

Unit 6, Lesson 1: Examining Father Adrew White’s Journal



Maryland Social Studies Standards and Framework

Standard: Social Studies Skills and Processes

Topic: Analyze Social Studies Information

Standard: Social Studies Skills and Processes

Topic: Organize Social Studies information

Standard: Peoples of the Nations and World

Topic: Elements of Culture

MCCR Grade 4

MCCR Standards: RI.4.3, SS.6.1, SS.6.5

Objective:

Students will:

- Analyze a document to determine the point of view
- Distinguish factual information from opinion
- Compare and describe the elements of culture including shelter, recreation, education, oral traditions, art, music, and language of Native American societies

Essential Questions:

How can Primary Sources help us understand events from the past?

What other types of sources could we use to learn about a particular subject?

How do Fr. Andrew White’s descriptions help us see and understand history?

Grade Level:

3rd – 5th

Overview:

This lesson directs students to examine primary sources with a critical eye to uncover their factual and subjective components. By doing this, students will gain an understanding of how primary documents hold clues to understanding our shared history and the challenges we face when trying to understand them.

Teacher Background:

Primary sources directly connect people today to the past by linking them with the people that originally created or used them and the context in which they existed. These sources include printed materials, the physical environment, material culture as expressed through artifacts, art and photographs, electronic media recordings, and oral history. Journals are primary sources that can contain valuable information that give historians an otherwise unseen glimpse of life in a particular place during a particular time. These glimpses, or personal accounts, often contain details of events, settings, or descriptions that may not have otherwise been documented. The personal accounts contained in journals must be read critically. Although personal journals are a

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rich source of information, it is important to remember that they are personal representations of events that were written at a different time from today and may contain misinterpretations.

The journal written by Father Andrew White, a passenger on the first voyage to Maryland in 1634, is one of the few primary sources left from the early years of the Maryland colony. It is also one of the few primary sources with descriptions of the Native Americans that lived in Southern Maryland and the landscape when the colonists arrived.

Lesson Procedure:

1. Present and describe the journal of Father Andrew White and its historical background.
2. Divide the class into small groups and give each group the excerpt from the Father White journal and “Fact vs. Opinion” worksheet.
3. Have each group read the passage and determine what information is a factual description and what appears to be Father White’s opinion of what he saw. The group can also note those parts that are difficult to classify either as fact or opinion.
4. Have students complete the worksheet by writing 4 factual statements and 4 subjective statements they found in Father White’s journal.
5. Then, have students write a brief response to the question: “What factors do you believe may have influenced Father White’s description?”
6. Once all the groups finish, ask each group to present their findings to the class. The teacher may keep a chart on the board of fact versus opinion.
7. After all groups have presented their findings, lead a discussion on the difficulties of using first-person journals and other personal writings as a means of gathering information about the past. Discussion questions might include:
 - a. How much of Father White’s journal entry was fact and how much opinion?
 - b. What kinds of things may have influenced his opinions of the Native Americans he met in Maryland? [*Father White’s biases concerning Native Americans would influence his opinion—Europeans largely saw Native Americans as uncivilized and considered them dangerous. Father White might have been afraid of Native peoples or may have pitied them because they had not been converted to Christianity. Students might also consider Father White’s motives for settling in Maryland which included the conversion of Native Americans to Christianity.*]
 - c. What are the challenges to relying on first-person descriptions of historic events or people? [*All people have different biases and backgrounds that can color the way they look at and record events. Sometimes those notions creep into descriptions unbeknownst to the author. Other times, authors have an agenda that they are trying to further in their writing. For instance, some early descriptions of life in the New World sent back to England were particularly positive. These descriptions were written to lure more colonists to the New World colonies.*]
 - d. Can primary sources still be an important tool for understanding history, even with the author’s biases? [*Absolutely, as long as the writer’s intentions and backgrounds*

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are taken into account and particularly if the information in the accounts can be further verified by comparison to other reliable historical documentation.]

- e. What other kinds of information are needed to have a full and complete understanding of the past? *[It is very important to compare first person accounts of history to as many other sources as possible. For the study of Eastern Woodland Indians in Maryland, archaeological research is particularly important. Because no written record remains from Woodland Indians before contact with European colonists, archaeologists study the physical remains of their presence in Maryland. However, this can prove to be problematic, as well, because so much of the materials used by Woodland Indians in their daily lives was biodegradable. Oral histories can be a good source of information for comparison also, but the same questions asked of primary source descriptions need to be asked of these materials.]*

Materials:

Excerpts from Father White's journal – Student Worksheet

Excerpts from Father White's journal – Teachers Version

Fact vs. Opinion Worksheet

Related Resources:

Lawatsch-Boomgaarden, Barbara, translator and editor. *Voyage to Maryland – Relatio Itineris in Marilandiam: Original Latin Narrative of Andrew White, S.J.*, Blochazy-Carducci Publishers, Inc., Wauconda, Illinois, 1995.

Close Encounters of the First Kind, 1585-1767, MSA SC 2221-1-17

<http://www.mdarchives.state.md.us/msa/stagser/s1259/121/4198/html/0000.html>

The Our Documents Initiative <http://www.ourdocuments.gov/index.php?flash=true&>

Teaching American History in Maryland (MD State Archives) <http://teachingamericanhistorymd.net/>