

Advanced Primary Source Micro-lesson

The purpose of this micro-lesson is to recap with students what they have learned about primary sources and explore more advanced interpretation problems.

1. Recap your definition of primary sources from the Working with Sources lesson.
2. Ask students to brainstorm what records they will leave behind for future historians.

Write these responses on the board or have students make their own lists and present their top three choices to the class.

Have your students not only identify sources, but how these sources are likely to survive for more than a hundred years. For example, who will preserve them? How will they be preserved? How will future historians access them?

An interesting lesson when evaluating historical sources is how they are preserved, why they were preserved and by who? If you think your students possess the maturity raise the issue of the state specifically constructing historical narratives. For example, why are Indigenous people largely excluded from the historical record? Why are records for women harder to find? If someone was illiterate how did they send letters home or write a diary? If our historical record is largely constructed from literate people is there an issue with representing people from different classes?

3. Introduce your students to the concept of 'inference' and how historians use this concept to interpret primary sources.

Have your students go through the list they just made of potential primary sources and suggest inferences they could draw from those sources. In other words, what can we know about our historical actors from the different types of sources? What information is left out? Can they draw conclusions about the past if there is an absence of evidence; for example, First Nations or Women?

4. Have your students make a preliminary list of the sources available on *A City Goes to War* for their historical person. Ask your students what challenges they might face in interpreting these sources.