

Primary sources for US History – Worksheet

Activity 1

Write down your research topic. It can be as focused or broad as you like!

Note: If you can't think of a topic, here are some examples:

- Religion in the British American colonies
- Native Americans in the American Revolutionary War
- Perceptions of Abraham Lincoln during the American Civil War
- African American movements during the Progressive Era
- American women in the II World War
- Political movements in 1970s America

Now use the Wh questions to help you decide which Primary Sources you might need:

Question	Examples...	Your notes
When?	Specific years, decades, presidential administrations, distinctive “eras” or “ages”	
Where?	National, state, city, county, regions	
Who?	Specific people/families, organisations/political parties and movements, or certain demographics/social groups	
Which?	Which aspect are you most interested in – political, economic, social, religious, public vs. private statements	
What?	The type of source you are looking for (books, correspondence, diaries, reports, official publications, ephemeral, images, audio-visual material, statistics, etc...)	

Activity 2

Use one of these three database platforms to search for primary sources:

- **Alexander Street**
- **Gale Primary Sources**
- **Readex (Newsbank)**

You can search across all the resources on each platform, or select a specific US based database to get more focused results.

1. Use your keywords to search for sources. How many options are appearing for you?

Are you seeing more or less than you expected?

Are the results relevant to your research topic?

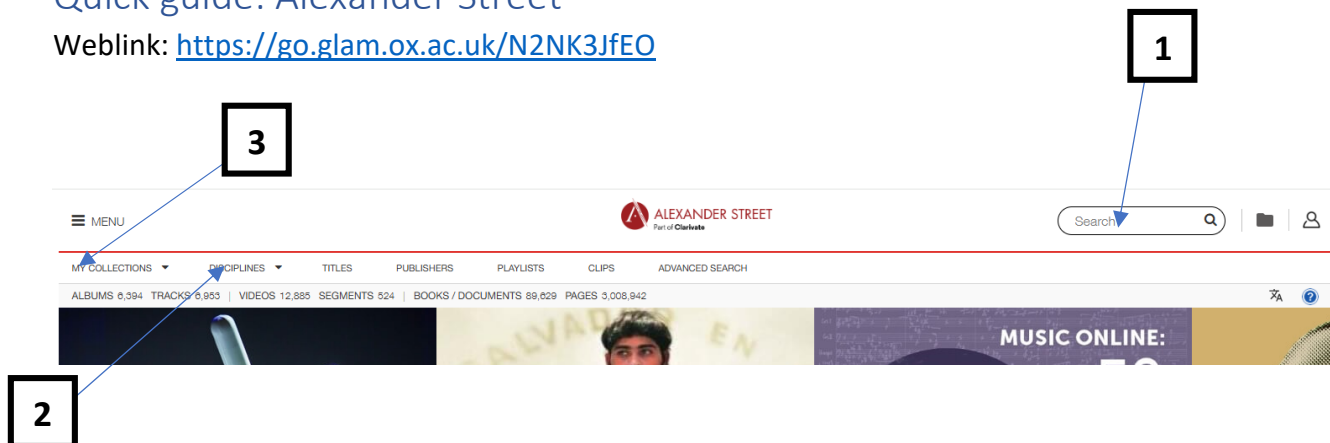
2. Now use the filters options to limit your search results (this can be by time periods, document format, or subject indexing). Use some of the answers you gave to the Wh questions to help you. How have your results changed?
3. If you have time, use one of the other database platforms, and repeat the same steps. Is one database platform better for your subject? If so, why?

Hints:

- To search for phrases or words you want to appear together, use speech marks (e.g., “American Revolution” or “Jim Crow”)
- Use Advanced Searches to create more detailed searches, such as searching for titles rather than full text.
- Make a note of names, places or publishers which keep appearing. Try searching for them specifically – do you come up with relevant results?
- Readex and Gale allow you to apply text analysis tools to your search results. How useful is this option to your research?

Quick guide: Alexander Street

Weblink: <https://go.glam.ox.ac.uk/N2NK3JfEO>



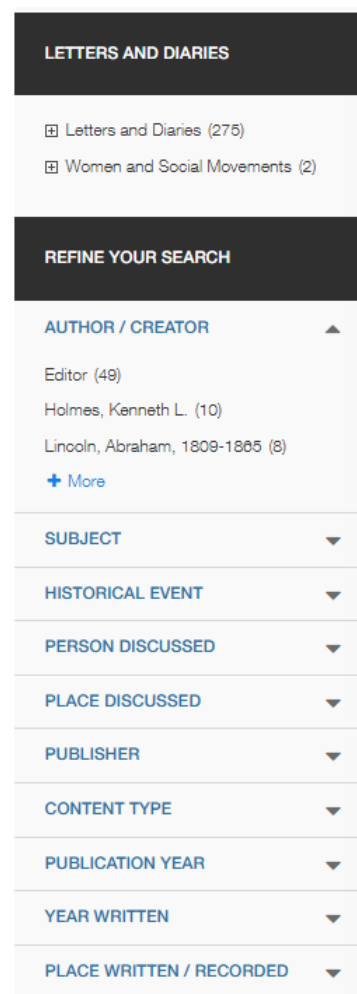
On the main page, you can either:

1. Search across all Alexander Street Databases, by entering your search in the Search box (top right).
2. On the Menu bar, select Disciplines, and select History (or American History) to search in specifically historical sources.
3. Under the menu, select My Collections and select a specific database you want to try. American History related options include:
 - a. Black Thought and Culture
 - b. Early Encounters in North America
 - c. North American Immigrant Letters, Diaries and Oral Histories
 - d. North American Women's Letters and Diaries
 - e. Women and Social Movements in the United States/International
 - f. World Newsreels Online

Filters

Use the menu on the left side to select topics such as:

- Subject
- Historical Event
- Content type
- Publication Year/Year written



Quick guide: Gale Primary Sources

Weblink: <https://go.glam.ox.ac.uk/6-JaxGScA>

Search across all selected Gale Primary Sources databases (36 of 36)

Start your research



Publication date(s)

All Dates Before On After Between

Include documents with no known publication date.

[View all limiters in Advanced Search >>](#)

Browse the Gale Primary Sources databases provided by your institution

[Select All](#) [Deselect All](#)

On the main page, you can either:

1. Search across all Gale Primary Source Databases, by entering your search in the Search box (left side)
2. OR select the specific database you want to try. American History related options include:
 - a. Archives Unbound (multiple options)
 - b. Archives of Sexuality and Gender
 - c. Nineteenth Century Collections Online (Women and Transnational Networks)
 - d. Nineteenth Century U.S. Newspapers
 - e. Political Extremism and Radicalism
 - f. Slavery & Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive
 - g. U.S. Declassified Documents Online
 - h. Women's Studies Archive

Filters

You search will be automatically sorted into format types (monograph, manuscript, newspapers, etc.)

Use the menu on the right side to filter to specific:

- Publication dates
- Owning archive/library
- Subjects (for some collections)

You can also use the Topic Finder option to find common terms/phrases based on your search results.

FILTER YOUR RESULTS

Archives	▼
Source Library	▼
Document Type	▼
Publication Date	▼
Languages	▼
Subjects	▼
Author - Items By	▼
Person - About	▼
Q Search Within	▼

TOPIC FINDER

Discover topics and results related to your search.

[Start the Topic Finder](#)

Quick guide: Readex

Weblink: <https://go.glam.ox.ac.uk/Zp3wsinR8>

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Welcome, University of Oxford

Current Events
Hot Topics
Daily Headlines and Activities

To search, click on an online resource listed below.

[Readex AllSearch](#)
Search across all of your available Readex collections, including newspapers, books, pamphlets, government publications, and more.

BBC Monitoring: Summary of World Broadcasts
Transcripts of global radio and television broadcasts, translated and summarized by the BBC Monitoring service. Available here: Summary of World Broadcasts, Series 1; Summary of World Broadcasts, Series 3; Summary of World Broadcasts, Series 4

The Cold War: Global Perspectives on East-West Tensions, 1945-1991
Translated sources and analysis from around the world providing comprehensive coverage of the conflict that drove global politics from the end of World War II to the early 1990s.

Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS) Daily Reports
The United States' principal record of political and historical open source intelligence.

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On the main page, you can either:

1. Select Readex AllSearch to search across all our Readex Subscriptions (top option).
2. OR select one of the specific databases below. American History related options include:

- a. African American Newspapers
- b. African American Periodicals
- c. Black Authors
- d. Early American Imprints: Evans
- e. Ethnic American Newspapers from the Balch Collection
- f. American State Papers/US Congressional Serial Set
- g. Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS)

Filters

Use the menu on the right side to filter to specific:

- Publication dates (fill out your own date, or scroll down to pick from specific years or decades)

Some of the individual databases will allow you to also sort by:

- Document type (Readex All Search only)
- Subjects (includes people, organization, topic)
- Genre
- Article Type

Results Per Page —

10 20 50

Custom Date —

Custom Date Range ?

From

To

Apply

Publication Name —

Soul (9)

Southern Workman (8)

Colored American Magazine (7)

African Repository (7)

More Options

Publication Location +

Article Type +

Decade +

Year +

Publication Topic +