



An Educator's Guide to the AJA's Online Document Library: *Snapshots in American Jewish History*

The AJA's Snapshots in American Jewish History provide an easily accessible entrance to the study of American Jewish history. This guide outlines a flexible six-part lesson format that teachers can customize to maximize curriculum and time limits.

Part I

Choose one or more
Snapshotss depending on
curriculum requirements

Part II

Develop a
Guiding Question
for study.

The following suggestions can be tailored to any of the Snapshots:

1. Guiding Questions for People

What outside forces affected the life of this person

What do this person's life experiences teach us about...?

What experiences defined this person's ...?

How did the environment of the region affect this person?

How has this person contributed to American society?

What were this person's views about...?

How did this person contribute to ...?

How much control did the person you studied have over daily life decisions?

How is this person's experience reflective of...

How did being Jewish contribute to this person's experience/contribution/opinion
action?

How can we learn from those who have lived through important events in history?
How should we judge people from the past?

2. Guiding Questions for Events

What were the historical circumstances that led to...

What are some possible explanations for ...

What was life like in...

What were the arguments for and against...

Why do we have to be cautious in making generalizations about ...

How can young people make a significant contribution to...

Describe this event...

How did the environment of the region affect...

In what ways did this event contribute to...

Is there evidence for the assertion that this event...

How do different types of historical documents provide different insights about...

What are two possible causes for this event?

What are two outcomes of this event?

Why do you think this event was important?

Part III

Study the pictures.

Ask students to answer any of the following questions:

What kind of document is this?

Is there a date?

Can you tell who wrote it?

Is it handwritten or typed?

What do you think it will be about?

Is there anything different about the writing that you can observe?

Does it have a title?

Any pictures or images?

Is there anything that strikes you about this document?

What is most important about this document and why?

What questions does this document raise for you?

What questions would you like to ask the author of this document?

How do the documents shown represent/illustrate/clarify the event?

Do you know the artist or time period that the painting was created?

What objects or figures do you see? What are they doing? How are they dressed?

What event is taking place? Does it appear to be real or staged? What action is happening?

What emotions and mood do you feel from this image?

What idea does this image give you about this event?

What questions does this image raise?

Part IV

Share the summary of the event or person with the class

Design an activity. Here are some ideas:

Students do their own research into this person/event to answer the guiding question

Contact the American Jewish Archives for the complete primary document set and use the guiding question to guide a text study

Compare and contrast the person studied to a person in a different region.

Compare and contrast two different people, using the guiding question to evaluate. Put the life of the person in a different region or time period. How would their life change?

A Conversation in the Past

In pairs or larger groups, each student chooses a document whose speaker (or image whose subject) interest them, and prepares to take the role of the person.

Together, students prepare a conversation between their subjects. The conversation questions can be provided by the teacher, or the students can create them. Either way, the questions should reflect the theme of the unit of study.

Students either present their conversation to the rest of the class, inviting further questioning from other students, or video their conversation for presentation.

Conversation with the Present

This activity can be done in pairs, as a panel discussion, or as a town hall meeting.

Each student chooses a person who interests them, and prepares to take the role of the person.

Ask students to bring their person into the present to discuss his/her thoughts about today's world, relating to the theme of the lesson or guiding question.

The speaker asks questions of the audience, and vice versa, as students grapple with the question of whether and how much issues have changed over time.

Eyewitness - Students become reporters, and write a short newspaper report about their person/event

Storyboard - students create a chronology of the event or person's life through pictures

Timeline - students create a chronology of causal events and/or outcomes of an event

Part V
Evidence of
Understanding.

Here are some examples:

Wraparound - repeat the guiding question or related question and invite each student to respond in one sentence. Can be done orally or in written form on index cards

Exit Cards - for example complete sentence stems to complete a summary of the lesson, illustrate five things that they learned, or 3-2-1: Three takeaways, two questions, one enjoyable part of the lesson

Alphabet Brainstorm - in groups, individually, or taking turns, have students supply one thing they learned that begins with each letter of the alphabet

Think-pair-share - ask a final question. Give students a few moments to think about the answer on their own, then share their answer with a partner. Conclude with a group discussion.

Four corners - pose a question about the subject that allows for four answers or four levels of agreement (strongly agree, agree, strongly disagree, disagree) and instruct students to choose their corner. Then ask students to explain why they chose the corner that they did.

Idea line up - similar to four corners, students physically choose a spot on a continuum that represents their opinion about the question. Again, students defend their opinion.