

SRI LANKA

histories that connect

සමස්ත ඉතිහාසය
இணைந்த வரலாறுகள்

TEACHER'S GUIDE: WORKING WITH SOURCES IN HISTORY EDUCATION



CONTRIBUTORS:

ELISE STORCK, HIRANYADA DEWASIRI, GIJS VAN GAANS,
M. SAMANTHA NIROSHANA PEIRIS, SUSANNE POPP, DENNIS RÖDER

1. INTRODUCTION

Author: Elise Storck (with special thanks to Gijs van Gaans for initial draft and set up)

The past is gone. What we know about the past is based on the traces the past left us: they allow us to access the past and construct narratives around them. Oral traditions hand over these narratives by telling from generation to generation. In a more scientific approach, the task of historians is to reconstruct the past by constructing historical narratives based on historical sources. As sources mostly do not give direct access to the past, they have to be valued and interpreted. Critical inquiry of the sources is an important aspect in this reconstruction. That is, sources must not be taken at face value but rather be engaged with critically through a questioning of the phenomena that the sources reveal and how they are revealed. This is what historians do. However, as it is not a primary aim of history education to make historians of all our students, how can we use sources and the ‘tools’ historians use in the history classroom? This guide about the use of historical sources starts with a brief description of the different aims of history education (1.1) and historical thinking skills (1.2), followed by a short introductory overview of issues concerning the use of historical sources. The following three chapters provide more detailed and practical examples on the use of specific kinds of sources. The focus is on potential use in secondary schools.



1.1. TWO STANCES IN HISTORY EDUCATION

Looking at the history classrooms across the world, two different types of history education may be distinguished. Both aim at educational aims related to personal growth and societal cohesion, but they are grounded in different views on how to reach these aims. They can be considered as two ends of a scale.

The first type relates to a history education that consists purely of the transmission of historical narratives. In classrooms like these, teachers tell stories about the past, which are regarded as factual. There is one, single and true narrative. Oftentimes, these are stories of an ethnic or national past; stories of national heroes, successes and victimhood of the dominant group. These stories are meant to contribute to identity formation on both the personal and the societal level. The facts and narratives are meant to be remembered by the students, which lead these students to learning them by heart in order to reproduce them on a test. ‘Past’ and ‘history’ seem to merge into each other. We might call this approach the reproductive stance. ‘One history for all’ is seen as promoting social cohesion. Among the pitfalls to this approach, is the effect on students who do not belong to the dominant societal group. Such students might learn the school syllabus quite well in time for graduation, but not use the knowledge in their daily lives simply because they do not recognize themselves in the stories that are told. As a result, they might feel excluded, which in turn could be counterproductive for social cohesion.

The second stance, on the other hand of the scale, relates to a history education that is grounded in the historical method. The main aim is not only to teach historical facts, but also to improve historical thinking skills. Historical thinking skills are seen as ‘tools’ to look at the past (and the present) in order to better understand the past and the world we live in, to better understand people in the past and therefore other people in the world around us. History is seen as a reconstruction of past times, which do not exist anymore. Stories are based on historical sources. In these classrooms students do not only learn ‘facts’ (‘what?’, ‘when?’, ‘who?’, ‘where?’, ‘why?’). They also improve their understanding of the complexity of causes and effects, of continuity and change and how history is ‘made’ by people (historians and others) based on the critical use of sources. Indeed, they might also learn to do some simple historical research themselves. Students learn to deal critically with sources and historical narratives, in turn enhancing their skills to deal critically with (dis)information on – for example – social media. Through this approach students learn how and why people can have different perspectives on the past and that these perspectives

can change over time. Thus, they also learn how history is used by people to transfer values and opinions, while learning how to think for themselves about such issues. This approach might be called the historical thinking stance. A potential pitfall of this approach is the complexity of these thinking skills: on the one hand, it can make history lessons more interesting and challenging for students. On the other hand, it is also challenging for the teacher to ‘get right’ and help students achieve a proper level of understanding. You can read more about historical thinking skills in part 1.3.

To conclude: in the first type of history education sources are used merely to illustrate a narrative. In the second type, sources are used for historical thinking. You will read more about historical sources in part 1.4. In the following paragraphs, we will look closer at the use of sources in the classroom as well as the potential challenges for both students and teachers.

1.2 HISTORICAL THINKING SKILLS: A SHORT OVERVIEW

At first sight historical sources predominantly play a role in aspects of historical thinking dealing with the concept of ‘evidence’. How do we know about the past? How reliable and trustworthy are the sources? Which are more reliable and why? How are they used to construct stories about the past? Why are there different interpretations of the past? But there is more at stake and to dig deeper into the use of sources in the classroom a short overview of all historical thinking concepts will be helpful.

In this introduction we adopt the conceptual approach of Peter Seixas and Tim Morton, as described in their book *The Big Six. Historical Thinking Concepts* (Toronto 2013). As the title already notes, this work concentrates on six major concepts that will allow teachers to think about how to teach the corresponding thinking skills. In this short introduction on the use of sources in the history classroom we stick to a short overview, illustrated by a short description in the form questions.

These six concepts are:

1. *Historical Significance* (and relevance): What were significant events, developments, people, dates in the past? What is relevant to know for us now? Who decides this? How and Why? *Why are there different views on this?*

2. *Evidence*: How do we know about the past? How reliable and trustworthy are the sources? Which are more reliable and why? How are they used to construct histories about the past? *Why are there different interpretations of the past?*

3. *Continuity and Change*: What changes and what remains the same? How? Why? *Why are there different views on this?*

4. *Cause and Consequences*: Why does this happen? Which consequences? How are causes and consequences interconnected? Which are more important? *Why are there different views on this?*

5. *Historical Perspectives*: What do we need to know about the historical contexts to understand people in the past with their beliefs, values, motivations? How do perspectives on the past differ from group to group and from time to time? *And why?*

6. *The Ethical Dimension*: What did people, both of the past and of recent times, judge as good or bad, right or wrong? *Why are there different views on this?*

All these six concepts are interrelated, and every single concept goes along with questions on multiperspectivity. But that does not imply that every perspective is as valid and ‘true’ as the others. Critical use of historical sources remains the foundation. More about the use in the classroom in the next paragraph.

1.3 HISTORICAL SOURCES

Types of sources

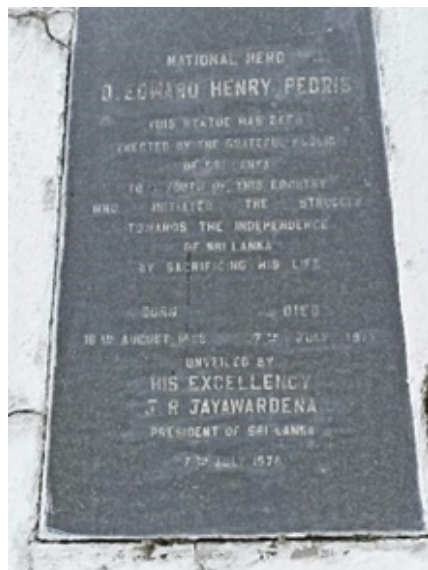
As described above sources are traces of the past. When history developed as an academic discipline in the 19th century in the West, historians mainly made use of official documents like treaties, meeting notes, letters et cetera. These were all written sources, and largely used to write political history. Nowadays we are more interested in a wider historical context and so also in social, economic, cultural, technological, and ecological aspects of past societies. Today we consider anything that can tell us anything about the past as a source: archeological sources, diaries, photographs, oral histories, songs, movies, records of businesses, weather reports, lists of cargo of ships, stamps, clothes, history textbooks... the list is endless.

Primary and secondary sources

A crucial distinction often made is between primary and secondary sources. Primary sources are stories that originated in the historical period on which they provide information. They can be considered as ‘eyewitnesses’ of the time under study. Sometimes they are made to be considered as historical sources, like treaties, official records, and proceedings of meetings. In most cases, however, they were not purposely made as historical sources - think for instance of private letters, diaries, utensils, buildings, songs, clothes, or posters. Crucially, all primary sources seem to give us direct access to the past.

Secondary sources are sources that date from a later time than the events they describe, like the works of historians, oral history, monuments, or historical expositions in museums. They intentionally mediate between past and present: they are reconstructions of the past, based on primary (and often) other secondary sources. The available sources and the intention of the maker can ‘colour’ the historical interpretation of the past. Different secondary sources can therefore tell different histories even when making use of the same primary sources.

The distinction between primary and secondary sources can help us to value the trustworthiness of the source. But the distinction can be blurry for students. A monument, a history textbook or a historical movie can be seen as a secondary source (based on primary sources), because they tell of something that happened in the past. But sources can be used both as primary and as secondary sources. A monument can tell us something about a war or a hero in the past, but it can also tell us something about what the makers in later times felt about this war or this hero. A school history text can describe a revolution, but this text can also tell us what the authors of the history textbook considered important about that revolution in the time and country they wrote the textbook. The sharp distinction depends on the question we ask. *What happened to **Edward Henry Pedris** on the 7th of July 1915?* is a completely different question from *How and why was this monument in Colombo made in 1978 and unveiled by the president of Sri Lanka? Why then? Why this incident among others? What is the message?* In the first case the monument is a secondary source about an event that happened in 1915, in the second case it can be a primary source about the political situation in 1978. For historical understanding it is important to make this distinction.



Images: Elise Storck

1.4 HISTORICAL SOURCES IN THE CLASSROOM: WHY?

There are several good reasons to use historical sources in history lessons.

One obvious reason is that sources give us a 'historical sensation'. As primary sources are direct witnesses from the past, they bring students into more direct contact with the past than a textbook would do, even when the sources are copies or pictures of real historical sources. Students can read and see what people in the past made or thought. This can raise curiosity and a sense of proximity and thus motivate students to appreciate and learn history.

A second reason has to do with illustration and contextualisation. It is not easy for students to grasp a powerful understanding of the historical context of a certain period or event through merely looking at text in textbooks. Images, journal cover pages, or movies can provide a better impression of what 'the world looked like' at a given time in history - especially the material world - and what individual people thought or felt and how they expressed themselves.

The third reason to use sources in the classroom has to do with the concepts of ‘evidence’ and ‘historical perspectives’. By critically analyzing the sources and corroborating sources with each other, by comparing them and furthermore by doing small historical research themselves, students learn to understand how historical narratives are made. They will discover that sources often do not ‘speak for themselves’, but have to be interpreted and that some interpretations are more, or less, valid than others. They will learn to see the more hidden or explicit messages in historical accounts and learn that interpretations of historical events or developments can differ along the token perspective, caused by the background and intention of the authors. In doing that they can train their skills in dealing with information, including current information that they might come across on (social) media platforms, for instance.

1.5 CHALLENGES FOR STUDENTS WHEN WORKING WITH HISTORICAL SOURCES

In the last decades quite a lot of research has been done on how students learn history and deal with sources. These studies show differences between novice students and students who have received more education and training. These insights can help us as teachers to teach students to deal with sources in a more powerful and effective way. Seixas & Morton (*The Big Six. Historical Thinking Concepts*, Toronto 2013) made an overview of several problems students with limited understanding of dealing with sources will come across, along with problems in understanding the people in the past who made the sources. These include showing an unexamined faith in the trustworthiness of the source; confusion about how to ask questions about a source; failing to consider questions about the creation of the source; making judgment about the messages of sources without taking into account the time period when they were made; assuming that people in the past had the same beliefs, values, worldviews and motivations as those of people today; and making unwarranted claims on the basis of one single source.

These findings relate to the double question of what we can do to improve students’ historical thinking skills when working with sources and how working with sources can improve their historical thinking skills. In this short introduction we will focus on four aspects: ‘reading’, contextualizing, questioning and corroboration.

‘Reading’ sources

In addition to problems with reading contemporary texts, reading text written in past times provides an additional challenge. ‘Old fashioned’ or archaic language (or indeed foreign languages), complex sentences, and unknown words hinder the accessibility of the text. Handwriting or font styles may not be readable anymore for our students. In such cases, when primarily considering educational goals, the advice is to add a glossary and/or translate texts into accessible language, preferably alongside a copy of the original to stir the feeling of proximity to the past.

Nevertheless, even if the text and symbols are clear we face the problem that students might focus on one or two obvious pieces of data while forgetting about the rest and thus arriving at false conclusions. This requires a certain training in ‘close reading’, not only of texts, but also of visual sources. Reading visual sources and audiovisual sources like cartoons, posters, stamps, movies, TV documentaries, songs and other music, or indeed monuments, require special attention. The following chapters will give more detailed and practical information on working with specific kinds of visual sources, stamps and songs.

Contextualizing sources

‘How stupid to think the world was flat / they went to war / they voted for X?’ ‘Why did you as a prisoner in a Nazi death camp not escape by putting the electricity off the barbed wire and take the guns of the guards?’¹ . Many poorly educated students tend to think that people in the past had strange habits and that nowadays people are smarter or cleverer. They look at people in the past and at sources from their own context. We call that presentism, a lack of historical contextualization. These more naïve stances on approaching people from the past and lack of contextualization hinder an understanding of the past - and thus also the traces and sources which they left behind.

Historical contextualization is the students’ ability to create an historical context and use this historical context to successfully interpret and explain historical phenomena and people’s actions.²

¹ Primo Levi (1986). *I sommersi e i salvati*. Turin: Einaudi. / Primo Levi (1988). *The Drowned and the Saved*. New York City: Simon & Schuster. [Question asked by an Italian student after Primo Levi told in a school visit about his experiences in a Nazi concentration camp 1944-1944.]

² C. van Boxtel, P. Holthuis, T. Huijgen and W. van de Grift (2019). Promoting historical contextualisation in classrooms: an observational study. *Educational Studies* 45:4, p.456-479.
DOI: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/03055698.2018.1509771>.

An historical context comprises a sense of time (when?), space (where?) and knowledge of the past society, with social dimensions (who lived there and then? in which groups?), political dimensions (who were in power and who were not; how was the administration organized?), economic dimensions and socio-cultural dimensions (what about important values, beliefs, science, art and artefacts?). Questions such as ‘When did an historical event occur?’ and ‘In what chronological sequence did historical events occur?’ can provide insights into the chronological dimension. The spatial dimension focuses on the geographical location and scale (e.g., regional, national or global) of an historical event. The social dimensions concern the use of political, economic, and cultural knowledge of a specific historical period to understand and interpret an historical source. Historical knowledge is thus an important aspect of contextualization, but it is not enough. It is also about applying and using this knowledge. Surprisingly for a lot of teachers they notice that when students are confronted with historical sources, it is not their natural first impulse to use this historical knowledge. This requires special attention and training before it becomes a more natural habit for students when they look at a source, to not only to look at what is in the source, but also to realize what they know about the historical context of the source.

Contextualization is in other words important for understanding sources and people in the past, while the very use of sources at the same time can contribute to knowledge of the historical context.

Questioning sources

A quality of professional historians is that they do not jump immediately to a conclusion when they are looking at a historical source. They are trained to generate curiosity and to ask questions: what puzzles me? What do I see? What is left out and why? What do I know or not know? One of the challenges we face when working with sources is that students often tend not to approach a source with an open mind.³ Rather, they tend to ‘jump’ immediately to the first interpretation that comes to their mind, often in a split second. For example: a student who saw in a cartoon a man with a cap and mustache, may immediately be convinced for herself that this was a cartoon depicting Adolf Hitler, even if all other symbols and other elements in the source such as a hammer and sickle and the date of 1948 would give evidence of it in fact depicting Joseph Stalin. Because the student did not question her own assumption and did not check this with the other elements

³ Carla van Boxtel and Jannet van Drie (2012, April 6). “That’s in the time of the Romans!” Knowledge and strategies students use to contextualize historical images and documents. In *Cognition and Instruction* 4:1, p.113-145.

DOI: <https://scholar.google.com/scholar?oi=bibs&cluster=6747685696035367155&btnI=1&hl=nl>.

in the cartoon, the source was not well interpreted. Teachers will also have the experience that students tend to look at a limited amount of information in a source, namely what immediately attracts their attention the most.

Two kinds of questions can help the student to a better understanding of sources and media. One type of question has to do with the content of the source: what do I see exactly? What is obvious and emphasised? What is in the background (visual sources) or what can I read ‘between the lines’ or in the details (textual sources)? What can I infer from adjectives, metaphors, symbols, colours, music, etc.? These are questions that help discover what is in the source. The second type of questions is about the source. These questions are for one part closely related to contextualization: what do I know about the historical context? Equally important are questions like: who is the author or the ‘client’ or ‘recipient’? What were the intentions of the author? How was this received in the time itself? These sorts of questions also concern the reliability of the information, in which corroboration can be of big help (more on this below).

An issue of a different order is that students very often are used to situations in which teachers formulate and ask questions, or even demand that there are correct answers. That might make students somewhat hesitant to formulate questions themselves. In exercises on working with sources it is therefore advised to make clear that it is important to raise as many questions as possible, even if you do not know the answers yet. It demands a safe and reassuring environment with an open atmosphere and mutual respect among teachers and students.

Corroborating sources

In school settings – and in daily life outside schools – students tend to hold as truth what is written in textbooks or told by teachers. Very often it is the same for movies, photographs and pictures, statements in everyday (social) media, as it is with historical sources. A main problem lies in students’ attitude to ‘truth’, their epistemological beliefs. For many students ‘truth’ is something to *find*, something that is out there that can be discovered when using the right cognitive tools and sources, which might be the first source they encounter. But this is not enough for a better understanding of the past, it is not enough if a student manages to understand the information in a source correctly. A final important issue when dealing with sources is about the reliability of the information in the source (*is it true?*) and the representativeness (for which part of the people does this apply to?).

As such, it might sometimes be important to corroborate sources. Corroboration is the ability to compare information provided by two or more separate sources, looking for similar, different or contradictory information. When other sources provide the same or similar information to the first, they are considered to corroborate (i.e., support, or agree with) with the first, which can strengthen the degree of trustworthiness.

The next three chapters provide practical ‘rules of thumb’ and teaching materials for implementation in the classroom.

1.6 TEACHERS’ PRACTICAL CHALLENGES

Teachers who start using sources might face challenges relating both to the availability of sources and what we might call ‘curricular stress’.

As for the issue of availability, we can first look at the sources which are already provided for in the textbooks. Which sources are effective for illustration? Which sources are useful for more deeper use of sources as described above and in the following chapters? And apart from textbooks, can we consider what is available in daily life in the environment in and around our school, such as monuments, remembrance sites, or artefacts?

Over the last couple of decades, large collections of sources have been made available on the internet. These are often combined with lesson plans developed by colleagues all over the world. For a single teacher it might require too much time to provide useful sources and lessons. Collaboration between teachers in local or regional or national networks can be a fruitful way to exchange ideas and inspiration or develop lesson ideas together. Even exchanging ideas and experiences on practical issues might be helpful (for example on issues like providing copies or students using mobile phones in the classroom or at home).

In educational systems in which the critical use of sources is an integral part of the curriculum, it is also an integral part of examinations. Likewise, there is time in the curriculum to work on these historical thinking skills. In Sri Lanka, the curriculum and the current system of examination can present a challenge to using sources in the classroom. Students must learn a lot of facts. This demands a lot of effort and students will often tend to forget these facts as soon as the exam is

passed, simply because they miss to grasp meaning and coherence. Experienced teachers who have an overview of the curriculum could try to find room in the curriculum by using sources which are relevant for a combination of facts, because they fit with important concepts or narratives. As sources can make history livelier for students they improve the chance that the content of the syllabus is both better understood and remembered. In this respect, as well, professional collaboration between history teachers can be inspiring and fruitful.

2.

Using visual sources in the classroom



2.1 INTRODUCTION

In the 21st century visual sources have become increasingly important, both in present everyday life as well as in history (including in research, but also in school history and popular history). As a result, it becomes more important for students to develop their skills to critically deal with visual sources, both in their daily lives and in their history education. Bridget Martin, a history teacher and teacher trainer in Paris, has formulated four relevant rules of thumb in teaching students to deal with visual sources: ⁴

o *Work from the surface to the depths*

- Begin with what stands out in an image and then 'read' in greater detail, asking questions of the image along the way. Consider how factors like position, colour, shape, symbols, etc. serve to attract the viewer's attention and communicate messages.

o *Describe and interpret*

- Ensure students are making clear links between exactly what they see in the image and what they interpret this to mean. This helps to avoid false assumptions, encourages students to always justify their interpretations and assists them in identifying how ideas and messages are communicated in visual sources.

o *Consider different perspectives*

- There are three important categories of perspective to consider when working with historical visual sources: the perspective of the creator, the perspective of the contemporary viewer, and the perspective of the present-day viewer.

o *Using contextual knowledge and captions*

- Contextual knowledge from both your teaching and image captions can support students to make sense of the image and identify the perspectives above. In some cases, it can be useful to withhold these until later in the analysis process in order to encourage more open 'reading' or to demonstrate the importance of context.

⁴ Bridget Martin (2019, May 21). Webinar: Reading Visual History, Using Digitised History Sources to Promote Visual Literacy and Historical Thinking [Website]. EuroClio. Accessed on 1 March 2022, from <https://www.euroclio.eu/2019/05/21/webinar-reading-visual-history-using-digitised-history-sources-to-promote-visual-literacy-and-historical-thinking-2/>.

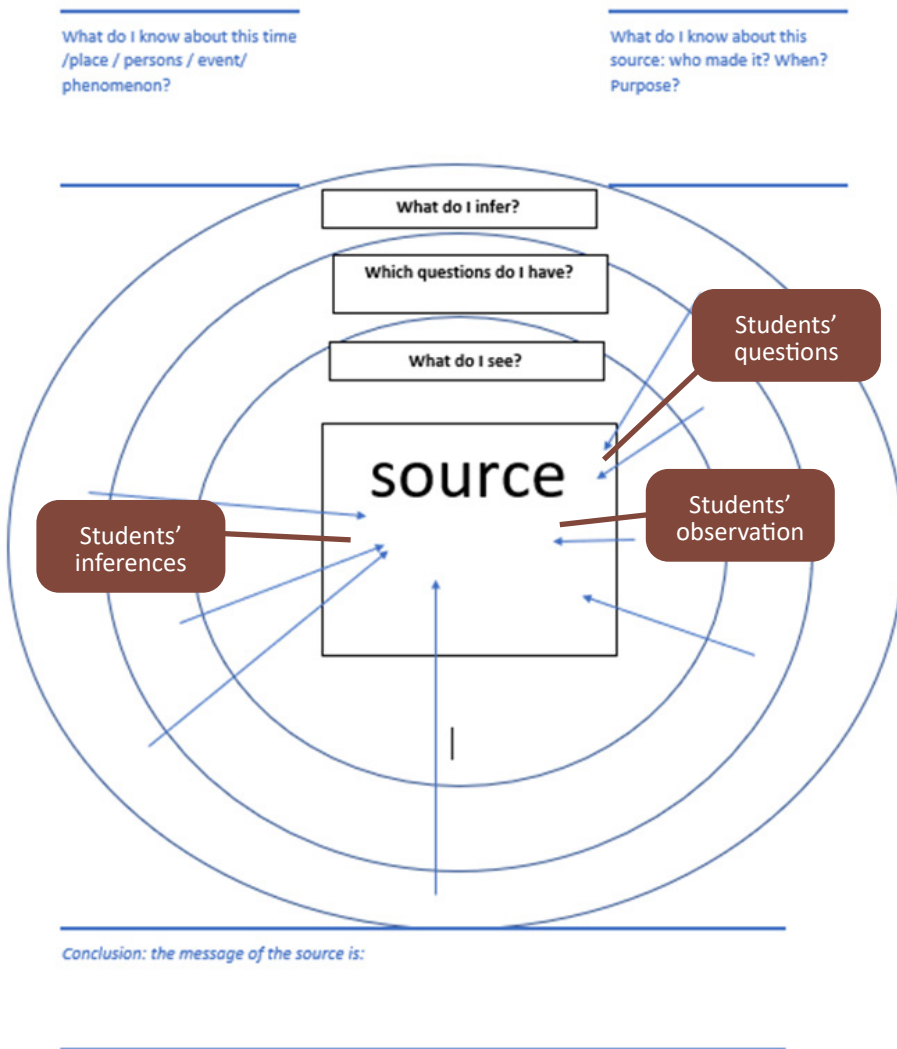
All these four rules of thumb meet the challenges described in the Introduction above. In the next paragraph you will find a classroom activity which can be used in any lesson on working with historical sources. In chapter 3 you will find specific elaborated suggestions for using Sri Lankan stamps as visual sources.

2.2 'PEBBLE-IN-THE-POND, AN 'ALL-IN-ONE' WORKSHEET FOR READING VISUAL SOURCES, RAISING QUESTIONS AND CONTEXTUALIZING

The worksheet below can help the students to read (visual) sources in a more historical way, by using aspects of careful reading /looking, asking questions and contextualization. It can be used in the following way:

1. Make groups of two or four students: each group gets one worksheet with a small copy of the visual source (picture/cartoon/drawing/photograph)
2. Show the visual source in a large format in front of the whole class
3. Ask students in the groups
 - to look carefully at the source and write down in the right 'pebbles' as many observations, inferences and questions they have, (stress the difference between observations and interpretations /inferences)
 - to write, concisely, in the left box some relevant knowledge about the historical context
 - to write, concisely, in the right box relevant knowledge about the source
 - to wait with jumping to a conclusion until all the other information is discussed and written down
 - (at a sign of the teacher) compare their findings with another group
4. Conclude with
 - the teacher leading a classroom discussion
 - on the content of the source, its meaning and relevance
 - about the procedure of how to look at a source.
 - Students formulate shortly for themselves on what they have learnt about the subject and about dealing with sources

In an ideal situation every pair of two to four students has a worksheet on A3-sized paper with the source copies in the middle and available on a blackboard or smartboard in a readable size. In a less ideal practical situation the teacher can write the questions on the blackboard or let the student write down the questions before working on them. If history lessons have their own classrooms, teachers could make a poster and hang this on the wall, so it is there to be seen anytime students work with sources.



3.

Using stamps as a historical source and prompt in the history classroom



3.1 STAMPS AS HISTORICAL SOURCE

Author: *M. Samantha Niroshana Peiris*



Image courtesy of kiyawanamuddara.lk

*“Stamps are miniature documents of human history. They are the means by which a country gives sensible expression to its hopes and needs; its beliefs and ideals. They mirror the past and presage the future. They delineate cultural attainments, industrial works, domestic, civil, and social life. In a word, these vignettes give a vivid picture of the world, its occupants, and their multifarious endeavors.”*⁵

Stamp collecting is a popular hobby in Sri Lanka and around the world and the educational benefits are invaluable. Collecting stamps as a hobby encourages self-directed learning and can foster essential skills, behaviors, and dispositions such as reasoning, logic, resourcefulness, and goal setting. Stamp collecting encourages students to question, compare, analyze, sequence, and be inquisitive all while having fun! Every stamp tells a story and Sri Lanka Post’s stamp series, releases, and collections are a rich and engaging way to learn about Sri Lankan history and culture.

Although ‘stamps’ was only a hobby of collecting in the past, today it serves as a medium for research, education, and information storage in society.

Amidst the accessibility and visual appeal of stamps is their ability to stand for the political culture of an entire nation in just one square inch. Postage stamps are small but powerful symbolic ambassadors from one nation to the rest of the world. Stamps are not just tools of postal operations, but objects that are deeply ingrained in the culture. The painting on stamps acts as a central institution for the circulation, management, and shaping of the visual meanings of the nation.

3.2 WHY STAMPS COULD BE USED


Stamps can be used as interesting collection material and valuable historical sources for historians. They also can be used in the history classroom as an educational tool to teach about social, economic, political, environmental, and cultural issues. On their own, stamps can be curiosities, even artistic marvels; in this project, stamps become a window into the larger sweep of history education.

⁵ Frances J. Spellman (n.d.). Home. Spellman Museum. Accessed on 1 March 2022, from <https://spellmanmuseum.org/>

3.3 FOUR STEPS TO WORK WITH STAMPS AS VISUAL SOURCE


Authors: *Susanne Popp & Dennis Röder*

This elaborate lesson plan is specifically made for a lesson around a commemorative stamp, issued on 22 November 2002 to mark the 400th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Sri Lanka and the Netherlands, but the steps can be used for working with any (visual) source.


Step 1:	Students' first perception of the picture	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Individual perceptions of the picture: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Freely expressing associations - Activating prior knowledge - Asking questions 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Collecting first information about the stamp - including text(s), monetary value, format, and size, colours 	<p>This commemorative stamp was issued on 22 November 2002 to mark the 400th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Sri Lanka and the Netherlands.</p> <p>This painting depicts Admiral van Spilbergen meeting the upcountry Sinhala king.</p> <p>The value of the stamp is 16.50 rupees.</p>

Step 2:	The students describe the picture	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The students should describe what they recognize in the picture as precisely as possible when they look at it more closely. 	<p>The painting on the stamp shows that the Sinhala king has reached the beach to welcome Admiral van Spilbergen.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● They should: 	<p>The coastal ecosystem indicates that he came to Sri Lanka from the north / east coast (e.g. palm trees). The Dutch flag, the Admiral's fleet, and ships are visible on the stamp.</p> <p>It is clear in the picture that the king had come with a herd of elephants, which may imply that the king was enthusiastic to meet Admiral van Spilbergen.</p> <p>Although this picture shows that the king had come to the shore to welcome the Admiral, this has not been the case in real history. This painting is just an artistic visualization of the creator.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - identify the representation technique (e.g., photography, painting, and drawing) 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - identify major and smaller elements of the picture (e.g., people, places, objects, symbols) and 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - pay attention to the way how they are represented (e.g., people: gestures, facial expressions, posture) 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - describe the major features of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The arrangement (composition) of the picture (e.g., foreground/ background, center/ periphery) - The colour scheme 	

Step 3:	The students analyze the picture as a visual source.	
3.1	Analyzing the content of the picture – guiding questions:	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What is the topic of the picture? Is it historical or contemporaneous? 	<p>This painting is a very valuable work of art based on a historical theme.</p> <p>The past story is creatively presented by the creator, but it does not match with the real history. History says that Spilbergen visited the King at his palace.</p> <p>Spilbergen landed in Batticaloa and the King's Palace was located in Kandy. Therefore, the King arriving at the beach is the work of the artist.</p> <p>The artist's message here may be to promote the hospitality of Sri Lankans or the King's motive to get help from the Dutch to chase the Portuguese from Ceylon.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● When was the stamp edited? How do the times of the depicted object/ event and the time of the emission relate to each other? 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Which aspects of the topic are emphasized? 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What is the meaning of the picture? 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Is it possible to discern a certain point of view on the subject matter? 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Does the picture want to affect the viewer? By which means? 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To which target group is the picture addressed? 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What is the (political) message of the picture? 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Which social and political norms and values are being promoted? 	

3.2	Collecting additional information regarding the political or social context of the stamp:	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Why was the stamp issued (anniversary, special occasion...)? 	<p>Additional information about the stamp:</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What was the historical background? Was there a public discussion about the issue of the stamp? 	<p>The painting on this stamp was created based on an oil painting named “Spilbergen’s arrival in Sri Lanka” by a talented artist called Geoffrey Beling.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Is the stamp part of a series? 	<p>This painting is still on display at the Dutch Burgher Union, Colombo. The (entire) painting depicts the arrival of a Dutch Admiral named Spilbergen, who was invited by King Vimaladharma Suriya to help rid Sri Lanka of the Portuguese.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● And if so, what is its value (high vs. low, but also: often used vs. rarely used)? 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What is the content of the other stamps in the series? 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Who is the designer of the stamp? 	<p>Commemorative Stamp for Dutch Burgher Union Sri Lanka issued the 100th</p>
		<p>The history of the Dutch Burgher Union was also honored with the issue of a Stamp worth Rs. 5.00 on 22nd October 2008.</p> <p>This Dutch Burgher Union stamp is directly connected to Spilbergen’s visit stamp.</p> 

		<p>Extra reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Journal of Spilbergen: the first Dutch envoy to Ceylon, 1602● Author: Joris van Spilbergen; K D Paranavitana
3.3	What kind of picture is presented on the stamp?	
	A. The picture is designed according to the model of another well-known picture.	Detail of a painting by Geoffrey Beling at the Dutch Burger Union, Colombo
	B. The picture shows a detail of an existing picture.	

Step 4:	The students interpret and evaluate the stamp as a document of the history culture and governmental identity policies at the time of its emission	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What conclusions can be drawn about the time of the emission of the stamp? E.g., political strategies and messages / political, societal, and cultural norms & values / Concepts of collective identity / invented traditions... 	<p>This painting is not fully used for the stamp and only a part of the painting is depicted on the stamp.</p> 
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How do the ideas/intentions/messages expressed in the picture relate to contemporary societal reality? 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How many different political/social/cultural groups have been interpreting or evaluating the ideas/intentions/message conveyed by the stamp? 	<p>Therefore, the meanings of the picture and the painting are different from each other.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Is it possible to imagine the theme of the stamp being reissued today? ● What obstacles could such stamps face today? 	<p>Simultaneously, Christopher Columbus' voyage to the West Indies teaches us more about this historical event.</p> <p>Sri Lanka has issued 4 stamps to commemorate Christopher Columbus' voyage.</p>



3.4 OTHER SUGGESTIONS AND CREATIVE IDEAS FOR THE USE OF STAMPS AS VISUAL SOURCES IN HISTORY LESSONS

In general:

- stamps can be used at the beginning (motivation, repetition, posing questions for the upcoming lesson), in the main part (analyzing contents/ historical background/ developing further ideas) or at the end of lessons (discussion, comparison);
- stamps as a visual source can also generally be used for the introduction of a topic or for deepening historical thinking or methodological ‘training’ or repetition and in exams and tests

Comparative approach: Representation on the stamp(s) ↔ actual historical event

- How is the event represented on the stamp? Which features are highlighted, which are neglected?
- Using stamps for deeper historical understanding (1): comparison of several stamps on the same historical event from different times
- Using stamps for deeper understanding (2): developing ideas for a new stamp on the respective event reflecting the perspective of the students and their present situation and the current ‘history culture’

Using stamps for lessons about ‘history culture’ / ‘remembrance culture’

- Make students aware of current days of remembrance in your history culture → ask them to create a stamp to commemorate this day in history
- Make students aware of change/ continuity in history culture and thus the changes/ continuities in the representations visible in stamps
- Make students discuss contemporary events /developments and their possible relevance for future history culture and ask them to draft a possible stamp/stamp series to represent those events/developments (e.g. climate crisis, Covid pandemic)

Using stamps for lessons about (national) ‘invented traditions’ / ‘identity policies’

- Make students decide which person/ symbol should especially represent the national history on a stamp and then compare past/ current representations on stamps
- Discuss the reasons/ functions why certain people/ symbols etc. were chosen and others not

Using diachronic series of stamps on one and the same historical topic

- Using stamps on the same topic to explore continuity and change in the history culture, e.g. political leaders, national symbols, ideas of technological progress, objects of national pride, commemorations ...

Using a whole stamp set (from the smallest to the highest value)

- make students aware of historical decisions who is regarded as “important” and “less important” in a (national) historical narrative
- use stamp sets about famous (national) personalities, technological achievements, national symbols, or prestigious traditions (function: explore the selection and the attribution of stamp values)
- ideas for activities/ questions for discussion in the classroom:
 - Who or what is missing in the series in the students’ eyes?
 - How would they attribute the different values from today’s perspective?
 - Which political people or technological achievements would they choose today for a set with 6 stamps? ...

Using stamps for the discussion of multiple perspectives

- Using stamps of a certain historical period in order to discuss how the different social groups may have looked at it (e.g., are all relevant ethnic or other groups represented in an equal way?)

Using blank stamps for the students to create a stamp (series) related to a historical topic

- point could be a commemoration day related to a topic in the history curriculum
- students are asked to choose one idea from various material/ sources and then design their stamp (which could be larger than an actual stamp)
- they are then asked to present their ideas and give reasons why they chose this idea/ representation
- all the stamps are then compared and discussed in the classroom (and later compared to current stamps)

3.5 SOME EXAMPLES OF STAMPS WHICH CAN BE USED AT SEVERAL STAGES IN THE CURRICULUM

Author: **M Samantha Niroshana Peiris**

The Common history lessons for Grades 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 & 11 are:

1. The Dutch era in Sri Lanka
2. Establishment of British power
3. Religious and national revival in Sri Lanka
4. Constitutional reforms and the National Freedom Movement
5. Social transformation of Sri Lanka under British
6. Sri Lanka after Independence

For more on stamp reading for educational settings in Sri Lanka, explore the website kiyawanamuddara.lk



The Dutch era in Sri Lanka

e.g.: 400 years of Relationship between Sri Lanka and the Netherlands

400 years of Sri Lanka (Ceylon) - Netherlands relationship was celebrated on 20th November 2002 with an issue of Rs 16.50 Stamp. The stamp design depicted an oil painting by William James Geoffrey Beling in 1944, titled “Spielberg’s Visit to Ceylon”.



1. Establishment of British power

e.g.: Kandyan Crown, Throne & Footstool

The jewelry and ornaments formed part of the regalia of the last King of Kandy. The full regalia comprised the crown, the throne and footstool, and the sword used by Kings of the Kandyan Kingdom for 122 years. The crown's eight-cornered diadems surmounted with the Royal Malgaha (tree of flowers). On the eight-corners are blue and pink plumes and are ornate with diamonds, emeralds, rubies, and pearls. Kandyan kings used the throne from 1693 and the crown from 1737 until the fall of the kingdom in 1815. Throne & Footstool was gifted on the orders of the Dutch Governor Thomas van Rhee.

In 1933, British Governor Sir Edward Stubbs referred to the throne during the course of his address at the opening of an art exhibition in Colombo. In September 1934 the Duke of Gloucester – son of King George V – visited Sri Lanka, bringing back with him the throne and regalia of the King of Kandy.



1. Religious and national revival in Sri Lanka

e.g.: Sidde Lebbe, Anagārika Dharmapāla, Arumuga Navalar, and Henry Steel Olcott



Muhammad Cassim Siddi Lebbe (11 June 1838 - 5 February 1898) was a Ceylonese Lawyer, educationist, scholar, philosopher, Divination, writer, publisher, social reformer, proctor, visionary, and Muslim community leader. Lebbe was the father of Muslim education in Ceylon, a dynamic social worker, and one who sacrificed everything he possessed to uplift the Muslim community culturally. Due to the inspiring life and work of Lebbe as one of the greatest sons of Lanka, Central Government has named him among the National Heroes.



Anagārika Dharmapāla (17 September 1864 – 29 April 1933) was a Sri Lankan Buddhist revivalist and a writer. He was the first global Buddhist missionary, one of the founding contributors of non-violent Sinhalese Buddhist nationalism, and a leading figure in the Sri Lankan independence movement against British rule.

Arumuga Navalar (18 December 1822 – 5 December 1879) was a Sri Lankan Tamil language scholar, polemicist, and religious reformer who was central in reviving native Hindu Tamil traditions in Sri Lanka and India.



Colonel Henry Steel Olcott (2 August 1832 – 17 February 1907) was an American military officer, journalist, lawyer, Freemason, and the co-founder and first President of the Theosophical Society which helped create a renaissance in the study of Buddhism. Olcott was a major revivalist of Buddhism in Sri Lanka and he is still honored in Sri Lanka for these efforts.



1. Constitutional reforms and the National Freedom Movement

e.g.: The ancient flag of Ceylon before the colonial period

The old Sinhala royal flag used as the flag of King Sri Wickrama Rajasinghe of the Kingdom of Kandy, used from 1798–1815, found at the Chelsea Hospital in London



1. Social transformation of Sri Lanka under British

e.g.: James Taylor (29 March 1835 - 2 May 1892) was a Scottish tea planter who introduced tea to British Ceylon. He arrived in British Ceylon in 1852 and settled down in Loolecondera estate in Delthota.



1. Sri Lanka after Independence

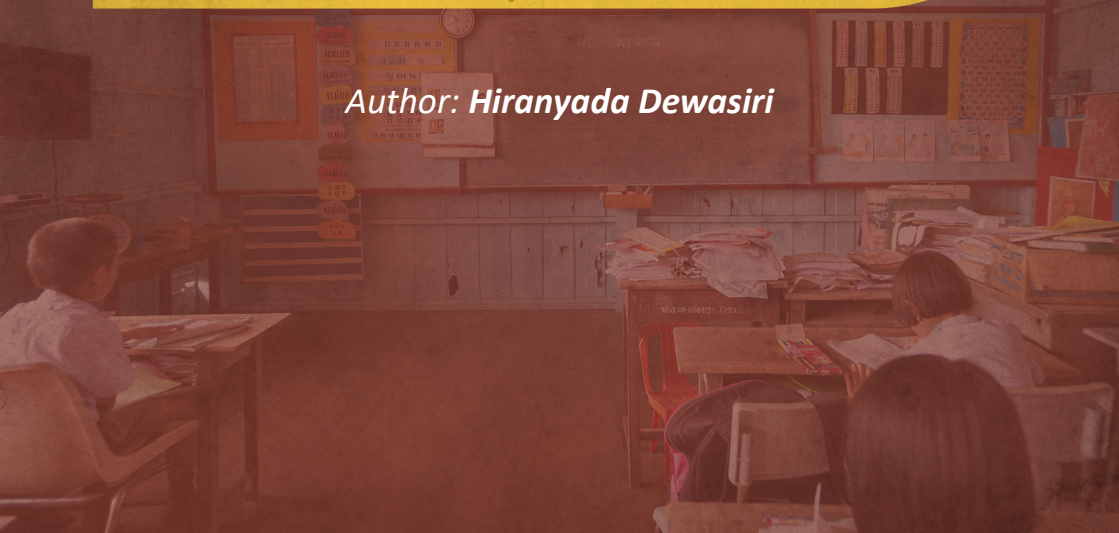
Mahaweli River diversion at the Polgolla near Kandy. The first project, Polgolla Diversion Complex constructed in 1976 consists of a diversion dam built across the Mahaweli Ganga at Polgolla for diverting the waters of the river to the Dry Zone.



4.

Using songs as a historical source and prompt in the history classroom

Author: Hiranyada Dewasiri



4.1 INTRODUCTION

A song is a musical text (Gilbert 2005). It is a set of words set to music. A song is sung. But songs are not the only musical texts. A musical text could be a piece of music that has been composed and written down. It could also be music or song that is never written down but is practiced as an activity.

A song has many elements such as music, melody, lyrics and technology. They are products of decisions made by humans. Songs are also sung for different purposes. Some songs are written, produced and distributed by those with state power and some

Songs are made in moments in time. They are products of those spatial and temporal contexts and are influenced by what people did during those times, who had power, what economic conditions prevailed and the technologies that existed during those times. If this is so, what does it mean to look at a song as a source of history?

Songs can be used in the history classroom in a number of ways. The song could be used as an illustration of a historical development or phenomenon, as a prompt to motivate students for a new topic, as a prompt to invite further inquiry into a selected topic or as a source to inquire upon a particular historical event, for example on a historical event that is in the syllabus.

4.2 WHY USE

A song is something that can be enjoyed as it appeals to our auditory senses and breaks the monotony of conventional classroom activities. They can be sung in the classroom together. Music helps students remember. By remembering the song and the activity, the students are more likely to remember the historical event that is explored through the song along with the points discussed.

A song would carry information about the time that the song was made in, the technologies used, about the things it is sung about and why those songs were sung. Such a musical text can be analyzed for the economic landscape of that time, political climate, technology, lyrics and genre of music and the histories of those genres. You may have witnessed such detailed inquiries into songs in literary analysis or television or radio programs that appreciate songs and other musical texts.

Songs are shared texts. They are played for audiences or are sung together. As creative expressions that are results of creative choices, power dynamics and technical and technological factors, like any other media, songs too select, shape and constrain information. This is applicable to any historical source. Through engaging with these songs in the history classroom, the students can inquire which stories have been included and which stories have been left out in these songs. Songs allow us to look at history as not something that has happened, but as something that is happening by way of continuing to foster particular narratives (e.g., looking at ways in which certain songs have passed down and are being passed down).

4.3 WHAT MAKES SONGS SUITED AS A SOURCE AND WHAT IS PARTICULAR ABOUT THEM?

Recorded music is available to be accessed freely and openly unlike other more conventional sources that are talked about in the textbook. Using recorded music or folk song as a historical source would allow students to get first-hand experience in working with a historical source. Recorded music also provides many aspects in the production and distribution processes to explore. Similarly, folk songs that may or may not be recorded later explore folk practices and could therefore be used as a historical source from a folk perspective.

Music could also be a commemorative text and can be used to understand the ways in which people remember certain events and how events are invited to be remembered. The music of a particular song may underscore the emotional elements of the lyrics. Inquiring into the combination of musical tunes, tones, scales and such elements with lyrics might help students to understand the role emotion plays in other sources. Music is a form of creative expression and songs are packed with emotion, and, whilst acknowledging this, the song can also be investigated as an object. Numerous songs are available around particular historical events or narratives.

An example in the Sri Lankan context could be comparing “Pita deepa desha”/“Loken Uthum Rata” vs. “Loken Uthum rata lankawai”.

Folk songs and folk poems are elements in oral history in which stories about the past are passed on from memory by telling or singing them. This may be suitable to introduce students to the concept of oral history. Among the powers of music is also that it in a certain way allows us to “travel in time”, recreating a past soundscape.

Songs can be divided into two types of historical sources: records and contemporaneous material. Some songs attempt to record historical events, and some do not deal with historical material as such but are contemporaneous. They are sources for the time of issuance and are representations for the time depicted. Students could engage with the songs about historical events by way of inquiring into the significance of the historical event to the time of issuance.

It is said that students engage more strongly with music coming from the students’ cultures. However, critical distance with the song in question may also enable extensive engagement as the inquiry may not be swayed by preconceived notions about the song.

4.4 WAYS IT CAN BE USED IN THE CLASSROOM: *THE PAN DINA DINA AND MANGO NONAGE THE KOPPAYA (MANGO NONA’S CUP OF TEA)*

Please note that the songs referenced in this guide can be found on YouTube or other popular music sharing platforms.

The Vinyl disk came in 1940 with recordings on either side. It was parallel to the establishment of the tea promotion board and was a promotional campaign similar to that in India (‘Tea vans’ to promote the consumption of tea). The song talks about food practices, how to make tea, and the general promotion of drinking tea in the subcontinent after WW1 and the Great Depression.

The Pan Dina Dina and Mango Nonage The Koppaya (Mango Nona's Cup of tea)

තේ පැන් දින දින වැඩි වැඩියෙන් තීමෙන් සිරුරට සැප වැඩිවේ...//
Drinking more tea day by day will increase the pleasure of the body.

උණු වී පැයෙනා ජලයෙහිලා පිරිසිදු තේ කොළ වත්කරලා...//
Pour pure tea leaves into the boiling hot water.

සීනි ද කිරි මුසු කර නිසි සේ සාදාගෙන පදමට රස සේ
Mix sugar and milk to it properly and prepare it tastefully.

වැඩි සැපයට තේ වැඩි වැඩියෙන් බොමු සැම සිරි පතළ දනෝ ...//
As people who spread prosperity, let's drink more tea for more well-being.

සුවඳැති මදුරස මනපිනනා
It's a fragrant sweet beverage, which thrills the mind.

දෙව් බොජුනකි කුස ගිනි නිවනා...//
It's a divine meal that satiates hunger.

කායික ශක්තිය තරකරනා
It improves the body strength.

ගතෙහි වීඩා දුරලන ලෙසිනා වැඩි සැපයට තේ වැඩි වැඩියෙන් බොමු දනමන පිනවන තේ...//
To relieve the fatigue of the body, let's drink more tea that pleases the people's minds for more wellbeing.

Activity 1: song as evidence

o Play the song. Break it down to parts and decipher the meaning.

What do you hear? Make a list of the things heard? Ask students to write an initial response on what the song made them feel.

1. Break the class into groups and give them source A each a 'W question' .

o *Who – Who made the source - did they have an opinion or bias? Who does the source talk about?*

o *What – What information does the source give? Is it the full story? Is it accurate? What are related things that the song does not talk about? What did the song make you feel?*

o *Why – Why was the source made? Was it made to persuade people of a particular opinion?*

o *When – Was it made at the time? Or years later? Was the person there?*

o *Where – Where was the source made? Did they have an opinion?*

o *How? – How was the source made? What technology was used?*

2. Discuss the song in class (the 6 Ws). Differentiate between the findings about the content of the song (the green questions: Who does the song talk about? What information? About what time is the song?)

- o findings about the song itself (all the other questions)
- o findings about the historical context in the syllabus
- o findings in the other sources

o Conclusion (by teacher and/or students):

- o What did we learn from this activity about Sri Lanka after the Great Depression?
- o What did we learn about the power of songs?
- o What did we learn about sourcing?

Activity 2: oral history

1. Play the song
2. Assign students a take home activity of speaking to an elder about their memory of this song. Provide 5 interview questions.
 - *Do you remember this song? If yes, what parts do you remember/ what are your memories of the song?*
 - *What do you remember about the contents of the song?*
 - *What do you think about what this song tells?*
 - *Are there any other songs that this song reminds you of?*

Students can also refer to places like the YouTube comment sections for non-expert accounts and browse the internet for more information. Students are asked to present their findings at the next assigned lesson.

3. Engage in fact checking with students.

Activity 3: dramatizing

1. Play the song
2. Dramatize the song in groups
 - Ask students to get into groups and provide them with a week to dramatize the song.
 - Students may find costumes, choose which characters to include or exclude.

Note: If Activity 3 is done without the previous activities it is to be considered as an art lesson, because it lacks learning about the historical context and/or evaluation of the song as a historical source.

Source B: Tea van and tea promotion in the 1930s

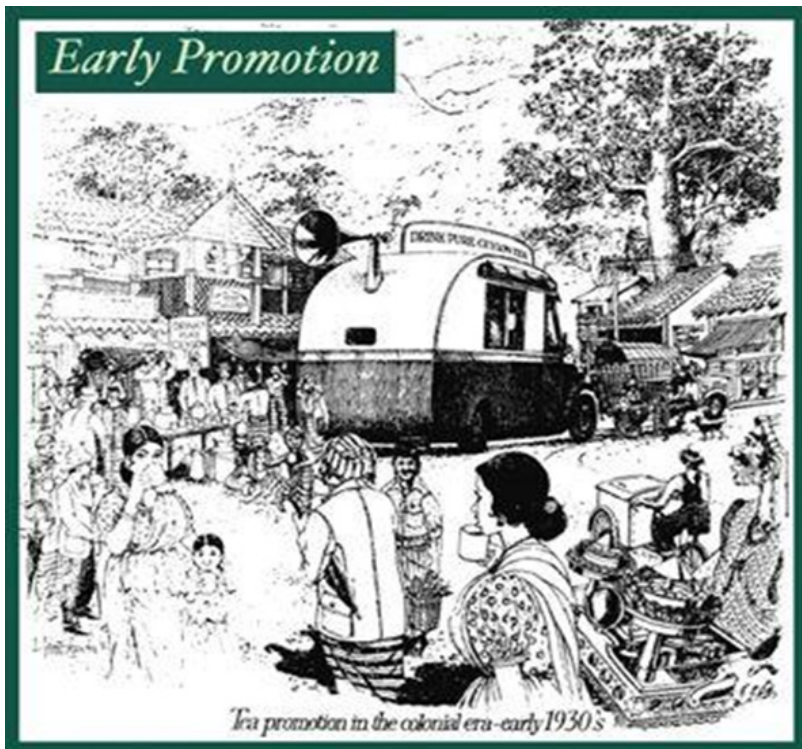


Image: Image source unknown, digitally reproduced by Rediscover Tea on Pinterest.

Source C: Historian Lutgendorf in 2012 about the ‘Tea Vans’. ⁶

Sometimes in motorized ‘tea vans’, equipped to dispense millions of cups of free tea and comparable numbers of ‘piece packets’, and to display colorful, vernacular-language signage produced by leading commercial artists. Enamel placards posted in railway stations and markets detailed the process of infusing tea by the ‘correct’ British method (source D), and this technique was endlessly iterated by ‘demonstration teams’ dispatched to festivals and bazaars, and even (via all-female units) to the inner quarters of conservative, purdah-observing households.

Similarly, the *pan dina dina* provides detailed instructions on how to make a cup of milk tea.

Source D: Enamel placards posted in railway stations and markets (in: Lutgendorf 2012)

⁶ Philip Lutgendorf (2012, December 27). Making tea in India: Chai, capitalism, culture. Thesis Eleven 113:1, p.11-31. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0725513612456896>



Image: Courtesy of the Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta, and digitally reproduced by Philip Lutgendorf.

Source E: Historian Lutgendorf in 2012 about the Tea promotional campaigns in India.⁷

The alleged physical and moral benefits of the ‘tea habit’ are touted in rapturous prose suggestive of Christian missionary tracts: drinking tea would make Indians more alert, energetic, and even punctual – in short, more like Britishers.

.....

The campaign also co-opted other discourses of the day, such as the so-called ‘woman question’ (a debate over whether the allegedly oppressed and uneducated condition of Indian women constituted an argument against self-rule): tea was touted as a medium for women’s ‘awakening’ – a progressive and empowering tool for smart, modern homemakers, who understood the importance of good nutrition and domestic hygiene.

⁷ Lutgendorf (2012). Making tea in India.

4.5 CHALLENGES AND POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Faced with these activities some Sri Lankan teachers mentioned the following challenges:

- o Lack of technological resources such as internet or digital devices
- o Loud classrooms may be a disturbance to other classrooms
- o Lack of time to fit an additional activity into an already tight school term
- o Lack of enthusiasm to learn things that won't be tested in national examinations

The first two challenges might be met with only providing the text of a song or giving the students a link to the song which they can play on a mobile phone (outside school).

As for the lack of time we refer to 1.7 in the general introduction.

Bibliography

Boxtel, C. van, Grift, W. van de, Holthuis, P. and Huijgen, T. (2019). Promoting historical contextualisation in classrooms: an observational study. *Educational Studies* 45:4, p.456-479. DOI: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/03055698.2018.1509771>

Boxtel, C. van, Drie, J. van (2012, April 6). "That's in the time of the Romans!" Knowledge and strategies students use to contextualize historical images and documents. *Cognition and Instruction* 4:1, p.113-145. DOI: <https://scholar.google.com/scholar?oi=bibs&cluster=6747685696035367155&btnI=1&hl=nl>

Levi, P. (1986). *I sommersi e i salvati*. Turin: Einaudi. / Primo Levi (1988). *The Drowned and the Saved*. New York City: Simon & Schuster.

Lutgendorf, P. (2012, December 27). Making tea in India: Chai, capitalism, culture. *Thesis Eleven* 113:1, p.11-31. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0725513612456896>

Martin, B. (2019, May 21). Webinar: Reading Visual History, Using Digitised History Sources to Promote Visual Literacy and Historical Thinking [Website]. *EuroClio*. Accessed on 1 March 2022, from <https://www.euroclio.eu/2019/05/21/webinar-reading-visual-history-using-digitised-history-sources-to-promote-visual-literacy-and-historical-thinking-2/>

Morton, T. and Seixas, P. (2013) *The Big Six: Historical Thinking Concepts*. Toronto: University of Toronto.

Spellman, F.J. (n.d.). Home. *Spellman Museum*. Accessed on 1 March 2022, from <https://spellmanmuseum.org/>