The Avalon Project: Using Literacy Strategies with Primary Sources on the Internet

Scott Scheuerell
Loras College

Increasingly, high school classrooms have access to the Internet. The Avalon Project Internet webpage enables high school students to access primary sources on a variety of American History topics. Literacy strategies are a promising method to help students organize the information they access when they are reading primary sources online. In particular, graphic organizers help students to make sense out of complex issues presented in primary sources. The author describes how his high school history students used the Avalon Project Internet webpage and graphic organizers to comprehend the primary sources with which they were working. Suggestions are given to help history teachers implement this activity in the classroom. Background information on literacy strategies is provided with specific examples of graphic organizers to help guide teachers who are interested in utilizing the strategy with their students.

Introduction

The Internet is becoming increasingly available to high school students in the classroom. Nearly 100% of public schools in the United States have access to the Internet (Parsad & Jones, 2005). History teachers are looking for ways to utilize the Internet with their students. Frequently, teachers are using primary sources accessed from the Internet. Lee, Doolittle, and Hicks (2006) conducted a survey of high school history teachers and found the biggest benefit of having the Internet in the classroom was to attain primary sources which would have been impossible to access before.

Digital history is a term used to describe the use of primary sources attained from the Internet. Increasingly, students can access primary sources, including historical images and historical accounts (Lee, 2002). Tens of millions of historical documents can now be found online (Lee, 2002). By accessing sources on the Internet, students can view historical documents which were once only accessible to professional historians at museums and archives (Web-Based Education Commission, 2000). Many history teachers are now seeking ways to more fully take advantage of using the primary sources from the Internet in their lesson plans since these resources differ from non-digital primary sources. Primary sources from the Internet differ from non-digital primary sources because these items are more accessible and flexible to work with. In addition, these sources are easier to manipulate and are more searchable (Lee, 2002). Due to these inherent advantages, history teachers are wondering how they can quickly access relevant primary sources instead of spending valuable time sifting through hundreds of hits on a Google or Yahoo search.

For example, during my experience as a high school teacher, I wanted to identify quickly a primary source related to the lesson’s objective in my American History class. Because I had multiple classes to plan for and coached outside of the classroom, I had limited time to find primary sources which my students could use. I quickly found the Avalon Project Internet webpage, sponsored by the Yale University Law School, and it became my go-to site. The webpage is user-friendly and features primary sources throughout American History. In particular, there are documents focused on the areas of history, economics, law, politics, diplomacy, and government (Lee & Clarke, 2003). Stu-
sight can easily access Presidential inaugural speeches, State of the Union addresses, key pieces of legislation, important treaties, and many other items which will be of interest to high school students. Most importantly, the Avalon Project webpage gives students access to interesting sources which bring history alive. Each of the primary sources provides in-depth information which cannot be replicated by a textbook typically used in most American History classrooms.

Fortunately, my classroom was equipped with a wireless laptop cart which enabled each of my students to access the primary sources from the Avalon Project. I also had a LCD projector which allowed my students to follow along as we used the sources. Our high school was on a 90-minute block schedule which helped teachers and students have the time necessary to utilize more fully the primary sources. I experimented using the primary sources from the Avalon Project in a number of ways. Through trial-and-error, I found the best approach was to begin class with an anticipatory set related to the lesson’s objective followed by a brief lecture. Following the lecture, we had 30-45 minutes to view a primary source related to the objective. Using this approach gave students the necessary background information to make sense out of the information they viewed using the primary source. In my opinion, students need to recall their prior knowledge from a lecture or readings and to be able to apply it to the sources they are viewing online.

There are many different ways students can use the primary sources accessed from the Internet in the classroom. Initially, I had my students answer worksheet questions and sometimes simply make a list of things they learned from the source. However, this approach failed to force students to think critically about the subject matter. Finally, I began to implement literacy strategies to help students make sense out of what they were reading online. This article will provide examples of literacy strategies and primary sources from the Avalon Project to guide history teachers who are exploring ways to utilize the Internet in the classroom.

**Literacy Strategies in the High School History Classroom**

Many students struggle comprehending what they read in a social studies classroom. In particular, primary sources inherently can be even more difficult for high school students. I determined that special education students struggled most with primary sources. However, I found all students struggled with primary sources to varying degrees. Therefore, there is a need to implement literacy strategies in the social studies classroom. This section will discuss more deeply the need for literacy strategies when using digital sources and how to structure the lesson appropriately.

**The Argument for Literacy Strategies**

Primary sources accessed on the Internet can be lengthy and complex for high school students to understand. Lee and Clarke (2003) conducted a qualitative case study of high school students who used primary sources from the Internet, including the Avalon Project webpage, and found many students had difficulty comprehending the source. The necessity for students to comprehend what they are reading is critical. Graphic organizers, when implemented as a literacy strategy, greatly help students make sense out of what they are reading. Students using graphic organizers demonstrate greater long-term achievement when they are using them in the social studies classroom (Gallavan & Kottler, 2007).

Reading strategies, such as graphic organizers, help students make inferences about the subject they are investigating (Martorella, Beal, & Mason Bolick, 2005). A graphic organizer forces students to connect their prior knowledge from a lecture or reading to the information presented in the primary source to draw conclusions (Martorella, Beal, & Mason Bolick, 2005).
Bolick, 2005). Students must reflect on what they are learning and prioritize what is significant by summarizing information utilizing a graphic organizer (Martorella, Beal, & Mason Bolick, 2005).

There are countless types of graphic organizers. I have used many with my high school students in conjunction with primary sources accessed on the Avalon Project Internet webpage. Based on my experiences in the high school classroom, I have seen first-hand how graphic organizers help students with metacognition when they are involved in digital history. Students are connecting prior knowledge to new knowledge and reflecting on their own thinking about the subject matter (Martorella, Beal, & Mason Brolick, 2005). In effect, students are involved in a deeper type of historical analysis which would be difficult to replicate without the aid of literacy strategies such as graphic organizers.

Personally, I found a few graphic organizers which were best suited to help students with the content they were confronted with in the primary sources found online. My personal favorites are compare-contrast charts, cause-effect diagrams, and concept maps. Each of these formats is user-friendly to the students. By using the graphic organizers frequently, my students became familiar with the format and developed the kind of thinking necessary to synthesize what they were reading.

The compare-contrast graphic organizer, such as a Venn diagram, enables students to conduct analysis about two or more historical topics. In particular, students are forced to think how two historical concepts are the same or different from one another (Gallavan & Kottler, 2007). I found the compare-contrast format to be most effective when students were able to connect a primary source from the past with a contemporary topic. For example, utilizing a primary source such as the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 from the Avalon Project webpage helps students compare and contrast views on immigration in the late 1800’s to the current debate on immigration.

A cause-effect chart can also be used by students as a graphic organizer. In my opinion, a cause-effect chart helps students see the big picture on historical concepts. Frequently students memorize names and dates on various historical topics. The cause-effect chart forces students to consider what preceded a major historical event and its long-lasting consequences. For example, students might be asked to consider the causes and effects of the War of 1812 using a primary source such as the Treaty of Ghent also located on the Avalon Project webpage.

The concept map is another user-friendly graphic organizer for students. Students draw a bubble chart to organize their thoughts, much like they would for an outline, placing the main idea in a big bubble in the middle of their paper and subsequent ideas branching out from the main idea. Students then develop subheadings for the ideas which branch out from the main idea and add specific details branching out from the subheadings. In order to present a challenge and make students dig deeper for meaning when they investigated the primary source, I required them to write down a specific number of details. As a result, the increased expectations resulted in a better product. There are numerous possibilities for a concept map utilizing the Avalon Project webpage. For example, students can view President Washington’s Farewell Address and develop a concept map to display their findings.

Implementing Literacy Strategies in the Classroom with the Internet

Interestingly, I found students enjoyed using big poster paper and markers to construct their graphic organizer instead of paper and pencil. Many students displayed a great deal of creativity as they developed their own unique graphic organizers. Most importantly, students were able to organize their thoughts on complex historical issues as they were reading primary sources online.
Many students also enjoyed working collaboratively with their peers to construct graphic organizers. I sometimes used a cooperative learning structure to vary classroom instruction day-to-day. Based on my experiences, I found it necessary to assign jobs for each student in a group, and I never had groups with three or more students. Partner A was assigned the researcher’s job of investigating the primary source online. Partner B was assigned the secretary’s job of disseminating the information on paper. This format can be especially helpful if a classroom has a limited number of computers. I also had students develop graphic organizers on their own since we had one-to-one laptop computer availability.

During the cooperative learning activity, there was a great deal of conversation taking place in the classroom. Students worked together to make sense of the primary source they were investigating, using the appropriate graphic organizer. There was a degree of excitement as students connected their prior knowledge about the topic from the lecture and/or readings to the primary source using the literacy strategies. Student comments generally focused on the discovery of specific details in the text of the primary source and how it related to something presented earlier in class. In addition, I walked around the classroom and answered specific questions the students had related to the primary source. I also asked higher-level thinking questions to make sure the students were making the necessary connections. Most of these questions focused on cause-effect, compare-contrast, and problem-solving.

I suggest showing students examples of graphic organizers which have been completed by students in the past, specifically examples of good and poor graphic organizers so they will have clear expectations on the type of product to complete the assignment. By raising the bar, I have found most students will work hard to fulfill the expectations since they have a more complete picture of what is expected from them.

Most students also benefit by going through an example or two aloud as a group before they construct a graphic organizer individually or with a peer. This point is especially important when students are using primary sources from the Avalon Project webpage since many of them can involve complex issues. I usually gave students a few minutes to view the primary source online and then we discussed an example as a large group. There was always a student or two who would rise to the occasion and share their group’s analysis for which other students could use to begin their graphic organizers.

Many classrooms now have access to electronic whiteboards, sometimes known as Smartboards or Mimios. The technology enables teachers and students to work interactively with an image projected on a wall from a computer using a LCD projector. In effect, a graphic organizer can be projected to a wall and students can share their findings from a primary source. In addition, the actual text from an online primary source can be viewed on the classroom whiteboard which enables the teacher and students to work interactively with the text from the source. The teacher and/or students can circle, underline, and highlight key points as they analyze what they have read. Most importantly, the technology enables students to comprehend what they have read.

Using the Avalon Project Internet Webpage with Graphic Organizers

Primary sources can include difficult vocabulary words or involve complex issues. Reading strategies can help students more effectively navigate through the source and make sense out of the text. In particular, teachers can use pre-, during-, and post-reading strategies to help facilitate learning with the digital source.

I suggest using a pre-reading strategy before students begin tackling the digital source. Questions can be used to help students activate prior knowledge related to the topic covered in
the primary source. In addition, the teacher can help students understand how the primary source is structured. Finally, the teacher can review complex vocabulary words found in the text.

As soon as students begin reading the digital source, I suggest moving around the classroom to troubleshoot as needed. Most importantly, help students use the graphic organizer as a during-reading strategy. It is critical for students to make the necessary connections involving cause-effect, compare-contrast, and other higher-level thinking models.

During the closure part of the lesson, I suggest using a post-reading strategy so that students can discuss aloud what they have learned from the digital source. Hopefully, students will discuss specific details from the text and how they relate to broader themes in the time period or topic under study. Using this approach, students will more effectively make sense out of digital sources, including those discussed in this article.

**The Whiskey Rebellion: Using a Cause-Effect Chart**

In 1794, the authority of the federal government was challenged by angry farmers in western Pennsylvania. The farmers were outraged at an excise tax on whiskey which threatened their standard of living. President Washington, recognizing the urgency of the situation, led a force of 12,900 volunteer troops to confront the farmers (Woods & Gatewood, 1998). The Avalon Project features a proclamation delivered by President Washington urging the farmers to quit their lawlessness and outlined his justification for taking action against them.

Students can view the proclamation on the Avalon Project webpage by clicking on the “18th Century” link and then clicking on the link labeled “The Whiskey Rebellion-August 7, 1794.” The proclamation by President Washington is an interesting primary source which will give students many insights that would be difficult to attain from a textbook. The proclamation is very detailed. A graphic organizer, such as a cause-effect chart, greatly helps students sift through the source to identify the key points. In this case, determine the causes and effects of the Whiskey Rebellion.

The cause-effect chart instructs students to place the event in a bubble in the middle of the page. I had students write “The Whiskey Rebellion” in the middle of their pages. The chart also has arrows pointing up from the bubble in which my students wrote the causes and arrows pointing down from the bubble where my students identified the effects of the event. Based on students’ findings from the Avalon Project online primary source, I had them identify at least five causes and effects of the Whiskey Rebellion using their cause-effect chart.

President Washington publicly identified the farmers in his proclamation as the source of the disturbance. Farmers, known as Whiskey Boys, had protested the excise tax in a number of ways. For instance, the Whiskey Boys had terrorized federal tax collectors and disrupted federal court proceedings. The farmers had also forced a small group of federal troops to surrender to them (Woods & Gatewood, 1998). President Washington identified the causes in his proclamation by saying:

> The farmers in western Pennsylvania had been intercepting the public officers on the highways, abusing, assaulting, and otherwise ill treating them; by going into their houses in the night, gaining admittance by force, taking away their papers, and committing other outrages, employing for these unwarrantable purposes the agency of armed banditti disguised in such manner as for the most part to escape discovery. (Avalon Project, 2008)

The biggest fear for President Washington was the possibility of the uprising spreading further to other regions of the country at a time...
when the nation was just establishing itself (Woods & Gatewood, 1998). Most troubling were the acts of violence which openly challenged the authority of the young republic. In Bedford, Pennsylvania, Whiskey Boys burned the stables and the hay of a federal tax collector (Hogeland, 2006). As a result, President Washington decided to use language in his proclamation which equated the uprising to treason. He stated “persons in the said western parts of Pennsylvania have at length been hardy enough to perpetrate acts, which I am advised amount to treason, being over acts of levying war against the United States” (Avalon Project, 2008). He also described acts of violence against a marshal who “had been fired upon while in the execution of his duty by a party of armed men, detaining him for some time prisoner” (Avalon Project, 2008). Each of these acts of violence, outlined in the proclamation, gave my students a first-hand account detailing the severity of the situation and insights on the causes of the Whiskey Rebellion.

Due to the mounting crisis, President Washington outlined in his proclamation how he planned to confront those who opposed the authority of the federal government. In particular, the Whiskey Boys who refused to pay taxes and used violence in opposition. President Washington stated “it shall be lawful for the President, if the legislature of the United States shall not be in session, to call forth and employ such numbers of the militia of any state or states most convenient thereto as may be necessary” (Avalon Project, 2008). Interestingly, President Washington did not have any problem finding volunteers who were willing to confront the rebels in western Pennsylvania. In fact, volunteers came from around the country. There were troops from New Jersey, Maryland, Virginia, and even Pennsylvania (Hogeland, 2006). The troops were personally led by President Washington and composed a force bigger than any army he had led during the American Revolution (Woods & Gatewood, 1998).

My students also noticed President Washington had issued a series of public warnings in his proclamation. First, he directly targeted the “Whiskey Boys” advising them to “disperse and retire peaceably” (Avalon Project, 2008). Second, he publicly warned citizens who sympathized with the Whiskey Boys and might consider aiding them saying, “I do moreover warn all persons whomsoever against aiding, abetting, or comforting the perpetrators of the aforesaid treasonable acts” (Avalon Project, 2008).

Finally, President Washington appealed to the citizens’ sense of nationalism. The President said, “The patriotism and firmness of all good citizens are seriously called upon, as occasions may require, to aid in the effectual suppression of so fatal a spirit” (Avalon Project, 2008). Ironically, my students discovered the Whiskey Rebellion had tied the nation closer together and strengthened the authority of the federal government. President Washington’s leadership led to the Whiskey Boys surrendering and to their trial in court, proving the rule of law in the young nation (Woods & Gatewood, 1998). As a result, my students had identified the effects of the Whiskey Rebellion based on their findings from the online primary source.

**The Alien and Sedition Acts: Using a Concept Map**

During the Presidency of John Adams, the United States was confronted with a possible war with France. Vessels were seized by the French, and American sailors were taken prisoner (Conlin, 1997). In 1798, President Adams sent diplomats to negotiate the dispute with France. The French sent word through three agents, known as X, Y, and Z, that they would only negotiate if the United States would pay a loan to France and pay bribes to French officials (Woods & Gatewood, 1998). The United States refused to give into the demands which led to a great deal of anger toward the French throughout the country and an undeclared war took place on the seas (Conlin, 1997). The Federalist Party used the opportuni-
ty to pass legislation, known as the Alien and Sedition Acts, which limited freedom of expression and targeted immigrants who may not be loyal to the United States.

Students can view the Alien and Sedition Acts on the Avalon Project webpage by clicking on “18th Century Documents” and then clicking on a link titled “The Alien and Sedition Acts: 1798.” The Alien and Sedition Acts gave my students insights into the hysteria the young nation was experiencing in 1798. My students connected their prior knowledge of the time period from lectures and readings to the details presented in these pieces of legislation. By using the concept map as a graphic organizer, my students were able to make sense out of the primary sources related to the Alien and Sedition Acts.

Concept maps serve much like outlines but are visual representations of a topic. In this case, I had students label the circle in the middle of their concept map “The Presidency of John Adams.” I also had my students label two more circles which branched out from the main circle. Each of these smaller circles represented subcategories. The first circle was labeled “Alien Act” and circle two was labeled “Sedition Act.” I then instructed my students to identify at least five specific items they learned by reading the Alien Act and put this information in smaller circles which branched out from the “Alien Act” circle. The students did the same to represent what they learned by reading the Sedition Act online.

The Alien and Sedition Acts resulted from a great deal of fear raging across the country in 1798. A possible war with France was on the horizon which convinced legislators to take action (Woods & Gatewood, 1998). The Alien Act changed the number of residency years needed to qualify for American citizenship. Previously, immigrants could be naturalized after five years. The Alien Act changed the number to fifteen years. Federalists were motivated to change the residency requirement since the majority of immigrants tended to support the Republican Party. The growing tension toward immigrants gave Federalists the opportunity to capitalize on the discrimination many Americans had toward immigrants (Conlin, 1997).

Many Americans felt immigrants were dangerous to the security of the United States (Conlin, 1997). The Alien Act targeted immigrants who threatened “the danger of the public peace or safety,” and if necessary, they could be “removed out of the territory of the United States” (Avalon Project, 2008). Interestingly, President Adams never used the authority given to him by the Alien Act to deport immigrants. However, the legislation did have an impact. In fact, there were many people of French descent who left the United States in 1798 due to increasing hostilities toward them (Woods & Gatewood, 1998).

The Sedition Act also had a profound impact on the psyche of the nation by making it illegal to speak or act out against government officials, including members of Congress and the President of the United States (Woods & Gatewood, 1998). If someone was found guilty of violating the Sedition Act, the law stated the individual “shall be punished by a fine not exceeding five thousand dollars, and by imprisonment during a term not less than six months nor exceeding five years” (Avalon Project, 2008). Therefore, the liberty of citizens freely speaking out against their government had been severely limited due to a possible larger-scale war with France.

Across the country, the Sedition Act had an immediate impact. The Federalists used the law to target Republicans and their supporters. Republican newspaper editors were singled out. At least five pro-Republican newspaper editors were indicted by the federal government. John Burk, who served as an editor for a New York newspaper, was fined one thousand dollars and imprisoned for four months in an unheated jail cell because he spoke out against the Federalist Party (Ferling, 1992). Actions like this enabled my high school students to more fully understand the mindset of Americans in 1798, including the fierce political ten-
sion between the Federalists and Republicans. Most importantly, the concept map helped my students visually organize the information they had accessed using the Alien and Sedition Act primary sources found online.

The Truman Doctrine: Using a Compare-Contrast Chart

In 1947, World War II was still fresh on the minds of Americans. Unfortunately, the United States faced a new threat from the spread of communism and the influence of the Soviet Union. The nations of Greece and Turkey were struggling to hold back increasing pressures from communists. President Truman’s administration recognized the need to aid both countries and prevent the Soviet Union from gaining more influence in the region. As a result, President Truman urged Congress to give Greece and Turkey $400 million in emergency aid to help each nation economically and prevent communism from spreading there (Woods & Gatewood, 1998).

The new policy established by President Truman sought to contain the spread of communism and aid nations in their efforts to oppose the Soviet Union; it became known as the Truman Doctrine. In March 1947, President Truman delivered a speech to a joint session of Congress where he introduced the Truman Doctrine to the American people. Students can read the speech by clicking on the “20th Century Documents” link which leads to a link titled “Truman Doctrine; 1947.” I had my high school students create a Venn diagram on which they compared and contrasted the Truman Doctrine to the Bush Doctrine. By utilizing this literacy strategy, students connected their prior knowledge of a contemporary event — the Bush Doctrine — to a prior event in our nation’s history — the Truman Doctrine.

A Venn diagram is organized with two overlapping circles. In this case, one circle was labeled “Truman Doctrine” and the other circle was labeled “Bush Doctrine.” My students wrote down the similarities between both doctrines in the space where the two circles overlapped. Differences between the two doctrines were identified and placed in the appropriate spaces where the circles did not overlap. As a result, my students were involved in higher-level thinking as they compared and contrasted these two critical foreign policy initiatives in our nation’s history.

In President Truman’s speech, my students identified the communists as the enemy to Greece, Turkey, and the United States. The President stated, “The very existence of the Greek state is today threatened by the terrorist activities of several thousand armed men, led by Communists, who defy the government’s authority at a number of points, particularly along the northern boundaries” (Avalon Project, 2008). Most of my students immediately recognized there was a different enemy identified in the Truman Doctrine than in the Bush Doctrine. In 1947, the enemy consisted of communists worldwide, and today we are fighting a global war against extremist Islamic terrorist organizations.

President Truman also outlined the need to contain and deter communist aggression by economically supporting countries like Greece and Turkey who were in a paramount struggle for their existence. Yet, there is no mention that the United States should take direct military action against the communist threat. President Truman said, “I believe that it must be the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures” (Avalon Project, 2008). Again, there is no language declaring the need for immediate military action. My students noticed that the Truman Doctrine differed from the Bush Doctrine on how the United States will determine how to exert its military force. In fact, President Bush outlined a new type of foreign policy initiative by calling for preventive military strikes when necessary to combat the war on terror. In a 2002 graduation speech at West Point, President Bush stated, “The war on terror will not be won on the defensive, and we must take the...
battle to the enemy, disrupt his plans, and confront the worst threats before they emerge” (White House, 2008). As a result, the Bush Doctrine moved American foreign policy from a defensive to offensive position which led to the invasion of Iraq in search of weapons of mass destruction before they could potentially be used against Americans. In contrast, the Truman Doctrine reacted to communist aggression. Specifically, it led to American involvement in Korea and Vietnam to prevent the spread of communism.

Although there are several distinct differences between the Truman and Bush Doctrines, there are some interesting similarities which students identified through their analysis. For example, President Truman and President Bush each argued his foreign policy was a moral issue. In President Truman’s speech, he contrasted the democratic form of government to communistic regimes by stating:

One way of life is based upon the will of the minority, and is distinguished by free institutions, representative government, free elections, guarantees of individual liberty, freedom of speech and religion, and freedom from political oppression. The second way of life is based upon the will of a minority forcibly imposed upon the majority. It relies upon terror and oppression, a controlled press and radio; fixed elections, and the suppression of personal freedoms. (Avalon Project, 2008)

Years later, following September 11, 2001, President Bush stated, “We are in a conflict between good and evil, and America will call evil by its name” (White House, 2008). Each of these statements clearly demonstrated to my students how Presidential leadership, during a time of crisis, can formulate public opinion and rally support for a crisis facing America abroad. In particular, my students saw how each President justified his foreign policy initiative by appealing to moral reasoning.

During the Cold War and the War on Terror, the rest of the world looked to the United States for leadership. Both President Truman and President Bush reminded the American people that the entire free world was looking to them for leadership. For example, President Truman said, “The free peoples of the world look to us for support in maintaining their freedoms” (Avalon Project, 2008). In 2002, President Bush described the role the United States must play in the world saying, “Wherever we carry it, the American flag will stand not only for our power, but for freedom” and “building this just peace is America’s opportunity and America’s duty” (White House, 2008). The enemy today may be different, yet my students recognized how the Truman and Bush Doctrine similarly asked the American people to demonstrate leadership to the world in a time of crisis. In summary, my students were forced to contemplate the similarities and differences between these different visions for American foreign policy by using a compare-contrast chart.

Recommendations

Students will sometimes fail to make the necessary connections of what they have read in the primary source to the broader objectives for the time period or topic under study. I suggest developing a series of questions before class to help students make these connections. In particular, questions using Bloom’s taxonomy will force students to think more deeply about the subject matter in the source. I usually had several higher-level thinking questions I asked as I moved around the classroom to see if students were making the necessary connections. In addition, these questions were used as a post-reading intervention during the closure part of the lesson. I specifically fashioned questions which fostered critical thinking, for example, comparing-contrasting, supporting an opinion with evidence, and explaining or defending a position.
Conclusion

High school students today have access to primary sources more than ever. The Avalon Project Internet webpage provides students with sources which would have been difficult to attain in the past. American History teachers can use literacy strategies to help students make sense out of the information they are reading online. In particular, graphic organizers are an effective strategy to help students organize the information they are presented with when viewing primary sources on the Internet.

Jonassen, Carr, and Yueh (1998) believe students using technology “should be responsible for recognizing and judging patterns of information and then organizing it, while the computer system should perform calculations, store, and retrieve information” (p. 15). The framework presented here changes the usage of the Internet in the history classroom from a lower-level thinking activity to a higher-level thinking activity. In the past, students “surfed the web” and recited what they had learned on various historical topics. By using graphic organizers, students are forced to think more deeply about the information they access from a primary source online.

The Internet will continue to transform how teaching and learning occurs in the high school history classroom. Lectures and readings will continue to provide students with the background information necessary for students to understand the primary sources they will read online. The opportunity to view primary sources online allows students to use their prior knowledge on a historical topic and apply it in a meaningful way. Most importantly, students will be reading sources which are much more interesting than most textbooks and will be able to organize their thoughts using proven literacy strategies.

References

Website Listed

Avalon Project
http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/avalon.htm

About the Author

Scott Scheuerell is an Assistant Professor in the Education Division at Loras College in Dubuque, Iowa, and a former high school social studies teacher. Educational technology in social studies is his primary research focus. He has had articles on educational technology in social studies education published in *The History Teacher* and *Social Education*. In addition, he has made several presentations on the integration of technology and social studies at the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) and Society for Information Technology and Teacher Education (SITE) annual conferences. He also enjoys integrating technology in his teacher education courses and collaborates with local schools on projects to integrate technology in social studies.

Primary Contact Information
Mailing Address: Loras College, 1450 Alta Vista, Box 248, Dubuque, IA 52001; Phone: (563) 588-7201
Email: scott.scheuerell@loras.edu