

“It’s News to Me!”
Teaching with Colorado’s Historic Newspaper Collection
Model Lesson Format

Lesson Title:

Spelling Bee: A Cultural Mirror

Subject(s) and Grade Level(s):

American History or Language Arts, Grades 4-12

Focus of Lesson: A brief explanation of what students are to learn in this lesson (content and/or skills). What is the purpose of the lesson?

In this lesson, students will explore the rich history of the spelling bee in Colorado and the nation through [Colorado’s Historic Newspaper Collection](#) and other primary sources related to the topic. In particular, they will investigate the ways in which newspaper accounts of spelling bees mirror the cultural values of their time. Throughout the lesson, students will develop their skills in searching historic databases, retrieving primary source information, and asking critical questions of the content.

Standards Assessed: Which standards will you be assessing in this lesson? Identify the content area, the standard number and any key components or benchmarks that are applicable.

Information Literacy Standard 2: The information literate student evaluates information critically and competently.
History Standard 2: Students know how to use the processes and resources of historical inquiry.
History Standard 2.1: Students know how to formulate questions and hypotheses regarding what happened in the past and to obtain and analyze historical data to answer questions and test hypotheses.
History Standard 2.2: Students know how to interpret and evaluate primary and secondary sources of historical information.
Reading and Writing Standard 4: Students apply thinking skills to their reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing.

Assessment: Explain the assessment. (Include the formal 'assessment assignment' and any forms, worksheets, etc. in the Materials Section)

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Students will analyze five articles on the topic of spelling bees from Colorado's Historic Newspaper Collection.2. After reading two articles about a 1908 national spelling bee won by an African-American girl in Cleveland, Ohio, students will write a letter to the editor of a historic newspaper using the style and vocabulary of the time and expressing an opinion about the accuracy or bias of one of the original articles. | |
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Standards Addressed: Which standards will you be addressing (but not assessing) in this lesson? Identify the content area, the standard number and any key components or benchmarks that are applicable.

Information Literacy Standard 1: The information literate student accesses information efficiently and effectively.

Information Literacy Standard 7: The information literate student contributes positively to the learning community and to society and recognizes the importance of information to a democratic society.

History Benchmark 2.3: Students apply knowledge of the past to analyze present-day issues and events from multiple, historically objective perspectives.

History Standard 3: Students understand that societies are diverse and have changed over time.

Reading and Writing Standard 1: Students read and understand a variety of materials.

Reading and Writing Standard 6: Students read and recognize literature as a record of human experience.

Time: The number of class periods required for the lesson as well as the length of class period.

Total 4 class periods of ~45 minutes each.

Materials / Teacher Preparation Section: List the technology, handouts, chart paper, text resources, etc. needed to complete the lesson. Include what you need to do to prepare ahead of time for your students to complete the lesson.

Lesson planning document:

[Teacher Lesson Plan Guide](#), introductory information, suggested daily plans, questions for use with historic newspaper articles, suggestions for further inquiry.

Technology needed:

Computers with Internet access for students to work in pairs, networked printer, technology support for functions in [Colorado's Historic Newspaper Collection](#).

Handouts:

[Student Lesson Guide](#) with introduction, links, guiding questions, search instructions, daily schedule.

[Historic Letter to the Editor Rubric](#)

Text resources:

Optional secondary sources on the history of public education in America.

Possible Procedures: Enumerate the procedure teachers can follow to teach the lesson to students. Provide the URL for the digital primary sources that you will use.

Class 1:

Introduction to Keyword Searching and Article Analysis

Introduction to Colorado's Historic Newspaper Collection. Students will learn to search by keyword, display newspaper articles, scan for basic content, record unfamiliar vocabulary, and perform basic analyses of five articles.

Class 2:

Advanced Analysis and Questioning Techniques

Select one article from the 1908 Cleveland spelling bee for whole-class analysis (vocabulary, evidence of bias, purpose, inferences regarding social or cultural climate). Generate follow-up questions for historical research.

Class 3:

Following Historical Leads

Based on questions about the Cleveland Journal article in Colorado's Historic Newspaper Collection, read and discuss two follow-up articles from the Cleveland Journal in *The African-American Experience in Ohio, 1850-1920*, a collection accessible through the American Memory gateway of the Library of Congress. (See Teacher Lesson Plan Guide for specific instructions.) Discuss how a spelling bee, however simple a cultural activity it may have been, mirrored the social and political climate of 1908.

Class 4:

Assessment of Learning

Write a letter to the editor of the Cleveland Journal using the style and vocabulary of 1908, targeting specific points made in one of the articles studied, and taking a stance for or against the ideas of the writer.

Potential Learning Resources:

Colorado's Historic Newspaper Collection

Collaborative Digitization Program

Search All Collections of the Collaborative Digitization Program

Denver Newspaper Agency Newspaper in Education Program

Scripps National Spelling Bee

The African-American Experience in Ohio, 1850-1920

American Life Histories: Manuscripts from the Federal Writers' Project, 1936-1940

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