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Introduction

Primary sources are the pieces of evidence that historians use to learn about people, events, and everyday life in the past. Just like detectives, historians look at clues, sift through evidence, and reach conclusions. Whether in a museum or in the classroom, the study of primary sources is crucial to the study of history. They provide tangible links to the past that help people build personal connections to history. Our Museum and its online resources offer a variety of learning experiences, each of which uses the primary sources in our collection to tell a story about the past.

Information about Visiting

If you are able to visit the Museum in person, your troop can:

- Explore exhibitions and talk with gallery interpreters (when available),
- Get your hands on history at interactive carts featuring reproduction objects,
- "Step back into time" with our award-winning historic theater programs, and
- Search the Museum using self-guide brochures.



We have created this document to help identify the programs and exhibitions that might help your troop achieve badges, but we encourage you to check online for a specific daily schedule (<http://americanhistory.si.edu/events>) and exhibition information (<http://americanhistory.si.edu/exhibitions>). The Museum is undergoing renovations, and the websites above will have the most up-to-date information.

Upon arrival, visit the Welcome Center to confirm the programs for the day. Many tours and presentations are staffed by volunteers, so availability changes on a daily basis.

You can prepare your troop for a visit by watching the Orientation Video together (<http://youtu.be/DtmNaWMrA30>). You may also want to print out one of our Museum's self-guide brochures from the Plan Your Field Trip page (<http://americanhistory.si.edu/visit/plan-your-field-trip>).

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R Online Reference

reference materials to find online, such as online exhibitions and digital artifacts

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Rosie Petal: Make the World a Better Place

Students Sit for Students' Rights Homepage



Grades K–4

<http://americanhistory.si.edu/ourstory/activities/freedom/>



Students Sit for Civil Rights is an *OurStory* module that includes activities based on reading *Freedom on the Menu*, a work of children's literature about the Greensboro sit-ins that played an important role during the civil rights movement. *OurStory* is a series of modules designed to help children and adults enjoy exploring history together through the use of objects from the Museum's vast collections, quality children's literature, and engaging hands-on activities.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Nonviolence Homepage



Grades K–4

<http://americanhistory.si.edu/ourstory/activities/mlk/>



Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. is one of America's celebrated heroes for his use of nonviolent protest strategies during the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 60s. By using this *OurStory* module, children and adults can enjoy exploring history together through children's literature, everyday objects, and hands-on activities. Focused around *Martin's Big Words*, an illustrated biography of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., the module includes links to hands-on activities and a list of recommended readings for further exploration.



Tula: Courageous and Strong

Students Sit for Students' Rights Homepage

Grades K–4

<http://historyexplorer.americanhistory.si.edu/resource/?key=1838&lp=lessons>



Students Sit for Civil Rights is an *OurStory* module that includes activities based on reading *Freedom on the Menu*, a work of children's literature about the Greensboro sit-ins that played an important role during the civil rights movement. *OurStory* is a series of modules designed to help children and adults enjoy exploring history together through the use of objects from the Museum's vast collections, quality children's literature, and engaging hands-on activities.

BROWNIES



Celebrating Community

Learning About Museums

Grades K-2

http://www.americanhistory.si.edu/starspangledbanner/pdf/SSB_Museums_K_2.pdf



What do museums do? In this activity, children will recognize the Smithsonian Institution and be able to explain what a museum does. This is accomplished through the use of discussion questions and activities in which they relate stories from prior museum visits or share ideas for a museum that they would like to create.

Looking at Memorials

Grades K-4

http://americanhistory.si.edu/ourstory/pdf/sept11/sept11_memorials.pdf



Field trips to memorials are great ways to learn about how communities remember important events. In this activity, students will do a digital field trip to learn more about the Pentagon's memorial for September 11, 2001, and then visit a local memorial. Part of an OurStory module entitled *September 11, 2001*, this activity includes discussion prompts and background information.



Dancer

An American Story in Dance and Music

Grades K–4

<http://americanhistory.si.edu/ourstory/activities/dance/>



In 1943, Martha Graham, Aaron Copland, and Isamu Noguchi created *Appalachian Spring*, a ballet that told the story of an American pioneer community. Focused around *Ballet for Martha* an award-winning work of children's literature about the collaboration of three artists to create an American masterpiece, the module includes links to hands-on activities and a list of recommended readings for further exploration.



Inventor

Invention at Play

Grades K–4

<http://inventionatplay.org>



Through the use of interactive games, inventors' stories, video commentaries, and toy displays, students will learn how play connects to the creative impulse that is fundamental to the work of invention, and explore the playful side of invention and the inventive side of play.

America on the Move

Grades K–4

<http://americanhistory.si.edu/onthemove/>



This online exhibition explores the role of transportation in American history. Students will learn about communities wrestling with the changes that new transportation networks brought; how cities change, suburbs expand, and farms and factories become part of regional, national and international economies; and hear the stories of people who travel for work and pleasure, and move to new homes. This online exhibition also includes an interactive collection search, thematic essays by museum staff and guest curators, interactive games and learning resources for the classroom and home.



Lighting a Revolution

Grades 5–12

<http://americanhistory.si.edu/lighting/>



Explore the process of invention and compare Thomas Edison's well-known work on the electric light bulb a century ago with several modern lighting inventions with this online activity. This resource looks at the process of innovation through a sequence of five steps: preconditions, invention, promotion, competition and consequences. A guest lounge and library include two photo galleries, scripts and curator notes for the exhibition, a mystery object, technical reference and historical overviews.



COBOL

Grades 5–12

<http://americanhistory.si.edu/cobol/>



This online exhibition tells of the development of COBOL, a computer programming language, and how it changed the commercial, banking, and defense industries. Fifty years ago, each computer maker used its own programming languages to tell a computer what to do. In 1959, a group of programmers devised COBOL, a Common, Business-Oriented Language.





My Family Story

Design Your Own Family Flag

Grades K–4

http://americanhistory.si.edu/ourstory/pdf/starspangled/Design_Flag.pdf



In this activity, children will create their own family flag using colors and pictures that have personal meanings. They will then explain why they chose those colors and pictures and their meanings. This resource is included in an OurStory module entitled *Making the Star-Spangled Banner*.

JUNIOR

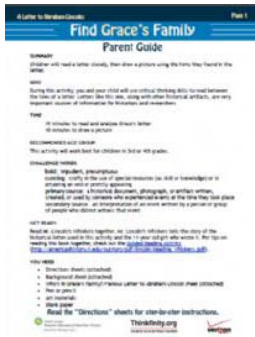


Detective

Find Grace's Family

Grades K–4

http://americanhistory.si.edu/ourstory/pdf/lincoln/Find_Family.pdf

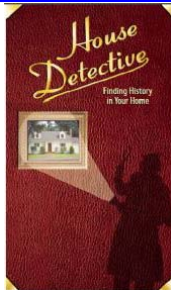


In this activity, children will analyze a primary source document—Grace Bedell's letter to Abraham Lincoln—and look for hints about Grace and her family. They will then draw a picture to represent the information they found in this activity, part of an *OurStory* module entitled *A Letter to Abraham Lincoln*.

House Detective: Finding History in Your Home

Grades K–4

<http://www.americanhistory.si.edu/house/pdfs/webhouseguide.pdf>



This printable guide shows students how to research the place where they live and can be used as a tool for individual or small group research. It will help them conduct research on their home or local building, describe their research process and summarize their conclusions based on analysis of the research. This activity is one of the educational resources included in the online exhibition entitled [Within These Walls](#).

History Detective Grades 3–5



http://www.americanhistory.si.edu/starspangledbanner/pdf/SSB_Historians_3_5.pdf



Children will be able to explain the difference between primary and secondary sources, and explain how the value of using primary sources is important to history. By using primary sources to answer a series of questions, they will see that, much like detectives, historians have to prove that their answers are correct by providing evidence. This activity is included in the online exhibition from the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History entitled *The Star-Spangled Banner: The Flag that Inspired the National Anthem*.



Digital Photographer

Camera Creativity and Collaboration



Grades 2–5

http://americanhistory.si.edu/ourstory/pdf/dance/dance_camera.pdf



Take a close look at a famous picture of Martha Graham, then grab your camera and make your own dance photo with a friend or family member. Part of an OurStory module entitled *An American Story in Dance and Music*, this activity includes a primary source photograph, guided looking questions, step-by-step directions for creating your own photograph, and background information.



Entertainment Technology

Lighting a Revolution

Grades 5–12

<http://americanhistory.si.edu/lighting/>



Explore the process of invention and compare Thomas Edison's well-known work on the electric light bulb a century ago with several modern lighting inventions with this online activity. This resource looks at the process of innovation through a sequence of five steps: preconditions, invention, promotion, competition and consequences. A guest lounge and library include two photo galleries, scripts and curator notes for the exhibition, a mystery object, technical reference and historical overviews.



Flowers

First Lady for the Environment

Grades K–4

<http://www.americanhistory.si.edu/ourstory/activities/firstlady/>



Learn more about First Lady Claudia "Lady Bird" Johnson, wife of President Lyndon Baines Johnson and her work to protect the environment and bring beauty to every community. This module from the OurStory program includes active reading suggestions and discussion questions for the illustrated biography *Miss Lady Bird's Wildflowers*, and related extension activities such as field trip guides, hands-on activities, and an object exploration.



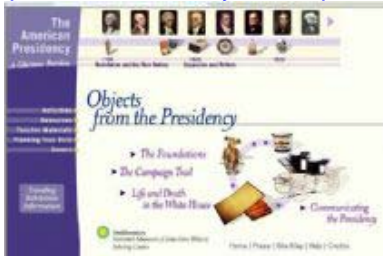


Inside Government

The American Presidency: A Glorious Burden

Grades 4–12

<http://americanhistory.si.edu/presidency/>



This exhibition examines the history of the American presidency. Through the use of objects from the museum's extensive collection, an interactive timeline and interactive activities, students will study the realities of the presidency, from its origins to the present, as well as the lives of the men who have held the office.



Dear Mr. President

Grades 3–4

http://americanhistory.si.edu/ourstory/pdf/lincoln/dear_president.pdf



Analyze the letter Grace Bedell wrote to President Abraham Lincoln, then write and send your own letters to the president of the United States. This activity is included in an *OurStory* module entitled *A Letter to Abraham Lincoln*.



Visit Your Government

Grades K–4

http://americanhistory.si.edu/ourstory/pdf/mlk/mlk_government.pdf



Find out about your local government through planning a short field trip, and then think about how you could make a difference in your community. The activity guide also includes tips for reviewing the experience once you're back at home or in the classroom. Included in an *OurStory* module from Smithsonian's National Museum of American History entitled *Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Nonviolence*, this activity is designed to help children and adults enjoy exploring history together.



Stories of Freedom and Justice Grades K–12



http://americanhistory.si.edu/freedomandjustice/learning_resources.html

This webpage is a gateway to lesson plans, videos, family activities, and instructional media related to the nonviolent civil rights movement in the 1950s and 1960s. Featured resources include videos and a teacher guide of the Museum's award-winning Join the Student Sit-Ins program, literacy-based family activities on Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and the student sit-ins in Greensboro, North Carolina, and an archived webcast of an oral history of the three surviving members of the Greensboro Four.



The theater program “Join the Student Sit-Ins” is also available in-person at the Museum. Check the daily calendar for specific details (<http://americanhistory.si.edu/events/>).



Musician

Freedom Songs Grades K–4



http://americanhistory.si.edu/ourstory/pdf/freedom/LunchCounter_Songs.pdf



Songs played an important role during the civil rights movement. In this activity, students will listen to freedom songs and then make their own version of one of the songs. It is included in an *OurStory* module entitled *Students Sit for Civil Rights*.



History Explorer Podcast: Freedom Songs

Grades K–4

<http://americanhistory.si.edu/thinkfinity/podcast/CW.pdf>



In this episode of the History Explorer podcast series, Christopher Wilson, Director of the Program in African American Culture, discusses the use of freedom songs during the civil rights movement and how they are incorporated into public programs on the museum floor. The resources include a teachers guide and student worksheet.



Playing the Past

The First Ladies at the Smithsonian

Grades 5–12

<http://americanhistory.si.edu/firstladies/>



In addition to artifacts and background information on the first ladies, this website features thematic overviews of the many roles of the first ladies, a timeline of first ladies, and behind-the-scenes details on the history of the first ladies exhibitions at the Smithsonian. The Smithsonian's National Museum of American History's first ladies collection includes material related to their social and political activities as well as their gowns.



Within These Walls

Grades 4–12

<http://americanhistory.si.edu/house/>



Learn about over 200 years of history through the stories of five families who lived in a house that is now at the National Museum of American History. In addition to historical information about this house, the site includes activity guides to help children explore the history of their own houses and communities.





Product Designer

Spark!Lab

Grades K–4

<http://sparklab.si.edu/>



This website, from the Lemelson Center's Spark!Lab, uses fun activities to help kids and families learn about the history and process of invention. Students can play games, conduct science experiments, explore inventors' notebooks, and even invent!

The Spark!Lab space at the Museum is currently closed, but hands-on carts with Spark!Lab activities are available at scheduled times. Check the daily calendar for specific details (<http://americanhistory.si.edu/events/>).

CADETTE

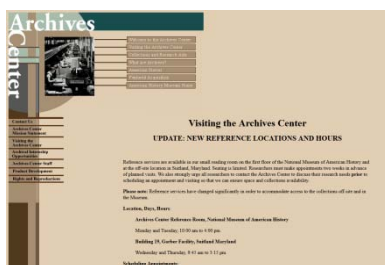


Entrepreneur

Book an Appointment with the NMAH Archives!

Grades 5–12

<http://americanhistory.si.edu/archives/>



Make an appointment to check out the Estelle Ellis Papers (423) from the NMAH Archives! The collection documents Ellis's career in publishing and as owner of Business Image, Inc. Don't miss the promotional items developed for *Seventeen* and *Charm* magazines. Designed to be informative and eye-catching, these materials used creative techniques to highlight to potential advertisers the uniquely female qualities and concerns of the magazines' readers.

Appointments are limited and must be booked in advance. To learn more about using the Archives, visit <http://americanhistory.si.edu/archives/b-1.htm>.



New Cuisines

FOOD: Transforming the American Table 1950–2000

Grades 5–12

<http://americanhistory.si.edu/food/>



FOOD will open at the Museum on November 20, 2012. Whether convenient, fast, organic, processed, gourmet, ethnic, or local—the foods available to Americans have never been more plentiful and diverse, or more ripe for discussion. Coupled with big changes in who does the cooking, where meals are consumed, and what we know (or think we know) about what's good for us, the story of Americans and food in the last half of the twentieth century is about much more than what's for dinner.



SENIOR



Behind the Ballot

The American Presidency: A Glorious Burden

Grades 4–12

<http://americanhistory.si.edu/presidency/>



This exhibition examines the history of the American presidency. Through the use of objects from the museum's extensive collection, an interactive timeline and interactive activities, students will study the realities of the presidency, from its origins to the present, as well as the lives of the men who have held the office.



Vote: The Machinery of Democracy

Grades 9–12

<http://americanhistory.si.edu/vote/index.html>



In this online exhibition, students will explore the history of voting methods in the United States, study how ballots and voting systems have evolved over the years as a response to political, social, and technological change, transforming the ways in which Americans vote. The exhibit includes sections on paper ballots, reform, the gear & lever voting machine, Florida 2000, and present and future ballots.





Stories of Freedom and Justice

Grades K–12

http://americanhistory.si.edu/freedomandjustice/learning_resources.html



This webpage is a gateway to lesson plans, videos, family activities, and instructional media related to the nonviolent civil rights movement in the 1950s and 1960s. Featured resources include videos and a teacher guide of the Museum's award-winning Join the Student Sit-Ins program, literacy-based family activities on Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and the student sit-ins in Greensboro, North Carolina, and an archived webcast of an oral history of the three surviving members of the Greensboro Four.

The theater program “Join the Student Sit-Ins” is also available in-person at the Museum. Check the daily calendar for specific details (<http://americanhistory.si.edu/events/>).

The Greensboro Lunch Counter and the Civil Rights Movement

Grades K–12

<http://www.objectofhistory.org/objects/intro/lunchcounter/>



This object-based learning activity revolves around the Greensboro, North Carolina lunch counter that was the site of a sit-in strike by four African-American students in 1960. Students will learn how the sit-in strike at the Woolworth's lunch counter sparked the widespread student activism that was at the heart of the Civil Rights movement. After exploring the lunch counter and its importance as a source of historical information, students will visit the forum section of the site to hear the Museum's curators and historians discuss the object and then use what they have learned to complete the Virtual Exhibit Activity.

AMBASSADOR



Photographer

Snapshots in Time

Grades 3–12

http://americanhistory.si.edu/onthewater/pdf/OTW_educators_guide.pdf



How does maritime activity impact your community and daily life? In this photo sharing activity, students investigate this central question by locating, exploring, and photographing evidence of maritime activities affecting them and/or their community. They will then write a detailed description about the effect of these activities and share both photographs and descriptions online. This activity is one of the learning resources connected with the online exhibition entitled *On the Water: Stories from Maritime America*.





Public Policy

Stories of Freedom and Justice

Grades K–12

http://americanhistory.si.edu/freedomandjustice/learning_resources.html



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