

# Photography as a Primary Source Interactive Worksheet

## Answer Key

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

1. What is a primary source?  
A document, account, or object created during a historic event, which is then used to study that event or time period.
2. Look at the first 3-D picture from the Civil War.  
This is a row of stacked federal rifles in Petersburg, VA in 1865. Many of the houses in the background have been damaged by Union artillery. Soldiers often safely stacked their weapons like this when they were no being used.
  - a. What do you notice first about this picture? What stands out?  
Accept any appropriate, reasonably justified answer.
  - b. Where do you think this photograph was taken? How can you tell?  
Answers may include: in the city, or town; in the south or north; Petersburg. Accept any appropriate, reasonably justified answer.
  - c. Do you think this was early in the war or closer to the end? Why do you think that?  
Accept any appropriate, reasonably justified answer. Point out that it is most likely near the end of the war due to the destruction.
  - d. Why do you think the guns are stacked like this? What part of the picture makes you think that?  
Answers may include: to keep them clean, to keep them free from moisture, the soldiers might be resting. Accept any appropriate, reasonably justified answer.
  - e. What time of the year do you think it is? How can you tell?  
Fall, winter, early spring. There are no leaves on the trees.
  - f. Where do you think the soldiers are?  
Accept any appropriate, reasonably justified answer.
  - g. Where do you think the citizens of the town are?  
Answers may include: Hiding, evacuated. Accept any appropriate, reasonably justified answer.
  - h. What clues might help you guess whether these weapons belonged to the Union or the Confederacy?

Answers may include: The accoutrements are Union-issue.  
Accept any appropriate, reasonably justified answer.

- i. List one or two things that this picture tells you about the war?  
Accept any appropriate, reasonably justified answer.
3. Look at the next picture of the men in their camp.  
This photograph was taken at Brandy Station, VA during a breakfast meal. It is the winter 1863-1864 camp at the Union headquarters of the Army of the Potomac.
    - a. What do you notice first about this picture? What stands out?  
Accept any appropriate, reasonably justified answer.
    - b. What time of the year is it?  
Spring, summer, or early fall. There are leaves on the trees.
    - c. What do you think they are doing?  
Answers may include: Eating a meal, talking, planning.  
Accept any appropriate, reasonably justified answer.
    - d. Who do you think they are? Are they Union or Confederate? Are they officers? How can you tell?  
Answers may include: Union officers. Point out that it is likely that they are officers because they are eating at a table with a table cloth, using dishes. Accept any appropriate, reasonably justified answer.
    - e. Who is the man in the background? What do you think his relationship is with the rest of the men in the picture?  
Answers may include: The man may be what the Union army referred to as Contraband- an escaped slave from a southern state that traveled with the army in order to assist in the war effort. Other scenarios are possible, however, so accept any appropriate, reasonably justified answer.
    - f. List one or two things that this picture tells you about the war?  
Accept any appropriate, reasonably justified answer.
  4. Look at the picture of the burial of fallen soldiers.  
This is an image of Union soldiers burying their dead at Fredericksburg in May 1864.
    - a. What do you notice first about this picture? What stands out?  
Accept any appropriate, reasonably justified answer.

- b. What time of the year do you think is it? How can you tell?  
Spring, summer, or early fall. There are leaves on the trees.
- c. Do you think these men are from the Union or from the Confederacy? How can you tell?  
Answers may include: Union- their uniforms are relatively standardized. Accept any appropriate, reasonably justified answer.
- d. Are there enough coffins? What does this picture tell you about how soldiers were buried during the war?  
Accept any appropriate, reasonably justified answer.  
Point out that because of the high death rate, many soldiers were buried wrapped only in a blanket or in nothing at all.
- e. What do you notice about the feet of the dead soldiers?  
Answers may include: Some don't have shoes. Point out that the shoes were most likely removed and given to other soldiers. Accept any appropriate, reasonably justified answer.
- f. List one or two things that this picture tells you about the war?  
Accept any appropriate, reasonably justified answer.
5. Look at the picture of the men on the railroad track.  
This image is of Confederate soldiers beside the damaged rolling stock of the Orange and Alexandria Railroad in Virginia in August 1862.
- a. What do you notice first about this picture? What stands out?  
Accept any appropriate, reasonably justified answer.
- b. Can you guess where this photo was taken?  
Answers may include: Along a railroad; in the south; in the country. Accept any appropriate, reasonably justified answer.
- c. What time of the year is it? How can you tell?  
Spring, summer, or early fall. There are leaves on the trees.
- d. Do you think these soldiers are Union or Confederate? What clues help you answer that question?  
Answers may include: Confederate- the uniforms are ragged and different from one another. The soldier in the center has

no shoes. Accept any appropriate, reasonably justified answer.

- e. Why do you think they are on the railroad?  
Accept any appropriate, reasonably justified answer. Point out that the train cars in the background are damaged. You might discuss the importance of the railroad during the Civil War and why destroying a railroad or railroad cars would have been necessary.
- f. List one or two things that this picture tells you about the war?  
Accept any appropriate, reasonably justified answer.

## Assessment

- 1. Look at the picture of the ruins.  
These are the ruins of the Richmond and Petersburg Railroad depot, Richmond, VA, 1865. There is a destroyed locomotive in the foreground.
  - a. What do you notice first about this picture? What stands out?  
Accept any appropriate, reasonably justified answer.
  - b. Where do you think this picture was taken? How can you tell?  
Answers may include: Richmond; Petersburg; in a city
  - c. What do you think these are the remains of? How can you tell?  
Accept any appropriate, reasonably justified answer.
  - d. Who do you think is the man in the center of the picture? Why do you think the photographer chose to take a picture of him?  
Accept any appropriate, reasonably justified answer.