

## PRIMARY SOURCE DOCUMENT USE MODELS

**Viewing an historical event from multiple perspectives.**<sup>1</sup> A collection of documents about a particular event offers students the opportunity to practice the skills employed by historians as they write about the past.

### Considerations:

- Events that have an element of controversy tend to be more engaging. Ex. Lexington Green — April, 1775; Sand Creek, Colorado — November, 1864
- Develop a task or activity that allows students to use the information found in the documents for a specific purpose. Ex. Trial, Debate
- Background information on the event is needed to help students understand the larger picture surrounding the event.
- Use excerpts from documents that contain contradictory information.
- Develop a culminating activity that allows students to synthesize their learnings and express their own thoughts on the evidence provided by the documents.

**Using photographs to illustrate change over time.**<sup>2</sup> Photographs of the same location taken a number of years apart provide students the opportunity to look at how the environment or a landscape has changed. Similarly, photos of such things as farming implements, machines, forms of transportation, etc., can illustrate the impact of science and technology on society.

### Considerations:

- A collection of several pairs of photos about similar topics or areas can be used to have students reflect on larger questions about changes in a region, etc.
- Develop a series of questions about each pair of photos to guide students in their analysis and understanding of the historical context.
- NOTE: Photographs taken by Matthew Brady during the Civil War often provide an interesting perspective. The photographs of Antietam, in particular, record opposing perspectives of the battlefield. Taken in opposite directions, one reflects the bucolic beauty and serenity of the area. The second, taken at the same time in the opposite direction shows victims of the battle lying helter-skelter where they fell.

**Using documents to investigate a theme or idea over time.**<sup>3</sup> A collection of documents illustrating different aspects of a common theme allows students to grapple with issues larger than the actual events and understand that, often, different generations are faced with the same concerns and dilemmas.

### Considerations:

- Identify a theme or idea that can be investigated over time. Examples: War, Reform, Disease, or Bozeman, Montana
- Develop a list of events from specific time periods that relate to the theme. Examples:
  - Theme: The United States Fights Wars
  - Categories/Topics: The role of blacks in wars, what U.S. leaders said, the role of newspapers, the actions of wars, opponents' points of view
- Use a generic "data analysis" handout to guide students in finding commonalities as they read a group of documents.
- Develop a task or activity that allows students to use the information found in documents for a specific purpose.
- Develop a culminating activity relating to the original theme or idea that allows students to synthesize their learnings and express their own thoughts on the evidence provided by the documents.

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<sup>1</sup> John Zola, "Sand Creek: Battle or Massacre?" *A New Look at the American West* (Boulder, CO: Social Science Education Consortium, 1996.)

<sup>2</sup> Ideas taken from: Gloria Eastman and Barbara Miller, *A New Look at the American West* (Boulder, CO: Social Science Education Consortium, 1996) and John Fielder, *Colorado: 1870-2000* (Englewood, CO: Westcliffe Publishers, 2000).

<sup>3</sup> David Kobrin, *Beyond the Textbook* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1996).