**Analyzing Historical Documents:**

**Reconstructing the Daily Life of a Woman in Freeport, PA in the Civil War Era**

***Introduction***

Students who are used to posting their everyday activities on their Facebook page are asked to reconstruct, with the help of her diary entries, the everyday life of a woman in Armstrong county, during the Civil War era.

This three to four-day lesson introduces students to the work of historians in the archives. By providing them with extracts from the diary of Rhoda Stone Lowry, the teacher helps students understand the work of historians who pore through archival material in order to produce historical monographs.

***Grades***: 9-12

***NCSS Standards Alignment***

NCSS 2: Time, Continuity, and Change

NCSS 5: Individuals, Groups, and Institutions

***Pennsylvania Standards Alignment***

History:

8.1.9-12.A.: Compare and evaluate patterns of continuity and change over time, applying context of events.

8.1.9-12.B: Compare the interpretation of historical events and sources, considering the use of fact versus opinion, multiple perspectives, and cause and effect relationships.

8.2.9.C: Compare and contrast how continuity and change in Pennsylvania are interrelated throughout U.S. history.

8.2.12.C: Evaluate how continuity and change in Pennsylvania are interrelated to the US and the world.

Reading, Writing, Speaking, and Listening:

**1.2.10.C:** Distinguish between essential and nonessential information across a variety of texts and sources from all academic content areas, identifying bias or propaganda where present.

**1.2.11.E:** Examine and respond to essential content of text and documents in all academic areas.

1.6.12.A: Listen critically and respond to others in small and large group situations.

1.4.11.B: Write complex informational pieces (e.g. research papers, literary analytical essays, evaluations)

Georgraphy:

7.3. Human Characteristics of Places and Regions

***Learning Objectives***

Students will be able to:

1. Analyze and interpret a historical text.
2. Evaluate the significance of a diary as a primary source.
3. Draw conclusions about the life of a woman such as Lowry in the 1860s.
4. Discuss the impact of the Civil War on those left on the home-front.

***Duration of Lesson***

Four class periods.

***Teacher Resources and Preparation***

For background about Rhoda Stone Lowry, see <http://www.iup.edu/page.aspx?id=86280>.

To print pages from the facsimile of the Rhoda Stone Lowry diary for students to transcribe, go to <http://www.accesspadr.org/cdm4/item_viewer.php?CISOROOT=/aiupa-cw&CISOPTR=86&CISOBOX=1&REC=2>. You can also access it at <http://libs0400.acadlib.iup.edu/depts/speccol/exhibits/civil%20war%20journal.pdf>.

For an unedited transcription of the Rhoda Stone Lowry diary, go to <http://www.iup.edu/page.aspx?id=86280> and click on the appropriate link.

***Teaching Activities, Procedures and Assessments***

Day One: Working as a Historian

Introduction (10 minutes)

Pairwork (20 minutes)

1. The Spencerian script was a popular script in the United States from the mid-19th century through the early decades of the 20th century. If students have access to laptops and the internet in the classroom, have them go to <http://www.iampeth.com/lessons_spencerian.php>. Scroll to bottom of the page and click on Spencerian Ladies Hand Exemplar 1 and 2. Otherwise, the teacher can make several copies of the images of the alphabet and numbers written in Spencerian script for distribution in class.
2. Print one or two pages from the Rhoda Stone Lowry (RSL) diary and distribute it to students. The diary can be found at the following URL: <http://www.accesspadr.org/cdm4/item_viewer.php?CISOROOT=/aiupa-cw&CISOPTR=86&CISOBOX=1&REC=2>.
3. Working in pairs, students are to try and decipher Lowry’s diary.

Class Discussion (10 minutes)

1. The teacher will guide the class in a discussion of the conclusions they can draw from the diary entries they have deciphered.
2. The class should also be encouraged to evaluate the usefulness of diaries as a primary source.

Homework

Students should write a paragraph about the usefulness of diaries as a primary source and what they hope to learn from the diary of Rhoda Stone Lowry.

Day Two: Reading the Rhoda Stone Lowry Diary

Because of time constraints, students will now be provided with a transcription of the Lowry Diary [<http://www.iup.edu/page.aspx?id=86280> Click on the link for the unedited transcription].

Working in groups, students are to read their individual allotment of the diary entries and share their discoveries within the group.

Sharing

1. Begin by having a few volunteers share what they wrote in their homework assignment.

Individual Work

1. Make multiple copies of the transcripted diary. There should be as many copies as there are groups.
2. Organize the class into groups of five.
3. Each group should be given ONE complete transcripted version of the diary.
4. Each student should be given 10 pages of the transcripted diary. (E.g. Student One gets pages 1-10, student 2 gets pages 11-20, and so on).
5. Each student should also be given a copy of the questions (see Handout 1).
6. Students are to read their allotted pages independently and enter information on Handout 1.

Day Three (Group Discussion)

1. Students gather in their groups to exchange information and share their discoveries with each other.
2. Each group will then discuss the group discussion questions in Handout 1.

Day Four (Debriefing/Class Discussion)

1. The teacher will lead a class discussion, focusing in particular on Questions 6 – 9.
2. Students should be encouraged to do the following:
3. Describe what they now know about Rhoda Stone Lowry.
4. Reconstruct Lowry’s daily life (based on what they discover from her diary).
5. Discuss whether her experiences can be generalized to describe those of other women in her situation.
6. Speculate on what life was like on the home-front for those who lived in areas that did not see combat.
7. Distinguish between fact and opinion in Lowry’s diary entries.