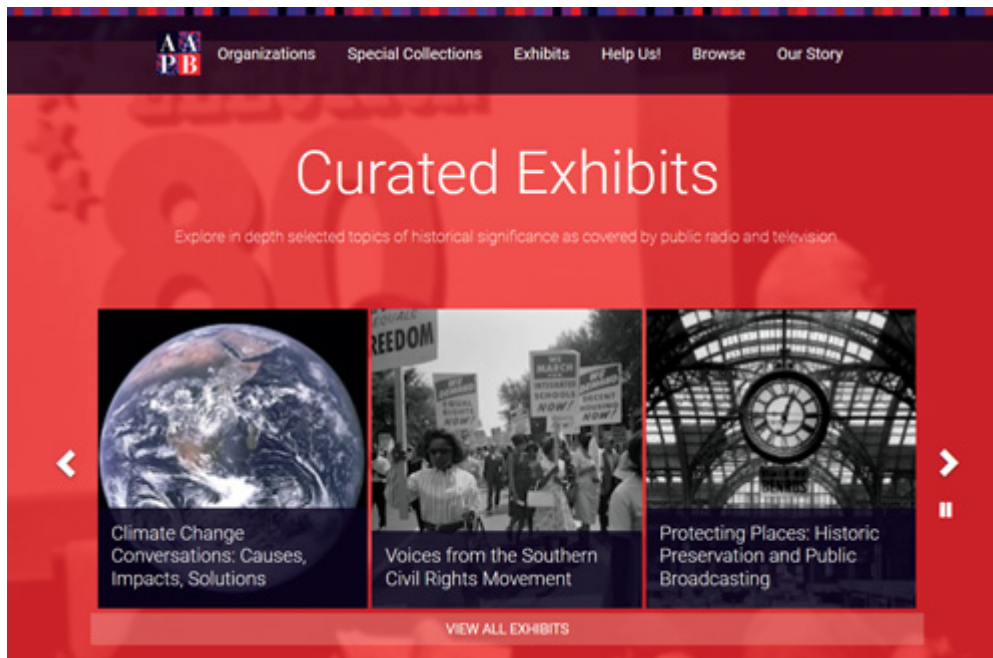


Free Primary Sources To Engage Students

by [Tom Bober](#)

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Librarian Tom Bober curates a strong set of resources, with tips on how to make the best use of these websites.



American Archive of Public Broadcasting

Primary sources are crucial to student learning. They add details that a secondary source cannot and encourage students to search for answers to their own questions. Finding these incredible resources can be tricky, but, luckily, many institutions make them freely available.

American Archive of Public Broadcasting americanarchive.org The American Archive of Public Broadcasting is a newer collaboration between the Library of Congress and WGBH in Boston. The site's holdings come from decades of searchable public radio and television. Browse by topic or geographically by participating organizations.

Search tip: "Special collections" and "curated exhibits" offer a wealth of engaging audiovisual resources on a variety of topics.

Chronicling America chroniclingamerica.loc.gov A joint collaboration between the Library of Congress and the National Endowment for the Humanities, Chronicling America is a collection of more than 12 million searchable digitized pages of newspapers published between 1789 and 1963.

SEARCH TIP: Click the "recommended topics" link to explore hundreds of subject areas; for each topic, an overview, important dates, and sample articles are listed.

Digital Public Library of America dp.la DPLA brings together more than 20 million sources from partners across the U.S. Browse by topic or by partner, or do a traditional search. DPLA's strength is searching across institutions to find resources. Check out more than 100 sets of primary sources grouped

by topic, as well as dozens of exhibitions, but be aware that some primary source sets contain both primary and secondary sources.

Search tip: Even though the Library of Congress contributes to DPLA, not all of its online resources are available on DPLA's site, so users will likely want to do multiple searches on both websites.

Library of Congress loc.gov Users will find tens of millions of sources at the Library of Congress website. This online collection's strengths are artifacts from the U.S. created prior to 1923, but it also features strong offerings related to the civil rights movement and other, more recent topics. Go to loc.gov/teachers for support in analyzing primary sources and primary source sets.

Search tip: After an initial search, click "available online" on the bottom of the left navigation bar to limit to items that can be viewed on the website.

The screenshot shows the National Archives website's "Educator Resources" section. At the top, there is a search bar and navigation links for "Blogs", "Bookmark/Share", and "Contact Us". Below the search bar is a navigation menu with categories: "RESEARCH OUR RECORDS", "VETERANS' SERVICE RECORDS", "EDUCATOR RESOURCES" (highlighted), "VISIT US", and "AMERICA'S FOUNDING DOCUMENTS". The main heading is "Educator Resources" with a sub-heading "Getting Started with Primary Source Research for Teachers and Students". A left sidebar lists "Primary Source Research" and "Getting Started" with sub-links like "Finding Primary Sources" and "Ready-to-use Tools, Activities and Documents at DocsTeach". The main content area features a large heading "Getting Started with Primary Source Research for Teachers and Students" and a sub-heading "Getting Started with Primary Sources in the Classroom". Below this is a list of resources including "Finding Primary Sources", "History in the Raw", "Resources for National History Day Research", "Introduction to Documents", "Beginning Research Activities", "Research Tips", and "Citing Primary Sources". On the right, there is a "Today's Document" section for "May 11, 2018" featuring "The Battle of Attna Begins - May 11, 1943" and a "DOCS TEACH" logo with the text "Find and create interactive learning activities with primary source documents that promote historical thinking skills."

National Archives

National Archives www.archives.gov/education/research/primary-sources This area of the National Archives website offers a jumping-off point for several collections of resources. Users can visit two related sites: DocsTeach.org, to refine searches by historical era to target results, and OurDocuments.gov, to view a list of 100 milestone documents in U.S. history. Students can also search for artifacts related to the U.S. government and political figures at the National Archives catalogue.

Search tip: Browsing available items at DocsTeach.org by historical era can provide inspiration when looking for an engaging source from a moment in history.

Newberry Library newberry.org/digital-resources-and-publications The Newberry, an independent research library in Chicago, recently made its digital collections of more than 1.7 million items freely available for public use. While many collections have a Midwest or Chicago focus, others speak to national or international topics.

Search tip: Users must search each collection separately, and search interfaces can vary between collections.



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Smithsonian Learning Lab

Smithsonian Learning Lab learninglab.si.edu Pooling millions of resources from across Smithsonian museums, the Smithsonian Learning Lab contains images of artifacts and also allows users to create their own collection of Smithsonian resources after signing up for an account. Users can also view others' published collections and make copies for their own use. Findings are as wide-ranging as the Smithsonian museums themselves.

Search tip: After doing a search, do not overlook the “refine search” option to filter by format or resource provider (e.g., National Air and Space Museum, National Portrait Gallery, etc.).

The Teaching with Primary Sources Network tpsteachersnetwork.org This online social network aimed at educators interested in learning more about teaching with primary sources lets users start discussions, share links, and create albums of primary source documents to share with colleagues. These resources are archived and tagged for easy searching.

Search tip: The TPS Teachers Network is organized by areas of interest. Users can browse and join groups that are of interest to them, such as the Primary Sources group within the School Library section

World Digital Library wdl.org Explore almost 20,000 artifacts from almost 200 countries. World Digital Library's strength is reflected in its name: it lets users search a single site to find artifacts from across the globe. Search or browse by time period, place, or topic, or type of item.

Search tip: Though many of the documents are written in languages other than English, all entries contain extensive secondary source support to explain the items and their significance.

Used with permission. Tom Bober is a library media specialist at Ralph M. Captain Elementary School Library, Clayton, MO.