



Hidden in the Documents: Discovering Loyalist Stories

Lesson 2

Learning to Read Primary Documents

Synopsis

Working in the computer lab, students will browse the “EvidenceWeb” documents related to the Loyalist theme on Library and Archives Canada’s *Learning Centre* website. They will practice reading primary-source documents: a painting, a list and a discharge notice of a soldier.

Specific Expectations

Students will:

- find selected primary-source documents from the “EvidenceWeb” Loyalist theme;
- develop descriptive words for primary-source documents;
- practice getting information and making inferences by reading a painting, a Loyalist muster roll and a discharge notice online;
- begin a concept map for primary-source document;
- learn to use appropriate vocabulary: primary-source document, account, list, Loyalist.

Preparation

1. Locate and bookmark the “EvidenceWeb” Loyalist theme on the computers in the computer lab.
2. Reserve the computer lab.
3. Prepare copies of Handout 2.1, one per student.

Time

60 minutes

Process

Introduction (10 minutes)

1. Post and review the lesson agenda with your students:
 - Start a K-W-L chart (what I **KNOW**, what I **WANT** to know, what I have **LEARNED**) for the Loyalists.
 - Use the Internet to find out more information.
 - Practice reading Loyalist documents: a painting, a list and a soldier's discharge notice.
 - Complete an organizer
 - Create a concept map
2. Pose a question: What have you learned about the Loyalists from James Parrot's story? (They were involved in a war, there was killing, it was dangerous, spies had to sneak into the United States, etc.) Suggest that the available information might not be very complete.
3. Create a K-W-L chart about the Loyalists on an overhead transparency or chart paper. The chart should have three columns with headings as follows: What do we **KNOW**; What do we **WANT** to know; What have we **LEARNED**. Begin to complete first two columns using answers from students.
4. Pose a question: How can you get more information? (By looking at the many documents available on the Internet.)

Body of Lesson (40 minutes)

1. Move to the computer lab. Students may work in pairs, and should be encouraged to share their learning with a neighbour.
2. Explain to the students that they will be getting more information about the Loyalists by reading some primary-source documents from the "[EvidenceWeb](#)". Read the introductory information about the Loyalists available on the site.
3. Give each student a copy of Handout 2.1. Review the categories for inquiry on the handout. Explain to the students that they will be historians looking for information.
4. Direct students to find James Peachey's painting of the Loyalist encampment at Johnstown (now Cornwall) on the "[EvidenceWeb](#)", using key words. Have them use

the zoom function at 100% to get a clear picture.

5. Ask students to suggest some questions to ask about this painting (5 Ws). Have students focus on the foreground of the painting and describe what they observe (people, clothing, canoes). What can they infer from their observations? Now have them focus on the background of the painting and describe what they observe. What inferences do they make? Finally, have them focus on the middle section of the painting and describe what they see. What inferences can they make?
6. Have each student fill in Section A, “Reading a Painting” on Handout 2.1. Sample answers for this section are provided.
7. Have half the students find the muster roll of free Blacks who have drawn provisions at Birchtown, using key words. Have them read the list with a partner and complete section B, “Reading a List” on Handout 2.1. They should use the transcript version after viewing the original.

Some prompts to help them:

- What kind of document is it?
- Who wrote or made it?
- Who is it intended for?
- Who would use it?
- What is the main idea?
- What problem or concern or feeling is found in it or could be inferred?

Questions the Black Loyalists might have asked:

- Will we be able to build homes?
- Will we be able to farm?
- Will we be safe?

8. Have the other half of the class complete the same process for the discharge notice of John McIntyre from the King’s Royal Regiment and complete Section C, “Reading a Discharge Notice” of Handout 2.1.

Some prompts to help them:

- What kind of document is it?
- Who wrote it?
- Who is it intended for?
- Who would use it?
- What is the main idea?
- What problem or concern or feeling is found in it or could be inferred?

Questions the discharged soldier might have asked:

- Will I be paid?
- Will I have land to farm?

- Will I have to fight again?

Conclusion (10 minutes)

1. Have volunteers direct peers to their chosen document on the “EvidenceWeb” and read it quickly using information on their completed section of Handout 2.1.
2. Brainstorm a list of descriptive words for primary-source documents. Each student begins to create a concept map for primary-source documents. Examples: sometimes hard to read, original, handwritten, hand painted, look old, interesting, real, varied, connect us to past people, etc.

Assessment Opportunity

Check students’ copies of Handout 2.1 for completeness and accuracy. Look for appropriate inferences and use of historical imagination.

Extension

Have students “read” more than one type of document from the “EvidenceWeb” Loyalist theme, using an organizer similar to that provided in Handout 2.1.