?
15. The Library of Congress uses the protocol "Observe, Reflect, Question" to analyze a primary source. Keitha-Gail suggests that students can take this process even further, interrogating sources to find relevancy and Summer adds that they can take action. What role can primary sources play in assignments focused on taking action in the here and now?

### **Next Steps:**

- Visit the Inquiry in the Upper Midwest Website [mnhs.org/ium](https://mnhs.org/ium)
- Watch on-demand webinars supporting primary source analysis and CRP [education.mnhs.org/ium/professional-development#webinars](https://education.mnhs.org/ium/professional-development#webinars)
- Sign up for an upcoming workshop on using primary sources in the classroom [education.mnhs.org/ium/professional-development](https://education.mnhs.org/ium/professional-development)
- Check out the other modules on Culturally Relevant Pedagogy Using Primary Sources [education.mnhs.org/ium/teaching-materials](https://education.mnhs.org/ium/teaching-materials)
- Explore primary sources online at the Minnesota Historical Society: [search.mnhs.org](https://search.mnhs.org)
- Explore primary sources online at the Wisconsin Historical Society: [wisconsinhistory.org](https://wisconsinhistory.org)
- Explore primary sources online at the Library of Congress: [loc.gov](https://loc.gov)
- Sign up to receive the Minnesota History Center Education eNewsletter: [mnhs.org/enews](https://mnhs.org/enews)