

Synopsis-Performing Primary Sources, 2009

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Synopsis

Students in Advanced Placement United States history must understand how to analyze primary sources and then use those sources to write a coherent essay on a given subject. This is called the Document Based Question (DBQ). It is an essay question that has approximately 10 very short documents attached. Students are asked to react to the DBQ prompt and use both the documents and their knowledge of the historical period in constructing their response.

So in this curriculum unit plan I want to consider a number of things that might be done to help students to understand, interpret, and analyze primary sources. First, I think it will be important for them to recognize how documents reflect a historical moment. So in this unit I will create a rubric that students can use upon first encountering a document as a way to analyze it easily.

Second, I want to have students engage in “performing history” through analyzing documents. My plan is to have students first analyze documents and then in groups, create live performances that essentially bring the history to life. This will include a brief description of the analysis and then an interpretation done through performance.

Third, since the topic of the seminar that helped to produce this unit deals with the theatre, I will emphasize the possibility of using **plays as primary sources**. In the end, I will give teachers several options as to the kinds of activities they might use with their students.