

# Veterans Legacy Program Curricular Materials

## How do Historians Create a Story?

### Lesson Summary

**Grade:** 9th-12th Grade; Can be adjusted to lower grade levels)

**Rationale:** Students seem to struggle with making the connection between primary sources and the story behind them. This lesson is help students understand and make the connections between different primary sources (census records, letters, diary entries, and other documents) and the life story of some veterans. This lesson will have the documents needed for students to create the life narrative of a veteran buried in the National Cemetery in Bushnell, FL, but it also has the biographies already written by UCF college students, so high school students are able to look at what they could have done, if the teacher would like for them to do a comparison. This lesson could be a stepping stone to additional research being done using local sources of for students to create their family's story.

### Florida State Standards:

**SS.912.A.1.1:** Describe the importance of historiography, which includes how historical knowledge is obtained and transmitted, when interpreting events in history.

**SS.912.A.1.2:** Utilize a variety of primary and secondary sources to identify author, historical significance, audience, and authenticity to understand a historical period.

**SS.912.A.1.3:** Utilize timelines to identify the time sequence of historical data.

**SS.912.A.1.5:** Evaluate the validity, reliability, bias, and authenticity of current events and Internet resources.

**SS.912.A.1.7:** Describe various socio-cultural aspects of American life including arts, artifacts, literature, education, and publications.

**LAFS.910.RH.1.1:** Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information.

**LAFS.910.RH.1.2:** Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.

**LAFS.910.WHST.3.7:** Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

**LAFS.910.WHST.3.9:** Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

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### **Materials Needed:**

- “Ordeal by Cheque” checks printed out (for introduction)  
Downloadable PDF available at <http://ghsbears.pbworks.com/f/Cheques.pdf>
- Copies of the teacher packet for modeling the lesson.

For this lesson, Archie Hawkins was chosen as the model packet because it has less documents, so it is a good start to get students considering how to put the pieces of history together without much of a paper trail. Archie’s Packet is found here: [LINK TO ARCHIE HAWKINS PACKET](#)

- Computers connected to Internet
- Primary sources for each of the veterans printed out for each group. 16 packets of veteran biographies and primary sources available here: [LINK TO TEACHER PACKETS HERE](#)
- Graphic Organizers/Timelines (there are several online timeline creators if you are wanting a technology aspect, but a handwritten one would be good too)
- Paper/Pen

### **Additional Online Resources:**

[https://www.census.gov/history/www/through\\_the\\_decades/index\\_of\\_questions/1910\\_1.html](https://www.census.gov/history/www/through_the_decades/index_of_questions/1910_1.html) - to view the questions asked of each census, to help students be able to read the questions (the different census dates are on the left so you can choose which one you need)

<http://www.findagrave.com> – to do a grave find – good for finding dates of death if not available in the primary sources provided

<http://www.ancestry.com> – this is a subscription service used for genealogy, some public libraries and historical societies have subscriptions and are open to the public to use.

<http://www.newseum.org/todaysfrontpages/> - this a museum in Washington DC that has a collection of headlines and newspapers for you to view

<https://www.cem.va.gov/cems/nchp/florida.asp> - National Cemetery Bushnell, FL website

<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/> - The OWL at Purdue University is a wonderful site to help students with citations, endnotes and footnotes, as well as Bibliography pages.

<https://www.floridamemory.com/> - This is a website specifically geared for Florida residents. This is a good place for students to do research for draft registration cards and other Florida information.

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### Procedures:

This lesson should be done in groups of two or three students.

### Day 1/Hook

1. Break students up into groups. Download the cheques from the Vanity Fair article “Ordeal by Cheque” available online at <http://ghsbears.pbworks.com/f/Cheques.pdf>. Copies should be made for each group and checks should be cut out so students can organize them and move them around. Ideally, students should be able to look at all the checks, but if time is a concern the number of checks used may vary.

2. Give students the directions to create a story of Mr. Lawrence Exeter, Sr by solely using the checks provided. Have them create a timeline to show when certain things occur, making sure they document how they came to that conclusion by having them make connections from one check to another. Afterwards, have each group write a summary of what they learned about Mr. Exeter Sr. just from his checks. Essentially, this should mimic the process of historians piecing together history based off of only primary source materials.

Note: This activity often takes a full day because the students enjoy creating a story for Mr. Exeter. If time is a factor, the number of checks used can be limited.

### Day 2

1. Ask students what Mr. Exeter accomplished in his life, having them refer to their finding from the checks as evidence. Explain the concept of historiography (the study of historical writing) and note that the students have already begun this process by putting together the puzzle of the checks. Remind them, however, that the checks do not tell the complete story.

2. Ask the students how they think that historians find evidence to tell the stories of people or events. What kinds of documents do historians use? Have students brainstorm a list of possible documents that could be helpful in historical research. Have a student keep track of the list on a white board.

3. Introduce what a census record is. Students may not already know what a census is, and the wealth of information that they have. Pass out a copy of the US Census Record found in Archie Hawkins’ packet. Give the students some time to look at the document in their groups and familiarize themselves with what information is found on the census.

4. Discuss the census record with the students. Talk about what kinds of questions census records ask, when and why they are collected, etc. Also point out that census records were handwritten, and ask what kinds of problems that could lead to- including sometimes misspellings of names, incorrect dates or ages, and language barriers. This would be a good time to have the students explore this website: [https://www.census.gov/history/www/through\\_the\\_decades/index\\_of\\_questions/1910\\_1.html](https://www.census.gov/history/www/through_the_decades/index_of_questions/1910_1.html) while they examine the census record.

5. Have students begin to compile a timeline for Archie Hawkins based on the census record that they have.

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### Days 3 and 4

1. Pass out the remaining primary source documents included for Archie Hawkins. Give students time to analyze the documents with their groups and continue to add newly found information to the timeline they created.

2. Have the class come together and complete a timeline on the white board. Start by asking what kinds of information need to be represented on the timeline. Some information will come quickly. Some questions to probe students with- do we know birth date? Death date? What he did, and when? What job did he have? Education level? Have the students make connections and determine what kinds of educated assumptions can be made based on the source material. What was happening in the United States and the world during the dates being looked at? What other sources can the students use? If possible, have students utilize a newspaper database to look up what kinds of things were happening during this time. If not, an internet search would also be sufficient.

3. Do we have a date of death? No. So how can we find one? Suggest FindAGrave.com to show students how you can look up information. We see Mr. Hawkins passed away in 1989. From there explain what an obituary is and why it would be important to a historian. (Use one as an example.) Where did Mr. Hawkins live in the last record we have? Explain to students that working from that last known location, we need to look at local newspapers to see if there is obituary for this soldier to complete his information.

4. Now, that we have as complete a timeline as we can get, ask students what other questions do they have. Make a list. Can we find the answers to these questions? How? Explain how sometimes this information is missing or gone. Why would we be missing information for this soldier? I would be trying to get the idea across that different ethnic groups have information missing, especially with a soldier that served during World War I and was a minority. Are there some secondary sources maybe we could use to fill in some blanks?

NOTE: If the soldier was in Florida, the students may want to check [Floridamemory.com](http://Floridamemory.com) to see if information is located there.

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### Days 5-7

1. Pass out a copy of Archie Hawkins' biography written by Harper Norris. Give them a few minutes to read the document with their partners and highlight the information that they already identified from their own analysis of the sources.
2. This would be a good opportunity to remind students about different methods of citations. Have them utilize Hawkins' biography to consider why Harper Norris utilized the citations that he did. Also explain why it is so important to cite your sources to avoid plagiarism.
3. Have a conversation with the class about their findings. Did the assumptions and timelines created by the class follow what Harper Norris wrote? How? How did he expand the knowledge of Mr. Hawkins' life?
4. Now explain that they are going to do research with their own soldier. Groups will be given the primary sources that accompany the teacher packets (16 provided) and will have their own veteran to research. \*Do not give them the already written biography, but start with the primary sources! Have the students create their own timelines with the information given.

NOTE: Some of these biographies have more primary sources available than others. Please preview the documents before giving the information to the students.

5. After giving students time to go through the data, assist them with any additional research ideas they might have. What did their unit do? What exactly was the job the person did in the military? What did the local newspapers say? If there is time, maybe schedule a trip to the local historical society/museum to see what information the librarians there can help students locate.
6. Have students write biography, create a Prezi, or some other presentation project to present to the class. After they have finished their presentation of the information, pass out the biographies written by the UCF VLP team to have them compare their research.

### Extension Activities

Take students to your local historical society to use the resources available there for research purposes.

Have students research their family's history.

Have students do research at the local cemetery. This will probably take some additional work on the teacher because you want to make sure the family is agreeable with the students doing the research on their family. The older graves are better because census records are only public to 1940.