

Using the Familiar to Introduce Students to the Study of Primary and Secondary Sources

Instructional Support for the Student Activity *I Left a Trace!*

The activity *I Left a Trace* is designed to serve as an early stage instructional intervention when teaching students to investigate primary and secondary source materials. The intent of the activity is to ease students' transition by using the familiar. Students first explore their own contribution to the historical record. They then explore a public event and how we learn about the past through a study of such events. Throughout, students also become used to recording, mapping, and analyzing information.

In Parts A and B...

Students record and analyze their own activities over a 24-hour period. The focus is on familiarizing students with the extent of the historical record, while simultaneously exploring its limitations. Students learn about both accidental and purposeful evidence—sources—and about the effect of lost or intentionally destroyed sources and the subsequent gaps in the historical record that result. The questions in Part B additionally provide a basis for discussing the small part a student's own "record" plays in the larger cumulative picture or context. They realize that what they personally record is even only a small part of their own record (which includes school and home records, medical records, and even references and comments on their activities that have been written or otherwise preserved by other people), and begin to realize the importance of public documents and records on what we can glean from studies of the past.

Use the familiar to help acquaint students with the historical record and the study of sources.



Access the student activity "I Left a Trace" below. For best results, select PDF and use the "quality" setting on your printer.

PDF version (<http://www.designedinstruction.com/learningleads/sa-trace.pdf>)

Print-friendly html version (<http://www.designedinstruction.com/learningleads/sa-trace.html>)

Additional Instructional Tips

Part A: Students may need more paper—you may choose to extend the number of "items" recorded to any number you wish. You may even wish to have students keep a separate log of every activity in which they are involved over a 24-hour period prior to engaging in analysis.

Part B: On question (a.), take care not to force students to volunteer during discussion. The goal is for students to get a first-hand experience with how certain things are left off the historical record—purposefully omitted—for many reasons. On question (c.), use the discussion to begin to introduce the exploration of societal context in which events or activities are recorded.

You may choose to have students work alone or in groups. It is, however, important that the questions—and students’ responses—become part of a classroom discussion, either after or during their completion. Also consider the additional instructional tips (above).

In Part C...

Students work in groups (or individually if you prefer) to explore a public event. Using the graphic organizer provided, they record pieces of evidence that in some way could serve to document the details and context of the event—in writing or otherwise—such that future historians might be able to study what transpired. You may wish to select one event for the entire class, or have each group select their own event to study. You may even wish to have groups present their “event analysis” to their classmates upon completion. For each source or trace evidence listed, ask students to use their map to describe the following.

Alternative Instructional Strategy

Have students bring in artifacts of the event they are analyzing. They may use home resources such as the newspaper, pictures from magazines, or even recordings of television reports.

Don’t miss the opportunity to include discussion about physical artifacts. Specimens such as photos, coins, tools, and other objects also serve as trace evidence of the event chosen for study—and excellent examples of primary sources that often tell us things the written word cannot.

Who? How? Why?

Trace Evidence #1:

- *Who* recorded it?
- *How* was it recorded? (This refers to the circumstances, accidental or purposeful, that resulted in the evidence being recorded.)
- *Why* was it recorded? (This presents an excellent opportunity to discuss purpose and even to begin to introduce the concept of bias—see the Bias Rule in [Teaching with Source Documents](#)).

Context Analysis Source Explorations



Check out the **FREE** sample unit "A Long Time Ago"

Resources for teaching through historical source investigations. Access at:

<http://www.designedinstruction.com/learningleads/case.html>

For more on teaching and learning using historical source documents and artifacts, see [CASE: Context Analysis Source Explorations](#).

CASE represents a cohesive instructional approach that is adaptable to any classroom or home teaching environment. The CASE overview page contains a regularly updated variety of CASE instructional units (including the free sample unit on child labor—"A Long Time Ago"), as well as links to each pertinent instructional resource used in units. Visit regularly for new additions and options.

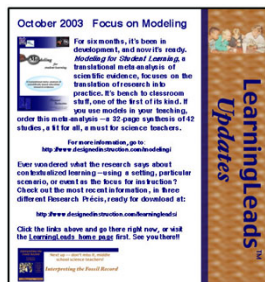


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