Primary Sources in the Social Studies Classroom: Historical Inquiry with Book Backdrops

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One of the main Common Core Requirements focuses on student use of authentic subject area skills. These skills are those used by professionals in the academic field of study. It is important that students develop and use appropriate historical thinking skills in the classroom. Historical skills include ability to read, write, speak, listen, and complete research based projects, and to appropriately analyze primary and secondary documents to make conclusions about what has occurred during a historical event. The implementation of instructional techniques requiring students to think like a historian are widely supported in the literature and are largely focused on the development of student historical literacy. This article examines how combining the use of children’s literature and primary sources can be used to construct a lesson promoting historical inquiry in the secondary classroom.

Key words: historical literacy, common core, primary documents, children’s literature, document analysis, inquiry learning

Introduction

Trying to engage secondary students in the social studies classroom can be challenging. This challenge exists largely because students often regard social studies as one the most boring subjects they encounter while at school (Chiodo & Byford, 2006). The need to develop instructional techniques that better engage students has led to the push for the inclusion of classroom assignments requiring active student engagement. One example of these activities, the book backdrop (Library of Congress, 2010), requires students to analyze primary and secondary documents with a piece of children’s literature used as a background essay. Such an activity is designed to promote student engagement. The implementation of such an activity helps teachers deal with the implementation of the Common Core State Standards Initiatives (CCSS) (2012). Common Core State Standards have been adopted in 43 out of 50 states (CCSS, 2012). With this adoption, the American educational system is undergoing a change in the types of skills that will be assessed in the classroom. The set of standards has been created in order to ensure “that all students graduate from high school with the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in college, career, and life, regardless of where they live,” (CCSS, para. 1). One portion of these standards is designed to assess the types of skills students need to develop in order to be successful in English/Language Arts and History/Social Studies. The Common Core standards helps students develop their ability to read, write, speak, listen, and complete research based projects; also, it promotes student use of field specific professional language (CCSS, 2012). In essence, students are being asked to use 21st century thinking skills, which require students to make educated arguments based upon factual information and communicate those arguments in an authentic way.

With one of the Common Core requirements focused on use of authentic subject area skills, students need to use appropriate historical thinking strategies. Instructional techniques requiring students to think like a historian are supported widely in the literature and are focused
largely on the development of student historical literacy (Barton & Levstik, 2003; Martin & Wineburg, 2008; Monte-Sano, 2011; Vansledright, 2002). The types of skills needed to engage in historical thinking include understanding distortions in historical texts, determining author and textual bias, identifying exaggeration within the text, identifying the ideology of the author, and examining the impact of partisanship on the meaning of the text (Vansledright, 2004). Using primary sources is strongly advocated as a means of completing historical inquiry and analysis (Fragnoli, 2006; Waring & Robinson, 2010), as this allows students to participate in the construction of historical knowledge (Martin & Wineburg, 2008). Historical inquiry grants teachers to the ability to break the pattern of overly relying on the textbook and promotes student synthesis of information and engages them in an authentic research activity (Whelan, 1997).

Implementing primary source analysis in the classroom permits students to engage in historical investigations by analyzing documents from a particular time period in which a historical event has taken place. This analysis offers students a framework for identifying a relationship between historical evidence and the construction of the events that took place in the past (Barton & Levstik, 2003). By engaging students in historical inquiry, they are able to develop appropriate historical thinking skills and are able to understand the underlying essential facts, concepts, and generalizations of historical knowledge (Lee, Doolittle & Hicks, 2006). The exposure to primary sources pushes students to ground their experiences in real world concepts and to realize multiple sources from the same time period can have conflicting accounts of what actually took place (Morgan & Rasinski, 2012). By rooting social studies instruction in the analysis of primary documents, students are required to constantly interrogate documents and their validity (Vansledright, 2004), engaging them in true historical interpretation (Hicks, Doolittle, & Lee, 2004). Engaging students in this type of analysis also provides students with a sense of autonomy, encouraging students to potentially develop an intrinsic motivation to analyze further documents (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Today’s online primary source databases grant instructors the ability to not only find previously obscure primary sources but also to implement them into the classroom with ease, allowing students a firsthand account of historical events (Bolick, 2006). Online document repositories provide teachers with a vast repository of primary sources, including: pictures, maps, cartoons, video, music, and speeches, etc. With access to such quality primary document sources and analysis tools, teachers have the ability to create learner centered experiences with which they facilitate knowledge, rather than dispense it (Lee, 2002). There are also a variety of other Internet-based resources that offer access to free books, speeches, and other texts enabling the teacher to increase utilization of historical texts in the classroom (Berson & Berson, 2013).

Using digital primary sources is a distinct advantage in the classroom as compared to physical primary sources. Some of the advantages of digital primary sources include: the ease in which they can be manipulated, their ability to be searched, and the flexibility of their use (Lee, 2002). While the ease of finding sources is truly beneficial, the simplicity of digital primary sources modifications is particularly useful. Physically editing primary sources to increase the focus of the text, to simplify language and syntax, and to make the presentation of a document more visually appealing can greatly aid in the successful implementation of primary sources (Wineburg & Martin, 2009). The manipulation of sources can make sometimes archaic and unappealing primary sources more palatable to students with low reading abilities, while simultaneously allowing teachers to make more explicit connections between the documents and
specific content standards. The skillful and purposeful ability to select primary sources for classroom learning is integral to the successful use of primary sources in the social studies classroom.

While the implementation of primary source activities may seem daunting at times, students of all ages and abilities have the cognitive capacity to participate in historical inquiry (Fertig, 2005). Even when dealing with barriers such as lack of prior knowledge, lack of analytical experience, or a lack of confidence, teachers can help students participate in historical inquiry. Scaffolding techniques such as analysis sheets, probing questions, and constant teacher monitoring can help students overcome deficiencies in critical thinking skills and help build student confidence. Requiring students to participate in historical inquiry permits teachers to meet the demands of Common Core State Standards. The use of these standards also pushes teachers to move away from the lecture method of instruction, which if used in excess can actually hamper a student’s ability to learn (Barton, 2005; Whelan, 1997). With digital primary sources a social studies teacher can address the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) goal of using technology in a transformative and powerful way (NCSS, 2010). The implementation of digital primary sources has the ability to dramatically alter how social studies instruction is handled, as it provides a view of history that is tentative and malleable (Lee, 2002).

The use of primary sources in the classroom has affected student perceptions of social studies instruction. After being presented with the opportunity to analyze history through primary source documents, many students indicate they feel frustrated, and irritated with the way history has been presented to them in the past (Davis, 1997). With appropriate questioning and discussion, teachers have the power to better engage students (Barton, 2005).

Below is an example of a book backdrop lesson that pushes students to use historical inquiry to analyze a set of primary documents. This lesson, designed for American government and politics courses, serves to demonstrate the struggle many have faced in their pursuit of their civil rights and liberties. It serves also to demonstrate how this struggle is not confined to a particular time period in American history.

**Framework**

An effective way of engaging students in historical inquiry is through the use of an activity the Library of Congress refers to as a book backdrop (Library of Congress, 2010). While a book backdrop can be implemented in any grade level with appropriate scaffolding, the framework provided here is best used with secondary students. A book backdrop activity generally centers around a piece of children’s literature that either focuses explicitly on a historical event or focuses on content that can be tied to other social studies themes. A book backdrop requires students to take information learned from the literature selection to analyze a variety of primary and secondary sources. This is done in order to answer a broad question regarding the topic of study covered by the selected piece of literature. The implementation of a book backdrop activity can be implemented in three steps: the reading of the literature selection to the class, the analyzing of primary and secondary documents, and the writing of a culminating essay.

The first step in the implementation of a book backdrop lesson begins with the teacher reading the selected literature aloud to the class. When using a piece of children’s literature, it is important to show students the illustrations within the book, as they can offer appropriate scaffolding and context for understanding of the text. The text should provide students with
enough context and background information to help them gain a detailed understanding of the
topic to be studied. It also should be open enough to allow students to explore how a historical
event took place.

Step two of the book backdrop activity requires the instructor introduce students to the
inquiry task. The task should revolve around historical inquiry, requiring students to answer an
overarching question by utilizing information from various primary and secondary documents
that revolve around the topic broached in the literature. The types of sources used for book
backdrop activity vary, but generally include political cartoons, photographs, journal entries,
government reports, tables, and graphs. Instructors supply students with a summary of the types
of documents they will encounter and then provide them with the question that must be answered
during their analysis.

Once students are familiar with their task, the instructor ensures they are appropriately
engaging with and analyzing the sources. Providing an analysis sheet will guide students’
inquiry. There are a variety of exceptional analysis sheets available for student analysis of
primary documents, for example through the Library of Congress (Teacher’s Guides and
Analysis Tool, n.d.) and the National Archives (Document Analysis Worksheets, n.d.). These
analysis sheets emphasize the need for students to move beyond the basic recognition of factual
information and into the creation of inferences, a determination of the main idea of the
document, and brief accounts as to how the information from the document can be used in a
culminating essay. The analysis process helps students organize their factual information in a
way that will aid in the corroboration and synthesis of information from the documents.

The analysis sheets first require students to source the documents with which they are
interacting. Sourcing a document requires determining the author of the document, its title, the
publisher, the date published, and whether the document is a primary or secondary source.
Understanding source information provides additional contextual information, which students
can use to identify bias in the work and identify how the document fits in with the other
documents in the set. The document sheet included with this lesson has been adapted from
various sources and begins by requiring students to restate the overarching question they are
supposed to be answering as they analyze the documents before them. The repetition of writing
the question for each document ensures students are analyzing the documents and they are
looking only for information that will help them accomplish their task.

Once students have appropriately sourced the document, they find a number of facts from
the document to support their answer to the overarching question. These facts must come
explicitly from the source, as the goal is to ensure students are able to use source material when
creating their argument. After students have identified the factual information from the
document, they make inferences or arguments regarding information within the document.
These inferences must be based upon the information found in the text and help to answer the
overarching question. When students use the factual information within the document to
construct their arguments and make inferences from the information provided, they are engaging
in the same types of activities in which historians participate, thus allowing them construct their
own historical knowledge.

After students have completed the process of identifying facts and making inferences
from their documents, it is important for them to identify the main idea of each document.
Identifying the main idea of each document will help them organize their documents in a
coherent fashion when participating in the pre-planning stage of writing their culminating essay. Students should then briefly state how they plan to use the information from each document in their essay. This helps students begin to plan the framework of their essay.

In order to complete the analysis sheet portion of the book backdrop activity students place each document into an analytical category. An analytical category is a component of a student’s potential thesis statement. It may be beneficial to scaffold this portion of the activity for students who are new to the process of historical inquiry. Providing students with predetermined analytical categories can be used to implement the scaffolding. The rigor of this portion of the activity can be increased for more advanced students by requiring that each student create their own categories.

An analysis sheet is completed for each document, providing students with ample information to write their culminating essay. Using an analysis sheet supplies students with an excellent framework for how to engage in historical thinking. With repeated practice using this model, students can develop an internal framework for coming to mature conclusions independent of an analysis sheet. Evaluation of student analysis sheets can be both a formative and summative. Checking students’ progress and ensuring work is being completed in class allows the instructor to formatively verify that work is being done. To use the analysis sheet in a more summative manner verify that student responses on the analysis sheet were correct and focused on the topic being covered.

In the final step of the book backdrop activity students produce a culminating essay. This summative assessment allows teacher verification of students’ understanding of the content goals for the lesson. This essay focuses on the topic presented at the beginning of the book backdrop assignment and use information gathered from the document analysis sheets to form a rational and cohesive argument. In order to anchor this paper to the documents analyzed throughout the assignment, students specifically cite which document they are referencing when framing their argument. This piece of writing is an example of how students can use primary and secondary documents to construct their own understanding of a historical event, thinking like a historian. Having students write an essay, rather than answer multiple-choice questions on a test, grants another opportunity to engage in an authentic learning experience. For guidance regarding how to grade this type of essay, please see the grading rubric provided in the “other resources” section of this paper.

Table 1: Document Analysis Sheet

1. What question must be answered when writing your essay?
2. Source Information:
   - Author of document (This can be an organization or person):
   - Title of document (This will be found in the source information):
   - Publisher of the document:
   - Date of document:
   - Primary or secondary Source? How do you know?
3. List 5-7 Facts found in the document. Please make sure they are substantial facts and not just information written down to fulfill the requirements.
4. List 3-5 inferences (educated guesses) you can make about the document based upon the information you listed as facts above.
5. In one sentence describe the main idea of the document.
6. How does this information help us answer the question that must be addressed in the essay?
7. What analytical category does this document fit into and why?

**Lesson Procedure**

In order to understand the procedures of this type of instructional technique, it may be helpful to see the framework of an actual lesson. The lesson herein looks at the American concept of civil rights and civil liberties, a required topic of student in all levels of American government. The literature selection for this activity is Dr. Seuss’s *Horton Hears a Who* (Seuss, 1954). This lesson follows the framework discussed above and begins with reading of *Horton Hears a Who* to the class as a whole. Once students have been presented with the piece of literature, they are given the following summary regarding the documents found in the assignment.

*Horton Hears a Who* revolves around an elephant who has discovered a spec that has voices emanating from it. While Horton is unable to see the being who is speaking these words, Horton feels that it has now become his responsibility to protect that spec from harm. While trying to protect his spec, Horton is confronted by other animals who think that he is crazy and they go out of their way to destroy the spec. Horton defiantly asserts that they must protect the life on the spec because “a persons a person, no matter how small” (Seuss, 1954, p. 6).

Throughout this children’s story Horton fights for the rights of the Whos and attempts to ensure that their voice is heard and that their right to equality and their right to exist are protected. These same themes can be found in the founding ideals of the American government. These concepts are so important that they have been forever preserved in the Declaration of Independence, which asserts our right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. They are also found in the Bill of Rights, which preserves such freedoms as freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, freedom of the press, freedom of religion, and the freedom to petition our government.

Through the analysis of the following documents and using contextual information from *Horton Hears a Who*, you are tasked to answer the question “how do our rights protect a person, even if they are small?”

After presenting the task and having the literature read to them, students begin with their analysis of the documents. Each document in this inquiry assignment relates, in some way, to the freedoms Horton is trying to preserve as he saves the Whos in Whoville. Documents 1 and 2 ask the reader to analyze the protections of 13th, 14th, and 15th amendments, while also challenging the effectiveness of those measures. Documents three and four ask the reader to analyze the importance of freedom of assembly and freedom of the press, while challenging them to look at the validity of those rights. Documents five and six look at the concepts of freedom and rights in the United States, while analyzing the hypocrisy that emanates from those rights. Documents seven and eight discuss the need for specific rights for minorities while also dismissing the inequalities that exist. Documents nine and 10 highlight the dangers that can come from exercising freedom of speech and how the lack of that freedom can hamper the development of a nation.

Once familiar with the documents provided, student analyze each document with the document analysis sheet looking at how the American government protects people, no matter how small. In this activity, students are presented with multiple perspectives about a citizen’s
right to these civil rights and liberties. The use of multiple perspectives requires students to analyze deeply the information they are presented with throughout the lesson.

To scaffold student understanding of each document, comprehension and analysis questions are added. The questions included for each document are provided in order to ensure students are developing an understanding of key terms and ideas, to help them develop a rational argument when completing the culminating essay. Once students have completed their analysis of each document and have answered all comprehension and analysis questions, it is time to move on to the writing of the culminating essay. This essay provides the instructor with the opportunity to collect evidence as to a student’s understanding of both civil rights and civil liberties, while assessing student ability to conduct historical inquiry.

Conclusion

With an increased focus on ensuring students have the ability to critically analyze complex systems and information, it is important instructors use instructional techniques to develop these skills. Requiring students to read complex texts and develop arguments based upon factual information will help students pass increasingly rigorous standardized tests and also will prepare students for the increased demands of both college and their future careers.

With a lack of barriers to the gathering of primary sources, and the ease in manipulating documents for classroom use, teachers need to introduce these inquiry activities at all levels. As Bruce Vansledright (2004) notes, persistence is needed to effectively promote historical thinking in the social studies classroom. Issues with teacher and student buy-in are bound to arise as schools look for a way to fulfill the requirements of Common Core State Standards, but these barriers can be overcome through the use of activities like the one discussed throughout this article.

References


**Web-based References**


Appendix A: Document Based Questions (DBQ) Documents

Document 1

AMENDMENT XIII
Passed by Congress January 31, 1865. Ratified December 6, 1865.

Note: A portion of Article IV, section 2, of the Constitution was superseded by the 13th amendment.

Section 1.
Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.

Section 2.
Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.

AMENDMENT XIV
Passed by Congress June 13, 1866. Ratified July 9, 1868.

Note: Article I, section 2, of the Constitution was modified by section 2 of the 14th amendment.

Section 1.
All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside. No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.

Section 2.
Representatives shall be apportioned among the several States according to their respective numbers, counting the whole number of persons in each State, excluding Indians not taxed. But when the right to vote at any election for the choice of electors for President and Vice-President of the United States, Representatives in Congress, the Executive and Judicial officers of a State, or the members of the Legislature thereof, is denied to any of the male inhabitants of such State, being twenty-one years of age,* and citizens of the United States, or in any way abridged, except for participation in rebellion, or other crime, the basis of representation therein shall be reduced in the proportion which the number of such male citizens shall bear to the whole number of male citizens twenty-one years of age in such State.

Section 3.
No person shall be a Senator or Representative in Congress, or elector of President and Vice-President, or hold any office, civil or military, under the United States, or under any State, who, having previously taken an oath, as a member of Congress, or as an officer of the United States,
or as a member of any State legislature, or as an executive or judicial officer of any State, to support the Constitution of the United States, shall have engaged in insurrection or rebellion against the same, or given aid or comfort to the enemies thereof. But Congress may by a vote of two-thirds of each House, remove such disability.

Section 4.
The validity of the public debt of the United States, authorized by law, including debts incurred for payment of pensions and bounties for services in suppressing insurrection or rebellion, shall not be questioned. But neither the United States nor any State shall assume or pay any debt or obligation incurred in aid of insurrection or rebellion against the United States, or any claim for the loss or emancipation of any slave; but all such debts, obligations and claims shall be held illegal and void.

Section 5.
The Congress shall have the power to enforce, by appropriate legislation, the provisions of this article.

AMENDMENT XV
Passed by Congress February 26, 1869. Ratified February 3, 1870.

Section 1.
The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude.--

Section 2.
The Congress shall have the power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.

1. How did the 13th, 14th and 15th amendments protect those within the government?
2. How are these amendments a reflection of how to protect those in need?
3. What can occur because we fail to protect all people within our country? Why are these failures such a negative to our country as a whole?

Appendix B
Document 2

Civil Rights
The Harmonious and Enthusiastic Mass Meeting at Halcyon Hall Last Monday Evening
Speeches by Messrs. Green, Sweet and Hamilton- The resolutions and a Letter from the Hon.
Fred. Douglass

Quite a crowd of ladies and gentlemen assembled at Halcyon Hall last Monday evening to take some action to regard to, and hear discussed the recent infamous decision of the Supreme Court in declaring the sections of Sumner’s Civil Rights bill unconstitutional that directly interest our people. R.A. Bolden was elected chairman, and on taking his seat said
“we did not wish anything more than the laws which protected the white citizens do for them, and we will be satisfied with the same common law if it governs all alike. The purposes and reasons for passing the Civil Rights law he glanced at, and said that while the very act of our having to apply for a special law was a disgrace to the American people, still what we do must be done judiciously…

1. Is the assertion laws that protected White citizens would be as effective as protecting African Americans? Use information from both this document and document 1 to answer this question.
2. How would needing to pass specific laws to protect African American citizens be a disgrace to the American system as stated in this document?
3. How does this document show American’s were sometimes unwilling to help those in need?

Appendix C
Document 3
(1920). [A group of women carrying signs against America's support of the English against the Irish, and burning a flag(?) on the sidewalk. Library of Congress.]
1. How does this document display a citizen’s right to freedom of speech?
2. Is this an effective form of displaying ones freedoms?
3. How would an act like this protect one’s rights to protect those in need?

Appendix D
Document 4
1. How does getting news from multiple sources help Americans?
2. How does freedom of the press protect our individual freedoms?
3. How does freedom of the press protect those who are being oppressed?

**Appendix E**

**Document 5**


Well, children, where there is so much racket there must be something out of kilter. I think that 'twixt the negroes of the South and the women at the North, all talking about rights, the white men will be in a fix pretty soon. But what's all this here talking about?

That man over there says that women need to be helped into carriages, and lifted over ditches, and to have the best place everywhere. Nobody ever helps me into carriages, or over mud-puddles, or gives me any best place! And ain't I a woman? Look at me! Look at my arm! I have ploughed and planted, and gathered into barns, and no man could head me! And ain't I a woman? I could work as much and eat as much as a man - when I could get it - and bear the lash as well! And ain't I a woman? I have borne thirteen children, and seen most all sold off to
slavery, and when I cried out with my mother's grief, none but Jesus heard me! And ain't I a 
woman?

Then they talk about this thing in the head; what's this they call it? [member of audience 
whispers, "intellect"] That's it, honey. What's that got to do with women's rights or negroes' 
rights? If my cup won't hold but a pint, and yours holds a quart, wouldn't you be mean not to 
let me have my little half measure full?

Then that little man in black there, he says women can't have as much rights as men, 'cause 
Christ wasn't a woman! Where did your Christ come from? Where did your Christ come from? 
From God and a woman! Man had nothing to do with Him.

If the first woman God ever made was strong enough to turn the world upside down all alone, 
these women together ought to be able to turn it back, and get it right side up again! And now 
they is asking to do it, the men better let them.

Obliged to you for hearing me, and now old Sojourner ain't got nothing more to say.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1.</th>
<th>How does this document display hypocrisy that exists when protecting certain citizens?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>How does this document help display the power of freedom of speech?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>How does this document mirror the message in Horton Hears a Who?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Appendix F**
Document 6


1. What does this document emphasize?
2. Why is the date 1776 important?
3. How does the message of 1776 impact American rights, especially those of the oppressed?

Appendix G

Document 7


OUR CIVIL RIGHTS
By Frank J. Webb, Jr.

The surest way to prevent seditions is to take away the matter of them; for if there be fuel prepared, it is hard to tell from whence the spark shall come that shall set it on fire.- Lord Bacon
Seated almost under the shadow of our nation’s capitol, with Howard University at arm’s length, and Charles Sumner’s picture over my desk, my mind naturally reverts to my race in the far distant Southland, where my kindred and my all find home and shelter, and in which I expect to live and die. With those thoughts in my mind it is but natural that my subject is as selected.

One can scarcely comprehend how our civil rights are abridged and denied till he has dwelt even for a day in the free balmy air of Indiana, or among the freedom-loving patriots of Ohio. Here we have no separate coaches, or separate theater seats; the hotels are free from colorphobia; a man can sit in the finest hotel in America and order what he likes, although his skin be as black as the ink that prints this page; and in public places it is as much as franchise is worth to make distinction.

1. How does this document emphasize the point that a person is a person, no matter how small?
2. How well does the information in this document align with the previous documents?

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**Appendix H**

**Document 8**


Right to Vote.

Washington, D.C., Sept. 17- Emphasizing, the importance of the ballot as the basis of American citizenship, the National Race Congress of America, is preparing its program for its fourth annual-or “Suffrage Session” which convenes in this city at the Metropolitan Baptist Church, 12th and R. Streets, Northwest beginning Tuesday, October 7th, and continuing through the 11th. Early announcement of the details will be made.

“The right to vote and to be voted for is the first of rights,” says the National Race Congress. “It is the vital principal of self-government and individual liberty. The ballot marks the difference between the citizen and the serf. Without the ballot the Colored American is powerless to contend for right and justice and civil equality; with the ballot he is all-powerful to act in defense of every lawful privilege.”

1. How does the right to vote empower a citizen?
2. How does the right to vote change a country? Is this a good or bad change?
Appendix I

Document 9

The Alien Act, July 6, 1798; Fifth Congress; Enrolled Acts and Resolutions; General Records of the United States Government; Record Group 11; National Archives

1. Why is a document like this dangerous for a society?

2. How can this document prevent equality within a society?

Appendix J: Essay Rubric and Outline

This rubric represents the required expectations in order to receive appropriate credit for your research essay. This project requires you to use information from your documents and literature in order to construct an understanding of the topic being studied. For this essay, you will need to use information from at least half of the documents provided in order to construct
your argument. The essay must be on the topic assigned at the beginning of the lesson or your essay will not be graded.

**Format**: The essay must be typed in 12 point Times New Roman font, double spaced, it must be at least 5 paragraphs in length (each paragraph must be 5-7 sentences in length or you will lose points), it must contain a cover page and it must contain parenthetical citations

**Focus**: The essay must address the question posed at the beginning of the essay. If the essay is not on topic, you will also lose points in the support category due to the fact that the supporting information will also be off topic

**Support**: You must use information from the documents to support your argument regarding the topic of the essay. If the information supports a different topic or if you do not use information from the documents to support your answers, you will lose points in this category. You are required to parenthetically cite each source used within their essay.

**Mechanics**: Because this is a work of academic writing, the mechanical components of writing such as grammar, sentence structure, and spelling are all important. You will lose a half point for every grammatical error found within the paper.

**Organization**: Writing must have a logical flow that progresses seamlessly from one topic to the next. You should organize your paper so that there is appropriate structure so that the reader can easily follow the topic being discussed in the paper.

Below are some organizational tips to help you write your essay:

**Introductory paragraph**: In the introductory paragraph you are introducing the topic that will be discussed in the paper. You should include the following information in their introductory paragraph to make it easy for the reader to follow the content of the essay.

- **Hook/Grabber** — This is the first sentence of the body paragraph and is designed to engage the reader and draw them into your work
- **Background information** — There should be a few sentences in the introductory paragraph that provide contextual and background information about the topic being discussed in the text.
- **Thesis Statement** — The thesis statement provides a roadmap for the reader. The thesis statement lays out what information you will use to support the main idea of the question being addressed within the work.
- **Transition statement** — The transition statement helps students transition from the introduction paragraph to the body of the essay.

**Body paragraphs**: The body paragraph is the meat of the essay and must contain sufficient detail in order for the reader to obtain the appropriate knowledge needed to understand the question being addressed in the essay. The body paragraph should contain:

- **Claim** — The claim is the first sentence of a body paragraph and is designed to set the topic for that specific body paragraph.
- **Factual Statement(s)** — The factual statement is based upon information directly found in the source material. These factual statements should be directly tied to answering the question being posed in the essay.
- **Argument Statement(s)** — The argument statement is an extension of thought based upon the factual statement. Students will make argument statements to help answer the question being posed in the essay and to show independent understanding of the factual concepts.
Conclusion Paragraph: The purpose of the conclusion paragraph is to summarize and close out the essay. The conclusion paragraph should contain:

- A restatement of the thesis
- A restatement of the basic argument
- A good concluding line

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