

# Primary Source Stations Activity Guide

This is a **flexible, classroom-ready Stations Activity Guide** designed to work with **any primary source** (textual, visual, or multimedia) across **history, ELA, social studies, civics, AP, and middle/high school courses**.

Flexible for History, ELA, Civics, AP, and Interdisciplinary Courses

## Purpose

Students analyze, interpret, and evaluate primary sources through structured, skill-based stations that emphasize sourcing, contextualization, close reading, and evidence-based reasoning.

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## Station Setup Overview

**Number of Stations:** 4–6

**Time Per Station:** 10–15 minutes

**Group Size:** 2–4 students (or individual)

**Materials:**

- Printed or digital primary sources
  - Station task cards (posted or handed out)
  - Student recording sheets or interactive notebooks
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## Station 1: Source & Context Station

Focus Skill: Sourcing and Historical Context

### Student Task

Students examine the origin of the primary source to understand **who created it, when, where, and why**.

### Guiding Questions

- Who created this source?
- When and where was it created?
- What was happening at the time?
- Who was the intended audience?

- What was the creator's purpose?

### **Student Output**

- 3–5 bullet points summarizing the source's background
  - One sentence explaining how context shapes meaning
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## **Station 2: Close Reading / Observation Station**

Focus Skill: Textual or Visual Analysis

### **Student Task**

Students closely examine **what the source actually says or shows**, without interpretation yet.

#### **For Text Sources**

- Highlight key words, phrases, or claims
- Identify unfamiliar language or terms
- Note tone or word choice

#### **For Visual Sources**

- List observable details (people, objects, symbols, actions)
- Identify setting and focal points
- Note use of symbols or imagery

### **Student Output**

- Annotated excerpt or observation list
  - One sentence summarizing the source's main message
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## **Station 3: Perspective & Bias Station**

Focus Skill: Point of View and Reliability

### **Student Task**

Students analyze the creator's **perspective, bias, and limitations**.

## Guiding Questions

- What beliefs or values does the source reflect?
- What voices are missing or silenced?
- What biases might the creator have?
- How reliable is this source for understanding the event?

## Student Output

- Bias checklist or short paragraph
  - One strength and one limitation of the source
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## Station 4: Evidence & Claims Station

Focus Skill: Evidence-Based Reasoning

### Student Task

Students identify how the source can be used as **evidence** to support historical or thematic claims.

## Guiding Questions

- What claim does this source support?
- What specific evidence can be cited?
- How might this source be used in an argument or essay?

## Student Output

- Quoted or described evidence
  - One claim supported by the source
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## Station 5: Corroboration Station (Optional but Recommended)

Focus Skill: Comparison Across Sources

### Student Task

Students compare the station source with another primary or secondary source.

## **Guiding Questions**

- Does this source confirm or challenge other sources?
- What details are consistent or conflicting?
- Why might accounts differ?

## **Student Output**

- Comparison chart or paragraph
  - One conclusion drawn from multiple sources
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# **Station 6: Interpretation & Reflection Station**

Focus Skill: Synthesis and Reflection

## **Student Task**

Students connect the source to broader themes, essential questions, or modern issues.

## **Guiding Prompts**

- Why does this source matter?
- What does it reveal about the time period or theme?
- How does it connect to today?

## **Student Output**

- Short reflection paragraph
  - Exit question or discussion prompt
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# **Differentiation Options**

## **For Emerging Readers / ELL**

- Provide sentence frames
- Use chunked excerpts
- Allow oral responses or collaborative writing

## **For Advanced / AP**

- Require HIPP or SOAPStone analysis
  - Add a thesis-writing extension
  - Require citation in AP/MLA format
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## **Assessment Options**

- Completed station packet
  - One synthesized paragraph using evidence from multiple stations
  - Short DBQ-style response
  - Group discussion or Socratic seminar follow-up
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## **Teacher Notes**

- Stations can be reused with any primary source set
- Works well with gallery walks or digital slides
- Can be condensed to 3 stations or expanded to 6 depending on time
- Aligns with historical thinking skills and close reading standards

# Student Recording Sheets

Student Recording Sheets

Student Name \_\_\_\_\_

Class / Period \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Primary Source Title or Description

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## Station 1: Source and Context

1. Who created this source?

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2. When and where was it created?

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3. What was happening at the time this source was created?

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4. Who was the intended audience?

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5. What was the creator's purpose?

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How does the context help explain the meaning of this source?

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## Station 2: Close Reading or Observation

**If the source is a text:**

Key words or phrases that stand out

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Important ideas or claims

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Tone or word choice (circle one or describe):

Neutral

Emotional

Persuasive

Critical

Other \_\_\_\_\_

**If the source is visual:**

List at least three observable details

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

Symbols or imagery used

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One sentence summary of what the source says or shows

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**Station 3: Perspective and Bias**

1. What point of view does the creator represent?

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2. What beliefs, values, or opinions are shown?

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3. What perspectives or voices are missing?

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4. How reliable is this source for understanding the topic? Why?

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One strength of this source

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One limitation of this source

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## **Station 4: Evidence and Claims**

What claim does this source support?

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Specific evidence from the source  
(quote, description, or detail)

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Explain how this evidence supports the claim

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## **Station 5: Corroboration (if assigned)**

Second source title or description

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How does this source compare to the first one?  
Check one and explain:

- Confirms
- Challenges
- Adds new information

Explanation

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One conclusion you can draw using both sources

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## **Station 6: Interpretation and Reflection**

Why is this source important?

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What does this source reveal about the time period or theme?

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Connection to today or to another unit or text

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## **Final Synthesis (Teacher Choice)**

Using evidence from at least two stations, write a short response.

Prompt

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Response

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**Optional Extensions (AP or Advanced)**

Historical Thinking Skill Used

Sourcing

Contextualization

Corroboration

Comparison

Short thesis statement using this source

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