



Unit 1 – Primary Source Documents and Visual Literacy

Primary source photographs and documents from *The Ties That Bind* website are used in this unit to teach the skills of observation and analysis.

The online collection includes material from Canadian archives and from the private collections of the interviewees whose stories are told in the website. The collection helps visitors to the website contextualize the Chinese Canadian experience from the 1880s to present.

Twelve photographs and documents from the collection are used in this unit. Over three workshops, students analyze the material using objective observation, deductive observation, and facts recording.

The Value of Primary Source Material:

Primary source materials offer students an unfiltered study pathway into a specific period of time, person(s) or event(s). The materials can be photographs, audio recordings, oral histories, diaries, and even wall paintings from ancient buildings. Primary source materials invite students to connect with the subject being studied and help students to gain a deeper understanding of history as a series of human events. The materials encourage further research since each piece is a “snapshot” of information.

After completing this unit students will be able to:

- Apply improved visual literacy skills
- Demonstrate improved critical thinking and analysis skills
- Understand the value of primary sources in historical enquiry

Recommended grade levels:

- The lesson is adaptable to the following grade levels: 6,7,8,9,10

Curriculum links:

- Social Studies, History, Language Arts, Visual Arts
- The lesson can be customized as required, for regional variances in curriculum and to create holistic links that include geography, drama, music, etc.

The unit consists of:

- Three in-class workshops

Time required:

- Recommended 120 minutes; 40 minutes per workshop
- The unit is flexible depending on the amount of class time available and class size

Evaluation based on:

- Completed work sheets (3)
- Classroom participation



Materials provided:

- Set 1 - twelve primary source documents **without** captions (download)
- Set 2 - twelve primary source documents **with** captions (download)
- Three work sheets: Workshop 1 - What I See (download); Workshop 2 - What I Think (download); Workshop 3 - What I Know (download)

Procedure:

- Advance planning required before beginning the unit
- Print and make copies of Worksheets 1, 2 and 3 – number based on class size and number of groups (see Workshop 1 instructions re: groups). You will need one copy per group
- Print both sets of primary source documents – one copy only of each set
- Have students review *The Ties That Bind* website at home or during the school day prior to start of unit
- In the event that computers are not available, website pages can be printed and circulated

Workshop 1 – What I See: Objective Observation

1. Introduce *The Ties That Bind* website to students, explaining what it's about (see Teacher's Guide) and the degree to which primary source material is used in the site as a way to tell the history of the Chinese in Canada during a specific period of time and related to a historic event.
2. Explain primary source material.
3. Explain that the students will be historical detectives, uncovering, interpreting and broadcasting historical information on the time, place, persons and events recorded in the primary source material.
4. Explain objective observation – how objective observations are those that can be seen.
5. Divide students into pairs or groups of three – to promote critical thinking through discussion with partner(s).
6. Each group selects a photograph from “Set 1 - twelve primary source documents”. The same photograph will be used for Workshop 2. In Workshop 3, students will use the set with captions.
7. Groups discuss their photograph and, if a computer is available, read the section of the website in which it appears. Note: Printed website pages can be circulated if computers are not available.
8. Groups then record their objective observations in “Workshop 1 Work Sheet”, stating facts only, as if explaining the image to someone who has not seen it.
9. Groups present their observations to class, receive feedback, and make revisions.



Workshop 2 – What I Think: Deductive Observation

1. Introduce Workshop 2, explaining deductive observation – how deductive observations result in assumptions based on knowledge acquired through objective observation of a photograph or a document's subject matter such as people, location, and time period.
2. Students re-group and study their photographs and previous work sheets, making deductions based on their previous observations of the photographs and their earlier review of *The Ties That Bind* website. Note: Printed website pages can be circulated if computers are not available.
3. Groups then record their findings in “Workshop 2 Work Sheet”.
4. Groups present their observations to class, receive feedback, and make revisions.

Workshop 3 – What I Know: Attribution and Collections

1. Introduce Workshop 3, explaining attribution – facts about who took the photograph, for what purpose, date, location, etc., and that attribution can reveal valuable information about the content and intended purpose of the photograph.
2. Introduce students to the concept of collections and cataloguing. Explain how family photographs can be in collections in traditional photo albums and in online photo galleries where they may be catalogued, sometimes by date or event.
3. Talk about the collections in *The Ties That Bind* website – how some of the collections belong to individuals while others belong to libraries and museums.
4. Explain how an individual photograph only tells one part of the story, but a collection of photographs creates a broader knowledge bridge between the viewer and the subject matter of the collection.
5. Distribute “Set 2 - twelve primary source documents”. Students continue with the same image.
6. Students re-group and record their photograph's attributions and collections data in “Workshop 3 Work Sheet”. Groups present their observations to class, receive feedback, and make revisions.