

# Using Newspapers for Historical Inquiry

2-3 days

Middle School High School United History/English

## DESIRED RESULTS:

What are the “big ideas” that drive this lesson?

- The controversies surrounding race found in the works of Mark Twain can be further studied by studying primary source documents, such as newspapers, from the era.

What are the “essential questions” that students must answer in order to understand the “big ideas”?

- How were people—specifically African Americans—discriminated against both socially and politically during the Jim Crow era?
- Why has *Huckleberry Finn* been controversial ever since it was first published?

## CORE UNDERSTANDINGS:

Students will need to know:

- That the controversy surrounding *Huckleberry Finn* has not remained static.
- That views on segregation often varied based on the region in which one lived.
- That one’s perception of a historical event can change over time.

Students will need to be able to:

- Identify that newspapers and other documents are primary sources and thus can be used to understand the social attitudes/ beliefs of other time periods.
- Identify newspapers from different regions of the country in order to demonstrate that there are varying points of view on any historical event.

## LEARNING EXPERIENCES:

1. Students will collaborate with one another to search Jim Crow era newspapers for evidence of discriminatory acts.
2. Students will identify areas where Mark Twain’s *Huckleberry Finn* was banned from libraries and the reasons that this occurred.
3. Using their new insight into the novel’s historical context, students will discuss the effect of *Huckleberry Finn*’s publication during the Jim Crow era.

#### Other Evidence:

1. Students will provide an oral explanation of their findings in newspapers.
2. Students will create a journal entry/paragraph to empathize with those during the Jim Crow era. Students can do this from the perspective of those subject to discrimination, those who actively discriminated against others, or those who remained bystanders and chose not to get involved.

#### Lesson Activities:

1. SCIM-C (Survey, Contextualize, Infer, Monitor, and Corroborate) will be explained to students and modeled by the teacher. For more details on this, teachers can visit: <http://www.historicalinquiry.com/tutorials/index.cfm>. Appendix A can be distributed to students to be used to guide them to questions that should be answered.
2. Students will use newspapers to complete their own SCIM-C (teachers can either provide newspapers electronically to the students via the Library of Congress historical newspaper website ( <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov>) or print copies to distribute to students, the latter of which is preferred. One example of an appropriate newspaper is the *Burlington Weekly Free Press* (Burlington, VT), March 20, 1885. In this newspaper, it is reported that Mark Twain's book has been banned in the Concord, New Hampshire library because of its "immorality". On the same there is a report of the "colored" residents of Quincy, Illinois opening their own skating rink, an effective example of Jim Crow era segregation.
3. Using newspapers from various cities and states, students will work with a partner to complete a SCIM-C chart (see Appendix B below).
4. Students will discuss their findings from the newspapers examined and compare their findings to those of their peers.
5. The teacher will lead a discussion with students of the controversial issues surrounding *Huckleberry Finn* when it was published compared to today. Students should be able to identify that it was initially considered "immoral", but is more controversial today because of the examples of racism that it contains. Students should understand that the terminology used in the book was socially acceptable at the time of Jim Crow but that it is not today.
6. Students should complete a journal entry addressing why discrimination against certain groups or people persisted through the Jim Crow era and why bystanders would or would not have intervened.

**COMMON CORE CONNECTIONS:**

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.9: Compare and contrast treatments of the same topic in several primary and secondary sources.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.1: Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features and the date and origin of the information.

**EXTENSION OF LESSON:**

Choose a specific historical event from the Civil Rights era, and research how this event was portrayed in the presses of both the North and the South. Compare and contrast their respective treatments of this event.

## Questions for Historical Inquiry (SCIM-C)

**S**ummarizing

**C**ontextualizing

**I**nferring

**M**onitoring

**C**orroborating



### **Summarizing**

1. What type of historical document is the source?
2. What specific information, details and/or perspectives does the source provide?
3. What are the subject and/or purpose of the source?
4. Who were the author and/or audience of the source?

### **Contextualizing**

1. When and where was the source produced?
2. Why was the source produced?
3. What was happening within the immediate and broader context at the time the source was produced?
4. What summarizing information can place the source in time and place?

### **Inferring**

1. What is suggested by the source?
2. What interpretations may be drawn from the source?
3. What perspectives or points of view are indicated in the source?
4. What inferences may be drawn from absences or omissions in the source?

### **Monitoring**

1. What additional evidence beyond the source is necessary to answer the historical question?
2. What ideas, images, or terms need further defining from the source?
3. How useful or significant is the source for its intended purpose in answering the historical question?
4. What questions from the previous stages need to be revisited in order to analyze the source satisfactorily?

### **Corroborating**

1. What similarities and differences between the sources exist?
2. What factors could account for these similarities and differences?
3. What conclusions can be drawn from the accumulated interpretations?
4. What additional information or sources are necessary to answer more fully the guiding historical question?

**Big Question:** \_\_\_\_\_

<p><b>S-----</b>  <b>Summarizing</b>          What does the source tell us? Just the details and facts.</p>	<p><b>C-----</b>  <b>Contextualizing</b>          When, why, how, where was the source produced?</p>	<p><b>I-----</b>  <b>Inferring</b>          What does the source suggest? Insights, thoughts.</p>	<p><b>M-----</b>  <b>Monitoring</b>          What else would I like to find out? What questions do I now have?</p>
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SCIM-C Charts

**Question:**

Monitoring/Questioning: What else would I like to find out? What questions do I now need to ask?

Inferencing: What does the source suggest?

Contextualizing: When, why and how was the source produced?

Summarizing: What does the source tell us?

Source description

