

## Audio-Visual Primary Sources

### Course

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#### Analyzing Film [5:15]

[https://players.brightcove.net/2566261579001/HyuWsfFhb\\_default/index.html?videoId=5664891544001](https://players.brightcove.net/2566261579001/HyuWsfFhb_default/index.html?videoId=5664891544001)

#### About

This video lesson focuses on strategies you can use to help students be active in their interactions and analysis of film or video sources.

#### Transcript

After preparing your technology and planning for your time with students, including students taking a few minutes to source and contextualize the film or audio in preparation, students are ready to analyze the source itself.

As I mentioned before, students are used to being passive consumers of audio-visual sources. We want students to be active in their interactions and their analysis of the film or audio. Keep that in mind as we look at different ways for students to analyze these formats of sources.

When my students are analyzing a primary source, any format of primary source, I use the Library of Congress' Primary Source Analysis tool as a foundation. The tool is set up in a three-column format and asks students to make observations, reflections, and questions. When viewing film for observations, I want students to document what they see and hear in the film. With film, this can include motion that is taking place, dialogue or interactions between individuals and people in their environment. Depending on the length of the film, students may choose to focus in on one or more moments and make more in-depth observations or make more general observations about the entire film.

When making reflections, students are reflecting on aspects of the primary source and, possibly, also its relation to its creator. In the case of the film, they may be reacting to what they see on the screen, reflecting back on the sourcing done earlier and considering the purpose of the film, considering the audience at the time, or evaluating the film. Reflections, even though possibly connected to other elements, should be partially based on observations made in the film or from the bibliographic data. And questions are exactly that, where students generate their own questions and, like reflections, should be at least partially based on observations, reflections, or the bibliographic data.

My hope is that the observations, reflections, and questions students generate will not only connect to the film but to the sourcing and contextualizing they did prior to their analysis. This is where those earlier activities pay off as students draw from the ideas they recently surfaced when analyzing the audio-visual primary source.

While reflections and questions are simple enough to write and record in the Primary Source Analysis tool, making observations of the film primary source can be challenging. Most students will create a bulleted list of observations.

Let's revisit our film from earlier in the workshop. As my students watch the film after sourcing and contextualizing the piece, they may observe the congested streets, the trolley that moves through the street, the people walking with signs, and the horse. Many of these observations could be made throughout the film, so I often ask students to put a timestamp in minutes and seconds showing where they initially made their observation. Not only does it help them go back to a moment if they need to, it also helps me have a better idea of what they are noticing and valuing in the film.

Observations are also a place where students can state what they expected to see but didn't. Some may mention that they expected to see automobiles or that they thought the trolley would be pulled by a horse. There, of course, is the option to write a narrative description of the scene or scenes from the film. My students sometimes struggle with the time it takes to write the narration and watch moments of the film over and over again. A narration, though, lends itself to documenting the pacing and steps within the film. A student may write, "The film begins with a half-filled trolley moving from left to right across the screen. As I see the street, there are so many people, that I don't see any gaps in the crowd, and they seem to be moving in all directions. One group carrying signs walks through the street from right to left of the camera, a bridled horse steps into the foreground, and we see the trolley pulled to the side of the street on the right."

The narration, as opposed to the bulleted list, captures the steps in the film moment-by-moment. Again, I may request that students put timestamps in parentheses to mark important points in the narrative. There may also be a desire to incorporate inferences and questions into the narration. Students do this naturally when making observations

in any form, but it is especially natural to do it when writing a narrative observation. They may want to include sentences such as, "I wonder what time of day it is," or, "The trolley is probably picking up and dropping off passengers on the side of the road." As these are a natural part of analysis and a natural part of narration, I encourage students to include reflections and questions in the narrative, but I do ask that they somehow identify them as separate from the observations, encouraging students to write their narrative and then look for those sentences or parts of sentences that don't identify what can be directly seen or heard, if there is sound, in the film. Some students will highlight those reflections and questions in different colors or make a special mark at the beginning of the reflection or question so that they know it's not an observation.

Bullet lists and narrative writing are two options for making observations and may be especially helpful if writing is a strength for a student or if there's a large amount of dialogue in the film that students will likely want to document in their observation.

#### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[Primary Source Audio Visual Resources](#)

[Primary Sources Used in This Workshop](#)

[Teaching with AV Sources.](#)

#### MLA CITATION

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