

INTRODUCTORY LESSON: LUNCHROOM FIGHT

MATERIALS

- 📄 Student Handout - Lunchroom Fight

COMMON CORE ALIGNMENT

- ☰ Page 61 - #3 (Gr. 11-12), #6 (Gr. 6-12), and #8 (Gr. 6-12)

PLAN OF INSTRUCTION

1 Introduction.

Set the stage for students:

Imagine that you are the principal of a school and you just found out that there was a fight in the lunchroom during lunch. You've asked many students and teachers who witnessed the fight to write down what they saw and who they think started the fight. Unfortunately, you have received many conflicting accounts that disagree about important details of the fight, like who started it, when it started, and who was involved. It's important to remember that NO ONE is lying.

2 In pairs, students must answer the following questions:

- (a) How could there be ***different stories*** of the event if no one is lying?
- (b) Who are the ***different people*** who might have seen this fight? (e.g., friends of those involved versus people who don't know the kids who were fighting; those who were fighting versus those who were witnesses; adults versus kids).
- (c) What might make one person's story ***more believable*** than another person's?

3 Debrief.

Issues to discuss.

- (a) Why might people ***see or remember things differently?***
- (b) Who has an interest in one person getting in trouble instead of another? Who was standing where? Could they see the whole event?
- (c) The ***plausibility*** of the stories themselves (e.g., issues of exaggeration and how the stories fit into what is known about the students' prior histories). Is the story believable? Trustworthy?
- (d) ***Time***: Do stories change over time? How might what we remember right after the event differ from what we remember a week later? Does time make the way someone remembers something more or less trustworthy?

- (e) **Physical Evidence:** What physical evidence might affect who/what you believe (bruises, missing objects, etc.)?

4 As you discuss, be sure to underscore these points:

- (a) The principal needs to consider which stories are more or less reliable because it's important to understand why the fight began. Not only is it important that the instigator (if there was one) be punished, but also it's important to think about how to prevent such fights in the future.
- (b) Historians, in trying to figure out what happened in the past, essentially engage in the same work. Just like the principal, there's no way to actually recreate the moment or time-travel to witness it. All that historians have to work with is the remaining evidence—ranging from people's stories to physical artifacts.
- (c) Sourcing is the act of questioning a piece of evidence and trying to determine if it's trustworthy. When you source, you ask how people's biases or perspectives shape their story. This doesn't necessarily mean that a person is lying if he or she comes from a particular perspective. They still might have something valuable to contribute to your understanding of what happened in the past. But *as a reader* it's important to keep in mind that each person sees the world in a particular way. When you keep that in mind, you're sourcing.

LUNCHROOM FIGHT

NAME: _____ DATE: _____

DIRECTIONS

Imagine that you are the principal of a school and you just found out that there was a fight in the lunchroom during lunch. You've asked many students and teachers who witnessed the fight what they saw so you can figure out who started it. Unfortunately, you have received many different accounts that disagree about who started the fight, who was involved, and when it started. It's important to remember that NO ONE is lying.

In your group, answer the following questions.

QUESTIONS

(1) How could there be *different stories* of the event if no one is lying?

(2) Who are the *different people* who might have seen this fight? (Example: friends of those involved; people who don't know the kids who were fighting; those who were fighting; teachers; students.)

(3) What might make one person's story *more believable* than another person's?

Snapshot Autobiography

Materials: Copies of Snapshot Autobiography Project

Note: This lesson is designed to span two class periods.

First Day Plan of Instruction:

1. Journal free-write: What is the story of your birth?
Note: For various reasons, including adoption, some students may not know the story of their birth. We encourage you to keep this in mind throughout the lesson and offer students an alternative life event to write about if appropriate.
2. Pair/Share.
3. Whole class discussion:
 - *How do you know the story of your birth?*
 - *What evidence do you have to back your story?*
 - *How might someone else remember this story?*
4. Pass out and explain directions for the Snapshot Autobiography. Students begin to design pamphlets.

Homework: Students finish pamphlets **and** interview someone for second perspective.
(See second page of Snapshot Autobiography Project.)

Second Day Plan of Instruction:

1. Explain that we will first begin by sharing one of our important events. It does not necessarily have to be the one that you asked another person about.
2. Students each share one event. (Given time constraints, you might need to divide class or only ask for volunteers to share an event).
3. Discussion questions:
 - Why did students choose certain events and not others? What made some events more important or memorable than others?
 - Was it difficult to select events? Why or why not?
 - What types of evidence would be necessary to corroborate that your selected event actually happened?
 - What happened when you asked someone about the event? Did they agree with your version? Did they remember things differently?
4. Closing comments: *This is what history is like. History is what happened in the past, just like the events in your life. Different accounts may conflict or agree with one another. Our work this year is to figure out how we can gather enough evidence to get the clearest picture possible of what happened in the past.*

Acknowledgments

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Snapshot Autobiography Project

What is history? Many people describe history as the study of the past, a huge collection of names, dates, and facts that you are expected to memorize. The goal of this assignment is for you to discover other meanings of history and to recognize why it is important to study history.

In this project, you will think about the meaning of history by describing and illustrating several events from your own life, finding a witness to provide another description of one of those events, and thinking about the similarities and differences between the two descriptions.

Part I: Snapshot Autobiography

- 1) Take blank, regular size piece of paper and fold it so that it forms 3 panels (like a letter you'd mail). Counting front and back, you should have 6 panels.
- 2) The first panel is the cover for your Snapshot Autobiography.
 - Give your autobiography a title, for example, "Snapshots from the Life of Kathy."
 - You may illustrate it if you wish.
- 3) On the back panel write a brief "About the Author" section. Include your name, place and date of birth, and anything else you want people to know about you. You may include a self-portrait if you like.
- 4) This leaves four panels. In the first of these panels, write about your birth. In the other three panels, you are going to write about important events that have shaped you as a person. This means that you are selecting a total of three important events (besides your birth) from your life.
 - You will be interviewing another person about one of these events, so make sure to pick at least one event that someone else knows about.
 - For each of these three events, write a narrative (story) describing what happened. Make sure you describe it from start to finish. Pretend that someone who doesn't know you will be reading your story and trying to understand it. Be sure to include details!
 - Illustrate each event with a small, hand-drawn picture.

Name: _____

Part II: Homework: Snapshot Biography – Another Perspective

Now is your chance to talk to somebody else who remembers one of the important events you chose.

- 1) Select **one** of the events you wrote about.
- 2) Find somebody who remembers that event. For example, a parent, grandparent, sibling, or friend who will be familiar with the event you described.
- 3) Ask the person you chose to tell you their version of the story. In order to make sure that you are getting *their* version, ask them an open question about the event, for example, *“Mom, do you remember when Jane and I started being friends in fifth grade? Can you tell me what you remember about when we met?”*
 - Take careful notes of the interview. Pay attention to which parts of their story are different from your own.
 - Make sure to thank the interviewee for their participation in this project!

Name of the person being interviewed: _____

Relation to you: _____

Event from Snapshot Autobiography they will be corroborating (cross-checking):

Interview Notes

What do the two stories have in common?

What is different about the two stories?

Evaluating Sources

Materials:

- Evaluating Sources Worksheet

Plan of Instruction:

1. Introduction: *As we've seen in the Lunchroom Fight and Snapshot Autobiography lessons, different people often have different accounts of what happened in the past.*

One question that historians face all the time is who to believe? What makes one account more trustworthy than another?

2. Hand out Evaluating Sources Worksheet and divide students into groups of three. Have them complete worksheet.
3. Discussion: Review student answers. Use the following answer key to guide discussion:

NOTE: The key takeaway from this activity is that historical understanding is intertextual. Though students are asked to choose one source over the other in this lesson, they would ultimately need to corroborate their sources with additional evidence in order to adequately answer these historical questions.

Answer Key:

1. Source 2: Historians base their accounts on multiple primary and secondary documents and extensive research. Hollywood films have no standards for historical accuracy.
2. Source 1: Audience shapes the stories we tell. We can imagine that even in 1936, a former slave would be wary of criticizing slavery to a white government official. That is not to say that Source 1 is necessarily accurate; we can imagine a former slave might exaggerate accounts or possibly not remember details so well. Of the two sources, however, Source 1 will probably be more trustworthy.
3. Source 2: Human memory is notoriously unreliable. A map of a concentration is technically an "objective" source. On the other hand, there is no guarantee that the map perfectly mirrored the layout of the camp.
4. Source 2: Any government film created in 1942 to explain internment would be propaganda. The declassified evidence in the Congressional report makes Source 2 more reliable.
5. Source 1: Sworn testimony is the gold standard of evidence. Although testimony can be corrupted by lying, coercion, and the shakiness of human memory, in this instance Source 1 is

- more reliable than a public speech by a General whose reputation is on the line.
6. Neither: Textbooks from the 1980s tended to overlook and/or neglect the experiences and accounts of Native Americans. On the other hand, a newspaper account from 1876 would likely have lacked credible evidence about the battle and/or have been biased towards Custer and his men.

Name _____

Evaluating Sources

1. **Historical Question:** Who was present at the signing of the Declaration of Independence?

Source 1: Hollywood movie about the American Revolution made 2001.

Source 2: Book written by a famous historian who is an expert on the American Revolution, published in 1999.

Which do you trust more? Why?

2. **Historical Question:** What was slavery like in South Carolina?

Source 1: Interview with former slave in 1936. The interviewer is a black man collecting oral histories for the Federal Writers' Project.

Source 2: Interview with former slave in 1936. The interviewer is a white woman collecting oral histories for the Federal Writers' Project.

Which do you trust more? Why?

3. **Historical Question:** What was the layout of the Nazi concentration camp Auschwitz?

Source 1: Interview with 80 year-old Holocaust survivor in 1985.

Source 2: Map of concentration camp found in Nazi files.

Which do you trust more? Why?

4. Historical Question: Why were Japanese Americans put in internment camps during WWII?

Source 1: Government film explaining internment from 1942.

Source 2: Government report on Japanese Internment from 1983 based on declassified government documents.

Which do you trust more? Why?

5. Historical Question: Did American soldiers commit atrocities during the Vietnam War in 1969?

Source 1: Sworn testimony by American Sergeant in Congressional hearings in 1969.

Source 2: Speech by American General touring the United States in 1969.

Which do you trust more? Why?

6. Historical Question: What happened at the Battle of Little Bighorn?

Source 1: High school history textbook from 1985.

Source 2: Newspaper account from the day after the battle in June 1876.

Which do you trust more? Why?

INTRODUCTORY LESSON: MAKE YOUR CASE!

MATERIALS

-  Student Handout - Make Your Case!

COMMON CORE ALIGNMENT

-  Page 61 - #1 (Gr. 6-10), #2 (Gr. 6-8), #6 (Gr. 6-12), and #8 (Gr. 6-12)

PLAN OF INSTRUCTION

1 Introduction.

Explain to students:

This lesson is about the skill of corroboration. Corroboration is the act of comparing pieces of evidence and seeing where they agree and disagree. When you have multiple pieces of evidence that say the same thing, your argument is stronger. When you only have one perspective on an event, you risk that it might be incomplete or maybe even wrong.

Historians corroborate evidence when they try to figure out what happened in the past. If they find multiple pieces of evidence that support their initial hunch, their case becomes stronger. If they can't find enough evidence to support a particular argument about what happened in the past, they consider other explanations or interpretations.

Because the goal of corroboration is to build a strong argument, it also involves sourcing. You want to source for two reasons: (1) you want each piece of evidence to be reliable; and (2) you want to see if people with different perspectives agree about what happened. It's always more convincing when two people who usually disagree happen to agree.

For example, a famous painting of the Battle of Lexington shows the American colonists standing their ground and fighting while the British fired on them. If you read the primary sources about the event, the Americans say the British fired first, and the British say the Americans fired first. So they disagree about who shot first. But both say the colonists scattered and ran away once the shooting started. So although we might not know who shot first, we can say with some confidence that the colonists did not stand their ground, despite the portrayal in the painting, because both sides agree on that point.

We're going to practice corroboration today with two examples.

2 Distribute the Make Your Case! handout.

Have students complete worksheet in pairs.

3 Debrief student answers.

As you review student answers, be sure to discuss how each additional piece of evidence makes the initial claim stronger or weaker.

Scenario A:

- (a) Both pieces of evidence corroborate the claim that the Panthers were out for pizza when the locker room was vandalized.
- (b) Evidence B is stronger because the running back is from the opposing team and would have less personal motive to protect the Panthers.

Scenario B:

- (a) What does each account say about who started the fight?

The three accounts differ: Justin and Max blame each other, and Jamie says he didn't see the fight. Therefore, we cannot determine who started the fight because none of the accounts corroborate.

- (b) What does each account say about how Max and his friends treat Justin?

The three accounts suggest that Max and his friends are not that nice to Justin and possibly harass him. Justin and Jamie say so explicitly, and Max implies it. Although we can't be sure as to the extent of the teasing/bullying, we can cautiously conclude that Max and his friends make Justin feel uncomfortable.

- (c) Why does Jamie's account (Account C) help you build a stronger case than if you just had Max's or Justin's account?

Jamie's account adds a more objective perspective. The truth is that we don't know whether Jamie secretly hates Max, etc. He could be a notoriously unreliable source. However, if we take him at his word (that he's not friends with either Justin or Max), then his account adds an element of neutrality.

MAKE YOUR CASE!

NAME: _____ DATE: _____

DIRECTIONS

For each of the scenarios below, explain how each piece of evidence corroborates the initial account. Then choose the piece of evidence that would make a stronger case and explain your selection.

SCENARIO A

On the night before the big game between your school's team, the Panthers, and your biggest rivals, the Bears, the Bears' locker room was vandalized. Many of the players from the Bears are accusing members of your team of committing the vandalism. The Panthers say that they couldn't have vandalized the locker room because they were all out for pizza when the locker room was raided. Additional testimony:

Account A:

Statement by the Panther quarterback's older sister saying that she drove them to the pizza place on the night the locker room was vandalized.

Account B:

Statement from the Bears' running back saying that he saw the Panthers at the pizza place the night the locker room was vandalized.

QUESTIONS

(1) How do both Account A and Account B corroborate the Panthers' account?

(2) Which of the two pieces of testimony would make their case stronger? _____ Explain.

CONTINUE 

SCENARIO B

You are a principal who is trying to figure out the truth about a lunchroom fight. The fight was between Justin and Max. Justin is a new student. He is shy and doesn't have many friends. Max is a popular student who is known for his friendliness.

Account A: Justin

"Max started it. I was just standing in line waiting to pay for my food, and he shoved me super hard. And for no reason! He just freaked out on me. I don't even know the kid, and he's been weird to me ever since I started going to this school. Him and his friends glare at me in English class for no reason."

Account B: Max

"That kid is psycho. He turned around and punched me out of nowhere. Me and my friends were standing in line just joking around, and he turned around and punched me for no reason. He's messed up and creepy. Ask anyone."

Account C: Jamie (student who has class with Max and Justin right before lunch)

"I wasn't in the cafeteria today, and I'm not friends with any of those guys, but I've seen Max and his friends be mean to Justin in the hallways and in class when the teacher isn't looking. Not physical or anything, but they'll like say jokes under their breath and then laugh and stuff like that. They make him uncomfortable."

(3) What does each account say about who started the fight?

(a) Account A: _____

(b) Account B: _____

(c) Account C: _____

(4) Based on these three accounts, can you determine who started the fight? (Circle One.)

(a) Yes

(b) No

(5) Explain your answer to question #4 (above):



(6) What does each account say about how Max and his friends treat Justin?

(a) Account A: _____

(b) Account B: _____

(c) Account C: _____

(7) Based on these three accounts, can you determine how Max and his friends treat Justin?

(a) Yes

(b) No

(8) Explain your answer to question #7 (above):

(9) Why does Jamie's account (Account C) help you build a stronger case than if you just had Max's and Justin's accounts?

INTRODUCTORY LESSON: LUNCHROOM FIGHT II

MATERIALS

- 📄 Student Handout - Lunchroom Fight: The Evidence
- 📄 Student Handout - Lunchroom Fight: Evidence Context Handout
- 📄 Student Handout - Suspension Report

COMMON CORE ALIGNMENT

- ☰ Page 61 - #1 (Gr. 6-12), #2 (Gr. 6-8), #4 (Gr. 6-8), #6 (Gr. 11-12), #8 (Gr. 6-12), and #10 (Gr. 6-8)

PLAN OF INSTRUCTION

1 Introduce Lunchroom Fight.

If you have completed the first Lunchroom Fight lesson, you can say:

When we did the first Lunchroom Fight activity, we focused on sourcing. You wondered how two accounts of the same event could be different if no one was lying, and you considered why some accounts might be more reliable or trustworthy than others.

Today you're going to receive evidence from eyewitnesses and others connected to the fight in the lunchroom. Your job is to figure out who should get suspended for starting the fight. In order to figure that out, you're going to need to source, contextualize, and corroborate. In other words, you're going to need to read and compare multiple pieces of evidence in order to figure which are more reliable and how they all fit together to fill out the story of what happened in the lunchroom that day.

If you have not completed the first Lunchroom Fight lesson, you can say:

Today you're going to receive evidence from eyewitnesses and others connected to a fight in a lunchroom. Your job is to figure out who should get suspended for starting the fight. In order to figure that out, you're going to need to source, contextualize, and corroborate. In other words, you're going to need to read and compare multiple pieces of evidence in order to figure which are more reliable and how they all fit together to fill out the story of what happened in the lunchroom that day.

2 Hand out “Lunchroom Fight: The Evidence” and “Lunchroom Fight: Evidence Context Handout.”

Explain:

Read through the headnote and all the evidence. Then go back and identify pieces of context that shed light on who started the fight. Write each piece of context in the correct part of the first column of the handout.

For example, from the headnote we learn that Justin's father fired Max's mom and dad. So we're going to write that in the "Town context" part of the handout.

Continue doing that for all the evidence. You need to find at least TWO additional pieces of context for each of the areas of context.

Review student answers. Potential answers:

(a) Outer circle: Town

- *Justin's dad fired Max's mom and dad.*
- *The economy is not strong.*
- *Max mentors younger boys and helps out at church.*
- *Justin has moved around a lot.*

(b) Middle circle: School

- *Justin is a new kid and shy.*
- *Max is popular but lately has been depressed and withdrawn.*
- *Max and his friends are mean to Justin in the hall and glare at him in English class.*
- *There is tension in the school as a result of the reorganization plan.*

(c) Inner circle: Cafeteria

- *The fight happened while the boys were in line.*
- *Max pushed Justin.*
- *Justin punched Max.*
- *Max and his friends were joking around.*

3 After students share their answers, have them go back and fill in the second and third columns:

Discuss student answers.

- (a) Students will likely say that Max, Justin, their parents, and Max's friend are all unreliable because they are clearly aligned with one side.
- (b) Students may say that Jamie, the cafeteria worker, and the bystander are reliable because they don't have a vested interest in either side.
- (c) Some interesting discussion may come up around Max's girlfriend (who we would predict would side with Max, but in fact says that he's been mean recently), and the English teacher (who we would predict would be neutral, but whose comments suggest that he feels for the boys whose parents lost their jobs, and might have turned a blind eye to their teasing of Justin).

- (d) The important point to discuss here is the role that context plays in painting a full picture of what happened and why. If students eliminate all the “unreliable” evidence, they would throw away some critical contextual information (e.g., that Justin moved around a lot or that Max’s friends think he’s weird). It would be difficult to paint a full picture of what happened using only the information in the “reliable” evidence (because bystanders typically see the events from a distance). Remind students that even if they believe a source is mostly unreliable, it may still contain some useful information.

Note: Students may question whether the information in the headnote is reliable or not. Students would be right to question the reliability of the headnote information. If they do so, congratulate them on their impressive sourcing skills, but tell them that for the purposes of this exercise, they can assume that the headnote gives reliable information. They should focus on which sources corroborate information in the headnote and whether those sources are reliable.

4 Have students fill out the “Suspension Report” independently.

Have students share out their answers.

- (a) As students share answers (and potentially disagree about who should be suspended), encourage them to use the terminology of historical thinking (context, source, reliable, corroborate, evidence, etc.).
- (b) Explain that all the lessons in this unit on Reconstruction will be about using all the skills of historical thinking to evaluate evidence and come to conclusions about what happened in the past.

LUNCHROOM FIGHT: THE EVIDENCE

NAME: _____ DATE: _____

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

You are a principal who is trying to figure out the truth about a lunchroom fight. The fight was between Justin and Max. Justin is a new student. He is shy, quiet, and does not have many friends. He moved to town last month because his father was hired to take over the town's main business. Justin's father fired many people, including Max's parents, when he reorganized the business. Max is a popular student, who is known for his friendliness and good humor. In the past few weeks, however, he has been withdrawn and somewhat depressed.

THE SOURCES

Justin: *"That kid started it. Max. I was just standing in line waiting to pay for my food, and he shoved me super hard. And, like, for no reason. He just freaked out on me. I don't even know the kid, and he's been weird to me ever since I started going to this school. He and his friends glare at me in English class for no reason."*

Max: *"That kid is psycho. He turned around and punched me out of nowhere. Me and my friends were standing in line just joking around, and he turned around and punched me for no reason. He's messed up and creepy. Ask anyone."*

Eric (Max's good friend): *"The new kid definitely started it. He really just attacked out of nowhere. He's a freak, and he seriously thinks he's better than everyone because of his dad."*

Anthony (bystander): *"I was pretty far back in the line, but Max and his friends were being kind of loud and joking around. I couldn't really hear what they were saying. And then all of a sudden I saw people pulling Justin and Max apart."*

Megan (Max's girlfriend): *"I wasn't there. All I can say is that Max has been really different lately and kind of mean. I don't know what's going on, but he's not himself."*

Cafeteria worker: *"The group of boys were pushing each other around. I think it was an accident, and one of them pushed into the new boy, and he took it the wrong way."*

CONTINUE 

Max's mother: *"Max would never start a fight. He's the sweetest boy. I know he's had a hard time lately with me and his dad losing our jobs, but he still would never start a fight with anyone. He's a mentor to the younger boys and helps out at church. You can ask anyone in this town."*

Justin's father: *"I can guarantee 100% that Justin would never lay a finger on anyone unless he was really provoked. Trust me. And I know because we've had to move around quite a bit in the last few years because of my job, so unfortunately, Justin knows what it's like to be the new kid. And I've watched him go through these adjustment periods at each new school. He just lies low, and pretty soon the other kids see what a great kid he is. So I know as a fact that Justin wouldn't stir up trouble. It's really not in his nature."*

Jamie (student in English class with Max and Justin in the period right before lunch):

"I wasn't in the cafeteria today, and I'm not friends with any of those guys, but I've seen Max and his friends be mean to Justin in the hallways and in class when the teacher isn't looking. Not physical or anything, but they'll like say jokes under their breath and then laugh and stuff like that. They make him uncomfortable."

English teacher: *"To be completely honest with you, I'm not surprised that this happened. There has been a lot of tension in the school and in the town, in general, with the reorganization plan. A lot of people are very upset with the decisions of the new management to fire people, and I must say that I myself am very surprised that they've done this. It's a tremendous strain on the community, and I feel for all the boys."*

LUNCHROOM FIGHT: EVIDENCE CONTEXT HANDOUT

NAME: _____ DATE: _____

DIRECTIONS

Use the evidence from the Lunchroom Fight Evidence sheet to complete the table below. Each row in the table should have at least two pieces of evidence.

Town Context: What is happening in the town that might explain the lunchroom fight?	Who said this?	Explain if this source is reliable or not and why.

School Context: What has been happening in the rest of the school (for example, in English class)?	Who said this?	Explain if this source is reliable or not and why.

Cafeteria Context: What happened in the cafeteria?	Who said this?	Explain if this source is reliable or not and why.

LUNCHROOM FIGHT: SUSPENSION REPORT

NAME: _____ DATE: _____

SUSPENSION REPORT

(1) What happened in the cafeteria?(Please identify sources of information.)

(2) In my judgment, the following student should be suspended:
_____. My reasoning is as follows:

Principal Signature

Date