

Learning the Ropes Twine Game Classroom Activity

Introduction

This learning activity contains guidance for using primary sources along with the *Learning the Ropes* twine game. By analyzing primary sources both before and after playing the game, students will learn about the history of global cultural and economic exchange in the 19th century and will learn to hone their historical thinking skills to consider agency and contingency of historical actors. The primary sources relate to ships, sailors, and commodities and through them students will better understand the diverse and cosmopolitan world of cultural exchange that existed aboard ships and at ports around the world. Aboard ships like these, sailors from North Africa, China, the Americas and all points in between worked side by side transporting goods such as textiles, coffee, sugar, tea, and much more to and from ports all over the world. The sources and *Learning the Ropes* game represent a chance for students to conceptualize world history as a connected whole rather than disparate and discrete regions. The content can be connected to a broad range of world history standards and topics to include global interactions, the developing industrial economy in Europe and trading networks in the Indian Ocean, Africa, and East Asia. For AP World History the activity provides a useful bridge between the units on Land-Based Empires & Transoceanic Interconnections (1450–1750) and Revolutions & Consequences of Industrialization (1750–1900) and the sources can form the basis of an FRQ.

Time

This activity will take one 90-minute period or two 45-minute periods.

Grade Level

The activity is appropriate for a grade 10 AP World History or Grade 11 AP World History class, but the sources and game can be used in a wide variety of settings.

Contents

This PDF consists: this cover sheet, a page of procedure instructions, and 4 pages of primary source images with transcriptions.

Procedure

1. Inform students that they will be analyzing primary sources related to global shipping in the early 1800s and then playing a text-based game where they will take on the role of a fictional sailor on one of these ships
2. Place students in pairs or small groups and pass out the sources below from the group labeled Primary Source Group 1. Alternatively teachers can choose one or two sources to examine as a class. For some classes, the instructor may want to read the sources aloud to students.
3. Students should examine the sources carefully and note details related to shipping. Allow enough time for students to engage with the sources, notice details and make connections. The language in some sources is older and not all words are spelled the same as today. Below each source, questions are provided to help prompt students in observing details and generating an analysis.
4. After examining the sources, have students play through the Learning the Ropes Twine game for 30 minutes. This should involve 2-3 “rounds” of gameplay per student.
5. After the game, repeat the primary source exercise with the primary sources from Primary Source Group 2. In the second round of source analysis, prompt students to make connections with what they experienced in the game.
6. While they are engaging in the analysis, write down questions they have and after the activity, discuss how they might research the answers to them.
7. At the conclusion of the activity, ask them to reflect — either aloud or via written responses (this could be an “exit ticket”) — what they learned about 19th century shipping that they did not know before.

Primary Sources Group 1

Richard Henry Dana, *Two Years Before the Mast* (1840).

Background:

The author took two years away from college at Harvard to sail with a merchant crew. He joined the crew in an effort to change his life and to strengthen his eyes. He published the book because he wanted to provide an authentic account of ship life from the perspective of a common sailor. Early in his journey from Boston to San Francisco, he has the following interaction with the ship's cook. This is an abridged passage and where you see [...] some of the scene has been cut.

Passage:

"The night after this event, when I went to the galley to get a light, I found the cook inclined to be talkative, so I sat down on the spars, and gave him an opportunity to hold a yarn. I was the more inclined to do so, as I found that he was full of the superstitions once more common among seamen, and which the recent death had waked up in his mind [...] At length he put his head out of the galley and looked carefully about to see if any one was within hearing, and being satisfied on that point, asked me in a low tone –

'I say! You know what a countryman 'e carpenter be?'

'Yes,' said I; 'he's a German.'

[...]

'I'm plaguy glad o' dat,' said the cook. 'I was mighty 'fraid he was a Fin. I tell you what, I been plaguy civil to that man all the voyage.'

I asked him the reason of this, and found that he was fully possessed with the notion that Fins are wizards, and especially have power over winds and storms. I tried to reason with him about it, but he had the best of all arguments, that from experience, at hand, and was not to be moved [...]

He had heard of ships, too, beating up the gulf of Finland against a head wind, and having a ship heave in sight astern, overhaul and pass them, with as fair a wind as could blow, and all studding-sails out, and find she was from Finland.

'Oh ho!' said he; 'I've seen too much of them men to want to see 'em 'board a ship. If they can't have their own way, they'll play the d—I with you.'

As I still doubted, he said he would leave it to John, who was the oldest seaman aboard, and would know, if anybody did [...] The cook stated the matter to him, and John, as I anticipated, sided with the cook, and said that he himself had been in a ship where they had a head wind for a fortnight, and the captain found out at last that one of the men, whom he had had some hard

words with a short time before, was a Fin, and immediately told him if he didn't stop the head wind he would shut him down in the fore peak. The Fin would not give in, and the captain shut him down in the fore peak, and would not give him anything to eat. The Fin held out for a day and a half, when he could not stand it any longer, and did something or other which brought the wind round again, and they let him up.

'There,' said the cook, 'what do you think o' dat?'

I told him I had no doubt it was true, and that it would have been odd if the wind had not changed in fifteen days, Fin or no Fin.

'Oh,' says he, 'go 'way! You think, 'cause you been to college, you know better than anybody. You know better than them as 'has seen it with their own eyes. You wait till you've been to sea as long as I have, and you'll know.'"

Questions:

What happens in this scene?

List the locations mentioned here.

What stands out to you about this scene?

What does this passage tell you about the space of a ship?

What does it tell you about culture on a ship?

What does it tell you about how sailors spend their time?

How is the language used by the cook and John different from that of the author?

What does the author think of sailors?

Obed Swain II, Logbook of the Catawba (25 Dec 1852 - 29 May 1857), Nantucket Historical Association.

Background:

This is an excerpt from the logbook of the Catawba, a ship embarking from Pawtucket to the Pacific Ocean in 1852. The Catawba are an Indigenous American tribe from the Carolina region.

Passage:

Wednesday Dec 29th

First part commences with strong Gails from SSW steered East middle part the gail incresing at 11 PM took in the Fore sail and hove to heading up SSE at 3 AM the Wind haled to the NW turned up the W Boat latter part much the same so E hard weather

Latt 39°45

Thursday Dec 30th

First part commences with strong Gails from NW lying too heavy WSW at 6 PM mere was Crate middle part the gail abated latter part moderate Employed in setting Rigging so E was

Latt 38°49 Long 61°15

Friday Jan 1st

First part commences with light airs from the East heading up SSE middle part variable latter part strong breeze from SE & S heading up E & N saw 3 sails so E was

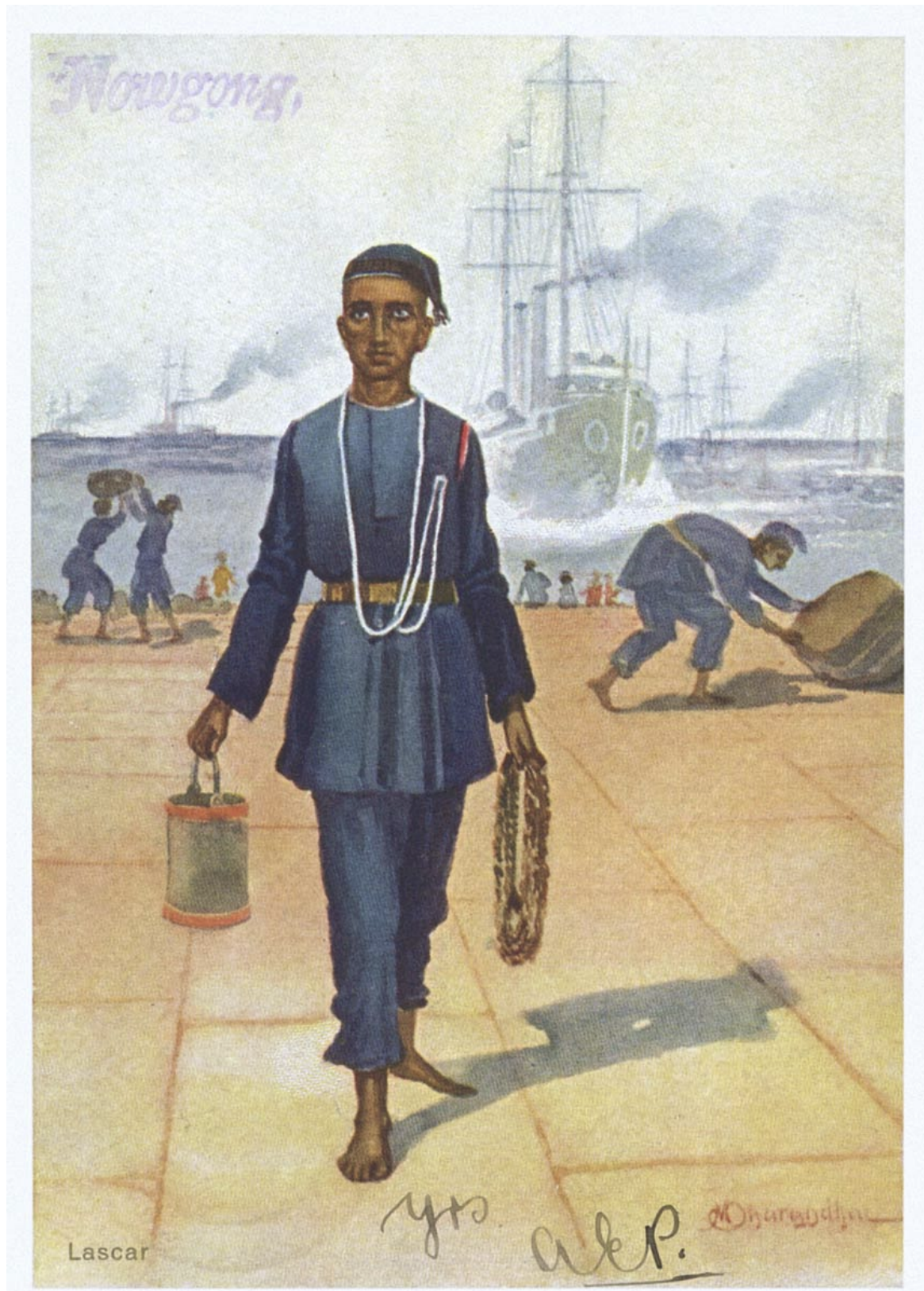
Questions:

What is this document about?

Why would someone write this down?

Who would use this?

M.V. Durandhar, Lascar, 1903, postcard.



Questions:

How is this person dressed?

What do you see in the background?

Where might this person be from?

How could they be employed?

Why is this image printed on a postcard?

Primary Sources Group 2

George V. Harris to Nathaniel Kinsman, August 19, 1827, Ship's Papers: Bengal (1827-1829), Phillips Library, Peabody Essex Museum

Background:

This is a letter to the captain of the captain of the Bengal, a merchant ship embarking from Salem, Massachusetts.

Passage:

Salem August 19th 1827

Capt Nathaniel Kinsman
Sir

I hand you herewith Invoice and Bill of Lading of one hundred Spanish milled Dollars. If you load at Sumatra, I wish you to invest this amount in pepper, on my account.

If you load at any other port than Sumatra, invest it in whatever articles you think will bring the most profit.

Wishing you a pleasant and prosperous voyage
I remain

Your friend & Servt
Geo. V. Harris

Questions:

What is this letter about?

Why did Harris write this letter?

What is the relationship between the writer and Captain Kinsman?

What does the writer know about Sumatra? What about other ports?

What relationship does the writer have with Sumatra?

Pickering Dodge, Invoice of Opium, Ship's Papers: Bengal (1827-1829), Phillips Library, Peabody Essex Museum

Background:

This is an invoice from a Salem, Massachusetts merchant sending trade goods on the Bengal, captained by Nathaniel Kinsman and heading for the East Indies.

Invoice:

Invoice of Opium shipped by Pickering Dodge, on his ship Bengal, Nathaniel Kinsman Master, for the East Indies: and consigned to said Master for sale & investment in account of the shipper a citizen of the United States of America.			
11.1	5 Cases Turkey Opium as follows		
1 C. 5.	No. 1 say 100 Mace - Duties & Taxes.		
	2. 101 -		
	3. 101 1/2 -		
	4. 100 1/2 - - do. do.		
	5. 100 1/2 - 701 1/2 lb @ 250 ⁰⁰ shipping 1704 1/2		
22	2 Cases Opium as follows		
12.2	say 2 cases Opium as follows		
	gross weight 412 1/2		
	Tare 81		
	332 lb with a 2/8 lb		664
	Shipping charges		241 1/2
			2163
		Dollars.	2400
			2714 1/2
		Profit.	2275 1/2
100	101 1/2		
25	25 3/4		
105	106 1/2		
100 1/2			
25			
105			
Errors Excepted Salem August 21. 1827 Pickering Dodge			
The 5 Cases marked A B C are of the 1st quality - the 2 Cases marked D E are ordinary & must be sold or bartered on the Coast of destination if possible			

Transcription:

Invoice of Opium shipped by Pickering Dodge, on board ship Bengal, Nathaniel Kinsman master, for the East Indies; and consigned to said master for sales & investment on account & risk of the shipper – a citizen of the United States of America

J.W.I.		
1 @ 5	5 cases Turkey Opium whs as follows	
	No. 1 whs 140 nett – Jau Kau de Lama	
	2 “ 141	
	3 “ 141 3/4	
	4 “ 140 1/4 - Old Jerry	
	5 “ 138 3/4	
	= 701 3/4 lbs @ 250 cts shortprice	1754.37
P.D.		
20. 29; in	3 cases Opium whs as follows	
	Gross weight 413 lb	
	Tare 81	
	332 lb net @ 2 \$ per “	664
	Shipping charges	2418.37
		21.63
	Dollars	2440
		4714.82
	Net profit	2274.82
	Errors Excepted	
	Salem	August 21. 1827
	Pickering Dodge	

The 5 cases marked JWI are of the 1st quality – the 3 cases marked PD are ordinary & must be sold or bartered on the coast of Sumatra, if possible

Questions:

What is this document about?

What locations are mentioned here?

What relationship is there between the author and Captain Kinsman?

What does the author think of Sumatra?

Why would Dodge ship opium to Sumatra?

William Daniell, The European Factories, Canton, 1806, Yale Center for British Art



Questions:

What flags can you identify in this image?

What kinds of ships can you identify in this image?

What might be going on in Canton?

Why are there so many flags and types of ships in one port?

Why would Europeans have factories in Canton?

W. Corill, Panorama of the City of Dacca, lithographed and published by Messrs. Dickinson, c. 1850, Yale Center for British Art

Please visit this link or have your students visit this link:

https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/6/66/Panorama_of_the_city_of_Dacca_1847.jpg

Have your students scroll slowly through the panorama image. What do they notice? What kinds of buildings are there? What kinds of ships? What kinds of people? Why would this image be published in London?