ANALYSIS OF LITERATURE
USING PRIMARY SOURCE
POEMS

Library of Congress Teaching with Primary Sources Program

California University of PA
Keystone Hall, Room 112
250 University Avenue
California, PA 15419-1394
Have students identify and note details.

Sample Questions:
- Describe what you see.
- What do you notice first?
- Is there any text you can read? What does it say?
- Describe anything you see on the page besides words, such as images or decorations.
- How is the text and other information arranged on the page?
- Describe anything about this text that looks strange or unfamiliar.
- What other details can you see?

Encourage students to generate and test hypotheses about the source.

What was the purpose of this text? · Who created it? · Who do you think was its audience? · Can you tell anything about what was important at the time it was made? · What tools and materials were used to create it? · What is the larger story or context within which this was printed? · What can you learn from examining this? · If someone created this today, what would be different?

Have students ask questions to lead to more observations and reflections.

What do you wonder about... who? · what? · when? · where? · why? · how?

Help students to identify questions appropriate for further investigation, and to develop a research strategy for finding answers.

Sample Question: What more do you want to know, and how can you find out?

A few follow-up activity ideas:

Beginning
Have students choose a section of the text and put it in their own words.

Intermediate
Look for clues to the point of view of the person, or people, who created this text. Discuss what someone with an opposing or differing point of view might say about the issues or events described in it. How would the information be presented differently?

Advanced
Examine a section of the text. Think about what you already know about this period in history. How does the text support or contradict your current understanding of this period? Can you see any clues to the point of view of the person who created this text?

For more tips on using primary sources, go to http://www.loc.gov/teachers
ANALYSIS OF PRIMARY SOURCE LITERATURE

Title of Primary Source Literature: How Old Brown Took Harper’s Ferry

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OBSERVE</th>
<th>REFLECT</th>
<th>QUESTION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What kind of poem is it?</td>
<td>What kind of imagery does the poem project?</td>
<td>What are you wondering about?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Who wrote it?</td>
<td>Describe the author’s use of figurative, literal,</td>
<td>What do you need to research to build your knowledge?</td>
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<td>When was it written?</td>
<td>and rhetorical language.</td>
<td>Who was Edmund Clarence Stedman?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To whom was it written for?</td>
<td>Can you identify historical persons, places, events</td>
<td>What did others (from that historical time period) think</td>
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<td>Where was it published?</td>
<td>that are described in the poem?</td>
<td>about Steadman’s poem?</td>
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<tr>
<td>What is the tone of the poem?</td>
<td>What was happening during the time the poem was written</td>
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<td>(+/- 3 years)</td>
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How does this poem relate to the guiding investigative and other essential questions?
What kinds of parallels (if any) are there to current day events (political, historical, or societal)?

Performance Tasks

1. **Writing assignment** – read the poem and write (narrative, argumentative, or explanatory) paper as aligned to Common Core State Standards

2. **Speaking assignment** – develop a presentation (oral or multimedia) to share with an audience as aligned to Common Core State Standards
How Old Brown Took Harper’s Ferry

John Brown in Kansas settled, like a steadfast Yankee farmer,
Brave and godly, with four sons, all stalwart men of might.
There he spoke aloud for Freedom, and the Border-strife grew warmer,
Till the Rangers fired his dwelling, in his absence, in the night:  [5]
    And Old Brown
    Osawatomie Brown,
Came homeward in the morning—to find his house burned down

Then he grasped his trusty rifle and boldly fought for Freedom,
Smote from border unto border the fierce, invading band;  [10]
    And he and his brave boys vowed—so might Heaven help and speed ‘em!—
They would save those grand old prairies from the curse that blights the land:
    And Old Brown,
    Osawatomie Brown,
Said, “Boys, the Lord will aid us!” and he shoved his ramrod down.

And the Lord did aid these men, and the labored day and even,
Saving Kansas from its peril; and their very lives seemed charmed,
Till the Ruffians killed one son, in the blessed light of Heaven—  [20]
    In cold blood the fellows slew him, as he journeyed all unarmed: And
    Old Brown,
    Osawatomie Brown,
Shed not a tear, but shut his teeth and frowned a terrible frown!

Then they seized another brave boy—not amid the heat of battle, But in peace, behind his plow-share,—and they loaded him with chains,
And with pikes, before their horses, even as the goad their cattle,
    Drive him cruelly, for their sport, and at last blew out his brains:  [30]
    And Old Brown,
    Osawatomie Brown,
Raised his right hand up to Heaven, calling Heaven’s vengeance down.

And he swore a fearful oath, by the name of the Almighty,
    He would hunt this ravening evil that had scathed and torn him so;  [35]
He would seize it by the vitals; he would crush it day and night; he
Would so pursue its footsteps, so return it blow for blow,
That Old Brown,
Osawatomie Brown,
Should be a name to swear by, in backwoods or in town!

Then his beard became more grizzled, and his wild blue eye grew wilder,
And more sharply curved his hawk’s nose, snuffing battle from afar;
And he and the two boys left, though the Kansas strife waxed milder,
Grew more sullen, till was over the bloody Border War,
And Old Brown,
Osawatomie Brown,
Had gone crazy, as they reckoned by his fearful glare and frown.

So he left the plains of Kansas and their bitter woes behind him,
Slept off into Virginia, where the statesmen all are born,
Hired a farm by Harper’s Ferry, and no one knew where to find him,
Or whether he’d turned parson, or was jacketed and shorn;
For Old Brown,
Osawatomie Brown,
Mad as he was, knew texts enough to wear a parson’s gown.

He bought no plows and harrows, spades and shovels, or such trifles,
But quietly to his rancho there came, by every train,
Boxes full of pikes and pistols, and his well-beloved Sharp’s rifles;
And eighteen other madmen joined their leader there again:
Says Old Brown,
Osawatomie Brown,
“Boys, we have got an army large enough to whip the town!”

“Whip the town, and seize the muskets, free the negroes and then arm them;
Carry the County and the State, aye, and all the potent South.
On their own heads be the slaughter, if their victims rise to harm them—
These Virginians, who believed not, nor would heed the warning mouth.”
Says Old Brown
Osawatomie Brown,
“The world shall see a Republic, or my name is not John Brown.”

’T was the sixteenth of October, on the evening of a Sunday:
"This good work," declared the captain, "shall be on a holy night!"
It was on a Sunday evening, and before the noon of Monday,
With two sons, and Captain Stephens, fifteen privates—black and white—
Captain Brown,
Osawatomie Brown,
Marched across the bridged Potomac, and knocked the sentinel down; [80]

Took the guarded armory-building, and the muskets and the cannon;
Captured all the county majors and the colonels, one by one;
Scared to death each gallant scion of Virginia they ran on,
And before the noon of Monday, I say, the deed was done.
Mad Old Brown, [85]
Osawatomie Brown,
With his eighteen other crazy men, went in and took the town.

Very little noise and bluster, little smell of powder made he;
It was all done in the midnight, like the Emperor's coup d'état.
"Cut the wires! Stop the rail-cars! Hold the streets and bridges!"
said he,
Then declared the new Republic, with himself for guiding star,—
This Old Brown, [90]
Osawatomie Brown;
And the bold two thousand citizens ran off and left the town.

Then was riding and railroading and expressing here and thither;
And the Martinsburg Sharpshooters and the Charlestown Volunteers,
And the Shepherdstown and Winchester Militia hastened whither
Old Brown was said to muster his ten thousand grenadiers.
General Brown!
Osawatomie Brown!! [100]
Behind whose rampant banner all the North was pouring down.

But at last, 't is said, some prisoners escaped from Old Brown's durance,
And the effervescent valor of Ye Chivalry broke forth,
When they learned that nineteen madmen had the marvellous assurance—
Only nineteen—thus to seize the place and drive them straight about;
And Old Brown, [105]
Osawatomie Brown,
Found an army come to take him, encamped around the town.

But to storm, with all the forces I have mentioned, was too risky;
So they hurried off to Richmond for the Government Marines,
Tore them from their weeping matrons, fired their souls with Bourbon whiskey,
Till they battered down Brown's castle with their ladders and machines; [110]
And Old Brown,
Osawatomie Brown,
Received three bayonet stabs, and a cut on his brave old crown.

Tallyho! the old Virginia gentry gather to the baying!
In they rushed and killed the game, shooting lustily away;
And whene'er they slew a rebel, those who came too late for slaying,
Not to lose a share of glory, fired their bullets in his clay;
And Old Brown,
Osawatomie Brown,
Saw his sons fall dead beside him, and between them laid him down.

How the conquerors wore their laurels; how they hastened on the trial;
How Old Brown was placed, half dying, on the Charlestown Court-
House floor;
How he spoke his grand oration, in the scorn of all denial;
What the brave old madman told them,—these are known the country o'er.

"Hang Old Brown,
Osawatomie Brown,"
Said the judge, "and all such rebels!" with his most judicial frown.

But, Virginians, don't do it! for I tell you that the flagon,
Filled with blood of Old Brown's offspring, was first poured by
Southern hands;
And each drop from Old Brown's life-veins, like the red gore of the
dragon,
May spring up a vengeful Fury, hissing through your slave-worn lands!
And Old Brown,
Osawatomie Brown,
May trouble you more than ever, when you've nailed his coffin down!

November, 1859.
THE RAVEN

By

Edgar Allan Poe

This primary source can be found on the Library of Congress’ Read.gov webpage.

Once you are on the Read.gov webpage look on the left side of the webpage to the Books & Related Info for menu and select Teens.

The Raven, by Edgar Allan Poe can be found in Classic Books Online.

Use this interactive primary source with students.

There are many black and white illustrations contained throughout this book to support the text and to help students build their visual literacy analysis skills.

Bonus feature – this primary source book contains commentary by Edmund Clarence Stedman (pgs. 16 – 22).

Instructional Use – Students can study Steadman’s comments and use them as a model to develop their own critique of various types of poems/poets. You could design a performance task asking students to critique several poems/poets in narrative form.