HOW TO DO RESEARCH

PRIMARY SOURCE UNIT

GRADE LEVELS: 4-12

CREATED BY

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RE:SOURCE

HOW TO USE THIS UNIT

This How To Do Research Unit Guide provides a lesson-to-lesson foundation for teaching:

- What primary sources are
- Real vs. fake information (evaluating sources)
- Document analysis
- Different ways to obtain information
- How to formulate research questions
- How to find answers to research questions
- The hows and whys of citations (annotated bibliography)

By the time students get to high school, they should have a basic understanding of how to effectively do research. Considering that there are so many steps involved in the research process, the earlier these necessary skills are taught, the more time students will be able to devote to their actual projects. Moreover, in today's world, information literacy needs to be achieved at an earlier age, so students can learn to be smart consumers, responsible sharers, and presenters of information.

Throughout the research process, students will learn that there will be dead ends, questions that are too broad or too narrow, questions that do not have answers. This is an accurate reflection of what their experiences will continue to be as they move into higher level research projects in their educational careers.

Integrated into our explanation of each lesson are specific prompts, the purpose of each lesson, and supporting materials, which are provided as handouts at the end of the unit guide.

The final project is a capstone project in which students present their research in three ways:

1. Annotated bibliography
2. Town Hall
3. Tri-fold board gallery walk

LESSON 1

INTRODUCTION TO PRIMARY SOURCE DOCUMENTS

2-3 days
40-minute period

Students are presented with a variety of real and fake primary sources about a particular event or subject.

Some topic examples can include:

- Voter education
- Immigration
- Tenement life
- League of Nations/United Nations
- Figuring out fake news: The War of the Worlds broadcast

We have packaged and/or made links to everything needed to implement the topics listed above. Should you want to do a different topic, use the directions below specific primary sources for your topic.

Students work in groups to read through the sources and make observations about their content.

Small groups answer leading questions on chart papers set up around the room and discuss as a whole group.

Some broader questions can include (aim for addressing the 5 Ws):

- What's going on here?
- When is this occurring? How do you know?
- Who wrote it? Who is participating?
- Where is it occurring?
- Why was it written?
- How do we know this was a real event?

Teachers should expect and incite arguments about the way different students perceived the information presented in the primary source documents.

For the purposes of this unit, the teacher will define *rhetoric* as the use of language to sway opinion, and provide current identifiable examples of rhetoric in politics, advertising, public relations, and marketing

A whole group discussion follows about how rhetoric appeared **in the presented documents**.

In small groups, students share what they think is going on in the documents as if they were historians who came upon this new material. They then should devise a narrative of the actual documented events.

Students share out their narratives and as a whole class evaluate how different interpretations can be arrived at from the same source material. This can be related to today's news and how different news organizations present the same event/information from different perspectives

Students should understand that smart consumers don't believe information until several widely varied sources have been evaluated.

LESSON 2

EVALUATING SOURCES

1-2 days
40-minute periods

Students who are careful consumers need to identify reliable sources in the following ways:

- Corroborating
- Contextualizing
- Learning about creators of sources
- Close reading

JIGSAW WHOLE-CLASS ACTIVITY

The teacher assigns 4 small groups. Each group is responsible for reading two documents (Document A and Document B) and then answering different sets of questions from theThinking LIke A Historian Chart. The class then shares out the answers and as a whole group completes the entire chart.

Students will be able to demonstrate an understanding of how to apply the rules for confirming the validity of a source by relating the questions in the charts (see handout below) to the content of various sources.

Teacher provides two sources from Lesson 1 (one real and one fake)

Students use the appropriate handout to evaluate each source.

SUPPORTING MATERIAL

Handout A: Thinking Like A Historian: Close Read, Contextualize, Corroborate

LESSON 3

DIFFERENT WAYS TO GET INFORMATION

2-4 days
40-minute periods

Students complete a KWHL (a graphic organizer in which students identify what they know, what they want to know, how they plan to discover their answers, and what they finally learned) as a point of reflection and to spur on the search.

SUPPORTING MATERIAL

Handout B: KWHL chart

Students learn that archives are resources for primary source research. They learn how archives compare to libraries.

An archive is a place where historical documents are preserved and made accessible.

A library is a place where books, periodicals, and other material can be viewed, read, and borrowed.

Teacher gives definitions of primary and secondary sources and encourages students to make connections to materials in previous lessons.

A primary source is a firsthand "right there" account documented by people who participated and witnessed an event.
Examples: Diaries, still images, interviews, films

A secondary source is information created by someone who did not experience events firsthand. It is a source that interprets or analyzes primary sources.
Examples: Textbooks, magazines, encyclopedias

Questions the teacher can pose to students for discussion:

- Where do primary sources come from?
- Why are primary sources kept?
- What primary sources do the students create on a day to day basis?

Students are presented with a “Sort the Source” activity in which images of different primary and secondary sources are presented to the students. The students sort the images into categories of their own understanding and articulate the reasons for their sorting decisions.

SUPPORTING MATERIAL

Handout C: Sort the Source

This is a packet of sources. Each page is coded with a six-digit number to assist the teacher in identifying primary and secondary sources. Pages with even numbers are primary sources; odd numbers are secondary sources.

Optional: Students create a primary source
(ex. Write a letter to a family member or friend)

LESSON 4

RESEARCH PROJECT TOPIC AND QUESTIONING TECHNIQUES

2-4 days
40-minute periods

Teacher decides on an umbrella topic (a broad subject/theme) in which the students pursue a self-driven research question. Some examples of umbrella topics and related primary sources that can be found on the OER Commons site:

- Voter Education
- Tenements and immigration (1880-1950)
- War of the Worlds, Fake News, and Media Literacy

Students are presented with several primary sources related to the umbrella topic. The Library of Congress, archives with related collections, and the National Archives are reliable repositories for finding primary sources online.

Students examine the curated selection of documents (at least 20-30 minutes).

Students fill out chart paper placed around the room and respond to broad questions or noticings about the primary sources provided by the teacher.

Examples of broad questions for students:

- Who is the audience for the document?
- Who do you think created the document?
- What was the purpose of creating the document?
- What type of document is this?
- What do you suppose the reaction was to the document at the time?

Teacher places chart paper around the room with some basic categories the primary sources address.

Students independently sift through and sort the primary sources into the categories identified by the teacher.

In small groups of 4-5, students come up with questions about the content in the documents.

A whole class discussion follows about the questions that were placed on the chart paper. The whole group evaluates which questions are too broad, too narrow, which are dead ends, and which questions could lead to further research.

LESSON 5

DEVELOPING TOOLS FOR CONTINUING RESEARCH

3-5 days
40-minute periods

Students learn how and where to find answers to the questions they are asking within the provided sources, along with how to find other sources that they can use during the research process. This lesson serves as the H (How will I discover the answers to what I want to learn) in the KWHL graphic organizer.

Students will develop the ability to find answers using close reading skills and will use those answers as springboards for further research

Teachers should relay the point that finding one answer is going to generate another question. A strong research question will have almost never-ending questions.
It is a treasure hunt.

Optional: Show and discuss scenes from the movie National Treasure and how finding one answer leads to another question.

Students choose a research question or two that they want to pursue.

Students sort, evaluate, select, and articulate documents related to individual research questions.

Step 1: Students come up with mini-questions that they can search for answers within documents. Teacher should model coming up with mini-questions and how those answers feed up to the student's research question.

Step 2: Students sort through the primary source documents by reading more closely to determine which documents could be used to answer their question(s).

Step 3: Students comb through selected primary source documents to find answers to their mini-questions.

Step 4: Students seek out secondary sources to get more information related to their research question.

Step 5: Students search for additional primary sources using selected archival institutions' collections. Other suggestions for digitized primary sources are the Library of Congress and the National Archives.

LESSON 6

SEARCHING AND HONING THE INDIVIDUAL RESEARCH QUESTIONS

2-3 days
40-minute periods

Students learn about "**access points**," also known as **key words**. Names of individuals, names of organizations, locations, dates, and specific events will serve as the pathways into finding more specific information.

Students will learn that "**Pathfinders**" are lists of reliable links to sites that can be searched for useful primary source documents using their **access points**. Some examples include the Library of Congress, the National Archives, and the New York Public Library.

Teachers should model identifying an access point and searching links such as the National Archives or the Library of Congress.

Students will learn the importance of keeping track of access points and pathfinders for the duration of the research process in the next lesson.

Students should also find and assess secondary sources in order to provide background information and contextual connections. These should be included in their list of citations and annotated bibliography, which is explained in Lesson 7.

LESSON 7

WHY AND HOW TO CITE

1-2 days
40-minute periods

Students will learn about the ethics of plagiarism and the importance of citing their work. Teachers can encourage students to make connections between citing work and the students' daily lives. For example, if a student puts something online that they worked hard on and somebody claimed it as their own, how would they feel and what would their legal options be.

Teachers can use EasyBib and Google Docs as the means for teaching students how and where to keep their citations. It is important to encourage students to use both sites simultaneously. We have experienced EasyBib to be somewhat restrictive in keeping lists of citations, so we encourage our students to create a citation in EasyBib and transfer it to a Google Doc.

LESSON 8

RESEARCH PODS AND CONFERENCING

3-5 days (this will vary depending on teacher and student need)
40-minute periods

This is a transition to a more independent, student-centered approach to their research. Students can work in Research Pods, which is the time they are doing dedicated independent work for their own projects. Teachers act as coaches during this time. They may want to hold individual conferences with students to assess their progress.

During this time, students should accomplish the following:

- Find additional primary and secondary sources that pertain to their research question.
- Articulate a direction they would follow using all of the sources they have compiled and analyzed that pertain to their question.
- Identify several facts that pertain to their research question that can be used in a verbal and written explanation of their research topic.
- Continue to keep track of their citations in their Google Doc.

LESSON 9

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

1-2 days
40-minute periods

An annotated bibliography is a list of citations with a description of each source. This description can include what the source is and why it was used a particular research process. A template is provided that gives a more in depth definition and explanation on how to organize an annotated bibliography.

Teachers model an annotated bibliography. Depending on the student group, the annotations can be as succinct or as detailed as the students' level dictates.

SUPPORTING MATERIAL

Handout D: Annotated Bibliography Template

LESSON 10

CAPSTONE PROJECT

3-5 days
40-minute periods

The students will present their research in three ways:

1. TOWN HALL

Students will host a forum for their families and peers where they answer questions about their class' umbrella research topic. They will use the information found throughout their research to provide evidence-based answers. This allows the students to turnkey their information to a broader community.

Teachers should prepare questions that are likely to be asked by the audience and do a dry-run with students beforehand. This will help students learn and develop their presentation skills, public speaking skills, and the ability to recall and respond.

We actually wrote questions and gave them to specific "plants" in the audience to start off the questioning and keep it going if there were lulls in audience questions. The students were aware of these questions and actually rehearsed them beforehand.

2. GALLERY WALK

Students create and present their research on tri-fold boards. Much as in the Science Fair format, this presentation allows students to visually organize their information and their research.

SUPPORTING MATERIAL

Handout E: Tri-fold Board Template

3. ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

(teacher determines the number of primary and secondary sources to be included)

As the project wraps up, it is important to allow for student reflection.

REFLECTION 1:

Ask students to write a letter to next year's students explaining the project, *their experiences, and to give helpful hints.*

REFLECTION 2:

As a whole class, create a flow chart identifying the major steps from start to finish of the archive project. This allows students to see the whole picture with 20/20 hindsight.

HANDOUT A

Thinking Like a Historian:
Close Read, Contextualize, Corroborate

Investigate	**Contextualize**	**Corroborate** (Confirm/Find Supporting Evidence)
Who is the author of the document?	What was happening in the world before or at the time the source was created?	What do other sources say about the topic?
Why was the document written?	What role did the author play?	Do you think the author is trying to sway the reader of the document?
When was the document written?	What was daily life like when the document was created?	Is the document believable?
What type of source is it?	Was this source influential?	Does the document contradict other sources?

HANDOUT B

KWHL Chart

TOPIC: Research Skills

What I Know	What I Want to Know	How I Will Discover My Answers	What I Learned

HANDOUT C

Spot Unreliable Sources



Investigate the source	What type of website is it? What is the mission?
Check the date	When was the article written? Is the article out of date?
Don't just read the headline	Have you read the article in its entirety?
Learn about the author	Is the author real? Is the author credible?
Supporting sources	Are there links that provide additional support to the article?
Ask the experts	Have I consulted with a librarian or archivist?

HANDOUT C

Sort the Source - 1



No. A 1500

Certificate of Marriage

STATE OF WASHINGTON, } SS.
COUNTY OF SPOKANE. }

I Hereby Certify that on the 4th day of Febr. in the year of our Lord one thousand nine hundred and thirteen at Spokane in the County of Spokane and State aforesaid, I the undersigned, a Catholic Priest by authority of a license bearing date the 3rd day of Febr. A.D. 1913 and issued by the County Auditor of Spokane County, did join in lawful wedlock

Theodore Marx

of the County of Spokane State of Washington and

Hazel E. Williams

of the County of Spokane State of Washington

IN THE PRESENCE OF

WITNESSES: Otto Marx
Adeline Peterson

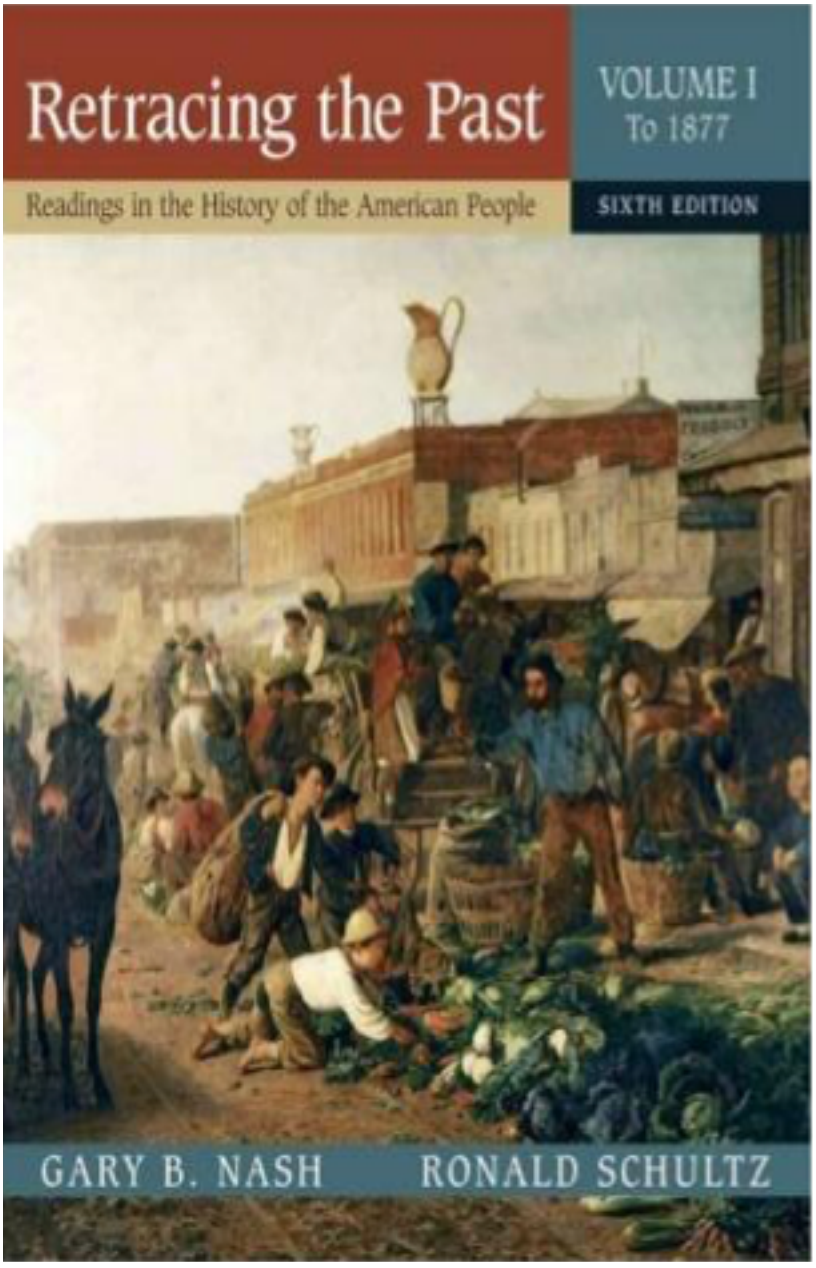
Signed Theodore Marx
Signed Hazel Williams

Joseph McL. Pyper
RESIDENCE Rector of St. Ann's

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HANDOUT C

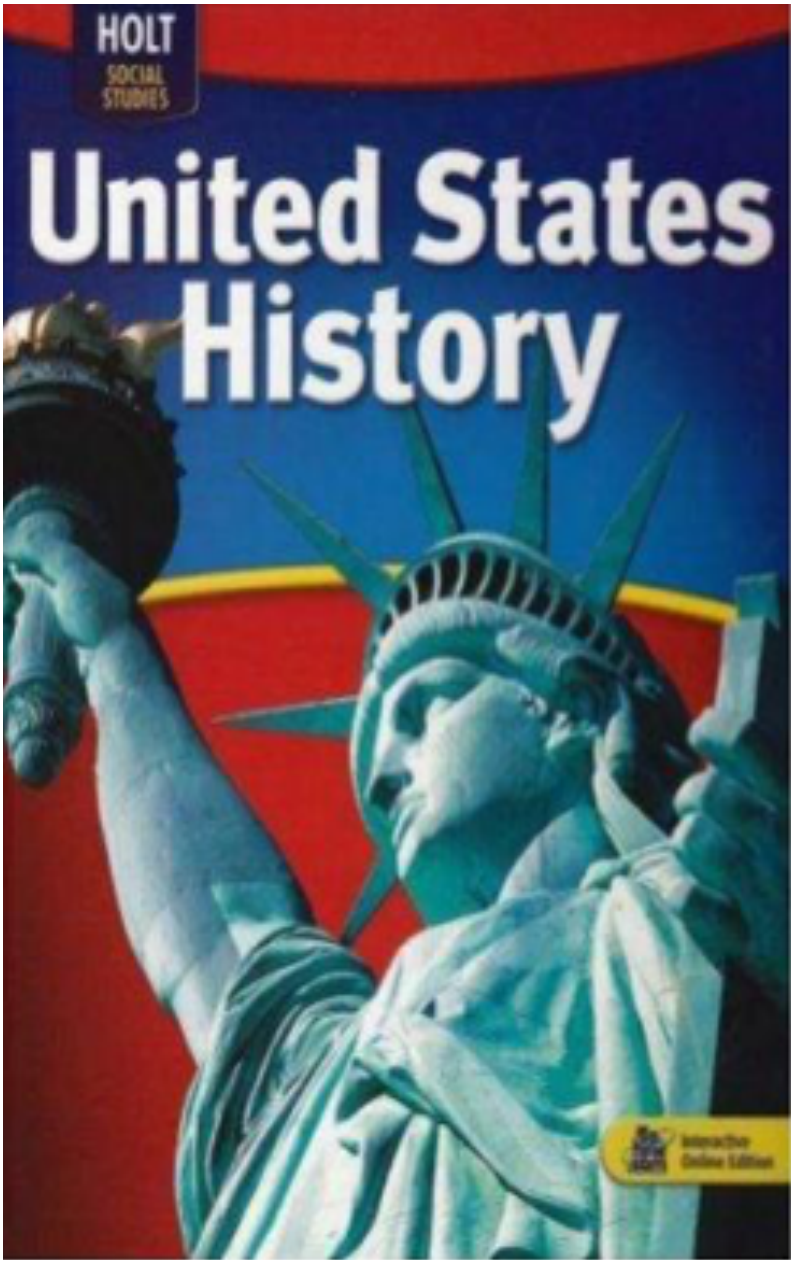
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HANDOUT C

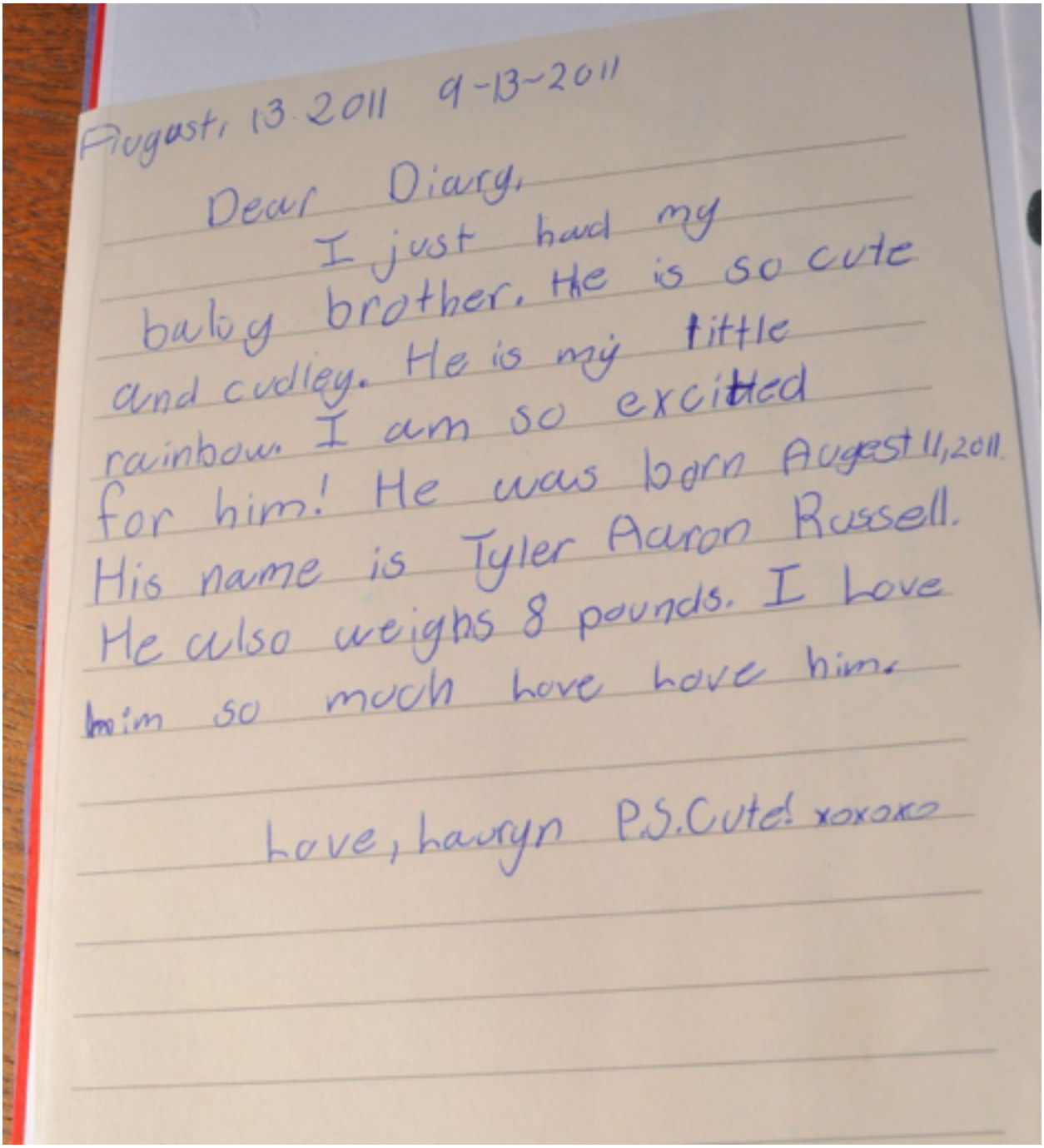
Sort the Source - 3



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HANDOUT C

Sort the Source - 4



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HANDOUT C

Sort the Source - 5



000006

HANDOUT C

Sort the Source - 6



The Times Dispatch

WHOLE NUMBER 1597. RICHMOND, VA., TUESDAY, APRIL 16, 1912. PRICE TWO CE

Titanic, Giant White Star Liner, Sinks After Collision With Iceberg on Her Maiden Voyage, and 1,800 Lives Are Reported Lost in World's Greatest Marine Disaste

WIRELESS CALLS SEND VESSELS RUSHING TO AID OF SEA COLOSSUS

Through the Night They Drive With Full Speed to Reach Titanic.

MEANTIME, WORLD WAITS IN AGONY OF SUSPENSE

OF ALL ON BOARI ONLY 675 KNOW TO HAVE ESCAI DEATH IN OI

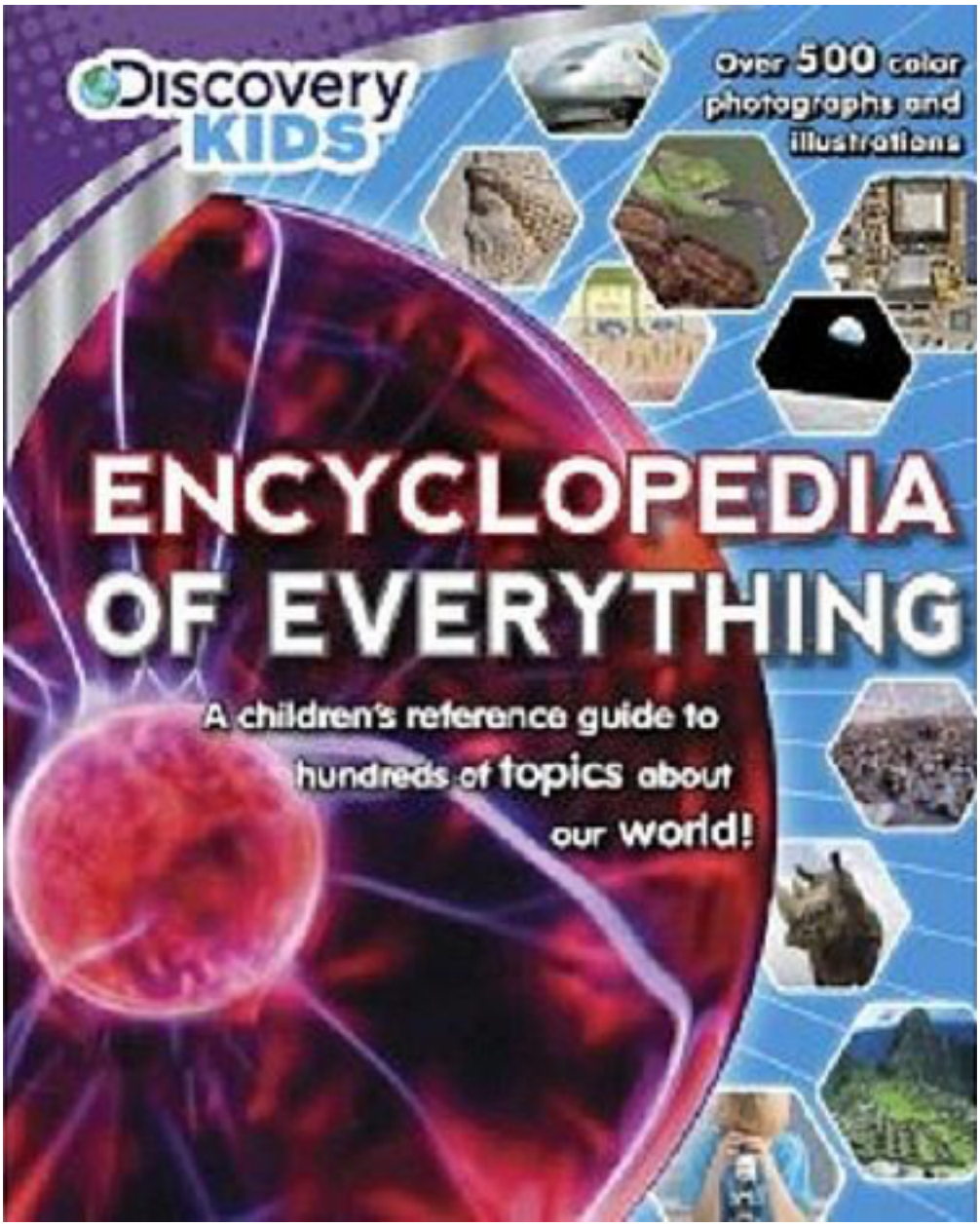
Those Rescued M Women and Child Who Were Tak Off in Boats.

BITS OF WRECKA ALL THAT IS L OF GREAT VE

000008

HANDOUT C

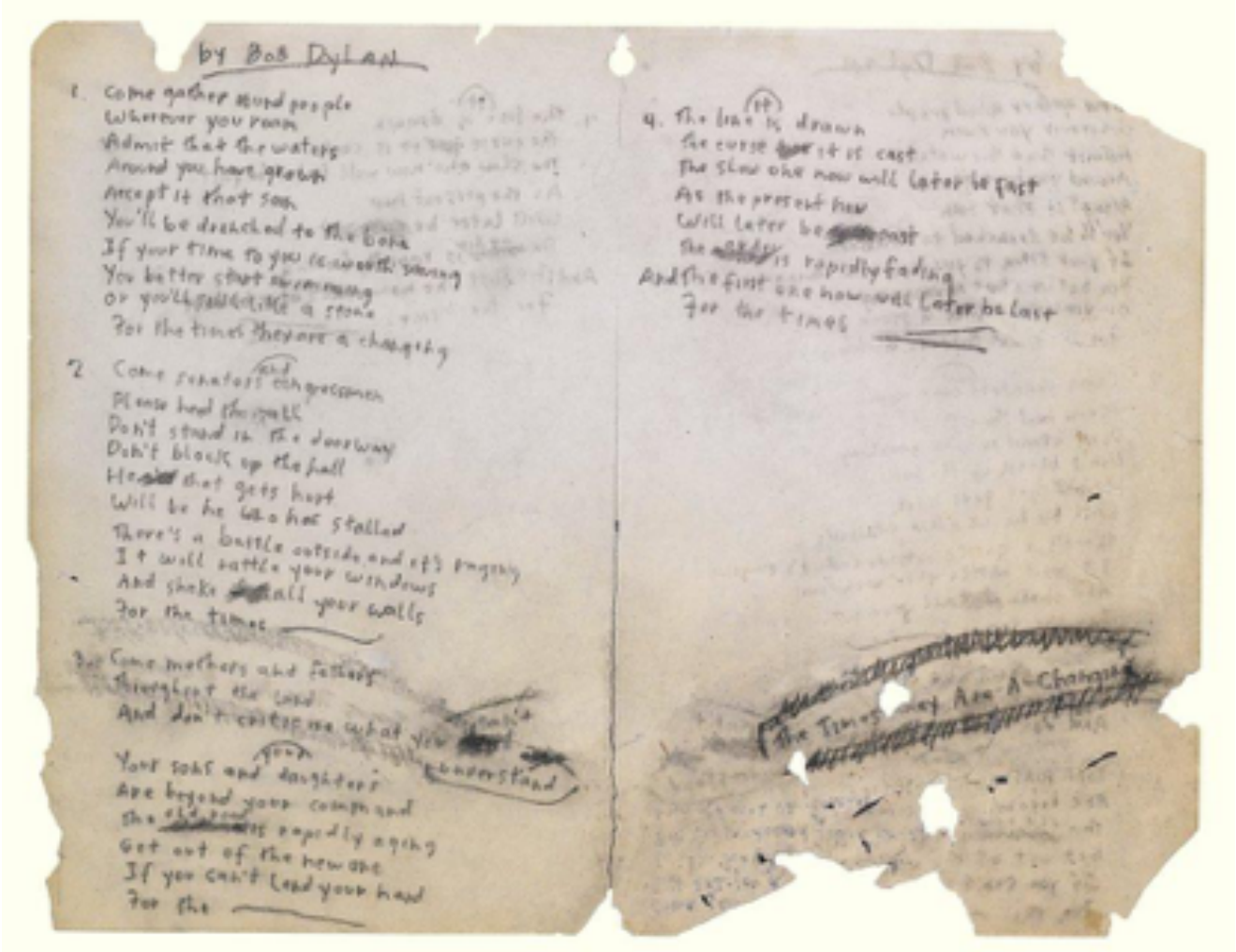
Sort the Source - 7



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HANDOUT C

Sort the Source - 8



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HANDOUT C

Sort the Source - 9



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HANDOUT C

Sort the Source - 10



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HANDOUT C

Sort the Source - 11

L'Esterre Rosary School
L'Esterre
Carriacou
Grenada
14th/12/09

Dear Mackenzie

How are you doing? My name's Dana Joseph. I am eleven years old and I am in grade six at the L'Esterre Rosary School.

Thank you for the books you have sent to us. We appreciate them.

I have read some of the books such as "Becoming Naomi León" by Esperanza Rising. "Becoming Naomi León" is a knowledgeble book. It's very Comprehen-sive.

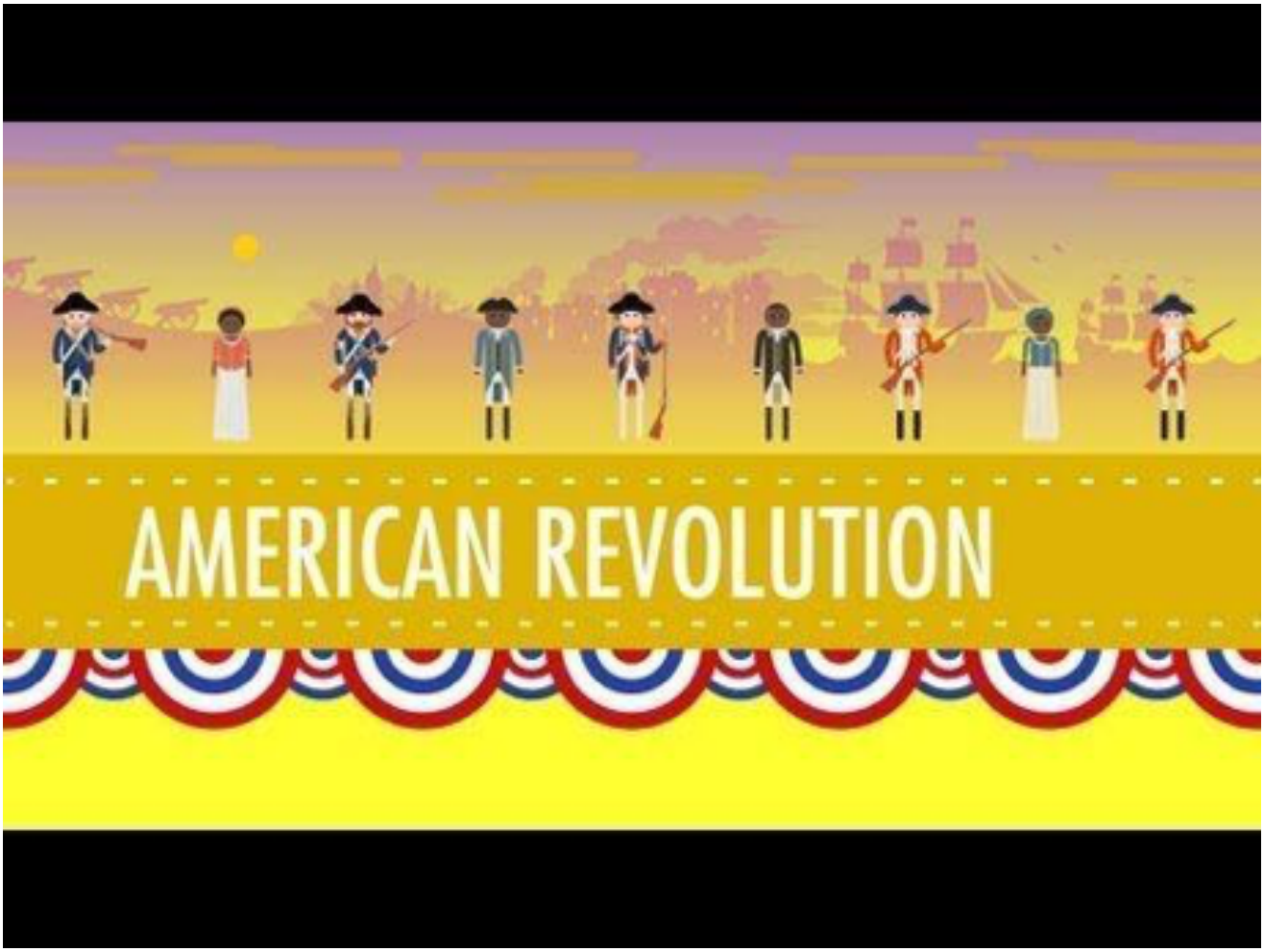
We are hoping to you will send some more books next time. We are very thankful.

Sincerely yours,
Dana Joseph

000016

HANDOUT C

Sort the Source - 12



000018

HANDOUT D

Annotated Bibliography Template

An annotated bibliography is a list of citations used during the research process.

Each citation is followed by a brief descriptive paragraph that evaluates the source.

SOURCE:

CITATION INFORMATION:

SUMMARY OF SOURCE:

Sentence starters:

- **I used this document because... (what information did it have that was important to you?)**
- **It told me that... (give a brief summary of what was discussed in the source)**
- **It connects to my question because... (explain how it addresses your question and what part it plays in the answer)**
- **It helps me to understand... (what does it say that helps you understand your answer better?)**

HANDOUT E

Tri-Fold Board Template

Name_____ Date_____

TRI-FOLD SET-UP PLAN

Process	Target Question	Research
Description of Document Examination processes and how you used them Create a flowchart showing how you progressed through the project Name	Put your question here Information that helped you to draw your conclusion Put your answer here	Explanation of different types of sources and how you used them Description of Annotated Bibliography

→ Pictures or diagrams of you working / the process

→ Pictures of / from your topic

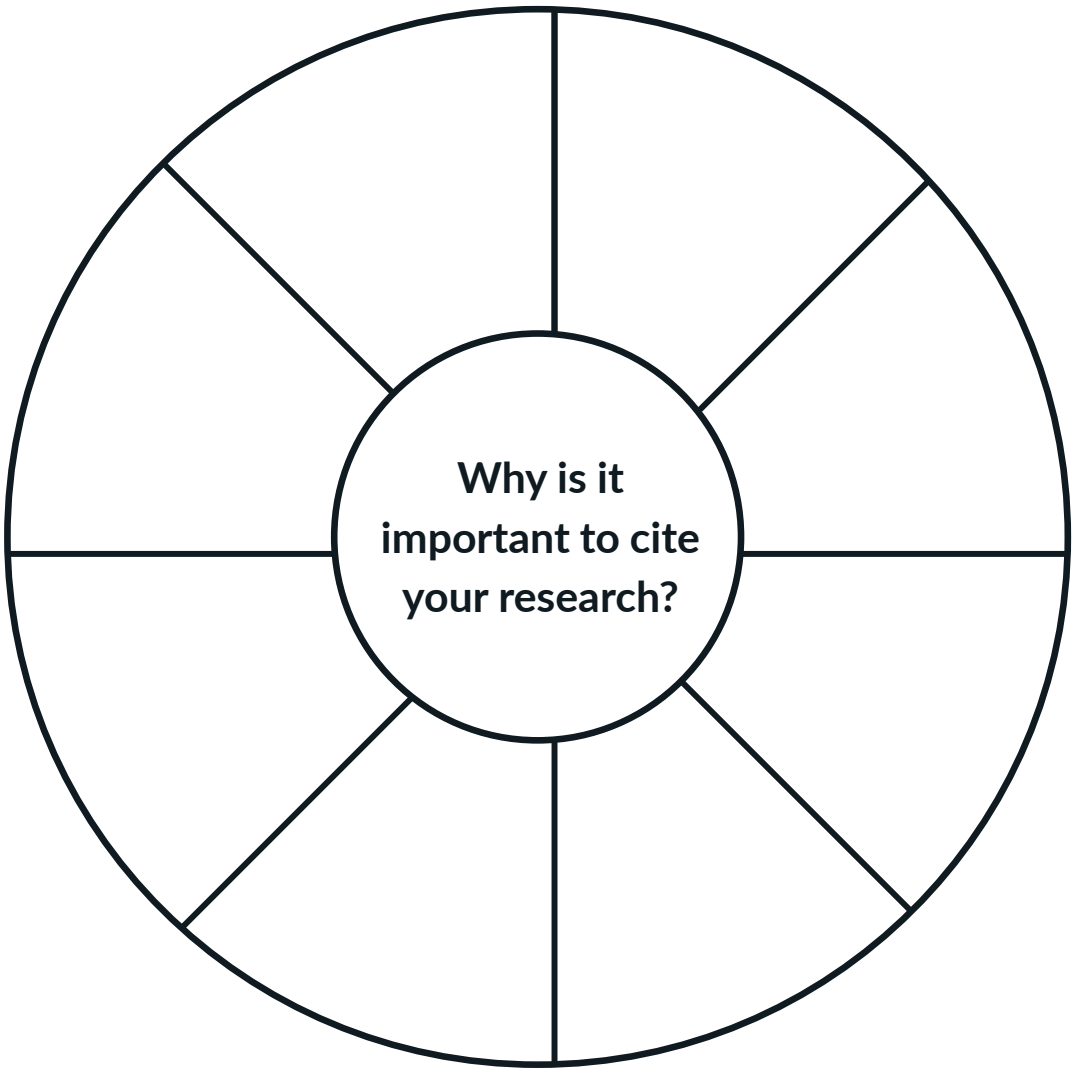
→ Pictures of the sources

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS

Citation Wheel

Cite...

- When you say something that you read somewhere
- When you use a quotation
- When you summarize a text



SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS

Conference Form

What is your project title/topic/question?

How are you feeling about the project?

What is your organizational strategy for reaching your goal?

What has been most helpful?

What has been most challenging?

Date	Currently working on	Next Steps	Comments

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS

Document Analysis Form

Title of document _____

Type of document _____

Date of document _____

Creator of document _____

For what audience was the document written _____

List important content from the document:

- _____
  _____
- _____
  _____
- _____
  _____

Why was this document created?

_____

_____

_____

What are some pieces of evidence from the document to help the researcher know why it was written?

- _____
  _____
- _____
  _____

What questions do you have after analyzing this document?

_____

_____

_____

_____

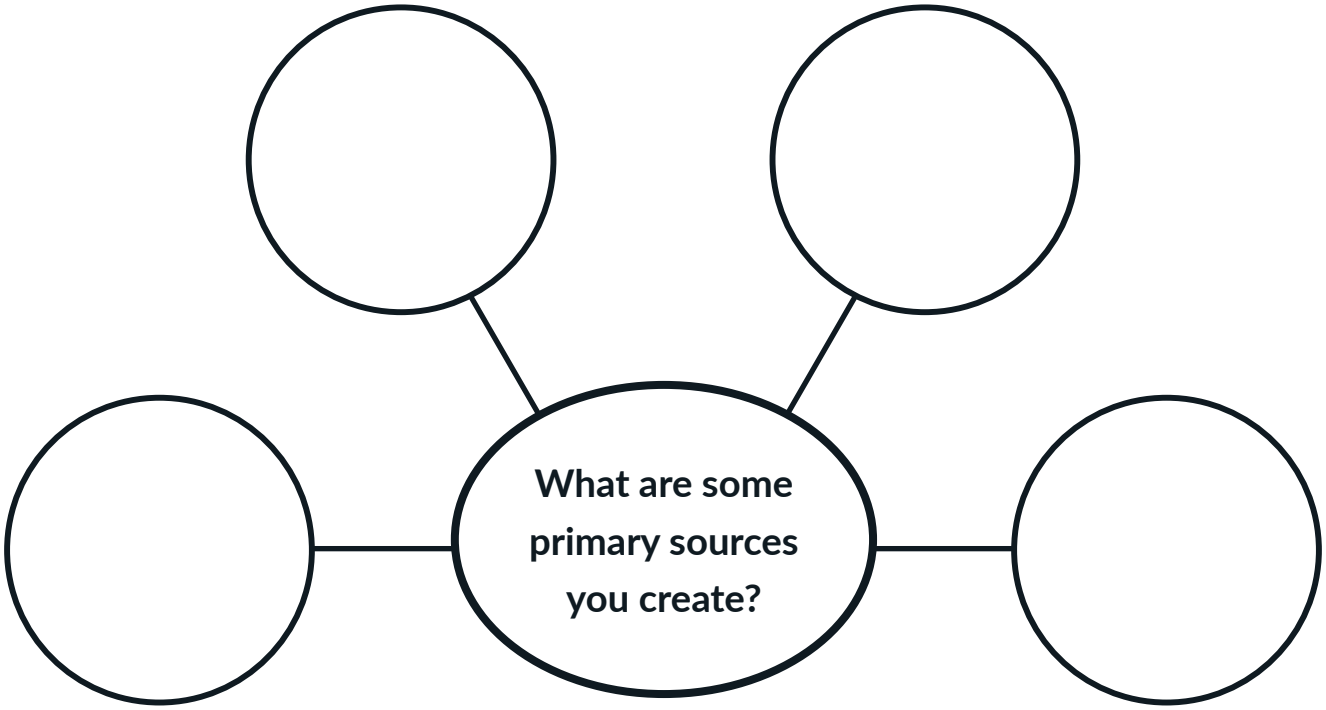
SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS

Source Comparison Chart

Primary Sources	Secondary Sources
Diaries	Textbooks
Letters	Reviews
Speeches	Historical films
Maps	Website on World War II
Photographs	Encyclopedias
Artwork	Biographies
Clothing	Historical fiction

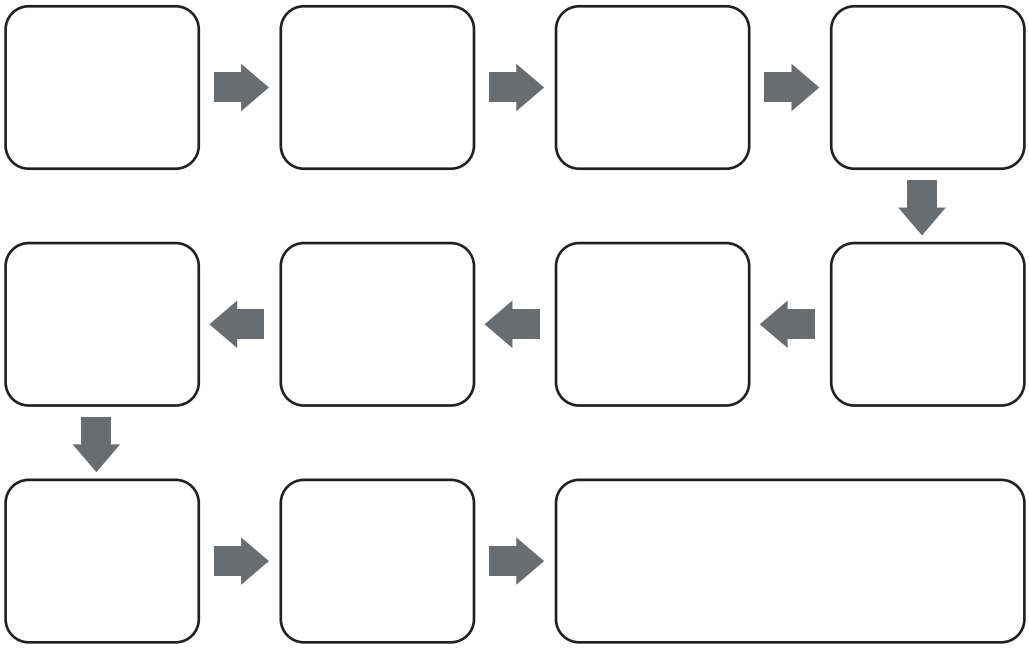
SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS

Personal Primary Source Graphic Organizer



SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS

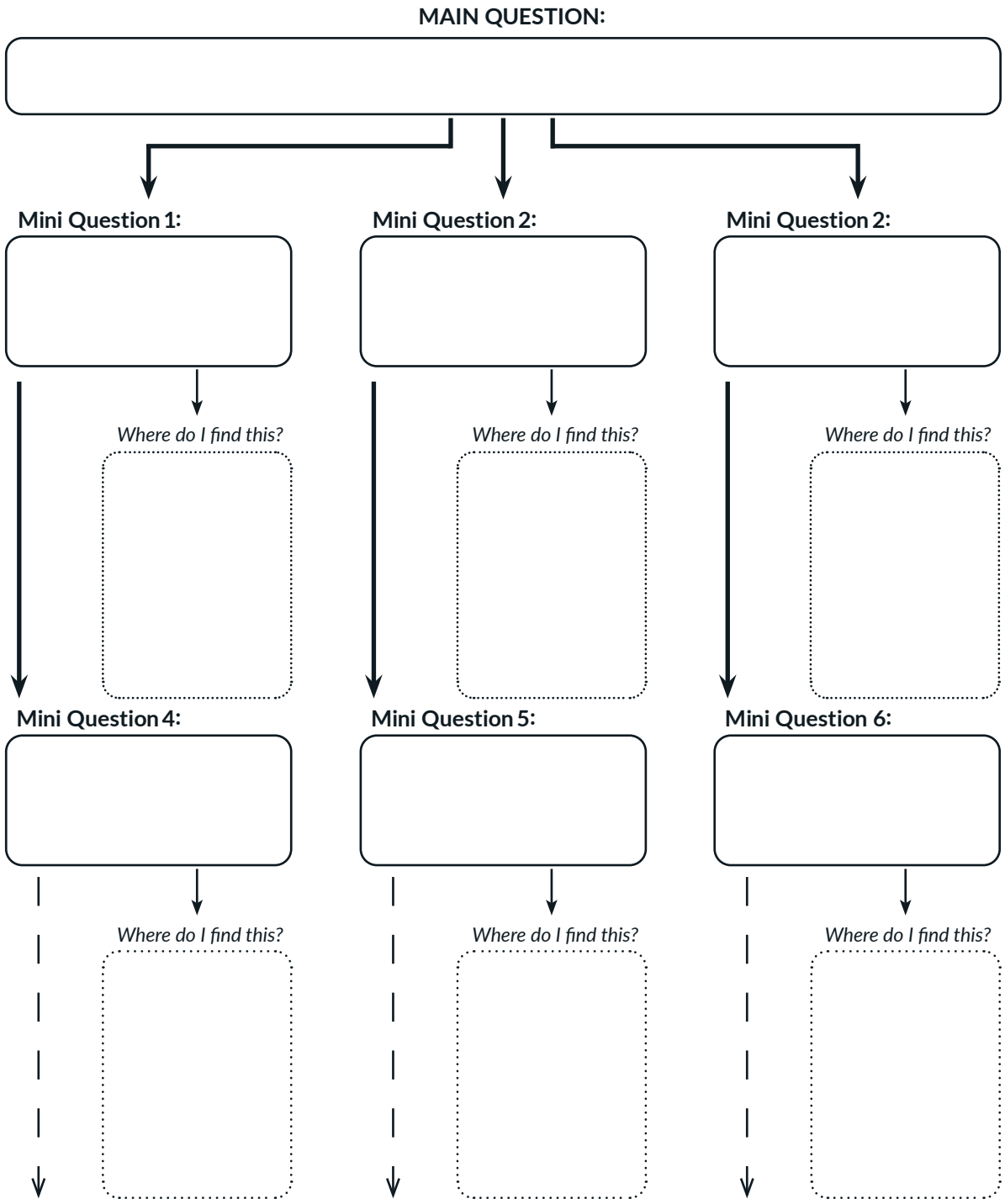
Process Chart



Describe your archive project experience for next year's students

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS

Question Tree



SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS

Reflection Letter

Date _____

Dear Researcher,

Sincerely,

ABOUT US

RE:source is the digital platform for the Rockefeller Archive Center's Research and Education division. RE:source's stories, photo-galleries, and archival education teaching materials showcase the many facets of philanthropic practice—from the fields touched by philanthropic giving, to issues particular to the philanthropic sector.

The Rockefeller Archive Center (RAC) is a not-for-profit repository and research center that preserves and makes available for research the records of several dozen foundations and nonprofit organizations.

In addition to the papers of the Rockefeller family, the RAC's collections include the records of the Rockefeller Foundation, Ford Foundation, Near East Foundation, Commonwealth Fund, Rockefeller Brothers Fund, Henry Luce Foundation, W. T. Grant Foundation and many other philanthropic organizations. The papers of leaders of the philanthropic community, Nobel Prize laureates, and world-renowned investigators in science and medicine supplement the institutional collections.

ABOUT US



Marissa Vassari is Archivist and Educator at the Rockefeller Archive Center. She specializes in developing educational outreach project models that build research and information literacy skills. Marissa regularly presents at conferences on her work, and in 2016, she created the Archival Educators Roundtable, which facilitates communication among professionals who use primary sources in public outreach and teaching. She holds a BA in Psychology and Special Education, an MA in Childhood Education, and an MLIS degree with an Archival Studies specialization.



Elisabeth Hickey has been teaching for over 20 years, the last 13 as a "Challenge" teacher in a High Achievers' program. She has been writing curriculum for her entire career and is most interested in education through project-based teaching. Elisabeth holds a BA in Psychology from Vassar College and a Masters in the Science of Teaching from Fordham University.

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