

Chapter 9

Can We Believe What We Learn From Museums and Other Historic Sites?

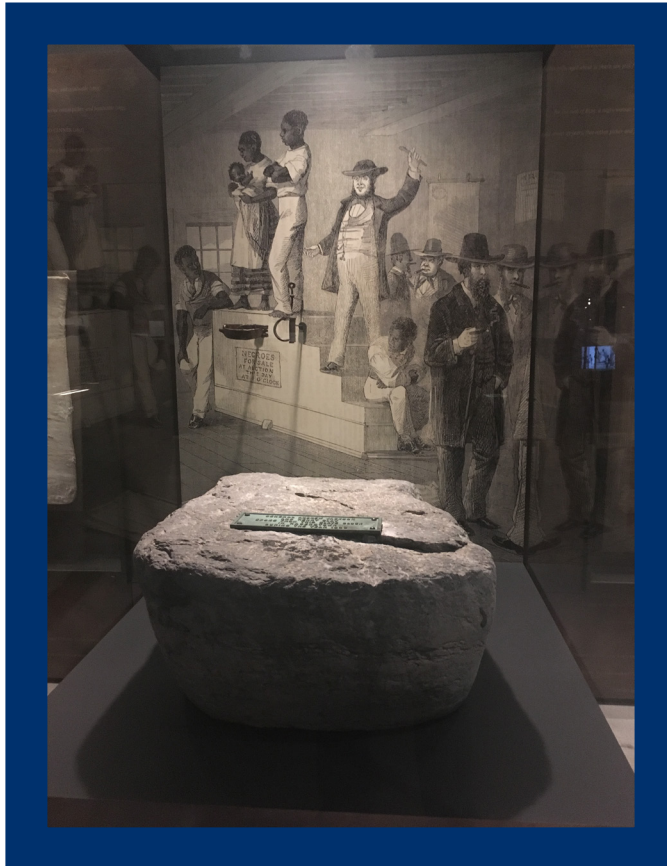
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Can We Believe What We Learn From Museums and Other Historic Sites?

<p align="center">C3 Disciplinary Focus History</p>	<p align="center">C3 Inquiry Focus Evaluating Primary Sources, Communicating Conclusions, and Taking Informed Action</p>	<p align="center">Content Topic Museums + Historic Sites</p>
<p>C3 Focus Indicators</p> <p>D2: Analyze the ways in which the perspectives of those writing history shaped the history that they produced. (D2.His.6.9-12)</p> <p>Explain how the perspectives of people in the present shape interpretations of the past (D2.His.7.9-12)</p> <p>Analyze how current interpretations of the past are limited by the extent to which available historical sources represent perspectives of people at the time. (D2.His.8.9-12)</p> <p>Use questions generated about multiple historical sources to pursue further inquiry and investigate additional sources. (D2.His.12.9-12)</p>		
<p align="center">Suggested Grade Levels 9-12</p>	<p align="center">Resources Cited throughout chapter</p>	<p align="center">Required Time Variable (Recommended 3 lessons)</p>

The lights were dim as I stood there staring at a 1,600 lb. grey [auction block](#) encased by glass sitting atop a platform. A bright spotlight shined down from the ceiling highlighting the commemorative plaque affixed atop the block where Andrew Jackson and Henry Clay, among others, once stood. Hanging behind the block facing me was a drawing depicting White auctioneers leading the bidding of Black enslaved people (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. *Auction Block on display at the National Museum of African American History and Culture*



Note. Photograph of the Auction Block on display at the National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington, DC, December 2016. Taken by Tina M. Ellsworth.

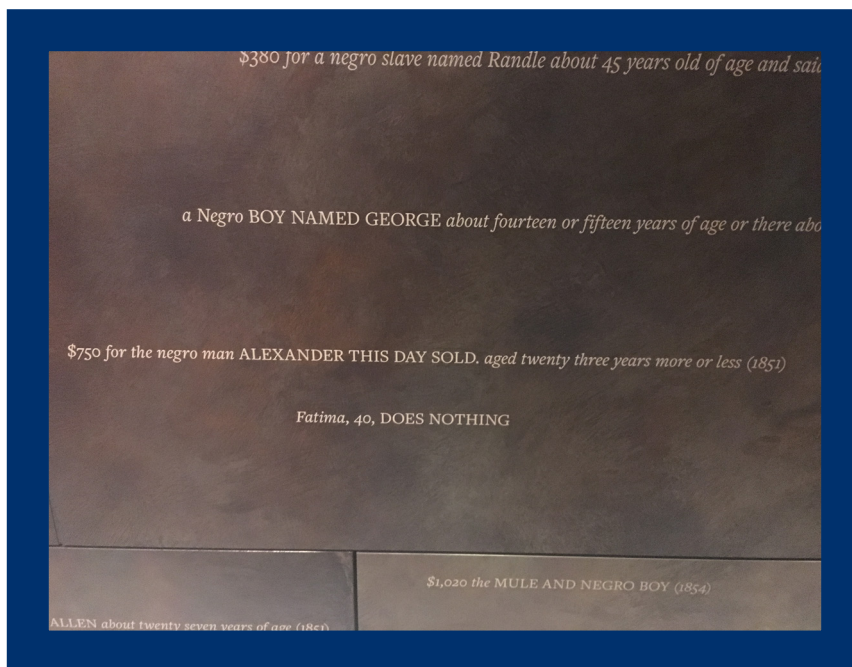
The block stood encased alone in front of a larger wall inscribed with auction ads that read (emphasis same as original) (see [Figure 2](#)):

YELLOW MARY, aged about 18, a GOOD SEAMSTRESS, can pick 500 lbs. cotton
per day
Jacob, 23, DEFECT IN EYE
PHILLIS, aged 20, field hand and cotton picker (1855)

a Negro slave Henry. We warrant the slave, to be sound, sensible, healthy and A
SLAVE FOR LIFE, \$2,025 (1856)
Fatima, 40, DOES NOTHING

Included in this display were photographs of auction houses on the “[Slave Market](#),” and [broadsides for auctions of enslaved persons](#).

Figure 2. *Exhibit at National Museum of African American History and Culture*



Note. Photograph of the walls next to the Auction Block on display at the National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington, DC, December, 2016. Taken by Tina M. Ellsworth.

The air was stale as I stood there in front of the auction block. The room was somber. I turned my ears to the speakers above my head to hear the histories of people who were enslaved being reenacted audibly with incredible passion, fear, anger, sadness, and frustration. Tears fell down my face as I heard stories of enslaved people and how their lives were impacted by the auction block. I was grateful that these powerful stories were collected from the [Federal Writer’s Project, 1936–1939](#) and were recorded by actors. The narratives were chilling. They sounded much like this [one](#).

I remember standing there for quite some time, paralyzed by the humanity on display. I was not only sickened at the institution of slavery in the colonies and the United States but also at the way it was boldly and unapologetically perpetuated and sustained by the continual dehumanization of Black people. I engaged in deep reflection as I questioned what I would have done if I were alive at that time. I thought about the things I was doing and could be doing now to advocate for equality for all people in the United States hundreds of years later.

It was evident to me that the museum had a mission and purpose for the narrative it had created—to “understand American *history* through the lens of the *African American* experience” [original emphasis] (NMAAHC, 2020)—and I was fully immersed in it. The narrative presented challenged the traditional dominant narrative of continual racial progress by demonstrating the history of White supremacy prior to the nation’s inception and carrying it through to present day. The auction block was but one small piece, but I will carry it with me forever.

I was 38 years old in December of 2016 when I first set foot in the National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC) in Washington, DC. I was able to visit the museum with a few hundred people as a special event with NCSS as a part of its national conference. And several years later, I still talk about it, think about it, and teach about it. I still wonder. I still ask questions. My curiosity is still alive and well. But most importantly, I was inspired to take action to educate others about our nation’s past, and to bring about greater equality for more people in the United States. This is the majesty of a museum experience.

Teachers use museums and historic sites for a variety of reasons (Brugar, 2012). However, some studies have shown that teachers do not always capitalize on student experiences at the museums (Marcus & Kowitt, 2016; Stoddard et al., 2015). This chapter is meant to guide teachers into helping students engage in inquiry, analyze sources, communicate conclusions, and take informed action (NCSS, 2017) by designing learning opportunities that situate students to critically examine content presented by museums and historical sites following the C3 framework. The chapter seeks to develop inquiry in teachers and students by posing questions that challenge the dominant narrative posited by these institutions. Teacher candidates will learn purposeful and powerful pedagogies (NCSS, 2017) for visits to and interactions with museums and historic sites built on inquiry-based practices that situate students to take informed action.

Rationale for Classroom Practice

Visits to museums and historic sites, such as the one described above, draw us in to engage with new content, deepen our historical understanding (Burgard, 2020; Burgard & Boucher, 2016), and position us to make sense of our present-day context so we are better prepared to take informed action.

Teachers may find themselves choosing museums and historic sites based on different criteria (Brugar, 2012). Perhaps they had a meaningful experience at one, much like I did at NMAAHC. Perhaps they are geographically bound, and options are limited based on where their school is physically located. Economics also certainly play into how teachers decide which site to visit (Kenna, 2019). It also could be that teachers “inherit” a trip because it is a tradition for their school. On the other hand, as technology improves and more museum spaces move to virtual environments, teachers may find themselves planning learning opportunities for students with virtual field trips to museums or historic sites (Marcus et

al., 2017). No matter how or why they choose their visit, it is incumbent upon teachers to create a meaningful learning opportunity that deepens students' historical understanding through inquiry-based practices, while teaching them to question information that often goes unchallenged in museum spaces (Burgard & Boucher, 2016).

There is tremendous power in visits to museums and historic sites given that “museums can afford the chance to learn about history not available elsewhere” (Stoddard et al., 2015, p. 124). Museums and historic sites have the “potential to profoundly impact students' ability to create meaning from treasured fragments of history,” (Burgard, 2020, p. 58) and deepen their understanding of the past (Marcus et al., 2012). Historic sites provide students an opportunity to engage with primary sources they likely have never seen before. Educational specialists often guide visitors through various exhibits while highlighting interesting and unknown facts, sharing the story behind the story, and leading participants through various activities intended to deepen historical understanding (Stoddard et al., 2015).

But how do we know if students learn what we intend for them to learn? Do they just approach the museum as passive observers or consumers without considerations for how to cultivate deeper historical understanding because of the trip? Thinking back to “[Perspectives of the Primary Source Creator, Selector, and Learner](#)” (Ken Carano and Tina Ellsworth), do students consider the perspectives of the source creator, the selector, or even their own personal perspectives when engaging with historical sources? Do they misinterpret what they read, and ultimately walk away with misconceptions of museum content and therefore have less understanding of the past from when they first walked in? Often, teachers miss critical learning opportunities for visits to museums and historical sites because of a lack of understanding of the learning that can happen there (Marcus et al., 2012). Instead, teachers should approach these visits as ways to not only engage students with new content through a vast number of primary sources, but also to position them to think critically and deeply about the narrative they encountered.

Public history has the power to shape or reshape a public's memory (Glassberg, 1996). As educators, we must be conscious of the museum curators' decisions, which are born “out of a desire to teach, to tell, to relate something to somebody” (McWilliam & Taylor, 1996, p. vii). These decision makers engage in purposeful curriculum gatekeeping (Thornton, 2006) by deciding what stories to tell and, more importantly, what stories *not* to tell, a pedagogy known as “remembering and forgetting” (Segall, 2014). The narrative created is often presented as *the* story of history, although the interpretive nature of history means that there is no such thing as *the* story; narratives serve as *a* story. Given that museums and historic sites are in public spaces, they are often perceived as authoritative and absolute (Marcus & Kowitt, 2016; Stoddard et al., 2015), and the narratives within them often go unchallenged (Burgard, 2020). It is important for teachers to be cognizant that stories represented at these sites are just as limited as narratives in a history textbook, and students should approach museum content “like any other source of historical knowledge” (Stoddard et al., 2015, p. 124).

Much like the curators and the educational specialists at historic sites, teachers, too, act as curricular gatekeepers with historic sites as they seek to “link the social studies curriculum” with “learning opportunities for students” (Thornton, 2006, p. 416). Teachers enact their gatekeeping by

- choosing the historic site,
- deciding how to set the stage for the visit,
- planning how to engage students with the content upon their arrival, and
- setting up debriefing opportunities following the visit (Burgard, 2020; Ellsworth, 2017; Thornton, 2006).

This chapter will discuss how to cultivate students’ critical historical inquiry as they explore museums and historic sites in a physical or virtual environment.

Using the C3 Framework

Museums provide an ideal space for students to hone their analytical skills given the myriad of primary sources they will encounter, the purposeful selection of those sources included in a museum, and the physical placement of the sources within the museum space itself. The C3 Framework provides support for how to cultivate inquiry in students in museum spaces, engage them in disciplinary thinking, position them to evaluate evidence, communicate conclusions, and most importantly, take informed action (NCSS, 2013). These four dimensions of the C3 Framework should be viewed as “interlocking and mutually reinforcing ideas” (NCSS, 2013, p. 16) that are operating iteratively, as opposed to treating them as a linear approach to learning.

The Inquiry Template

This museum inquiry follows the C3 inquiry framework using the Inquiry Design Model (IDM) (Swan et al., 2018). Although the IDM model suggests that teachers find a specific content angle to design the inquiry, the inquiry, “Can we believe what we learn from museums and historic sites?” is designed so teachers can apply it to any museum or historic site regardless of the content (Table 1). Then, teachers can make slight adjustments to be more content-specific based on the site they are visiting.

Questions are at the heart of an inquiry (Dimension 1). This compelling question is designed to “get under the students’ skin” (Swan et al., 2018, p. 141) by challenging commonly held beliefs about museums and historic sites. In this instance, students often view museums as authoritative and do not typically question what they learn (Marcus et al., 2012). By asking students if they can believe what they learn from historic sites, they will examine the narrative being presented, analyze the sources telling the story, and consider the

perspectives that are missing. This intersection of rigor and relevancy in this question should help draw students into the mystery.

Table 1. IDM Template

Inquiry Design Model (IDM) Blueprint™		
Compelling Question	Can we believe what we learn from museums and other historic sites?	
Standards and Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> D2.His.6.9-12. Analyze the ways in which the perspectives of those writing history shaped the history that they produced. D2.His.7.9-12. Explain how the perspectives of people in the present shape interpretations of the past D2.His.8.9-12. Analyze how current interpretations of the past are limited by the extent to which available historical sources represent perspectives of people at the time. D2.His.12.9-12. Use questions generated about multiple historical sources to pursue further inquiry and investigate additional sources. 	
Supporting Question 1	Supporting Question 2	Supporting Question 3
What story did the museum or historic site tell?	What sources were used to tell the story? Were they believable/reliable?	Whose stories/perspectives are missing?
Formative Performance Task	Formative Performance Task	Formative Performance Task
Write a paragraph describing the prevailing narrative.	Complete the graphic organizer for analyzing primary sources.	List stories or perspectives that were missing.
Featured Sources	Featured Sources	Featured Sources
Use sources in the museum or historic site.	Use sources in the museum or historic site.	Teachers may need to provide secondary sources.
Summative Performance Task	Can we believe what we learn from museum and other historic sites? Construct an argument that addresses the compelling question using specific claims and relevant evidence and information from historical sources while acknowledging competing views.	
Taking Informed Action	Ask students what can be done to make museums or historic sites more believable. Some possibilities may include writing letters to curators, advocating for a more comprehensive history, finding sources to add to a collection, transcribing digital sources so archives can add them to exhibits.	

Note. This table was adapted from the work of Swan et al. (2018).

Students will then use the sources on display at the museum or historic site to answer the supporting questions using the sources displayed (Dimensions 2 and 3). The first two supporting questions ask students to think about what the existing narrative is and to analyze sources that are telling that story. Students will write a paragraph describing the narrative they saw presented and will complete a graphic organizer of the primary sources they analyzed. The third question asks students to look for what is not included in the narrative. If students are unaware of what other perspectives might be missing, teachers may want to provide some secondary source information about perspectives of people from different racial, ethnic, or religious groups. Students will then craft an argument to answer the compelling question using claims and evidence from the historic site (Dimension 4). Then students will be prepared to take informed action. Later in the chapter, an example will be provided to show this framework applied to a specific museum space.

The Museum Framework and the C3 Connection

To deepen student understanding of this inquiry, Burgard (2020) provides teachers with a four-step framework to outline the learning opportunity for students when engaging with a museum or historic site, before, during, and after the visit that complements the inquiry.

Before the Visit (Dimension 1)

- **Step 1a.** Provide students with the context and purpose of the museum itself. This means talking about the site’s mission, purpose, and origination story.
- **Step 1b.** Provide students with background on the topic they will learn more about at the museum or site. Students should not encounter a museum with a blank slate. By providing them with background knowledge and some alternative narratives to the story, students are better positioned to challenge or question the narrative presented at the site, immediately situating them for critical thinking.
- **Step 2.** Engage in preliminary inquiry (Dimension 1) by providing students with critical questions for viewing the museum with an analytical lens. Ask students:
 - What do you expect to see when you get to the museum/historic site?
 - Whose stories do you expect to hear?
 - What types of artifacts and evidence do you expect to see?
 - What questions do you hope to have answered?

During the Visit (Dimensions 2 and 3)

- **Step 3.** As students engage and analyze the artifacts, have them choose different artifacts to analyze by making notes of their thoughts (Dimension 2 and 3). Encourage students first to encounter the artifacts strictly from an observational standpoint by answering questions posed by the Library of Congress sources like:
 - What is the source? (Include title)
 - Who created the source and when was it created?
 - Describe the source with detail. What do you see?
 - Where was the source physically located in the museum? What was its size in relationship to others? Where was it placed in relationship to others?
 - What sources corroborated each other? Which ones appeared contradictory? Were there any seeming outliers?

After the Visit (Dimensions 3 and 4)

- **Step 4a.** Ask students to individually reflect on their museum experience and draw conclusions about it (Dimensions 3 and 4).
 - Whose stories and voices did you hear? What did they say?
 - Whose stories/perspectives are missing/silenced? Why might they be missing?
 - What is the message of the history presented?
 - How does this museum shape the public memory?
- **Step 4b.** Engage students in whole class debriefing where they collectively critique the museum/historic site. Ask them to engage in open-ended inquiry where they ask new questions about what was missing in the museum and find answers to their own questions (Dimensions 3 and 4).
 - What did you see-think-wonder about the museum?
 - How reliable was the museum as a historical source?
 - What questions did you have that were answered? Were you satisfied with the answers? Why or why not?
 - What questions do you still have that were not answered that you would like to have answered?
 - How does this museum shape public history?
 - What do you think needs to be added to the narrative presented at the museum?

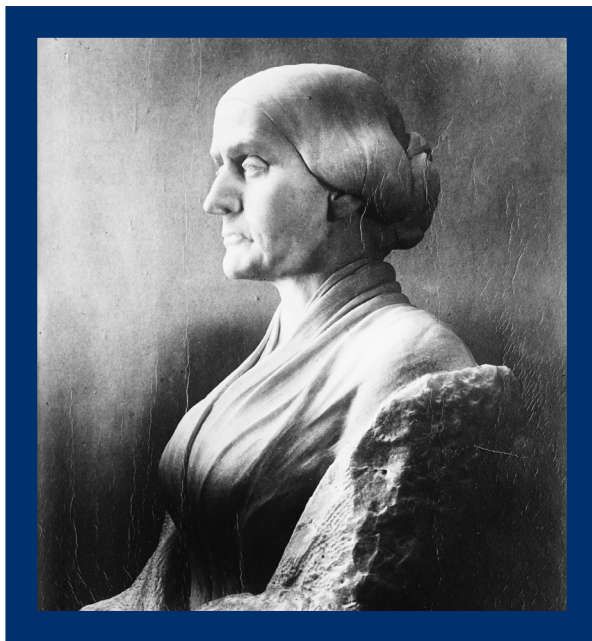
By applying a critical framework to museum experiences, students learn “how to evaluate whose stories are being told, and whose are not” and will be able to “recognize those gaps and be more motivated to seek knowledge and information to fill them” (Burgard, 2020, p. 63).

This can only be accomplished, however, if the teacher creates learning opportunities that have students “critically analyze, examine, and evaluate the curriculum presented at these sites” (Burgard, 2020, p. 63). Below is an example for how to apply the framework and embed the inquiry within it.

The Classroom Example: The Library of Congress’s Women’s Suffrage Exhibition

In 2019, I had the privilege to see the Library of Congress’s exhibition commemorating the centennial of the ratification of the 19th Amendment. Inside the Library, there was a separate exhibition space that emulated a museum. Using its own resources, and a few that were online from other collections outside of the Library of Congress, the Library’s staff built a temporary exhibition featuring events, people, places, and things, significant to women’s suffrage in the United States. A myriad of sources filled the one-room exhibit hall including a projector screen showing a documentary that ran on a loop, a bust of Susan B. Anthony (see Figure 3), photographs from the sentinels protesting at the White House gate during WWI, and many others. Makeshift walls were covered with artifacts accompanied with sourcing

Figure 3. *Bust of Susan B. Anthony*



Note. Harris & Ewing. (1915–1923). *Bust of Susan B. Anthony* [Photograph]. Library of Congress. <https://www.loc.gov/item/2016884755/>

information and brief contextual descriptions. For all intents and purposes, this exhibition was a museum.

During my time in that space, I was reminded of my experience at the NMAAHC. I recalled the continuous inquiry I was engaged in as I navigated the exhibition and the deep learning that occurred. Then, I decided I would simulate this experience for students using this exhibition since traveling there was cost prohibitive for my students. Suffrage was a timely topic because of heightened media coverage with the centennial of the 19th Amendment's ratification. As a result, some students' curiosities were already piqued, so it was important to me to have students engage with this exhibition specifically.

Choosing the Sources

For my classroom re-creation, I called upon the Library's digitized collection. At the time of this exhibition, the Library of Congress had published many of the permanent artifacts from the exhibition into its online collection (see Figure 4). Luckily, when exhibitions like this one are on physical display, even if only temporarily, curators often pull the sources and reposition them on the website to try to create a bit of a virtual museum experience for those unable to attend the physical exhibition. Therefore, if teachers are unable to physically attend the exhibition, they can still do much to recreate a museum in their classroom by providing students an opportunity to engage with many of the exact same artifacts that they would see if they were there in person.

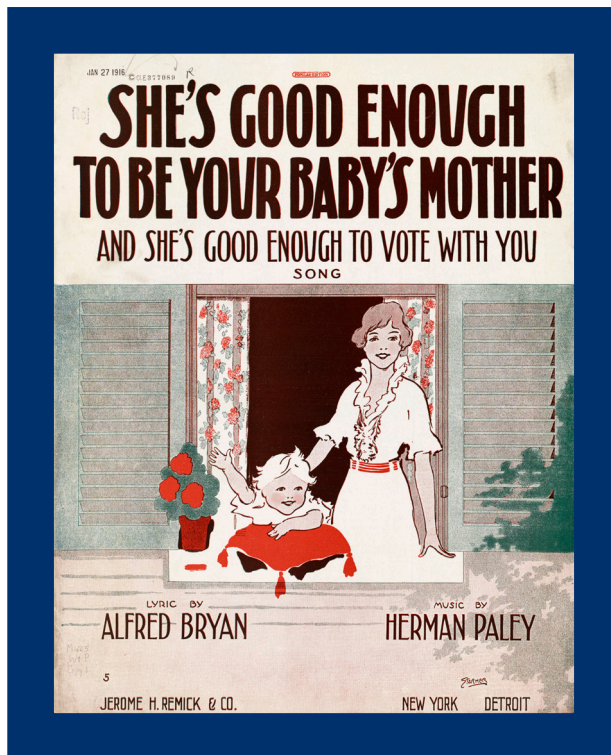
Figure 4. *Some of the Picket Line of November 10, 1917*



Note. Harris & Ewing. (1917). *Some of the picket line of Nov. 10, 1917*. [Photograph]. Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/mnwp000296/>

To recreate the museum in the classroom, I visited the Library’s homepage and found a link to the women’s suffrage exhibition. I read a brief description of the temporary exhibition and saw a list highlighting several of the sources featured in the exhibition. These artifacts included marquee records, images, merchandise, cartoons, ephemera of the movement, and even sheet and recorded music (Figure 5). By using varying types of sources, I was able to create the simulated museum space to meet the needs of all learners based on both ability level and interest. For striving readers, pictures, music, and images provided rich historical content that was immediately accessible to them. For other students, certain types of sources were more appealing than others, so their interest drove their interactions.

Figure 5. *She’s Good Enough to Be Your Baby’s Mother and She’s Good Enough to Vote With You*



Note. Bryan, A., & Paley H. (1916). *She’s Good Enough to Be Your Baby’s Mother and She’s Good Enough to Vote With You* [Notated Music]. Library of Congress. <https://www.loc.gov/item/2017562275/>

Using this list, I then initiated a keyword search in the search box on the Library’s exhibition home page and found links directly to the items in the Library’s permanent collections. I then copied the bulleted list from the exhibition website and linked the sources to the list (like what is shown below):

- [Abigail Adams’s letter](#) from 1799 refusing to consign women to an inferior status;
- A rare printed version of the “[Declaration of Sentiments](#),” a listing of demands which Elizabeth Cady Stanton read to a crowd of more than 300 at Seneca Falls, and the proceedings of a larger national women’s rights meeting two years later in Worcester,

- Massachusetts, that drew more than 1,000 suffrage supporters;
- A [sculpture of Susan B. Anthony](#) (portrait bust) that she hoped would one day be displayed in the Library of Congress, now on loan for the first time from the Belmont-Paul Women’s Equality National Monument;
- An original broadside of the [Declaration of Rights for Women](#) that suffragists distributed in Philadelphia in 1876, disrupting the nation’s centennial celebration when Anthony presented the declaration on stage to acting Vice President Thomas Ferry;
- A draft manuscript of Stanton’s controversial and best-selling “[The Woman’s Bible](#)” that paired Biblical text with feminist commentary;
- [Suffrage sheet music and merchandise](#) used to “sell” the idea of suffrage (“[She’s good enough to be your baby’s mother](#)”—[listen to a 1916 performance](#));
- Images and film footage of political activity on the streets, including the first national parade for suffrage in 1913 in Washington, DC, which exposed racial divides in the movement and was disrupted by an unruly mob ([photo](#); [Women’s suffrage procession](#); [Official program of the Woman suffrage procession](#); [Suffrage parade, Inez Milholland](#); [“Since my Margarette became-a-da-Suffragette” \[recording\]](#));
- Banners, [pins](#), and a [cap and cape worn](#) by suffragists during parades and demonstrations;
- Photographs of early picketing ([First picket line, Feb. 1917](#); [Kaiser Wilson](#); [Sailors attacking pickets](#); [Suffrage Picket Riots](#); [Grand picket at the White House](#); [Suffrage pickets marching around the White House](#)) at the White House and documentation of suffragists’ subsequent arrests, imprisonment and force feeding ([Occoquan](#); [Going to jail](#); [Cell in DC jail](#); [Hospital at DC prison showing Paul’s window boarded up](#); [Alice Paul describes force feeding](#));
- [Carrie Chapman Catt’s Ratification Notebook](#) with notes on her strategy to win ratification of the 19th Amendment in each state; and
- An interactive display on suffragists who helped win the vote state by state.

A full list of sources in the exhibition can be found [here](#). In addition to the primary sources, the Library provides secondary sources, such as [this brief video](#) that was played on a loop during the exhibition. If teachers wanted students to take a virtual field trip to the exhibition, they could use [this link](#).

By choosing the sources on the bulleted list on the Library’s homepage, I knew I would be providing students with many sources from the Library’s exhibition, albeit with physical limitations.

In preparation for our simulation, I printed copies of sources and displayed them in different locations in the classroom so students could view multimedia and audio artifacts, as well as documents and photographs in their own time and pace. I wanted students to tour the makeshift museum throughout the classroom in some of the same ways they could if they were on site.

It is important to note that this process can be repeated for many other museums and historic sites around the country, including ones in your area. Where exhibitions are not digitized, teachers can often reach out to the archivist, or educational outreach specialist for the site, and ask for assistance in curating sources that are used in the physical displays. Some museums also offer traveling trunks to bring museum spaces to classrooms (Oklahoma Historical Society, n.d.; Historic Columbia, 2021).

Critical Observations

As mentioned in an earlier chapter, teachers must always consider the perspectives of the creator, selector, and learner of the artifacts (see “[Perspectives of the Primary Source Creator, Selector, and Learner](#)” by Ken Carano and Tina Ellsworth). In this instance, teachers should critically examine the collection in the same way they expect students to by considering the perspectives of those who curated this collection and chose the sources to put on display. Doing so positions teachers to lead students through their own critique of the museum. Likewise, teachers should consider how their recreation of the museum space also puts them in the position of the selector.

In my investigation of the online collections for the women’s suffrage exhibit, I noticed the thumbnails that organized the artifacts in easy-to-navigate folders on the bottom of the [exhibition homepage](#) for the Library of Congress. Each folder had a photo as the cover with the following labels: Seneca Falls and Building a Movement, 1776–1890; New Tactics for a New Generation, 1890–1915; Confrontations, Sacrifice, and the Struggles for Democracy, 1916–1917; Hear Us Roar: 1918 and Beyond; and [More to the Movement](#). Initially, I concluded that the chronological ordering to the folders meant that the “More to the Movement” folder will take me to present day women’s issues, but it does not. Instead of a contemporary photo highlighting a woman’s issue, a dated photo of a person who appears to be a Woman of Color is used. I began to wonder then, what could be in this folder?

Upon further investigation, I uncovered that this folder was specifically created to discuss Black, Indigenous, and Women of Color (BIPOC) who fought for suffrage, which ultimately was not granted to many of them when the amendment passed in 1920 due to state laws impeding access to suffrage. The folder was limited to nine portraits of BIPOC suffragists and a brief biography on a suffragist highlighting the work each one accomplished. I began thinking about how I could address this glaring issue and decided to address it when students critique the museum and take informed action.

It should be noted that the Library's folder description acknowledges the lack of artifacts that tell stories of BIPOC who fought for suffrage. The Library attributes the lack of sources highlighting those contributions to overt acts of racism in the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) and the National Woman's Party (NWP) that limited or excluded active participation of BIPOC in those organizations at the time. Women of Color then organized themselves and joined religious organizations such as the [Woman's Convention of the National Baptist Church](#), and "local women's clubs and suffrage leagues" (Library of Congress, 2021) (see Figure 6). The Library encourages its users to creatively mine the collections to "make fresh discoveries" related to BIPOC women's efforts. This is an important acknowledgement on behalf of the Library, and one that teachers need to be hyper-sensitive to in hopes of positioning students to recognize the lack of sources that include perspectives of Women of Color. When students conduct the museum analysis, discussed later, the hope would be that they would notice this glaring omission. In the meantime, teachers should carefully consider how to include these artifacts in their simulated museum space.

Figure 6. *Banner State Woman's National Baptist Convention*



Note. Nine African-American women posed, standing, full length, with Nannie Burroughs holding banner reading, "Banner State Woman's National Baptist Convention." (1905-1915). [Photograph]. Library of Congress. <https://www.loc.gov/item/93505051/>

Setting Up the Classroom

Using the primary sources from the women's suffrage exhibition linked earlier in this chapter, as curriculum decision-makers, teachers can decide which items to include in their classroom field trip to the Library of Congress (Thornton, 2006). By using all the sources listed on the resource list, teachers will be replicating much of the exhibition in their own classrooms. Teachers may decide which items to print off, to make accessible via the website, or to display on a television or projector. Teachers may even utilize mobile technologies such as QR codes or interactive exhibitions from the institution's website. Likewise, teachers may include the musical recording resources as a running soundtrack in overhead speakers as students navigate the museum. Ideally, sources would be located all throughout the classroom to feel like a museum.

The teacher will have to decide how to organize the content inside of their simulated museum. One common way to organize historical content is to present it chronologically with a clear "entry" point to the exhibition. Teachers may consider moving desks to create "walkways" between different parts of the exhibition. Teachers should also think about the size and placement of items they choose to print off and display, while authentically questioning why they are making the decisions they are making relative to size and placement as well. A mixture of sources is critical to increasing access to museum content to as many learners as possible. For those struggling to read the documents handwritten in script, teachers should provide transcripts. In addition, by providing photographs, videos, and audio recordings, emerging English speakers or students with IEPs or 504s may be better positioned to engage with the content (Cruz & Thornton, 2013; Fleck, 2019) because the language is less of a barrier. Likewise, a myriad of sources means that students can engage with ones that particularly appeal to them without feeling compelled to read every word of every source, which many museum participants do not do either (Schorch, 2013).

Regardless of how teachers set up the exhibition, students may engage with its content in any order they choose in the same way that museum attendees interact with museum spaces. By giving students this type of freedom, they can follow their own natural curiosities and find sources that connect with them and answer their own questions.

Applying the Museum Framework

While Burgard's (2020) framework provides students an opportunity to not only analyze artifacts on display at a museum or historical site, it can also still be effectively applied to off-site experiences as well with little adaptation. For this example, the framework will be modified for recreating the Library of Congress' women's suffrage exhibition in a classroom. When replicating a single museum space, teachers should not include sources on women's suffrage that were not in the original exhibition/collection, even though sources exist in other museums' and historic sites' online collections. By providing sources from a single institution's collections, students can get a better sense of the narrative created by it and are better positioned to analyze it.

Staging the Inquiry

Teachers should launch the investigation by asking students the compelling question: “Can we believe what we learn from museums and other historic sites?” Given that these sites go largely uncontested (Marcus & Kowitt, 2016; Stoddard et al., 2015), students may respond with a simple “yes.” However, since the teacher posited the question in the first place, their own curiosities may be heightened causing them to question whether or not they should. Teachers should use this dialogue as a segue into talking about a trip they will be taking to a museum or historic site whether it be in person or in a simulated space.

Before the Visit: Providing Background and Context

In preparation for the museum visit, and prior to having students engage in the museum inquiry, Burgard (2019) suggests teachers share background information about the historic site. In this case, students need to know more about the Library of Congress, so they can better understand the overall exhibition. Teachers can share as much or as little of the history as they deem necessary. This background about the Library is meant to serve as a guide.

Background on the Library

According to its website, the Library of Congress was created in 1800, as an act of Congress when the federal government moved from Philadelphia to Washington, DC. A joint Congressional committee provided the Library’s oversight while the librarian post became a presidential appointment, underscoring the Library’s unique relationship with the government. President Thomas Jefferson believed in the unique relationship between knowledge and democracy, which ultimately “shaped the Library’s philosophy of sharing its rich, often unique collections and services, as widely as possible” ([loc.gov/about/](https://www.loc.gov/about/)). Ainsworth Rand Spofford, the Librarian of Congress from 1864–1897, believed that the Library of Congress is the nation’s library and “successfully advocated for a single, comprehensive collection of American publications for use by both Congress and the American people” ([loc.gov/about/history-of-the-library](https://www.loc.gov/about/history-of-the-library)). A full history of the Library’s history can be found on the Library’s website under “[About the Library](https://www.loc.gov/about/).”

The Library of Congress is the largest library in the world with “millions of books, recordings, photographs, newspapers, maps, and manuscripts in its collections” ([loc.gov/about/](https://www.loc.gov/about/)). It seeks to “preserve and provide access to a rich, diverse, and enduring source of knowledge to inform, inspire, and engage you in your intellectual and creative endeavors” ([loc.gov/about](https://www.loc.gov/about/)). The Library’s mission is to “develop qualitatively the Library’s universal collections, which document the history and further the creativity of the American people and which record and contribute to the advancement of civilization and knowledge throughout the world, and to acquire, organize, provide access to, maintain, secure, and preserve these collections” ([loc.gov/about/](https://www.loc.gov/about/)).

Background on the Library's Exhibition

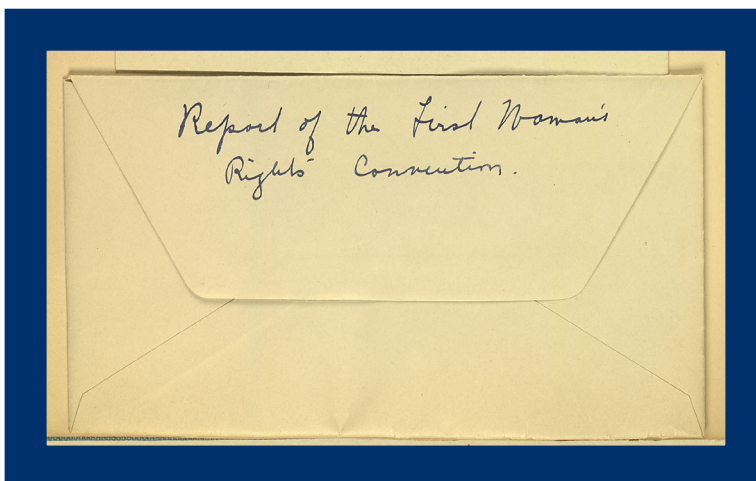
Share with students that for this trip, they will be “visiting” the Library’s new exhibition titled “[Shall not be denied: Women fight for the vote](#).” Explain that the exhibition boasts artifacts from personal collections of leading suffragists, as well as records from NAWSA and the NWP, which were donated to the Library. The exhibition “explores women’s long struggle for equality” by tracing the movement from the Seneca Falls convention in 1848, through “divergent political strategies and internal divisions the suffragists overcame, the parades and pickets they orchestrated for voting rights, and the legacy of the 19th amendment” (ratified in 1920) (Zongker, 2019).

Providing Background on the Topic of Woman’s Suffrage in the United States

Teachers should then provide students with historical information necessary to situate woman’s suffrage into a larger historical context. Given the historical context, students will then predict what they might see when they “visit” the exhibition and predict the message of the narrative at the museum or historic site. Students should also include what questions they think the museum will answer.

Teachers will determine how much content students will need to be able to contextualize the suffrage movement in the United States. The following is a sample background teachers may use: Women in the United States were not granted suffrage until 1920. Historians typically mark the beginning of the woman’s suffrage movement in the United States with the Seneca Falls Convention of 1848, the first women’s rights convention, which resulted in the crafting of the Declaration of Rights and Sentiments ([Figure 7](#)). For the next 72 years, women engaged actively in their citizenship by protesting, writing, lobbying, and organizing. Three generations of suffragists sought to achieve suffrage, but for whom? All women? Or just White women? Leading women’s suffrage organizations that make up the dominant historical narrative, such as NAWSA and NWP, had splintering ideologies about approach, strategy, and end goals, but ultimately secured the right to vote in 1920 with the ratification of the 19th amendment to the U.S. constitution.

Figure 7. *Report on Woman's Rights Convention, Seneca Falls, New York*



Note. *Report of the Woman's Rights Convention, held at Seneca Falls, New York, July 19th and 20th, 1848. Proceedings and Declaration of Sentiments.* (1848). Library of Congress.
<https://www.loc.gov/item/rbcmiller001106/>

Additional Information

In addition to this background information, teachers should select brief, key passages from secondary sources to provide students with a general overview of the women's suffrage movement from textbooks, the [Library of Congress](#), and other museum websites such as the [National Women's History Museum](#) and the [Turning Point Suffragist Memorial Association website](#).

Initiate Inquiry

Now that students know a little about the Library of Congress, the exhibition they are about to see, and the women's suffrage movement in the United States, they are ready to engage in preliminary inquiry (Dimension 1). Teachers should restate the compelling question: "Can we believe what we learn from museums and other historic sites?" To activate students' schema in preparation for the visit, teachers should ask questions such as:

- What do you expect to see when you get to the museum/historic site?
- Whose stories do you expect to hear?
- What types of artifacts do you expect to see?
- What questions do you hope to have answered?

Teachers should share the three supporting questions that will position students to answer the larger question: "What story did the museum or historic site tell?" "What sources were used to tell the story and were they reliable?" and "Whose stories/perspectives are missing?"

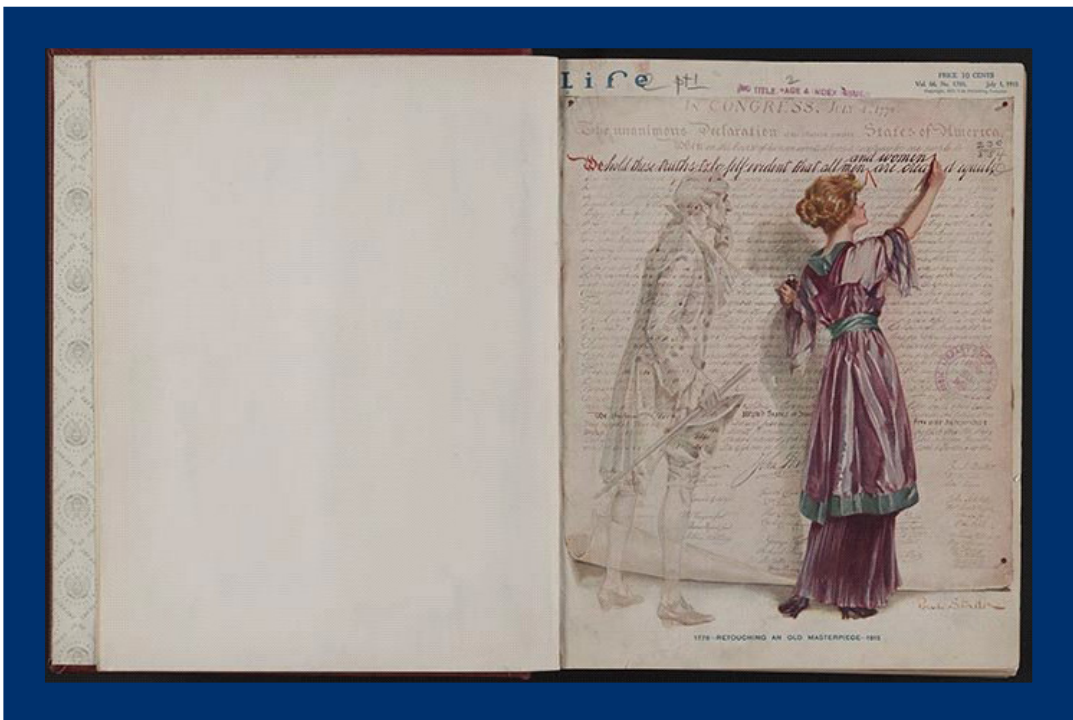
Teachers should explain to students that during their visit to the site, they will engage with many sources. These sources have already been decided by museum curators; however, students get to choose which ones they closely analyze. Following the Library of Congress’s “observe-reflect-wonder” protocol, a Museum Source Analysis Guide has been created for students to log their findings for any ten sources of their choice (Table 2). Teachers will provide each student with a copy of the guide and introduce them to the questions in the row across the top.

Table 2. Museum Source Analysis Guide

Museum Source Analysis Guide (observe and reflect)					
	What is the source? (Title?)	Who created it? when? Describe the creator and explain how who the person is likely shaped the creation of the source might the creator have created the artifact?	Describe the artifact with detail. What do you see?	What is the creator’s position or perspective?	What is the purpose/message of the source?
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					
9					
10					
Wonder					
What questions do you have about woman’s suffrage in the United States that were not answered in the artifacts you examined? What new questions emerged from the artifacts you encountered?					

To prepare students for using this guide throughout the “visit” to the museum, teachers should model how to use the guide (Table 2). Start by showing students 1776—*Retouching an old masterpiece*—1915 (Figure 8). Given that many students will approach museum spaces by observing a picture first before reading any sourcing information, start your analysis of this document in the same way. Hide the title and other sourcing information. Ask students to write a headline or caption for the picture in no more than ten words. Give them a few minutes to examine the artifact as closely as they would like, while keeping this activity under five to seven minutes. Then, begin to reveal some of the sourcing information. Ask students to hypothesize what year this was created while citing evidence from the picture to back up their claim. Then, reveal the date. Give students an opportunity to consider what might have been happening at the time and edit their caption with this new knowledge. Repeat this process with other elements of the sourcing information until all information is revealed. Then, using this same source, guide students through the blank Museum Source Analysis Guide by answering the questions together as a class. Sample responses students may give have been provided below (Table 3).

Figure 8. *Retouching an old masterpiece*



Note. Stahr, P. (1915, July). 1776—Retouching an Old Masterpiece.” In *LIFE Magazine*. Library of Congress. www.loc.gov/exhibits/creating-the-united-states/declaration-legacy.html#obj4

Table 3. Sample Modeling of the Museum Source Analysis Guide

Museum Source Analysis Guide (observe and reflect)				
What is the source? (Title?)	Who created it and when? Who is the creator? Why then might the creator have created the artifact?	Describe the artifact with detail. What do you see?	What is the creator’s position or perspective?	What is the purpose/message of the source?
Retouching an old masterpiece	Paul Stahr July 1915. Stahr was an American illustrator from NYC and was a second-generation immigrant. He might favor woman’s suffrage because he believed in the “American dream” of equality and thought the US was not living up to its creed.	It is a drawing. I see a white woman (whose outfit is brightly colored) writing “and woman” with a quill pen on a copy of the DOI next to “We hold these truths to be self-evident that all men and women...” The DOI is life size on a flat surface in front of her. There is a ghost-like man standing behind her watching her make the edits. He has his hand on his chin as if he is thinking.	I think the author agrees that the DOI meant to include women also. Since this was made before women got the right to vote, I would say that he supports woman’s suffrage. He says to add the word is “retouching” an old masterpiece. Usually retouching makes things better. He also made the woman look beautiful and colorful while the rest of the drawing is done in pencil. The fact that it was a cover of a major magazine makes me think the editors agreed.	The author is trying to garner support for woman’s suffrage by appealing to the words of the founding fathers, whose principles people claim to hold dear. His choice to include a founding father as a ghost makes me think that he agrees, or at least thinks it’s a good idea.

During the Visit

If visiting a historic site in person, students are likely to be greeted and welcomed to the museum and given instructions from a museum liaison. If replicating a historic site in a classroom, teachers can serve in this role. Remind students that ultimately, they will be answering the question “Can we believe what we learn from museums and other historic sites?” through the investigation of the supporting questions. The blank Museum Source

Analysis Guide (Table 2) is provided to help students answer the first two supporting questions: “What story did the museum tell, and what sources were used to tell the story?” and “Were they believable/reliable?”

Encourage students to become familiar with the museum’s narrative and its sources before deciding ultimately which ones to use. Allow students to visit any part of the classroom museum that they wish, and to navigate it as their own interests take them. While students will encounter a wide array of primary sources, their task is to specifically log their thinking about any ten of the artifacts using the graphic organizer (Dimension 2 and 3). Encourage students to encounter the artifacts strictly from an observational standpoint first by focusing on the first two columns of the analysis form:

- What is the source? (Include title)
- Who created the source and when was it created? Describe who the creator is and hypothesize about how who the person is likely shaped the creation of the source.
- Describe the source with detail. What do you see?
- (If on site, teachers may want to add one more column that asks students to consider where the source is physically located in the museum, making note of its size and physical size in relationship to others.)

After these initial observations, students should then answer the analytical questions in the remaining columns based on what they saw. Students should think through these answers on their own before the whole class debrief after the simulation. Have students record their thoughts on the analysis form.

- What is the creator’s position or perspective?
- What is the purpose or message of the source? What did the author want you to think or feel?

At the end of the visit, ask students to fill out the “Wonder” section on the bottom of the guide. Here, students will record questions that remain unanswered from the pre-visit activity or record new questions they have birthed from the sources they encountered. These questions should be open-ended and should prompt further investigation and inquiry.

After the Visit

The day after the visit, teachers should pose the compelling question back in front of the students. Prior to a full class discussion, teachers should provide students time to reflect individually on their museum experience. Students can use their analysis guide where they took some initial notes and made observations to help them answer the following questions:

- Whose stories and voices did you hear? What did they say?
- Whose stories/perspectives are missing/silenced? Why might they be missing?

- What is the message of the history presented?
- How does this museum shape the public memory?

After students have a chance to reflect, reconvene students and engage them in whole class debriefing where they share their answers to these questions citing evidence from the sources they examined (Burgard, 2020). Lead students through a discussion and ask them to engage in open-ended inquiry where they ask new questions about what was missing in the museum and find answers to their own questions. Some questions that could be used to guide the discussion may include:

- What did you see-think-wonder about the museum?
- How reliable was the museum as a historical source?
- How thorough was the narrative put forth by the museum?
- What questions did you have that were answered? Were you satisfied with the answers? Why or why not?
- What questions do you still have that were not answered that you would like to have answered?

Conclude this first debrief by having students answer the compelling question: “Can we believe what we learn from museums and other historic sites?”

In some instances, students’ limited knowledge of the suffrage movement may prevent them from answering some of these questions. Teachers should then direct students to the following websites that contain primary and secondary sources about Black women who fought for suffrage concurrently, before circling back to these questions. Doing so would provide students with an opportunity to think more critically about the questions because they will have the historical content to provide greater context.

- [“How Black Suffragists Fought for the Right to Vote and a Modicum of Respect,”](#) *Humanities: The Magazine of the National Endowment for the Humanities*
- [“Between Two Worlds: Black Women and the Fight for Voting Rights,”](#) *National Park Service*
- [“African American Women Leaders in the Suffrage Movement,”](#) *Turning Point Suffrage Memorial*
- [“Five You Should Know: African American Suffragists,”](#) *National Museum of African American History and Culture*
- [“How the Suffrage Movement Betrayed Black Women,”](#) *The New York Times*

After students have been exposed to additional significant narratives, revisit the questions they initially answered on their own about the stories and voices heard and the ones missing/silenced. As a whole group, discuss the exclusion of these groups and ask students to draw conclusions about why museums do this. Then, pose the compelling question one last time and prompt them to consider why museums should be critically evaluated like any

other historical source and not uncritically trusted as an authoritative source of historical knowledge (Marcus & Kowitt, 2016; Stoddard et al., 2015).

When I asked Library of Congress staff about the omission of Black voices in the exhibition, they explained that collections donated to the Library were overwhelmingly White due to the racism that existed within the more recognized women's groups at the time. The National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) and the National Woman's Party (NWP) both intentionally excluded Black women from their suffrage groups. The NWP website recognizes the "legacy of racism and classism that we must acknowledge, confront, and correct" (National Woman's Party, 2018) both as a party and as a part of the larger feminist movement.¹ As a result, there are no sources from NAWSA and the NWP chronicling Black women's efforts to secure the vote in the collections that were donated to the Library. It is also important to note, however, that museum curators are tasked with building historical collections. We must ask questions about why there are scant sources within the Library (and some other institutions) that share stories of Black suffragists from the same time period. Likewise, it's equally important to ask why some of the sources on Black women suffragists that do currently exist in other collections within the Library of Congress were not also pulled as a part of this exhibit. Students should learn that Black women were incredibly active in suffrage efforts and ultimately formed their own organizations and clubs that sought to universal suffrage. Just because their stories were not included in this exhibition does not mean that Black women were not active when White women's groups shut them out.

At some point during the discussion, teachers should share with students how they selected which sources to include in the classroom museum and how they decided which ones not to use. They should also share with students the vast number of resources they could have used. Share with students that their interpretation of the historical event is being shaped even when choosing which sources to include or not include. Ask students to visit some of the additional resources on the Library of Congress's website and ask them which additional sources they would have included if they had designed the learning experience. Ask them to justify their decision in light of what they know now.

Dimension 4 of the C3 framework calls on students to answer the compelling question by citing evidence and considering counterarguments. Students should now be positioned to answer the compelling question, citing evidence from both inside the Library's collection and outside of it. Students should communicate their findings with each other.

Teachers may conclude this discussion by asking students their thoughts on the present-day accusation levied at many museums: the narratives are whitewashed. Ask students to read "[People are calling for museums to be abolished. Can whitewashed American history be rewritten?](#)" Ask students to provide an argument as to whether they agree with this position using evidence from the exhibition they just investigated. (Teachers may be interested in

¹ In 2020, the NWP unified with the Alice Paul Institute (API) under the API banner. Although the NWP site and mission are no longer active, the Alice Paul Institute has affirmed its commitment to anti-racism in its actions and how it presents history (A. Hunt, personal communication, January 26, 2023).

additional lessons about women’s suffrage provided by the Library of Congress that can be found on its classroom materials website under the “[Women’s History](#)” heading.)

Taking Informed Action

The second part of Dimension 4 of the C3 Framework calls on students to take informed action. An inquiry is incomplete without providing students an opportunity to act on their new learning. Providing students with the “so what” or “now what” situates students to engage in civic action. Teachers should consider multiple ways in which students could act on what they know (Levine, 2013; Muetterties & Swan, 2019), while remaining open to student ideas. Taking informed action can look different to different people. The idea is to find something that originates in students’ own questions and interests.

Muetterties & Swan (2019) encourage students to consider what action type they want to take: Be informed, be engaged, be a leader, or be the change. If students chose to “be informed,” they will learn more about the issue and share what they learned. This action may look like writing a public service announcement (PSA) or creating a podcast. If students opt to “be engaged,” then they will interact with others with shared interest on an issue. Taking this type of action may look like volunteering or attending a meeting. For students who prefer to “be a leader,” they will find ways to organize people in order to address a concern. Students of this type may organize a rally or form a club. Lastly, students may aspire to “be the change.” These are students seeking “transformation, meaning they take an action that will address the root cause of their issue” (Muetterties & Swan, 2019, p. 235). Students of this type may contact policymakers to bring about systemic change in their communities. Ultimately, the purpose of taking action is to connect student learning to civic engagement and “provide a tangible way to apply learning in and out of the classroom” (Muetterties & Swan, 2019, p. 237).

Be Informed: Add to the Classroom Collection

Now that students have identified gaps in the stories of BIPOC in the Library’s women’s suffrage exhibition, their first step of action might be to learn more about these untold stories. Students might want to engage with the “[Mary Church Terrell: Advocate for African Americans and Women](#)” campaign with artifacts demonstrating Terrell’s work in women’s suffrage (see Figure 9). By spending time in the Terrell collection, they will not only find some answers, but can consider what sources should be added to the classroom exhibition.

Figure 9. *Mary Church Terrell*



Note. *Mary Church Terrell, three-quarter length portrait, seated, facing front. (1880–1900). [Photograph].* Library of Congress. <https://www.loc.gov/item/97500102/>

Teachers may also have students find sources outside of the Library to be added to the classroom exhibition to make it more inclusive than the sources provided by the Library’s collections. One such website may include the Smithsonian Institution’s [Votes for Women website](#) that features curated sources from multiple institutions within its system. Students should locate an artifact, identify the sourcing information, and provide justification for why it should be included by considering the context of the item, and its significance to women’s suffrage in the United States.

Be Engaged: Help the Library Improve its Collection

After students find new sources amplifying Black, Indigenous, and other Women of Color in their efforts to seek the right to vote, students can be engaged by advocating for the inclusion of these sources in the Library's Suffrage Collection. They can petition the Library of Congress to include these sources first by pulling from the Library's own Terrell collection and including them in its collection about women's suffrage also. By including advancements towards suffrage made by Black, Indigenous and other women of Color, the collection would provide a more comprehensive history of women's suffrage in the United States.

Students can also be engaged with the Library of Congress by participating in the "[By the People](#)" Program, which was launched in 2018, and invites people to "transcribe, review, and tag digitized images of manuscripts and typed materials from the Library's collections." By helping with these transcriptions and tags, the "search, readability, and access to handwritten and typed documents" will greatly improve (Library of Congress, 2021). Volunteers completed the collection, "Organizing for Women's Suffrage: The NAWSA Records" in 2022; however, there are several active campaigns at the time of the publication of this text that seek volunteers to help improve access to the sources. As more museums, historic sites, and other archives continue building digital collections, it is likely that transcription will always be needed. Transcribing is one way that individual teachers and students can take informed action. Now that teachers and students know the collections are limited in the perspectives represented in the collection, they can act to increase access to other sources by creating transcriptions.

Be a Leader: Carrying Home Lessons Learned From a Museum or Historic Site

It is important to note that engaging with museums and historic sites is not the only way to gather information about public histories. Our very own local communities are also laboratories for deep, relevant, and authentic investigation in the same way that museums and historical sites are. By viewing the local community as a place where students can identify not only issues of the past, but current public policy issues, teachers can situate students to examine evidence through the same critical lenses as demonstrated in this chapter.

In a Letter to Teachers, Vito Perrone (1991) argued many of the same ideas later posed by the C3 framework. He implores schools to allow students to study their own communities to better understand their world. He argues that "students see homelessness and poverty in the streets around them, they know about immigration as they hear so many languages spoken, they are aware of community violence, drugs, war and the threat of war" (p. 39), and yet schools often ignore these realities that students plainly see, and even more importantly,

care about. He posits that when school appears to be disconnected from students' lived experiences, "schools don't often make the local community architecture or its historical and cultural roots a focus of study. The community's storytellers and craftspeople are not common visitors. The literature that is read is seldom selected because it illuminates the life that students see day in and day out outside the school" resulting in a "trivializ[ing] much of what students learn" (p. 39). When teachers use place-based investigations (Smith, 2002; Sobel, 2004; Stoddard et al., 2015), students could find the relevancy of their skills and will be situated to be civically engaged.

After learning about women's suffrage, and the racism within the movement, students may seek to find other issues of race-based inequities in their own communities. Once students have identified a race-based inequity, they can create their own walking or driving tour of significant issues, places, and people in their community using [Voice Map](#). This tool allows students to create their tours to draw attention to the inequities and provide audio to teach about the issues and inspire and motivate people to act to rectify them.

Be the Change: Public Participation

Students may then use their Voice Map to present the public policy issues to policymakers at a townhall meeting and ask for a new law that will help address a racial inequity. They may present to other local civic groups to not only inform, but to help organize to bring larger, systemic change to the issue. They may even raise money to help address the causes of the inequities.

The key to Dimension 4 is to have students act on their own learning in a way they find meaningful and relevant, which are the same skills that are "needed for active and responsible citizenship" because "individual mastery of content no longer suffices; students should also develop the capacity to work together to apply knowledge to real problems" (NCSS, 2013, p.19).

Bonus Content: Virtual Museums

Given the realities of COVID-19, and what is quickly becoming known as "pandemic teaching/education" (Cohan, 2020; Peters & Besley, 2021), it is likely that teachers will be turning more to virtual museum exhibitions given that many museums and other historic sites are closed or have rules that make it difficult to visit a site in person. While the women's suffrage exhibition could be largely viewed online, and a teacher may choose to have students engage with the content in that way, the website does not provide a virtual tour of the site, thereby limiting the students' ability to examine placement, size, and sheer volume of sources included in the exhibition. However, many museums and other institutions seek to bring as much of the museum to your classroom as possible. The [National Park Foundation](#) provides virtual tours that allow students to see inside buildings and observe what is on the walls as well as items that are prominently displayed on the floor.

Likewise, [Google Arts and Culture](#) has teamed up with over 2,000 cultural institutions, museums, and galleries around the world to bring anyone and everyone virtual tours and online exhibitions of some of the most famous museums around the world. [Google Expeditions](#) and Virtual Realities allows students to explore collections of 360° scenes and objects, or to travel anywhere in the world with over [900 VR Expeditions](#) to choose from! Google's collection of over [100 augmented realities](#) allows students to see abstract concepts come to life! The critical piece to remember is that no matter the method in which students are engaging with museums and historic sites, teachers should plan for learning opportunities that have students thinking critically about the information they are consuming.

Conclusion

Museums provide students with artifacts, and other interactive and immersive exhibitions that provide rich learning opportunities and bring history alive. With appropriate facilitation and preparation, educators can enhance student learning where students can engage their own agency. For teachers to think of museums as “pedagogical spaces, entails exploring what, how, and toward what museums organize visitors to experience” (Segall, 2014, p. 55). Students must be explicitly taught how to conduct such exploration and not treat the public history as an authoritative one. Students then are empowered to participate in the “same evaluation of historic evidence that historians engage in” and are no longer passive consumers of knowledge and instead become creators of it (Burgard, 2020, p. 63). Our students, and trained historians, must challenge and question the public histories that serve as public memories in public spaces. Doing so will situate students to “uncover, expand, and elevate the long-silenced, forgotten, and painful histories” (Burgard, 2020, p. 63) of the oppressed and minoritized, better position them to understand the past, and ultimately act on that knowledge in the present. Questioning these sites cannot become a matter of “if” but rather of “when and how.”

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