Boarding Houses in America (1860-1920)

Barbara Hansen

Replace this text with a brief description of your learning experience.

**Overview**

**Objectives**

Students will:
- Understand what primary and secondary sources are.
- Learn about boarding houses as an American way of life.
- Use their thinking skills to analyze and compare different boarding houses in different places.
- Use their language arts skills (writing, speaking) and their artistic skills to convince others of the importance of boarding houses in the American culture.

**Recommended time frame**

120 to 150 minutes (5 days)

**Grade level**

8th or possibly high school

**Curriculum fit**

Social Studies and Language Arts

**Materials**

Use photos, sheet music, and cartoons about boarding houses taken from the Library of Congress records. Use the analysis sheets provided by the Library of Congress in their “Teaching with Primary Sources” notebook. Use markers, poster board and other artistic or creative sources for their assigned project.

**Michigan State Learning Standards**

Integrated United States History, Organized by ERA (USHG)

USHG Eras 1-3 (Review of Grade 5 social studies)
- F2 Geographic, Economic, Social and Demographic Trends in America
- USHG Era 6 (The Development of An Industrial, Urban, and Global United States (1878 -1898 in Grade 8)
- 6.1 America, the last half of the 19th century

U6 USHG Era 6 The Development of an industrial, urban and global United States (1870 -1930)

U6.2.1 United States History Investigation Topic and Issue Analysis, Past and Present

The Michigan Curriculum Framework: Social
Day One:
Give a mini lesson on “What are primary sources?”
Teachers can go to the
http://www.loc.gov/teachers/usingprimarysources
website. Discuss that primary sources are original
documents and objects, actually created and used at
the time period mentioned. They are not: replicas or

Procedures

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Give a mini lesson on “What are primary sources?”
Teachers can go to the
http://www.loc.gov/teachers/usingprimarysources
website. Discuss that primary sources are original
documents and objects, actually created and used at
the time period mentioned. They are not: replicas or
reconstructions, second hand documents or interpretations. They are actual. Where can we find them? Let students suggest. They should mention museums, private collections, antique shops, and especially the Library of Congress. Ask students if they know of any primary source documents? They could answer: a diary, magazine/newspapers, photos, audio/video recordings, memoirs, speeches, and interviews. Ask what they might think are the advantages of using primary sources? What are the disadvantages? Tell them that they will discover more when they view primary sources.

Pass out a photo of a boarding house from the sources of the Library of Congress. Have students discuss the photo with a partner, considering the following questions. What do you see in the photograph? Where do you think the photo was taken? Who do you see in the photograph? Who do you think took the photo? Who might have lived in this structure? Why? Then use the photo analysis sheet available from the website above. Now, have the students look at the photo again. This time, have them fold the photo into four parts. What did they notice that they didn’t observe before? A class discussion should follow as to the process of observing a primary source. Can they make judgment about this photo? What might they want to know? List their suggestions on the board.

Day Two:

Distribute another photograph of a boarding house from the sources of the Library of Congress. Tell them that this photo is distinctive and probably has been seen many times. Can they guess why? Then tell them that this boarding house is a famous boarding house in history. This is Mary Surratt’s boarding house. Do they know who she is? Use the photo analysis sheet and the same procedure as in examining the first photograph. Students can fill out the sheet with a partner. Discuss who was Mary Surratt and discuss whether they would know from the photo. What would they have to do to find out about her?

Next, divide students into groups. Give them sections of the newspaper account of boarding houses, taken from the Library of Congress records. (http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn90059522/1)
Teaching with Primary Sources
Illinois State University

887-08-21/ed-1/s), originally from the St. Paul daily globe, August 21, 1887 – Image 6. One person in the group should read aloud the section to the group. Members of the group should then list what they learned from the article about boarding houses. One person from the group can then read the list to the class.

After the information is gathered, there should be a class discussion. What did they find out about boarding houses? List for them their answers on possibly a sheet on the computer.

Finally, use the handout sheet and have students check all the items that they think could be found in a boarding house of 1878. Go over the answers by having students submit, orally, a “yes” or a “no”. This should stimulate further interest in boarding houses.

Day 3:
Have students go to the website of the Library of Congress to look at a song sheet about boarding houses. Once on the website, have them recite the words together in a choral fashion. Then pass out the analysis sheet about “Thinking About songs As Historical Artifacts” for the LOC lyrical legacy. They can work with a partner.

Next, show the students that the boarding house idea was also in cartoons of the period. Show three cartoon illustrations from the Library of Congress and have the students select one to analyze with a partner, using the cartoon analysis worksheet supplied by the Library of Congress. Discuss the results with the class.

Day 4:
Invite the class to list on paper what they think, from what they’ve learned so far about boarding houses, were the advantages of living in a boarding house? What were the disadvantages? This activity could be done as a group or individually. The class should then discuss what they listed and it can be written on the board.

Now, they should go to a website like http://wiki.answers.com/Q/What_are_the_advantages_and_disadvantages_of_boarding_houses and compare their answers with this ad that covers the advantages and disadvantages.
Finally, assign a project, due the next day. Students
are to pretend that they are boarding house owners or managers. As owners or managers, they are to figure out a way to get people to board at their place. They can use signs, posters, banners, letters, a skit, puppetry, whatever works so that people board at their house, instead of those of others.

**Day 5:** Students should be ready to present to the class their persuasive arguments in some form or other. They should try to convince the class to board at their place using incentives to stimulate their business. They should be able to apply the knowledge they learned in previous lessons. The presentation should be clear and concise. After the presentation, students, if they prefer, can take questions or comments from the audience.

**Evaluation**

Use a rubric to assess students on their knowledge of boarding houses and their role in American life. For a premade rubric, go to rubistar.4teachers.org/index.php. Or use the composed one on the rubric page.

**Extension**

Have students list items that they were unfamiliar with when doing research on boarding houses. They should be able to explain one of these in detail. Ask: “Would you go back in time?” Have students explain why or why not. They can also make a comparison with what they have today. Have the names of items changed? Try to use the Library of Congress website, www.loc.gov, to help you find the meanings of the items. You can also search wiki or google or other appropriate sources.

As another possibility, students can compare boarding houses of long ago with what is used today. They can either discuss or write about apartment buildings, hotels, bed and breakfasts, or other places of lodging.
Historical Background
Back to Navigation Bar

Boarding houses were very popular in America, especially during the period of 1860 to 1920. Moreover, they were even common after this period of time. They were spread across America. They were a way of life for many. People could not afford homes, like we have, today. Also there was a scarcity of homes because Americans were changing their lifestyles. By the 1880’s farmers were coming from the fields into the cities, where they could make more money. America was going from an agricultural nation to an industrial one. Immigrants, salespeople, newlyweds, farmers, factory workers, were among the many who rented at a boarding house. Some boarding houses were for men. Some were for women. Some were for professional people. Some boarding houses had families. At one time, as many as seventy per cent of the American public may have stayed at boarding houses across the United States. The lifestyle, then, was very different than it was now. People bonded through boarding houses because they shared the same house, the same food, the same manager, and the same conditions.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Images</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Citation</th>
<th>Perm URL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image3.png" alt="First page of 1880's stories of boarding houses" /></td>
<td>St. Paul Daily Globe (Saint Paul, Minn.) 1884-1896, August 21st, 1887, Image 6</td>
<td><a href="http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lc/cnp/sn90059522/1887-08-21/ed-1/seq-6/">http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lc/cnp/sn90059522/1887-08-21/ed-1/seq-6/</a></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Boarding house piano; among the popular songs sung by Harrigan and Hart.

Title
The Boarding house piano
[sheet music]

Name
Skelly, J. P..

Place of Publication/Creation
New York

Type of Material
notated music

Genre
sheet music

Published/Created
1879

Publisher
Harding, E. H.

Issuance
monographic

Language
English

Forms
electronic resource
remote

Physical Description
1 score

Note
From: Music Copyright Deposits, 1870-1885
(Microfilm M 3500)

Additional physical form
Also available through the Library of Congress Web Site as facsimile page images.

Subject
Songs with piano

Call Numbers
Microfilm M 3500
M2.3.U6A44

Repository

http://lcweb2.loc.gov/diglib/ihas/loc.music.sm1879.15216/pageturner.html
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Title</strong></th>
<th>Our stylish boarding-house; Comic song and chorus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Name</strong></td>
<td>Abraham, Edw. J.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Place of Publication/Creation</strong></td>
<td>Cincinnati</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Type of Material</strong></td>
<td>notated music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Genre</strong></td>
<td>sheet music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Published/Created</strong></td>
<td>1882</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Publisher</strong></td>
<td>Helmick, F. W.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Issuance</strong></td>
<td>monographic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Language</strong></td>
<td>Undetermined</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Forms</strong></td>
<td>electronic resource</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Physical Description</strong></td>
<td>1 score</td>
</tr>
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<td><strong>Note</strong></td>
<td>From: Music Copyright Deposits, 1870-1885 (Microfilm M 3500)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Additional physical form</strong></td>
<td>Also available through the Library of Congress Web Site as facsimile page images.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Call Numbers</strong></td>
<td>Microfilm M 3500 M2.3.U6A44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Repository</strong></td>
<td>Library of Congress, Music Division</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Composite of humorous scenes of a traveling salesman in a country village: his arrival; sleeping in a crude hotel; bad manners at a boarding-house breakfast; political discussion in barber shop; leaving town without paying bill. | Title: A drummer's experience in a country village  
Date: Created/Published: 1884.  
Medium: 1 print.  
Reproduction Number: LC-USZ62-55982 (b&w film copy neg.)  
Rights Advisory: No known restrictions on publication.  
Call Number: Illus. in AP101.J8 1884 (Case X) [P&P]  
Repository: Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C. 20540 USA  
Notes: Repr. of cartoon drawing by W.H. McDougal. Illus. in: Judge, 1884 June 14, p. 4. This record contains unverified, old data from caption card. Caption card tracings: Occupations Travel. sales; Cartoons, US June 1884; Artists, Publ. I.; Shelf. | [http://www.loc.gov/pictures/resource/eph.3b03860/](http://www.loc.gov/pictures/resource/eph.3b03860/) |
| Print shows a large group of well-dressed ladies gathered for the "First National Congress for the Advancement of the Interests of Boarding-House Keepers" with a woman speaking at a podium and another taking notes before a large audience of women; disgruntled tenants are seated in the "Boarder's Gallery" in the balcony. It is | Title: The next thing in order / C.J. Taylor.  
Creator(s): Taylor, Charles Jay, 1855-1929, artist  
Date: Created/Published: N.Y. : Published by Keppler & Schwarzmann, 1897 April 7.  
Medium: 1 print : chromolithograph.  
Reproduction Number: LC-DIG-ppmsca-28794 (digital file from original print)  
Rights Advisory: No known restrictions on publication.  
This is a list of items. Which might you find in a boarding house of 1878?

----- electric can opener
----- faucets
----- porcelain tub and shower
----- samovar
----- dishwasher
----- microwave
----- chamber pots
----- nesting hens
----- chess set
----- books
----- automatic washing machine
----- root cellar
----- sewing machine
----- playing cards
----- electric toothbrush
----- stereoptican
----- magazines
----- pictures or paintings
----- cell phones
----- kerosene lamps

----- refrigerator
----- vacuum cleaner
----- metal tub
----- scrub board
----- rug beater
----- clock
----- bootjack
----- spittoon
----- computer
----- harmonica
----- piano
----- whatnot
----- chromolithographs
----- settee
----- cribbage set
----- television
----- vinegar and oil cruet set
----- a tape recorder
----- a sideboard
----- a lambrequin
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Class Discussion</th>
<th>Handouts</th>
<th>Boarding House Promotion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Participated Actively</td>
<td>Completed All</td>
<td>Given with detail and complete Understanding of the subject</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Average Participation</td>
<td>Some misconceptions</td>
<td>Partial – not as much detail or organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Minimal Participation</td>
<td>Many misconceptions</td>
<td>Partial – little detail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>No Participation</td>
<td>Not done</td>
<td>Did not create and give a presentation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Photo Analysis Worksheet

Step 1. Observation

A. Study the photograph for 2 minutes. Form an overall impression of the photograph and then examine individual items. Next, divide the photo into quadrants and study each section to see what new details become visible.

___________________________________________________________________________

B. Use the chart below to list people, objects, and activities in the photograph.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>People</th>
<th>Objects</th>
<th>Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Step 2. Inference

Based on what you have observed above, list three things you might infer from this photograph.

___________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________
### Step 3. Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A.</th>
<th>What questions does this photograph raise in your mind?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B.</th>
<th>Where could you find answers to them?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Cartoon Analysis Worksheet**

**Level 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Visuals</th>
<th>Words (not all cartoons include words)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. List the objects or people you see in the cartoon.</td>
<td>1. Identify the cartoon caption and/or title.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Locate three words or phrases used by the cartoonist to identify objects or people within the cartoon.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Record any important dates or numbers that appear in the cartoon.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Level 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Visuals</th>
<th>Words</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. Which of the objects on your list are symbols?</td>
<td>4. Which words or phrases in the cartoon appear to be the most significant? Why do you think so?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. What do you think each symbol means?</td>
<td>5. List adjectives that describe the emotions portrayed in the cartoon.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Level 3**

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Describe the action taking place in the cartoon.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Explain how the words in the cartoon clarify the symbols.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Explain the message of the cartoon.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. What special interest groups would agree/disagree with the cartoon’s message? Why?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Thinking About Songs as Historical Artifacts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Illustration</th>
<th>Lyrics</th>
<th>Music</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Looking at the Song</strong></td>
<td><strong>What do you see?</strong></td>
<td><strong>What do you notice about the music (fast, slow, catchy, dull)?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What are your personal reactions to the images?</strong></td>
<td><strong>What are your personal reactions to the lyrics?</strong></td>
<td><strong>What emotions might this song produce when sung or played?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Thinking about History</strong></td>
<td><strong>Why do you think the artist(s) wrote this song?</strong></td>
<td><strong>For what audience was the song written?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>What clues do you find to suggest this?</strong></td>
<td><strong>Why is the music important to this song?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>What does the song tell you about what life was like during this period in history?</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What are the advantages and disadvantages of boarding houses?

http://wiki.answers.com/Q/what_are_the_advantages_and_disadvantages_of_boarding_houses

Advantages can include:
♦ affordability (average of P500 above per head monthly)
♦ no need to pay a bond (in some cases)
♦ inclusion of utilities in the rent charged (stove, flat iron in some cases)
♦ no need to have furniture, bedding or cooking equipment
♦ having a location providing access to a range of services and facilities
♦ proximity to public transport and shops
♦ possibilities of companionship and friendship due to communal living arrangements.

Disadvantages can include:
♦ lack of privacy
♦ problems/conflict with other boarders
♦ low standard and cleanliness of facilities
♦ having to share facilities, (e.g. room & comfort room in some cases)
♦ small size of room
♦ insecurity of tenure
♦ concerns for personal safety
♦ having to deal with the landlord/landladies.
Resources and References

Major Websites:

Library of Congress, Homepage
www.loc.gov or www.loc.gov/teachers/usingprimarysources/guides.html
www.educationextra.com
Illinois State University
http://teaching primary sources.illinois state edu/resources/TSU Lessons/isu_lessons.html
www.rubistar.4teachers.org/index.php
Teaching with Documents Templates from the LOC
http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/index-html
http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/
http://www.americanhistoryonline.org/search

Here are some sources that weren’t directly used, but could be used.
Menlo Park Reminiscences by Francis Jehl pages 466 and 514
Mary Elizabeth Jenkins Surratt found in Wikipedia
Metuchen Edison History www.jhalpin.com
History lives at Greenfield Village May 1934 page 29
Victorian America: transformations in everyday life, 1876-1915
Working at Inventing: Thomas A. Edison and the Menlo Park Experience by William Pretzer page 21
“Going A Boarding” Sarah Jordan’s Place and other Accounts of Boarding House Life by DR Braden 1986
The Boarding House in Nineteenth Century America by Wendy Gamber http://www.amazon.com/dp/080188571xref
Boarding House from Wikipedia http://em.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boarding_house
An evening at Mrs. Clancy’s boarding house (music) http://www.loc/jukebox/recordings.detail.id.1392/
The Assassination of President Lincoln (painting or print) http://www.americaslibrary.gov/jb/civil/jb_civil_lincoln_3
Dumont’s Boarding House –the German House-Idaho Springs about 1900 (photo)
http://cdml15330.contentdm.oclc.org