



Eyewitness to the Past: Strategies for Teaching American History in Grades 5-12

Joan Brodsky Schur

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Throughout history, people have often expressed controversial and conflicting interpretations of current events. In this unique resource, Joan Brodsky Schur reveals how compelling and engaging the study of history becomes when students use documents to imagine living through events in American history.

Eyewitness to the Past examines six types of primary sources: diaries, travelogues, letters, news articles, speeches, and scrapbooks. Teachers will find interactive strategies to help students analyze the unique properties of each, and apply to them their own written work and oral argument. Students learn to express opposing viewpoints in documents, classroom interactions, and simulations such as staging congressional hearings, elections, or protests. They build crucial analytical thinking and presentation skills. Used together, the six strategies offer a varied and cohesive structure for studying the American past that reinforces material in the textbook, encourages creativity, activates different learning styles, and strengthens cognitive skills.

Each chapter provides detailed instructions for implementing an eyewitness strategy set in a specific era of American history, and includes extensions for adapting the strategy to other time periods. In addition to the primary sources included in the book, examples of student work are presented throughout to aid teachers in evaluating the work of their own students. Rubrics and a list of resources are offered for each eyewitness strategy.

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