

# the warhol: resources & lessons

## Unit Lesson Plans / Historical & Cultural Context / History & Memory / Lesson 4



### Overview:

Historians are interpreters and this lesson helps students understand how to think critically when reading an historic account of an event. The many roles of a historian are outlined and discussed, as well as the way in which critical judgment helps form the “story” of history as it is written and the importance of reliable sources. The historian Conover Hunt, writing about JFK, is used as an example.

Grades: 6-12

Subjects: Evaluation, Research Skills, Historical Sources

### PA State Standards:

#### History:

8.1.9.B Synthesize and evaluate historical sources

- Literal meaning of historical passages

Different historical perspectives

8.1.12.C Evaluate historical interpretation of events

- Multiple points of view

#### Reading:

1.1.12.G Understand and apply knowledge gained from text

- Support assertions about texts
- Compare and contrast texts
- Make extensions to related ideas, topics or information
- Assess the validity of documents
- Analyze the positions in documents
- Evaluate the author’s strategies
- Critique public documents

### Cognitive Skills:

#### Identify and Interpret:

Students will identify and discuss the role of a historian

Students will identify and categorizing sources

Students will interpret historical documents

#### Synthesize and Apply:

Students will connect passages from writings

Students will evaluate the usefulness and information gained from source materials to build understanding

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Chief Justice Earl Warren, right, shown administering the oath of office to John F. Kennedy on January 20, 1961. Courtesy the John F. Kennedy Library.

### Historians Interpret Sources

#### Procedure:

1. Introduce and discuss the role of the historian as an interpreter of source material.

#### The Historian:

- Interprets the past to help us understand the present and shape our future.
  - Searches for clues, like a detective, through primary and secondary sources in order to explain and analyze events.
  - Tells a story to an audience about what happened, why people acted, and why events occurred in the ways that they did over a period of time.
  - Makes critical judgments about the past.
2. Students should read excerpts from the historian Conover Hunt writing about John F. Kennedy and from primary source documents using the handout: Historical Sources and Historians.
  3. In class discussion students should be able to:
    - Identify the type of sources and whether they are primary or secondary in nature.
    - Evaluate the reliability of the sources.
    - Connect passages from the historian's writing that directly relate to the inaugural speech and vice versa.
    - Explain whether having the source along with the historical text aids in their understanding of the information. If so, how?

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### Handout: Historical Sources and Historians

Read the following excerpts from John F. Kennedy and the historian Conover Hunt:

#### Excerpt from John F. Kennedy's 1961 Inaugural Address

"We observe today not a victory of party but a celebration of freedom—symbolizing an end as well as a beginning—signifying renewal as well as change. For I have sworn before you and Almighty God the same solemn oath our forebears prescribed nearly a century and three quarters ago.

The world is very different now. For man holds in his mortal hands the power to abolish all forms of human poverty and all forms of human life. And yet the same revolutionary beliefs for which our forebears fought are still at issue around the globe—the belief that the rights of man come not from the generosity of the state, but from the hand of God.

We dare not forget today that we are the heirs of that first revolution. Let the word go forth from this time and place, to friend and foe alike, that the torch has been passed to a new generation of Americans—born in this century, tempered by war, disciplined by a hard and bitter peace, proud of our ancient heritage—and unwilling to witness or permit the slow undoing of those human rights to which this Nation has always been committed, and to which we are committed today at home and around the world...

...And so, my fellow Americans: ask not what your country can do for you—ask what you can do for your country.

My fellow citizens of the world: ask not what America will do for you, but together what we can do for the freedom of man."

#### Conover Hunt, Dealey Plaza National Historic Landmark (The Sixth Floor Museum: Dallas, Texas), 1997

"At his inaugural on January 20, 1961, Kennedy issued a challenge to 'a new generation of Americans' to help him 'get this country moving again.' For the first time in American history, nearly half the population was under the age of twenty-five; Kennedy's youth and idealism appealed to this young audience. They liked his liberal New Frontier Program and its promise of dramatic change.

John F. Kennedy's inaugural address was a clarion call for public commitment. His New Frontier Program was a set of challenges for Americans of all ages and persuasions to get involved with their country and to rediscover a national purpose. Many of the nation's youth took Kennedy at his word, entered public service and showed an interest in their country and the global human condition."

#### For class discussion you should be able to:

- Identify the type of sources and whether they are primary or secondary in nature.
- Evaluate the reliability of the sources.
- Connect passages from the historian's writing to the inaugural speech that directly relate to one another.
- Explain whether having the source along with the historical text aids in your understanding of the information. If so, how?