

Reading traces when inquiring into local histories

analyzing historical evidence to better understand local history

- Objectives:**
- understand what traces are and how they can be used to learn more about local history
 - understand how to identify and read types of historical evidence, including traces

What do traces from the past reveal about the history of a community?

Use the following activities to develop the strategy

Introduce the strategy

- Organize students into pairs and digitally display or distribute the images from [Image set 1](#).
- Inform students that their first task is to list five words that describe the person living in each bedroom. Encourage students to use the details in the images to help create their lists. Invite students to share their observations and inferences.
- Suggest that the objects in the bedrooms are examples of traces, or remnants or parts of a life. Traces are a type of historical evidence that can offer clues about the past.
- Invite students to suggest examples of traces that might be left behind as they live their lives.
- As students share their ideas, suggest that traces can include soil, tools, clothes, and even garbage. Ensure that students understand that unlike a secondary account such as a history book or documentary, traces were not created to tell a story. Traces were created for other purposes, but they can be used as sources of information.
- Inform students that their next task is to look for traces that might be found in their school. Direct pairs of students to walk through the school and to search for traces that could be used to describe the school community. For example, a display of trophies could reveal what activities students are skilled in, while the contents of a garbage container might provide insight into the values of the students. Consider asking students to photograph or sketch any traces that they identify.
- Invite students to share their photos or sketches of the traces they found in the school. As students share, consider guiding the conversation by posing questions such as:
 - What do these traces reveal about the school community?
 - What other evidence might be needed to corroborate and confirm what the traces suggest?



- Inform students that in this lesson they will learn how to identify and use traces as possible sources of information about the history of a community. Explain that this strategy can be used to identify and interpret evidence when learning about a local history.

Practise the strategy

- Organize students into pairs and provide each student with a copy of *Classifying Types of Historical Evidence* (Activity sheet A). Direct students' attention to the top of the activity sheet and explain that their first task is to identify the distinguishing features of traces and accounts.

- Instruct students to carefully examine the examples of each type of historical evidence, encouraging them to determine what distinguishes a trace from an account. Prompt students to note their ideas in the appropriate section of the activity sheet.

- Invite students to share their ideas with the class. As students share, co-develop or present the following distinguishing characteristics of traces and accounts:

- Traces are physical clues of the past, and can be naturally-produced (e.g., animal bones, soil, wood) or human-created (e.g., tools, documents, clothing). Replicas or reconstructions are also considered to be traces.
- Accounts are a deliberate telling of what happened (e.g., news report, diaries, textbooks).

- Explain that the second step in the strategy is to classify the type of historical evidence as primary or secondary sources. Direct students' attention back to the top of the activity sheet and the examples of traces and accounts.

- Instruct students to note on their activity sheet that the following examples are primary sources: a page from a personal diary, a hockey stick, a t-shirt. Next, prompt students to note that the following examples are secondary sources: a replica dinosaur bone, a book describing the lives of dinosaurs. Encourage students to suggest what distinguishes primary sources from secondary sources.

- Invite students to share their ideas with the class. As students share, co-develop or present the following characteristics of primary and secondary sources:

- *Primary sources* are original or first-hand in terms of time and access to what is being investigated. This means the item was created with generally direct access to the event, and was made at or close to the time of the event.
- *Secondary sources* are second-hand, created using information from the time period.

- Prompt students to revisit the lists of traces and accounts on the activity sheet and, using the distinguishing features, identify the remaining examples as either primary or secondary sources. Student responses might include:

- Primary sources: a ticket stub, a personal diary, a description of treaties told by an Elder
- Secondary sources: a documentary movie about a music concert, a book about the history of women's hockey in the community

- Direct students' attention to the bottom half of the activity sheet. Instruct students to consider each of the examples of historical evidence from a community. Prompt students to use the distinguishing features to classify each piece of evidence as either a trace or account, and primary or secondary source.

Classifying Types of Historical Evidence (Activity sheet A)

Carefully examine the examples of each type of historical evidence. Identify the distinguishing features of each type of evidence.

Traces

- Examples of traces:
 - A replica dinosaur bone
 - A ticket stub from a music concert
 - A t-shirt
 - A hockey stick

Accounts

- Examples of accounts:
 - A book describing the lives of dinosaurs
 - A description of treaties told by an Elder
 - A documentary movie about a music concert
 - A book about the history of women's hockey in the community

What are the distinguishing features of each type of historical evidence?

Trace or account?	Trace or account?	Primary or secondary sources?
A book describing the lives of dinosaurs	Trace	Secondary
A ticket stub from a music concert	Trace	Primary
A book about the history of women's hockey in the community	Trace	Secondary
A t-shirt	Trace	Primary
A replica dinosaur bone	Trace	Secondary
A documentary movie about a music concert	Trace	Secondary
A description of treaties told by an Elder	Trace	Primary
A hockey stick	Trace	Primary

- Invite students to share their decisions and thinking with the class. Student responses might include:
 - A book describing the history of the community: account, secondary source
 - A photograph of the main street of the community 100 years ago: trace, primary source
 - A museum exhibit featuring replicas of the tools used by farm workers in community 100 years ago: trace, secondary source
 - A stone hammer used by Indigenous peoples that lived on the land where the community is now located: trace, primary source
- Explain that while traces can often provide clues about many different topics and questions, the focus of the inquiry question guides and determines how a trace might be used. For example, a ticket stub from a music concert may provide more valuable clues about “What types of cultural and social activities were available in the community forty years ago?” than “What jobs and industries were the most important in the growth of this community?”
- To conclude this part of the lesson, remind students that primary and secondary sources come in the form of traces and accounts. These two types of evidence are very important for they provide all that can be known about the history of a community.
- Provide each student with a copy of *Reading Traces (Activity sheet B)*. Inform students that the final step in the strategy is to “read the trace,” or determine what the trace may reveal.
- Guide students thinking to the beginning of this lesson and the trace that they found in the school. Explain that their task is to use the questions from the activity sheet to read the trace.
- Direct students’ attention to the left-hand column of the activity sheet. Guide students in using each of the questions to read their selected trace. Encourage students to also include evidence and conclusions for each of the questions.
- Invite students to share their answers with the class. As students share, ask them to suggest what questions the trace might help them answer.
- Explain that these questions can be used to “interrogate” or draw information from traces when inquiring into local histories.
- To further develop students’ ability to identify and use historical traces to examine community history, consider providing each student with a copy of *Examining a Trace (Activity sheet C)* and encouraging them to use the strategy in situations such as:
 - exploring a historical or cultural site;
 - visiting a museum; and
 - examining archives or collections of documents.

Apply the strategy to learn more about a local history

Reading Traces	
Questions	Evidence
What is the trace?	
Who might have created or used the trace?	
Where would the trace be used?	
When would the trace be used?	
Why would the trace be used?	
How would the trace be used? What was its purpose?	
What questions might this trace help to answer?	

Examining a Trace	
Inquiry Question:	
Trace:	
What questions about the history of the community might this trace help answer?	
What evidence can we draw from this trace about the history of the community?	
What conclusions can we draw from this trace about the history of the community?	
What other evidence or sources might be used for confirming what the trace reveals?	

Assess the use of the strategy

- Encourage students to use *Assessing My Understanding: Reading Traces* (Assessment Material) to self-assess their use of this strategy.
 - Allow students opportunities to apply the strategy two or three times without assessment.
 - Guide students in interpreting and using the rubric to assess their own responses.
 - Encourage students to use the rubric whenever they use this strategy.
 - To use the rubric for teacher assessment of student work, remove the first person (student) reference from each descriptor.

Assessing My Understanding: Reading traces

NAME: _____

Use the scales below to assess your understanding of the strategy for reading traces. Include examples to show how you have met the success criteria. Remember to describe the next steps in your learning.

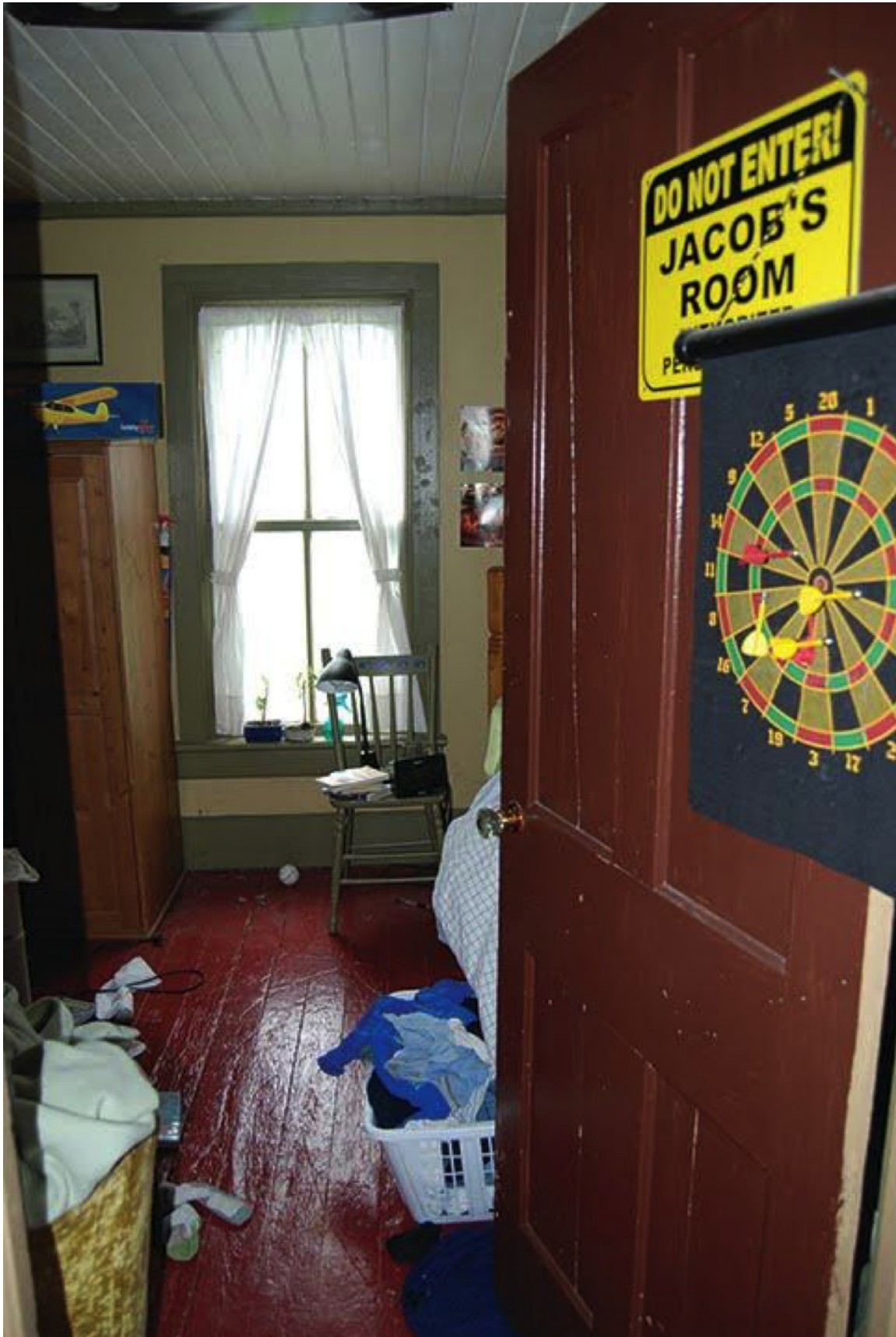
Success criteria	How am I doing?
I understand what traces are and how they can be used in the study of communities and their histories. Examples: _____	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> 1 2 3 4 5 </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> Not at all Getting there Getting there Getting there Got it </div>
I can effectively classify historical evidence as traces or accounts. Examples: _____	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> 1 2 3 4 5 </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> Not at all Getting there Getting there Getting there Got it </div>
I can effectively classify sources as primary or secondary. Examples: _____	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> 1 2 3 4 5 </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> Not at all Getting there Getting there Getting there Got it </div>

Next steps (in 2-3 lines): _____

Next steps (in 2-3 lines): _____

Next steps (in 2-3 lines): _____

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Classifying Types of Historical Evidence

Carefully examine the examples of each type of historical evidence. Identify the distinguishing features of each type of evidence.

Traces	Accounts
<p>Examples of traces:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a replica dinosaur bone • a page from a personal diary • a ticket stub from a music concert • a t-shirt • a hockey stick 	<p>Examples of accounts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a book describing the lives of dinosaurs • a description of treaties told by an Elder • a documentary movie about a music concert • a personal diary • a book about the history of women's hockey in the community

What are the distinguishing features of each type of historical evidence?

A trace is...	An account is...
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Example of historical evidence from a community	Trace or account?	Primary or secondary source?
A book describing the history of the community	<input type="checkbox"/> Trace <input type="checkbox"/> Account Explanation:	<input type="checkbox"/> Primary <input type="checkbox"/> Secondary Explanation:
A photograph of the main street of the community 100 years ago	<input type="checkbox"/> Trace <input type="checkbox"/> Account Explanation:	<input type="checkbox"/> Primary <input type="checkbox"/> Secondary Explanation:
A museum exhibit featuring replicas of the tools used by farm workers in community 100 years ago	<input type="checkbox"/> Trace <input type="checkbox"/> Account Explanation:	<input type="checkbox"/> Primary <input type="checkbox"/> Secondary Explanation:
A stone tool used by Indigenous peoples that lived on the land where the community is now located	<input type="checkbox"/> Trace <input type="checkbox"/> Account Explanation:	<input type="checkbox"/> Primary <input type="checkbox"/> Secondary Explanation:

Reading Traces

	Evidence	Conclusions
What What is the trace?		
Who Who might have created or used the trace?		
Where Where would the trace be used?		
When When would the trace be used?		
Why Why would the trace be used?		
How How would the trace be used? What was its purpose?		
What questions might this trace help us answer?		

Examining a Trace

Inquiry question:

Trace:

What *questions* about the history of the community might this trace help us answer?

What *inferences* can we draw from this trace about the history of the community?

What *conclusions* can we draw from this trace about the history of the community?

What other *evidence or sources* might be useful for confirming what the trace reveals?

Assessing My Understanding: Reading traces

Name: _____

Use the scales below to assess your understanding of the strategy for reading traces. Include examples to show how you have met the success criteria. Remember to describe the next steps in your learning.

Success criteria	How am I doing?
<p>I understand what traces are and how they can be used in the study of communities and their histories.</p> <p>Examples:</p>	<p>1 2 3 4 5</p> <p>← I'm still working on it I've got it! →</p> <p>Next steps (e.g., use criteria, ask for help):</p>
<p>I can effectively classify historical evidence as traces or accounts.</p> <p>Examples:</p>	<p>1 2 3 4 5</p> <p>← I'm still working on it I've got it! →</p> <p>Next steps (e.g., use criteria, ask for help):</p>
<p>I can effectively classify sources as primary or secondary.</p> <p>Examples:</p>	<p>1 2 3 4 5</p> <p>← I'm still working on it I've got it! →</p> <p>Next steps (e.g., use criteria, ask for help):</p>