

Who Says that's Modern? Making Use of Primary Sources in Art History

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Synopsis

My overarching goal for this unit is to help students recognize (in a way, experience) the early cognitive changes of the Modern artist through the use of primary sources. These documents will serve as a catalyst for a series of activities that physically engage students in the history they will be studying.

Making use of good primary sources can guide students to a time and place that no longer exists. The direct evidence and information that primary sources offer can be used for analysis, interpretation, and evaluation of an area being studied.

In this curriculum unit I want to address two specific goals. The first will be to develop a framework that students can use as a means for understanding and analyzing the primary source - what it provides and what limitations it has in helping us understand a history. The second goal I have for this unit specifically addresses the free-response section of the Advanced Placement Art History exam. These essay questions focus on the student's ability to apply their knowledge by analyzing known and unknown works of art as well as primary source documents from the nineteenth century or later. In large part, this section of the exam is looking for students to demonstrate their ability to analyze the relationship between a work of art and the historical context in which it was created. Given the multitude of perspectives offered to them throughout the year, this is not an easy task.

The lessons planned are to be used to guide the students in answering the questions above. Because the class is an art history class, researching the art of the countries, creating a power point presentation and writing a paper will be apropos to the type of activities expected in the class.