

## **CULTURALLY RELEVANT PEDAGOGY USING PRIMARY SOURCES**

### Tenet 1 in an Elementary Classroom

## **VIDEO GUIDE**

### **Description of Video**

Watch fifth grade teacher Andrea Bell-Myers lead her students through a primary source-based activity addressing tenet one of culturally relevant pedagogy (students choose academic success). See students analyze an 1895 photograph of a Ghanaian king and his court, draw conclusions about it, and compare this leader to other African kings they previously studied.

### **Audience**

Elementary teachers and educators exploring culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) and primary-source work

### **Purpose**

This document offers guidance for viewing the video and implementing primary source analysis and culturally relevant pedagogy in the classroom

### **Highlights**

- Fifth grade lesson investigating and comparing African kings
- Elementary students engaging in critical analysis of a primary source photo
- Culturally relevant pedagogy in action in an elementary classroom

### **Pedagogical Framework**

Culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) is a teaching framework established by Dr. Gloria Ladson-Billings at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. This video highlights how primary sources can provide a perfect vehicle for students to engage in meaningful learning. Primary sources are raw, unfiltered evidence from the past. When students encounter primary sources, they interpret the past through the lens of their own cultural knowledge. The multiple perspectives primary sources offer are integral to students constructing a richer and more nuanced understanding of their world.

This video focuses on the first tenet of CRP: “All students experience academic success.” See Tenet 1 come to life as students analyze a primary source to develop a deeper and more complex understanding of African leaders over time.

### **Note**

There is no “checklist” for creating a culturally relevant lesson. It is a way of thinking about one’s curriculum and instruction that places students and their own unique cultural knowledge at the center of classroom instruction. Titles or lesson ideas offered in this video are intended as examples of what could be used in a culturally relevant lesson.

## Guiding Questions

1. Andrea shares that her experience as a student of history was disempowering because the traditional US History narrative of African American people began with slavery. Think about the students in your classroom. How are the ancestors of your students portrayed in the curriculum? What problems with the traditional historical narrative can you address in your classroom?
2. African kings were a focus of historical study throughout the year in Andrea's classroom. Did you have any prior knowledge of the kings Andrea introduced (King Ghezo, Mansa Musa, Abubakari, or King Kobena)? Why or why not? Why do you think these kings are typically left out of the traditional narrative?
3. What role can primary sources play to fill in absent narratives in the curriculum?
4. Andrea makes a point to have her students investigate a portion of the primary source before they get to see the entire photo. In what ways does this strategy encourage rigorous analysis?
5. Andrea adds "I know..." to the Observe-Think-Wonder analysis chart. Why do you think she adds "I know" and what is the impact on students?
6. Rather than explaining the photograph to students, Andrea had them use the Observe-Think-Wonder-Know chart to engage in an inquiry of the source. In what ways does this process require students to engage in critical thinking? What kind of support is necessary to guide students through a process like this?
7. David O'Connor points out that a teacher must be a warm demander, both pushing students at the edges of their ability and providing love and support to help them reach high expectations. How is Andrea a warm demander in this lesson? In what ways do you serve as a warm demander for your students? How can you be more intentional about your expectations of and support for students?
8. Primary sources serve to supplement the traditional curriculum in Andrea's classroom by providing evidence of stories and experiences from the past that reflect the background of many of her students. Think about the students you have in your own classroom. What kinds of experiences and backgrounds are represented in your class that is not clearly reflected in the curriculum? What kinds of primary sources could help fill those gaps?
9. Motivating students to choose academic success is difficult and looks different from classroom to classroom. What measures does Andrea take to excite and engage *her* students with academic tasks? How might that look similar or different in your own classroom?
10. Throughout the video, Andrea makes it clear that she believes she is empowering her students by teaching them about stories that are not usually found in the traditional historical narrative. How can history empower your students? What kinds of stories might be especially empowering for your students?

**Next Steps:**

- Visit the Inquiry in the Upper Midwest Website [mnhs.org/ium](https://mnhs.org/ium)
  - Watch a webinar on Making Primary Sources Accessible for Struggling Learners [education.mnhs.org/ium/professional-development#webinars](https://education.mnhs.org/ium/professional-development#webinars)
  - Sign up for an upcoming workshop on using primary sources in the classroom [education.mnhs.org/ium/professional-development](https://education.mnhs.org/ium/professional-development)
  - Check out the other modules on Culturally Relevant Pedagogy Using Primary Sources [education.mnhs.org/ium/teaching-materials](https://education.mnhs.org/ium/teaching-materials)
- Explore primary sources online at the Minnesota Historical Society: [search.mnhs.org](https://search.mnhs.org)
- Explore primary sources online at the Wisconsin Historical Society: [wisconsinhistory.org](https://wisconsinhistory.org)
- Explore primary sources online at the Library of Congress: [loc.gov](https://loc.gov)
- Sign up to receive the Minnesota Historical Society Education eNewsletter: [mnhs.org/enews](https://mnhs.org/enews)