

Three Sides of the Smalls Story

Parent Guide, page 1 of 2

Read the “Directions” sheets for step-by-step instructions.

SUMMARY

In this activity, students will identify and analyze the historical data found within two newspapers reporting on Robert Smalls and the *CSS Planter*.

WHY

Through analyzing these two primary sources, students can better exercise critical thinking skills and consider perspective in written documents. Most documents include a bias of some kind, and comparing two stories about the same event helps students understand the roles of bias and perspective.

TIME

- 30 minutes or more, depending on student reading levels

RECOMMENDED AGE GROUP

This activity will work best for children in 4th through 6th grade.

CHALLENGE WORDS

See the individual articles for definitions.

GET READY

- Read *Seven Miles to Freedom* together. *Seven Miles to Freedom* is a biography of Robert Smalls, a brave man who used his boat-piloting skills to escape slavery and help the Union navy during the Civil War. For tips on reading this book together, check out the Guided Reading Activity (http://americanhistory.si.edu/ourstory/pdf/smalls/smalls_reading.pdf).
- Read the *Step Back in Time* sheets. Students will need a basic understanding of the Civil War to complete this activity thoughtfully.

More information at <http://americanhistory.si.edu/ourstory/activities/smalls/>

Three Sides of the Smalls Story

Directions, page 1 of 2

For adults and kids to follow together.

1. Break students into three groups and assign each group one of the three information sources.

Tip

The information sources are not all the same reading level. *Seven Miles to Freedom* is written for children and is the easiest to read. The *Charleston Daily Courier* is the next easiest to read. The *New York Herald* is the hardest to read. Consider the difficulty of the sources as you assign sources to your student groups.

2. Distribute copies of the sources and copies of the *ThinkAbout* sheet.
3. Once groups have completed their *ThinkAbout* sheets, bring all three groups together and have groups report on their answers for each source.
4. Discuss the following questions or topics as a class.
 - What details do the sources agree on?
 - Where is Charleston? Where is New York? Find both places on a map. Which city was a part of the Union and which was a part of the Confederacy?
 - How do you think people in Charleston or New York felt while reading about these events? Do you think they would think Robert Smalls was a good American? Why or why not?
 - The *New York Herald* uses the names of the slaves. The *Charleston Daily Courier* only uses the names of the slaves' masters. Does this agree with other things you know about the North and South in the Civil War?

Three Sides of the Smalls Story

Teacher Guide, page 1 of 2

Read the “Directions” and “Parent Guide” sheets for specific instructions.

OBJECTIVES

The students will be better able to:

- Answer questions using written sources.
- Analyze written sources for bias.

STUDENT PERFORMANCE CRITERIA

- Notes include relevant details from sources.
- Discussion exhibits logical connections and comparisons.

STANDARDS

NCHS History Standards

K-4 Historical Thinking Standards

- 2D: Read historical narratives imaginatively.
- 2E: Appreciate historical perspectives.
- 3C: Analyze historical fiction.
- 4B: Obtain historical data.
- 4C: Interrogate historical data.
- 4D: Marshal needed information of the time and place.

K-4 History Content Standards

- 4B: The student understands ordinary people who have exemplified values and principles of American democracy.

5-12 U.S. History Content Standards

Era 5: Civil War and Reconstruction (1850-1877)

- 2A: The student understands how the resources of the Union and Confederacy affected the course of the war.

5-12 Historical Thinking Standards

- 2E: Read historical narratives imaginatively.

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Three Sides of the Smalls Story

Teacher Guide, page 2 of 2

2F: Appreciate historical perspectives.

3B: Consider multiple perspectives.

3F: Compare competing historical narratives

4B: Obtain historical data.

4C: Interrogate historical data.

4D: Identify the gaps in the available records and marshal contextual knowledge and perspectives of the time and place.

IRA/NCTE Language Arts Standards

1. Students read a wide range of print and non-print texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works.
3. Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, graphics).
7. Students conduct research on issues and interests by generating ideas and questions, and by posing problems. They gather, evaluate, and synthesize data from a variety of sources (e.g., print and non-print texts, artifacts, people) to communicate their discoveries in ways that suit their purpose and audience.

21st-Century Skills

Learning and Innovation Skills

- Critical Thinking and Problem Solving

Information, Media, and Technology Skills

- Information Literacy

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