

LOVE AND WAR: USING PRIMARY SOURCES IN THE CLASSROOM

A Master's Research Project Presented to  
The Faculty of the College of Education  
Ohio University

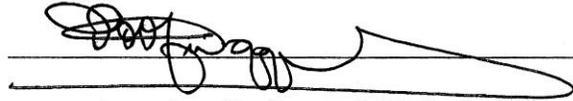
As Part of the Requirements  
For the Degree  
Master of Education

by

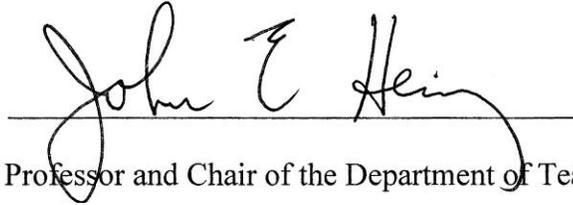
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This Master's Research Project has been approved  
for the Department of Teacher Education

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Frans H. Doppen', written over a horizontal line.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the benefits of a new approach using primary documents in the social studies classroom. Research has shown there is an array of benefits to the effective use of primary documents. This Master's Research Project includes a literature review, a discussion of the methodology, the study's findings, and its implications.

#### *Statement of Problem*

When presented with an array of primary sources students often lack the historical inquiry skills they need to analyze the text and subtext the way professionally trained historians conduct research (Wineburg, 1991). For the purpose of this study, it was hypothesized that thematically organizing primary resources would enable students to better analyze and understand a collection of primary sources. There is an extant literature on the benefits of using primary sources in the classroom, including an endorsement by the National Council for the Social Studies (Dallmer, 2007, p. 153), which suggests the benefit of focusing on a few big ideas that connect to student interest, such as local history, cultures, and issues. Dallmer (2007) suggests the use of primary sources as “resource material addresses the NCSS standards of Culture; Time, Continuity, and Change; People, Places, and Environments; and Civic Ideals and Practices” (p. 153). Teachers often look for creative ways to cover NCSS standards and primary sources can meet such a need.

However, Barton (2005) has cautioned us that while “students can build up an understanding of the past through primary sources, [their] ability to make sense of primary sources depends directly on their understanding of the contexts in which the documents were produced” (p. 749).

### *Research Question*

The primary sources used in this study consisted of a collection of letters written in France by Frank E. Powers during World War I to his sweetheart Loraine R. Richardson in Pottsville, PA. The research question in this study was: “Will students be able to gain a deeper understanding of an historical event, such as World War I, when they are presented with a thematically organized collection of primary resources?”

### *Purpose of Study*

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the benefits of a thematic approach to using primary documents in the classroom and to determine whether pre-service social studies teachers believe their future students will be able to gain new personal perspectives and appreciate the benefits of using primary documents as an alternative instructional method.

### *Limitations*

While guided questions and scaffolding can be tailored to meet any grade level, this study was targeted at students in grades 7-12. Since I was unable to conduct this study in a school setting, participants included teachers and pre-service teachers at a social studies state conference and pre-service teachers in a college social studies methods course.

A limitation of primary sources is that they must be understood in their historical context. Thus it is important to understand that Powers’ letters had to pass the war-time censors which limited his expression of ideas to Loraine E. Richards.

Another limitation includes access to primary sources. While many popular primary sources, such as the Declaration of Independence, are easily included in classroom curriculum, it is often difficult for educators to locate primary sources that help students make personal connections. While not every educator will be fortunate to have personal access to such sources, significant online databases of primary resources are growing exponentially such as those of the National

and Regional Archives, Presidential and Depository Libraries, and the Library of Congress (Nelson, 2005; Stoddard, 2008).

### *Methodology*

The collection of letters used in this study consists of 50 letters and other various documents written and/or sent by Frank E. Powers between May 15<sup>th</sup>, 1918 and May 11<sup>th</sup>, 1919. To prepare for the study both Dr. Doppen, my co-investigator, and I each separately read and analyzed the letters to identify emergent patterns and themes. We then compared our notes and discussed our findings which led us to identify eight themes:

- Freedom of Choice
- Social Network
- Leisure Activities
- Love
- Military Career
- Descriptions of the Enemy
- Evolution of Language
- Daily Life and Conditions

Next we identified six letters that well exemplified each separate theme and organized them into ring binders that contained all 48 letters. We piloted our study during a presentation at the state social studies conference. We first made a presentation that offered a brief overview of the lives of Frank E. Powers and Loraine Richards. Next, each of the participants was asked to read and analyze the letters in one of the thematic sub-sets. We then solicited oral responses based on their interpretation of the letters. Finally, each participant answered a series of guided questions regarding the clarity of the themes they identified and whether they believed this use of primary documents and guided questions would work in their classrooms.

Based on the pilot study we decided to create a series of guided questions for each of the eight themes. Next, our study involved a social studies methods course for preservice teachers. After developing these questions, Dr. Doppen and I then made the same presentation about the lives of Frank E. Powers and Loraine Richards as at the state social studies conference. After our presentation we introduced the eight thematic elements. I then distributed a series of three letters per person, two students per group. The thematic elements were then analyzed by our participants used to answer our guided questions. Additionally, we asked our participants to complete a short-answer survey regarding their use of primary documents in the classroom. These surveys were completed and returned after our presentation.

### *Organization of Study*

Chapter Two, presents a review of the research literature on the use of historical inquiry and primary sources in the classroom. Chapter Three will further describe the methodology used in this study while Chapter Four will present the findings of pilot study as well as the final study. Chapter Five, the final chapter, will present the conclusions and implications for further study.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

The research on the acquisition, analysis, organization, and instruction of primary sources reveals several reoccurring concepts. Most researchers and nationally recognized organizations in the social studies are extremely supportive of the use of primary sources in the classroom setting. These concepts include the benefits of using primary sources, teaching historical empathy, providing alternatives to textbook instruction, heightening global awareness, improving student understanding, making the ordinary individual extraordinary, and increasing digital archives.

While some articles are critical of the process by which primary sources are used in the classroom, one author is especially poignant about how these issues might be resolved. Barton (2005) offers many positions countering the blatant use of primary sources, highly suggesting that educators must be cognizant of the methods by which these sources are introduced.

#### *Endorsement by National Organizations*

Several national organizations encourage the use of primary sources in the classroom. They emphasize the importance of introducing and effectively using primary sources in the classroom. The use primary sources can be used to creatively meet standards, and help students better grasp the curriculum and increase their motivation to learn.

According to the National Council for the Social Studies [NCSS], meaningful teaching focuses on a few big ideas that connect to student interest, such as local history, cultures, and issues. The use of primary sources as “resource material addresses the NCSS standards of Culture; Time, Continuity, and Change; People, Places, and Environments; and Civic Ideals

and Practices” (Dallmer, p. 153, 2007). Teachers who look for creative ways to cover NCSS standards will find that primary sources can meet such a need.

The National Council for History Education [NCHE] advocates using written-record primary sources such as letters, diaries, and journals to assist students’ understanding of past events and issues “as they were experienced by people of the time and recapture the essence of their real lives. In doing so, learning about the past becomes real and meaningful as students develop empathy for people faced with issues and obstacles that might otherwise be unfamiliar to them” (McCormick, 2004, p. 12). Such introduction to primary sources allows students to begin navigating the recorded history using their own perceptions.

The editorial staff of *Social Education* suggests primary sources can encourage and motivate students in their learning, especially in a social studies classroom. “Within the civics classroom, there is a great deal that we can do to use innovative methods that engage students, such as the use of primary sources” (Civic Mission of Schools, 2005, p. 414).

These endorsements cover many of the benefits of using primary sources. These benefits range from creative ways to meet NCSS standards to increasing student participation. Another benefit is the innovative methods by which students can be engaged.

### *Responsible Historical Empathy*

The concept of historical empathy is addressed by several researchers. Engaging in historical empathy when analyzing primary documents can be challenging for students, particularly when they disagree with the opinions and writings of the original author. Depending on the students’ grade level, some may well be more or less empathic than others. During the formative years of pre-pubescence and puberty, students often struggle with their identity. According to Zarnowski (2004), when these “students deal with a range of perspectives on people and events, they begin to develop historical empathy skills which sets

them up to “become ‘bigger than themselves,’ to live more widely than their young lives can allow” (p. 22).

Historical empathy is crucial when reading and considering the context of the event and individuals involved. Analyzing primary sources with an empathetic perspective is important, otherwise individual actions and thoughts could be considered “inexplicable or irrational” (VanSledright & Brophy, 1992, p. 840), as would be the time period and the people involved, and their resources or lack thereof in comparison to resources presently available. Researchers have found that students may respond to primary sources with “initial astonishment..., exploration of the historical context with some preliminary understanding, development of ‘explanations’ of motives and events, followed by a refinement of these explanations,” (p. 841).

Using primary sources in social studies and language arts classrooms assists students in developing an understanding of themselves and others. The study of other people in historical or literary forms, coupled with the use of primary sources allows students to learn how society and the natural landscape have progressed through time. For example, in social studies this may include experiences before the United States included all 50 states; or in language arts it may include the advent of email versus the once common practice of letter writing. Students can also learn “how people like them coped with challenges, sometimes successfully, sometimes not” (Nelson, 2005, p. 22).

While reading about the past can be beneficial in preventing future mistakes, historical empathy allows students to directly relate to the subject and their actions. Empathy is “a step forward in their study of history, but they also may be more likely ‘to be able to cope with the present world’ and can better discern how what they do affects other people” (Foster & Yeager, 1998, p. 5). Notably, the focus is again removed from the student and placed on

those around him or her. Primary sources can assist in this change in perception, particularly if the original material and the author share similarities. As suggested by Eula T. Fresch (2004) in *Connecting Children with Children*, “The most effective way to help historical young people become ‘real’ to our students is to use primary sources whenever possible” (p. 3). This connection can be crucial to both historical empathy and motivation.

Importantly, it should be noted that historical empathy requires critical thinking. Foster (2001) dictates that historical empathy:

“does not involve imagination, identification, or sympathy, but that it involves an understanding of people’s actions in the past, a thorough appreciation of historical context through multiple forms of evidence and perspectives, an examination of students’ own perspectives, and encouragement of well-grounded but tentative conclusions.”

This realization and understanding of the past and how it is recorded demonstrates the importance of teaching historical empathy, particularly when using primary sources.

Overall, historical empathy can be developed through the use of primary sources, particularly from children or peers from a specified time period. Historical empathy allows students of all ages to view an event from a different, broader perspective. Historical empathy is important when reading about any past situation in comparison with current realities such as technology and globalization. Empathy allows the reader to understand the context of past events and the author’s perspective. This realization of bias allows the reader to grasp the course of the author’s decisions. Primary sources also act as examples that students might use to avoid making similar mistakes. By reading about a situation in an appropriately described context, students can learn from past errors or lost opportunities. Historical empathy can teach students how their present actions affect the future of their lives

and the lives of others. Empathy teaches selflessness and can help students identify their roles in their communities.

### *A Textbook Alternative*

The notion of using primary sources as an alternative to the textbook is frequently found in the research literature. Several authors (Bain, 2006; Everhart and Harris, 2002) discussed the disservice of instructors teaching from the textbook. The shortcomings of textbooks can be gauged in their intended agendas, limited scope of the overall curriculum, limited creativity and subsequent rigid assessments, the lack of critical thinking skills, and impersonality of being written by multiple authors.

While textbooks portend to weave a neutral canon of history or literature, they are not free from bias. In discussing author bias, “The textbook market (and the size of the books) grows steadily, but so do the attacks on the veiled (or not so veiled) ideological stances in these books and their banal rhetoric, incoherence, and failure to help students learn the content” (Bain, 2006, p. 2081). This leads to issues with critical thinking. If students are not engaged in active critical thinking, they will struggle with developing educated arguments concerning what they read, learn, and create.

Likewise, depending on the focus curriculum can be covered through textbooks in a linear sequence and lend students to rote memorization:

Most of us recall cheerfully bland textbooks that presented history as a fixed sequence of events we memorized and regurgitated on exams, then never thought of again. Educators have come to realize that good historical pedagogy requires student interaction with multiple perspectives, including those that conflict with one another,’ (Everhart & Harris, 2002, p.53).

This rote memorization doesn't challenge students or require much debate or critical thinking. This chronic linearity ushers in an academic despondency of going through the motions. Primary sources bring curriculum to life by actively providing peer-comparisons of an event or writings as experienced by an author of similar age or background.

Bain (2006) asks, "What can we learn about history instruction by situating textbooks and teachers within the realm of historical inquiry, making them the objects of students' historical investigations" (p. 2082). This argument suggests that learning as an institution suffers from group-think and lack of critical thinking or perspectives. The context of a curriculum becomes irrelevant when the reader fails to make a connection. This connection can be assured, however, through the use of primary sources. When the textbook is an active part of an educator's instruction, he or she can use primary sources to supplement the text.

Additionally, textbooks often are written by multiple authors who can keep the students from developing a perspective of authors' background. Understanding the background of the authors and identifying bias allows students to critically deconstruct the argument of the authors, and establish perspective in regards to the text. Bain (2006) describes this as an inability to "effectively ... criticize the textbook. Students were not, and did not see themselves as, peers of the authors" (p. 2092). Primary sources actively allow students to place themselves in the context and perspective of the author. Primary sources immediately make impersonal text personal. While future primary resources will include emails and blogs, the majority of currently accessible primary sources are found in letters, diaries, and journals – all personal, and often handwritten, thus generally easier for students to relate to.

Textbooks often leave students feeling overwhelmed, underwhelmed, and disconnected. The failure of textbooks is evident throughout intended agendas, a distillation of the overall curriculum, lacking creativity and subsequent rigid assessments, a failure to promote critical

thinking skills, and the impersonality of being written by multiple authors. The context of a curriculum becomes irrelevant if the reader fails to make connections. Primary sources allow teachers to promote this context and allow an alternative to textbook instruction. Primary sources also provide an author or authors with whom the students can identify bias, opinion, context, and a sense of humanity.

### *Heightening Global Awareness*

Additionally, the concept of a heightening of global awareness emerged from the research literature (Bain, 2006; Lesourd, 2001; Tally & Goldenburg, 2005). Not only can primary documents be used to introduce students to perspectives different than their own, but they can also be used to expand the worldview of students. Primary source documents that offer an alternative perspective (e.g.: German soldiers' letters from World War I), can be used effectively with sociocultural tools.

Next, primary documents can be used to introduce students to perspectives different than their own. The global community grows through the education and “development of a cross-cultural awareness that recognizes and tolerates disparate human perspectives, conceptions, values and beliefs” (Lesourd, 2001, p. 22). Educators must make the effort to present their students with varying primary sources involving similar contexts.

Likewise, primary sources can be used to expand students' worldview and introduce a different author bias. Another suggestion is the importance of addressing why differing accounts vary, and why authors' biases vary. “Successful history teachers construct activities in which students encounter documents for multiple purposes, such as noting point of view and bias and thinking about why different accounts vary” (Tally & Goldenberg, 2005, p. 2).

Sociocultural tools can assist students in analyzing primary sources. Bain (2006) suggests that educators should “design learning environments that fill the classroom with

history-specific scaffolds, discourse practices, and technology” (p. 2090). Scaffolds such as guiding questions can help students formulate thoughts relating to thematic elements. The use of technology can be used for researching primary sources, searching online databases, and enhanced imaging relating to primary sources.

Global awareness can be taught effectively through the use of primary sources in the classroom. Additionally, varying author bias should be discussed with students because students need to grasp why the bias is different. Finally, sociocultural tools such as history-specific scaffolds, discourse practices, and technology help students work with and analyze primary sources.

### *Improving Student Intellect*

The concept of improving student understanding through control, critical thinking, comprehension, and transfer is prevalent in the research literature (Barton, 2005; Beck & McKeown, 2001; Drake & Brown, 2003; Everhart & Harris, 2002; McCarthy & Anderson, 2000; McCormick, 2004; Morgan, 2002; Stoddard, Hofer, & Buchanan, 2008). Primary sources help students feel more in control of the curriculum. Critical thinking and comprehension are improved through primary sources by using scaffolding and guided questions. Additionally, students can better transfer what they’ve learned because of the connections they make using primary sources. Improving student transfer means improving retention of what students learn.

When working with historical events, there are several methods the educator can use to present the material. Critical thinking is crucial when working with historical events. McCormick (2004) suggests there should be two goals concerning every lesson which is to “comprehend historical events accurately and ... develop... critical thinking skills” (p. 6). Both of these goals can be addressed using primary sources to explain historical events.

However, accessibility to primary sources, particularly those close to the personal lives of students may be difficult. Some students have relatives or friendships that allow for easy access to primary sources. But that accessibility is not universal among students.

Photographs, letters, or family stories are all excellent primary sources that students may share but it is realistic that “[t]hese experiences may be all too infrequent, and ... should be made more systematic” (Drake & Brown, 2003, p. 468). By incorporating primary sources into the curriculum and making them an instrumental part of state standards and benchmarks, their prevalence may become systematic.

Using primary sources in the classroom can also serve as an alternative to lecture and rote memorization. Rote memorization fails to challenge students to think critically:

At... universities... the lecture still seems to be the centerpiece of instruction, where students passively absorb pre-processed information and then regurgitate it in response to periodic multiple-choice exams. Such an environment provides incentives to learn only at the surface (passive) level rather than at the deep (active) level” (McCarthy & Anderson, 2000, p. 279).

Primary sources can be viewed as active level learning because they encourage critical thinking regarding bias, opinions, reasons, and intended audience.

Active learning assists students in taking greater command of the curriculum they are seeking to learn. Students become more engaged in the curriculum and participate with increased frequency when learning activities are mainly student-centered. Perhaps most important is the fact they “give life and immediacy to the subject matter by encouraging students to move beyond a superficial, fact-based approach to the material” (McCarthy & Anderson, 2000, p. 280). Primary sources meet this description and are generally perceived as an active learning tool.

Not only will students develop greater skills to think critically they will be better prepared to make sense of the world around them:

“Students' experiences using primary sources can encourage analysis and evaluation of contemporary sources, including news stories, statistics, and advertising. As students hone their ability to recognize the subjective nature of evidence and gain an ability to identify limitations within a given source, they will develop analytical skill, enabling them to compare and critique data from a range of sources and to manage different viewpoints in areas of controversy” (Young, 2004, p. 48).

In order for students to best understand and utilize critical thinking with primary documents, origin, bias, and intent must be identified. Students need either background guidance or assistance in historical research to accurately determine the original context and accuracy of primary documents. As Barton (2005) states, “Students’ ability to make sense of primary sources depends directly on their understanding contexts in which documents were produced. Historians examine primary sources and speculate on the extent to which they can be trusted to present accurate accounts of past events,” (Barton, pp. 747, 749).

Barton also suggests that there are four characteristics unique to primary documents and to include them in course curriculum: “1. To motivate historical inquiry; 2. To supply evidence for historical accounts; 3. To convey information about the past; 4. To provide insight into the thoughts and experiences of people in the past” (pp. 751-752). These important reasons help explain the necessity of students learning how to effectively use primary documents. These four characteristics encourage command, critical thinking, comprehension, and transfer.

In addition, primary documents can boost student motivation. According to Everhart and Harris (2002), “most students clearly relished the opportunity to take command of the

history, demonstrating a great deal of creativity,” (p.54). Primary documents allow students to grasp historical events through the personal perspectives of an individual or multiple individuals.

Students come from a wide variety of backgrounds. The middle school and high school years being highly formative, primary documents allow the teacher an opportunity to build cross-cultural connections within the classroom. Different primary documents address different integral, cultural experiences that can arouse classroom interactions. Morgan (2002) suggests that “students need to get to know each other and the teacher. Enter the primary source. Primary sources and nonfiction offer valuable opportunities for interdisciplinary learning and critical thinking in all fields of study” (Morgan, p. 69). Primary sources can also be used within integrative unit plans and team teaching.

Primary documents are generally appreciated by students. The ability for students to relate to the author(s) of individual letters is a factor in improving student comprehension. According to Beck & McKeown (2001) primary documents are instrumental in providing students a foundation on which they can build their comprehension. (p. 226).

As students learn how to effectively analyze the origin and intent of primary documents, and effectively determine the context in which they were written they exercise a variety of skills. According to Stoddard, Hofer, & Buchanan (2008), “The overall goal is for students to develop critical researching skills in assessing and interpreting historical sources and the ability to articulate a well-warranted argument or historical account,” (p. 144). By learning effective critical thinking and research skills and how to construct a valid argument, students become adept at learning from primary documents.

*Extraordinary Ordinary People*

Importantly, primary sources address the concept that ordinary people are truly extraordinary – especially when they leave a written record of their personal history. Out of all of the concepts that emerge from the literature, viewing ordinary people as extraordinary is perhaps the most important. Not only do primary documents improve student appreciation of family and local history, they also provide an opportunity for organic learning about historical events.

Primary documents are because they teach students about their ability to influence the world and events of history around them. Shedd (2007) addresses this influence when he argues that “[t]eachers need to find ways to get around this shortage of writings from ordinary people so as to help their students see that the human past was made by everyone and not solely by the few in power” (pp. 25-26). Students can be empowered to become agents of change in their own lives. Students often feel they are insignificant in the larger scheme of society. Primary documents can help to acknowledge the individual contributions of everyday people and how they had an impact on the larger course of human history. As Shedd states, “Ordinary people are anything but inarticulate” (p. 25). Ordinary people’s primary documents provide a biased yet authentic account of the current event in which they participated.

As primary documents are explored, students may realize the scope and range of the authors in the historical event in which they participated. Primary documents help bring past events to life by exemplifying the human aspect of a situation. While primary documents cannot avail personal author bias they do provide an authentic perspective of an individual. As McCormick (2004) indicates, “It became my goal to find a way to make the people who

lived in the past come to life. I wanted to motivate them to discover the exciting stories embedded in our country's history from a variety of perspectives," (p. 5).

In addition to offering students the opportunity to develop an individual perspective on a historical event, students also invest a degree of personal connection with primary documents. As illustrated by Nelson (2005) "The students also use... historical objects and reproduction objects to bring a more complete picture of the past to the present. Anamnesis... is a re-imagining of the whole event, with one's emotions as well as cognitive understanding" (p. 23). For many students, primary documents may be the first experience with a historical event presented in a personal format.

### *Online Digital Archives*

In the future, online digital archives will become increasingly present and accessible. As the Internet develops in size and quality, online archives will become more prevalent and easy to access. For many students, the Internet is their primary method of research, both academic and personal. By increasing the number of online archives, students and researchers have access to an ever larger range of primary documents.

While many of the online archives include both scanned PDF files of the original document as well as typed transcripts, some sites are now providing a more interactive format which blends both. This new format includes both the original and a transcript "A typed transcript appears over the handwritten script, but each letter is also read aloud. This feature not only provides additional scaffolding for students but also opens up the use of these primary sources to the visually impaired" (Allen & Dutt-Doner, 2005, p. 66). Primary documents can be difficult to analyze when the context is not provided, and especially if the handwriting and document quality is poor. By providing students and researchers a more

interactive format, primary documents become easier to navigate. Additionally, the audio assistance is crucial in helping students with visual or auditory handicaps.

There are many digital formats in which students can access information. One popular avenue is Wikipedia.org which encourages open-source, public, user-generated encyclopedia. Several authors pinpoint the practicality of making primary documents accessible in this format. “A wiki is essentially a web-based publishing tool that enables multiple contributors to quickly add or edit content on the web... We have students evaluate primary and secondary sources... to edit an existing historical account in... their textbooks. One purpose is “to engage students in developing skills in historical inquiry through reconciling incomplete and conflicting accounts of the past with primary and secondary sources,” (Stoddard et al, p. 144). These open-source additions allow students to actively participate in the collection and analysis of primary documents.

With the growth of user-generated and government sponsored archives, students and educators have a wider range of resources to work with. “The growth of online archives of primary sources ... has made rich documentary materials widely available, and provided an extensive laboratory for teacher and curriculum development,” (Tally & Goldenberg, p. 3). Online databases of primary resources are growing daily such as, for example, those of the National and Regional Archives, Presidential and Depository Libraries, and the Library of Congress (Nelson, 2005; Stoddard, et al, 2008). These developing archives offer exciting avenues for educators. More so, these archives allow students to contribute their own personal, family-based primary documents. Online archives allow learning with primary documents to exist in a permanent digital state of existence.

*Summary*

The acquisition, analysis, organization of, as well as, instruction with primary sources address multiple reoccurring concepts. Much of the research literature supports the use of primary sources. Benefits of using primary sources include teaching historical empathy, providing alternatives to textbook instruction, heightening global awareness, improving student understanding, making the ordinary individual extraordinary, and increasing digital archives. The next chapter will present the methodology.

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

#### *Background*

This study was conducted in two parts. Both the pilot study and the actual study included questionnaires that followed a presentation and activity. The purpose of this study was to evaluate the benefits of a thematic approach to using primary documents in the classroom and to determine whether pre-service social studies teachers believe their future students will be able to gain new personal perspectives and appreciate the benefits of using thematically organized primary documents as an alternative instructional method. The pilot study was completed as a part of a joint presentation with my academic advisor at the 2009 Ohio Council for the Social Studies conference. The current study was completed in an undergraduate social studies methods course.

This study was based on a collection of primary documents that consisted of 48 letters and other various materials written and/or sent by Frank E. Powers between May 15<sup>th</sup>, 1918 and May 11<sup>th</sup>, 1919. To prepare for this study my academic advisor and I each separately read and analyzed the letters to identify emergent patterns and themes. We then compared our notes and discussed our findings which led to the identification of the eight themes as follows:

- Freedom of Choice
- Social Network
- Leisure Activities
- Love
- Military Career
- Descriptions of the Enemy
- Evolution of Language
- Daily Life and Conditions

For each of the eight themes I selected a set of six letters which I then organized in a ring binders that included all 48 documents.

### *Data Collection*

The pilot study was conducted at the 2009 OCSS state conference. The current study was completed in an undergraduate social studies methods course. To protect their identity, all participants in this study were assigned a pseudonym.

The pilot study was part of the joint presentation attended by 14 participants including novice as well as veteran social studies teachers. It consisted of two PowerPoint presentations that addressed the history of the documents and a review of the research literature on the use of primary resources in the social studies classroom. (See Appendix A-B.) As a part of the presentation, participants were assigned to read letters from one of the eight themes in the binders. (See Appendix C). After they shared their reflective thoughts with each other the participants were asked to complete the following three questions:

1. Did you enjoy this activity, why or why not?
2. Do you believe your students would be capable of completing this activity?
3. Do you think your students would enjoy this activity?

The current study included 16 preservice social studies teachers. I presented the same two PowerPoint presentations to them as to the participants in the pilot study. However, based on time restraints encountered during the pilot study, rather than asking participants to analyze six themed documents, they were asked to analyze two. Each participant was paired with a partner to analyze the two letters by way of a list of guiding questions. (See Appendix D.)

In the pilot study, after the PowerPoint presentations the participants were asked to share their individual responses with the whole group with regard to their interest in and willingness to organize primary documents for classroom instruction in middle and high school and whether

their students would enjoy examining primary documents. At the end of the presentation the participants were asked to share their individual thoughts in writing.

The current study used same collection of primary documents in the pilot study. The guided questions were thematically framed for the students in attendance to complete based on their thematic element (See Appendix D). After they were told what the eight themes were, the participants were allowed to choose which two documents they wanted to review. Each participant was then paired with a partner to mutually analyze two letters together. The guided questions asked them to analyze of the message, intent, audience, and content of the Frank Powers' letters based on assigned thematic element.

After they had completed reading and analyzing the letters, the preservice teachers were asked to share responses to how the two letters reflected the theme. Their experiences were recorded using the thematically framed questions. After their answers were gathered, students were encouraged to share their responses.

Each set of guided questions can be found in Appendix D.

### *Data Analysis*

The data for this study consisted of the findings from the pilot study as well as the current study which will be presented in Chapter Four. The data was analyzed by using methods of qualitative research. These methods included “grouping answers together across respondents, ... looking for differences among individuals, ... the view point of participants, ... and mind[ing] external validity and the extent to which the variable relationships can be generalized to other settings,” (Best & Kahn, 2003, pp.166, 259). Data analysis focused on the three probing questions listed above as well as the thematic guided questions from the current study.

This study included a significant limitation. The participants in the pilot study were conference attendees who were interested learning about using primary documents in their own

classroom. Therefore they may have been favorably disposed towards using primary documents. The current study, however, was completed by preservice teachers who may not have been interested in using primary documents in the classroom. Therefore, neither the participants in the pilot nor those in the current study may have been representative of the field of social studies teachers.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESEARCH FINDINGS

#### *Introduction*

This chapter presents the qualitative responses gathered from both the preliminary study and the follow up study. The responses are detailed in Appendix D. Data will be discussed within the framework of the following categories: general feedback, classroom competency, student enjoyment (preparation and adaptations), and thematic responses.

#### *Preliminary Study: General Feedback*

All fourteen participants in the preliminary study responded positively to the conference presentation and letter analysis. The majority of participant responses mirrored the research findings presented in Chapter Two.

The participants were asked to share general feedback and whether or not they enjoyed the presentation and analysis of the letters. The first question asked, “Did you enjoy this activity, why or why not?” Their responses were unanimously positive.

Several of the participants enjoyed the first-hand account the letters provided, “It was interesting to see and read first-hand accounts and the language used. We learn the textbook story but it is a whole different story when we read actual accounts.” This comment is representative of both the personal strength of primary documents and educator disenchantment with textbook authority. Bain (2006) has posited this as a shortcoming of textbooks, “Students were not, and did not see themselves as, peers of the authors” (p. 2092). Similarly, another participant wrote, “The activity was very interesting. It added a new element to teaching and learning about World War I.”

In just a few years The Great War will reach its centennial with no surviving veterans. Practically no one has a personal knowledge of World War I that reaches beyond what he or

she has read in a classroom textbook. Primary documents offer an opportunity to conceptualize the reality of a past event.

Another participant wrote similar comments. “Too often we present history like the texts we teach from. Using these letters allows for interpretation and relation to the past for students.” This addresses the restrictions of rote memorization as presented by McCarthy and Anderson (2000), “...students passively absorb pre-processed information and then regurgitate it in response to periodic multiple-choice exams. Such an environment provides incentives to learn only at the surface (passive) level rather than at the deep (active) level” (p. 279).

#### *Preliminary Study: Classroom Competency*

The second question in the preliminary study asked, “Do you feel your students are capable of completing this activity?” Responses differed depending on grade level taught. Some respondents believed their older students to be fully competent in completing this activity. Others taught younger students and weren’t sure the scope of the analysis would work for their students.

Participants with middle school students believed their students would be capable and interested in completing the activity, but would possibly need additional preparation and introduction to the material. Another idea was to introduce scaffolding exercises. Overall, the majority of participants thought their students would benefit from this activity.

One participant stated, “I think they are capable. Students would need to be prepped with how to read the document.” Preparation is referred to openly in this statement and could mean a variety of strategies and techniques. Other participants were increasingly focused on their estimation of student capability, “I do feel that secondary students can do this activity... especially certain segments of the war have been studied. I do feel the students would enjoy this.”

A strategy to help students with this project would be scaffolding, as suggested by several participants. Scaffolding would help them with analyzing the letters. “Yes, with scaffolding (like the handwriting to text conversion program you mentioned or the audio program for those with reading difficulties).” This participant referred to the recent primary document application mentioned in Chapter Two, “A typed transcript appears over the handwritten script, but each letter is also read aloud. This feature not only provides additional scaffolding for students but also opens up the use of these primary sources to the visually impaired” (Allen & Dutt-Doner, 2005, p. 66).

Limitations the participants listed when considering their students’ capability were both the legibility and length of the letters. One participant offered a contradiction to the aforementioned transcription application, “Yes, secondary students can do these activities depending on the legibility of the writing. I personally do not like to use transcriptions. They take ownership over transcribing the letters.” The opinion regarding legibility was mentioned by another participant, “Yes, the language used was at a readable level. The only potential problem would be the fading/creasing of the letters.” This comment illustrates the formation of the letter binders using photocopies. In order to maintain students’ accessibility to the letters with preservation in mind, the binders met both requirements. Likewise, the transcription tool and other forms of digital archives made the collection, preservation, and analysis of primary documents timeless.

The other limitation mentioned was length of the letters and how this may be overly difficult for some students. As a participant discussed, “I think 7th-12th grade students are capable of doing this activity. I think I would select the primary sources/letter[s] that I would want the students to read. A huge binder of letters may be overwhelming for students.” This demonstrates another benefit of using digital archives to preserve primary documents, the reality that some personal collections may not include enough teachable content. In that case, having

the availability of readily accessible primary documents allows the teacher to better control developing material for lesson plans and projects.

Overall, the participants were encouraging in their comments and opinions regarding classroom competency whether or not their students could aptly complete projects involving primary documents. Suggestions offered included preparing students by first introducing them to primary documents. Another suggestion included using scaffolding techniques, even transcription (digital) if available. Limitations listed by participants included the legibility (the physical strength of the original letters) and length (shortening the original collection or pulling specific letters).

#### *Preliminary Study: Enjoyment*

When asked whether or not their students would enjoy this activity, the response was resoundingly positive indicating their students would enjoy this activity. More importantly, their responses suggested their students would enjoy working with primary documents. Reasons why students would enjoy this project varied from calligraphy, to thematic elements, interactivity, applicability, relevance, and the degree to which humanity was depicted.

One participant mentioned the letters' calligraphy as a point of student interest when working with primary documents. When asked whether students would enjoy this project, the response was, "Yes, they would. The handwriting is appealing!" Another participant stated that the thematic elements and organization would be a help to their students, "I feel the students would really enjoy this. I especially think that the themes were helpful in organizing thoughts." Another participant listed the organization by theme as one of the strengths of the project, which in turn would assist students, "Pulling out information from letters is pretty easy." These responses indicate an interest based on the aesthetics and utility of the project, both in design and framework.

Similarly, responses indicated that the interactivity of the project is something that would be an interest to their students, “I really feel the students would like this activity because it is interactive and interesting.” One participant explained this interactivity, “the students I teach really like hands-on materials. It is what they remember.” Another response included, “Yes, the students I teach really like hands-on materials. It is what they remember.” One more participant stated, “These soldiers were only a few years older than our students we are teaching.” Furthermore, another participant said “Kids relate to this type of activity. It brings humanity to history.” Based on these responses, students would find this project interesting because they will be asked to personally analyze the documents, using their own experiences and opinions as points of comparison. These responses mirror Bain’s (2006) discrediting of textbooks, i.e. they fail to help students make personal connections: “Students were not, and did not see themselves as, peers of the authors,” (p. 2092). Analyzing primary documents allow both immediate realism and subjective analysis by the students, helping them command their material.

Likewise, other participants listed responses that indicated students enjoyed this activity due to their connection with the reality of the scenarios and unfolding history. Making a direct connection with the humanity of primary documents, another participant commented, “I think students would love the activity. This helps restore passion to history and learning history.” Another comment echoed Everhart and Harris (2002), “Most of us recall cheerfully bland textbooks that presented history as a fixed sequence of events we memorized and regurgitated on exams, then never thought of again,” (p.53). This project appealed to the participants because of the letters’ unconventional perspectives.

Notably, participants responded positively to using this project and primary documents with their students because of its relevance to the curriculum and the humanity of reading another individual’s perspective on a broad topic. As one respondent answered, “[this project] brings

history to life for the students and puts a “face” on World War I.” Another participant echoed this sentiment, “I think students would enjoy this activity. It allows students to look at a different perspective of the war and adds a personal aspect that students can relate to, and the war becomes less abstract.” These ideas demonstrate what Shedd (2007) wrote about the strength of primary documents, “... teachers need to find ways to get around this shortage of writings from ordinary people so as to help their students see that the human past was made by everyone and not solely by the few in power,” (pp. 25-26).

Additionally, one participant poignantly wrote, “using primary resources in the classroom is an excellent idea. These soldiers were only a few years older than our students we are teaching.” With the list of surviving World War I veterans shrinking and the increasing generational gap, it is important for teachers to make past events relevant to present day students. As suggested by Nelson (2005), “students also use... historical objects and reproduction objects to bring a more complete picture of the past to the present. Anamnesis ... is a re-imagining of the whole event, with one’s emotions as well as cognitive understanding” (p. 23). This project allows students the ability to personally connect with the personal experiences of soldiers from World War I.

#### *Follow-up Study: General Feedback*

The follow-up study included six groups of guided questions about Powers’ daily life and conditions; descriptions of the enemy; military experiences; the evolution of language; leisure; and love. These thematically guided questions were changed from eight to six themes based on the small classroom attendance that evening. After they were told what the original eight themes were, the participants were allowed to choose which two documents they wanted to review. There were fourteen students total, with four groups of pairs and two groups of three to mutually analyze two letters together. The guided questions asked them to analyze the message, intent, audience, and content of Powers’ letters based on assigned theme. The participant responses

ranged from broad generalizations to unique specifics. The follow up study yielded a variety of responses based on the participants' analysis of the letters. All participants were actively involved in the analysis and indicated they were interested in using a similar project in their own future classrooms.

### *Theme 1: Daily Life and Conditions*

The theme of Powers' daily life and conditions focused on patterned and impromptu activities he encountered while in France. This theme, while sometimes overlapping with the leisure theme, focused on the intangibles of his daily occurrences and limited range of freedom. The leisure theme centered on the activities Powers' participated in for fun. Analyzing daily life and conditions, intangibles that might have been taken for granted, were focused on such occurrences as weather, meals, sleeping arrangements, degree of movement, and interactions with others.

A number of participants offered broad analyses. When asked "How do these letters document his daily life?" one such response was, "They tell what he was doing and thinking on a daily basis." This could be inferred from the question, yet it represents one type of participant response. Another, more in-depth response included "They talk about how he is generally fed and rested enough; and [it's] hard for him to get letters. They also suggest he has not seen any fire fight yet because his only 'horrors of war' are being deprived of Loraine."

Some of his daily activities ran the emotional spectrum from positive to negative experiences. While we read about a soldier with limited combat exposure, Powers details many hardships of war. Some of his negative experiences include, "Lack of sleep, covered in mud, always on the move, [and] poor food. Not much control over situation. The amount of exercisable control in these situations is explained by "Little food, no clean clothes, just

following a column and moving to avoid attack.” We read that Powers is merely going through some of the more monotonous duties required of a soldier.

However, his experiences have also been positive in some regards; especially after the Armistice. One participant wrote that Powers kept busy by “Writing and reading letters, football games, target practice, [and] big dinners.” His range of free will was heightened after the Armistice as “[he has] more control over daily activities and comforts than earlier letters,” but we read that he has “No control over [his] return home and is anxiously awaiting that. [He has] no control [in finding] friends who may be in other divisions.”

These guided questions and analysis detail some of the motivating and mundane conditions of daily life in World War I. The stereotype of World War I is fighting in the trenches. While that was one reality, it is clear that many soldiers had simple comforts such as big meals and organized sport as occasional alternative options.

The participants compared the occurrences in Powers’ life with the status of a civilian during peace time. They compared Powers’ experiences with their own daily lives. By doing this, they were able to accurately extract daily occurrences such as hygienic practices, the availability of food, required tasks, the cleanliness of laundry, and insights into leisure activities. Another comparison included the historical generalization that World War I could be summarized by trench warfare compared to the alternative reality that many soldiers experienced down time that led to leisure such as recreational activities, a range of freedoms, and occasionally visitation. Although the participants listed some instances of Powers in combat, most of their responses focused on everyday tasks.

### *Theme 2: The Enemy*

Powers used a variety of nicknames and colloquialisms – some of which are still used today in reference to World War I. Participants were asked to analyze the letters for descriptions of the

enemy. This theme included both nicknames and actual descriptions of purported and experienced enemy actions. It complements the evolution of language theme in that the participants were asked to analyze the evolution and extinction of certain words and phrases – whether certain phrases hold meanings today similar to when they were in common use. When analyzing Powers’ descriptions of the enemy, participants were asked to assess whether the phrases he used were positive, neutral, or negative and what they meant.

The participants identified several nicknames, such as “Germans, Huns, Fritz, and Bosche.” Powers’ descriptions of the enemy are lengthier and allow the reader vignettes into the opinions and thoughts of United States’ soldiers toward their opponent. He describes the enemy as “barbarians [and] implies that the Germans are not human.” As analyzed by one participant, Powers’ sentiments toward the enemy are that he “dislikes the German soldiers he comes into contact with.” He describes how he could visualize a ‘big fat German general’ issuing orders from a barracks they had occupied from the enemy.” These descriptions of the enemy offer an open look into some of the prevailing Allied sentiments. By analyzing these reflections, the reader is privy to immediate frontline opinion.

In addition, there were instances in which Powers expressed his thoughts on the Allied forces. Participants listed some of these opinions as follows, “The French seem to like the Americans and are surprised as to how well they can fight but do not think they are as good engineers as themselves.” Powers also appreciates the British and French soldiers. [He] describes the British as “doughboys” and states they are the best troops in the war and won’t stop until the war is won.” This analysis demonstrates the participants can employ historical empathy based on the terms Powers used. Analyzing primary sources with from an empathetic perspective is crucial because, “the power to place oneself in the position of the historical [figure]... demands... imagination.” Otherwise individual actions and thoughts can be

considered as “inexplicable or irrational unless they were considered in the context of the situation [and] the beliefs prevalent at that place and time.” (VanSledright & Brophy, 1992, p. 840-841).

Military jargon often employs terms and phrases in order to disassociate soldiers from the horrors of war. These words might lack political correctness and be viewed as pejorative. The empathy within this theme rests on understanding Powers’ use of these nicknames and informalities which were common in the context of the time.

In their analysis of Powers’ descriptions of the enemy, not only did participants successfully list several words and phrases relating to the Germans, they were also able to identify those phrases in regard to the Allied forces. They were able to discern the context in which Powers used these descriptions, positive or negative, “Powers calls the Germans “Bosche” which I’m not sure is derogatory, but can’t be nice either. However, Powers doesn’t bad-mouth the Germans, although for the period maybe a nickname was all it took to insult someone.”

### *Theme 3: Military Experience*

The participants were also asked to analyze letters that detailed aspects of Powers’ military career and duties. Powers had a career that extended from being an officer, to becoming lieutenant, to becoming a captain, and being transferred from Company D to Company B. The participants were asked to identify factors that indicated how his experience as an army officer was different from that of an infantry soldier. They noted that, “He got to give orders to a company and wasn’t put on the front lines often. [He] got to conduct a bridge building process. His living quarters are much nicer. Still we can’t be consulted as to our wishes in this army.” Powers enjoyed privileges that infantry soldiers did not have. Thus these letters provide an alternative perspective to the stereotype of World War I as a war of “fighting in the trenches.”

Another similar question the participants were asked to answer was how World War I is remembered in textbooks and how Powers' individual account fit into that framework. Responses to how his experience differed from many common World War I infantry stories included, "He had more privileges than a general infantry soldier. It sounds like [he had] a lot of down time." Participants wrote that Powers' seemed more content in Company D than in Company B, "I will get my [commission] at any time and there may be a chance that I will get back to D. [Company] as [Captain]." Yet, "he seems calm/content with his emotions and situation because he has someone waiting for him back home." Overall, the account of Powers' military career differs from that of most other soldiers. However, his experience is critical to the canon of World War I because these shared histories help students, teachers, historians, and enthusiasts better understand the complexity of war and particularly a different time period and generation.

The participants were able to analyze the difference between Powers' experience in an engineering unit versus that of frontline infantry. He listed several of the tasks and operations in which his company was engaged and completed. Participant analysis ranged from merely listing his tasks to recording his mentality concerning assignment changes and work assignments. "He seems calm and content with his emotions and situation because he has someone waiting for him back home."

#### *Theme 4: Evolution of Language*

The participants were also asked to analyze the phrases and words Powers used that have since evolved or ceased to exist. This set of guided questions required the participants analyze the anachronisms of language since World War I. Many of the participants enjoyed this section as it allowed them to read antiquated phrases that are uncommon today. These guided questions

allowed them to ponder their own vernacular and how it may become antiquated with the passage of time.

Of the dated words and phrases Powers used during World War I, participants identified contemporary terms and expressions such as “honey bunch”, “many a moon”, “cheers me up a heap”, “chummy”, “hommes”, “took the cake”, “most lazy idea”, “out on a hunt for food”, and “sketch.” “Honey Bunch” was interpreted as a term of endearment. Phrases such as “many a moon” and “cheers me up a heap” were interpreted as emotional expressions. “Chummy” referred to not feeling well. The term “hommes” referred to the men in his company. The expression “take the cake” meant enjoying the best of experiences. The expression, “a most lazy idea” meant a weak idea. The idiom “out on a hunt for food” meant to locate food, while “Sketch” referred to an Irishman.

Finally, the participants were asked whether or not they viewed these letters as a form of literature. Their response was a resounding “yes”. One participant wrote “the letter represents a man’s experience and love for a woman expressing it through language in a written document.” According to the participants, both the words and phrases were examples of a changing language. The words, while antiquated, demonstrated that language represents very real human thoughts, desires, and opinions and thus evolves over time.

The participants did not have access to any dictionaries or glossaries and therefore relied on context clues to determine the meaning of words and phrases. They were able to identify many of the words and determine their meanings. They also concluded these letters constituted a written record of vernacular language common to a time period. Some participants were interested in using this analysis of the evolution of language as an integrative project within their future language arts and social studies classrooms.

*Theme 5: Leisure*

Powers had many opportunities to entertain himself after the Armistice. The participants were asked to analyze how Powers' free time was nonetheless dictated by what his orders were after the war officially ended.

They identified a variety of activities in which he was able to participate. For example, Powers "drew a sketch of himself and made a Valentine to send to his sweetheart, played football, saw a show in the "theater" of the camp ( juggler, singer, acrobats), played bridge and billiards, enjoy[ed] reading, sight-seeing, and took a bath." These everyday activities gained new importance as Powers had more time for leisure despite still being under the military orders.

As a result, "He was not able to call ... or see his sweetheart. [He] does not know when he'll be sent home or where he is going next. He could only go to certain places. His leisure time was interrupted [at one point] when he had to do target work with his rifle and because his division was advancing." These responses indicate that although Powers had more opportunities when the army advanced or changed work orders, he did face restrictions. Despite these restrictions, however, Powers was able to enjoy simple pleasures such as taking a bath, communicating with his sweetheart, and visiting and touring several cities around France. He had plenty of opportunity to enjoy activities after the war, but was never completely free to do as he pleased.

The participants were quick to identify leisure activities that many still enjoy today. Football, baseball, other organized sports, media, card games, and opportunities to spend with friends were several of the options they listed. Interestingly, none of the participants identified letter writing as a leisure activity. This is surprising considering the collection was written during down time for leisure. It is possible that participants did not list this as a leisure activity due to the fact that today letter writing is no longer a preferred way of communication.

*Theme 6: Love*

While Powers may at times have thought of different audiences for his musings, his primary target of sentiment and affection was his sweetheart, Loraine. His goal was to write her a letter every day. His letters document his boundless love and describe his dreams for their future together. Powers was a very open, loving man who did not hide his affection for Loraine. The participants noted that, “He describes his love as a journey [and there are] times that music brings back a memory.” He speaks of protecting her. He also speaks specifically to her, “I am coming back to you, we will be married and live happily ever after. I love you with all my soul and strength. May you be well and happy. I wish I could see you. All my love is yours.”

The participants suggested that Powers wrote Loraine because he missed her. He wrote “Because ... he loves her.” He also wrote because he felt “lonely,” and “[for] motivation, [and] therapeutic [reasons because it] could be his last letter.” Although Powers was only one individual among the masses, his story of love presents a different perspective on World War I.

Powers’ terms of endearment revealed several dated phrases that were once quite commonplace in vernacular. The participants noted many of his terms of endearment, such as, “sweetheart, honey, hon, love, little girl, dearest girl, and honey bunch.” Some of his letters end with either of the following phrases, “Here is my best kiss for you and all my heart’s love. Hugs & kisses, forever your own.” These phrases offer short but intimate insights into the mind of a front line soldier who has no clue about what the next day might bring.

Finally, the participants listed dreams and goals Powers had for his future. Some of these dreams included, “To come home from war and marry her. He speaks of many things they will do upon his return. To have her .... at “the bungalow” so she can see how beautiful it was and how it would be perfect for them.”

These dreams were synonymous with his love for Loraine. While family and friends played an important role in his letters as well, they exist because of Loraine. The element of love is present in nearly every letter he wrote. While Powers would've been just another "G.I.," Loraine was as crucial to the war as he was. War is never fought by the soldiers alone.

Analyzing love, the participants addressed anything from Powers' terms of endearment for Loraine to his future plans for spending their lives together. Many of the letters Powers wrote explained his plans for their future. The participants suggested his letters amounted to a form of literature, "the letter represents a man's experience and love for a woman expressing it through language in a written document." Another participant agreed "Mike is writing to Loraine about many different and interesting things."

### *Summary*

The participants in both the preliminary and follow-up study indicated that they liked the project and indicated they would be willing to use a similar project in their own classrooms. In the preliminary study, all participants stated they liked this study and using thematically organized primary documents with guided inquiry questions. They agreed that such an approach makes primary documents more accessible to students. As one participant suggested, "I especially think that the themes were helpful in organizing thoughts." The findings indicate that while the participants in both studies realized that the story of The Great War is much larger than one soldier's story, it is the individual soldier's experience that helps classroom students make connections and develop personal meanings.

The principal research question to be answered was "Will students gain a deeper understanding of an historical event, such as World War I, when they are presented with a thematically organized collection of primary resources?" The findings suggest the answer to this question is positive. The participants in the preliminary as well as the follow-up study were

engaged. They were excited about extending the thematic organization of primary resources into their respective classrooms.

The participants in both the preliminary and follow-up study responded in favor of having prepared guided questions to help assist students. They suggested that guided questions would help direct students and encourage them to use critical thinking skills. As one respondent mentioned, students would thus be able to take, “a good look at true history without plagiarism or possible exaggerations.” The general findings can perhaps be best summarized by a comment from one of the participants who stated, “I feel the students would really enjoy this. I especially think that the themes were helpful in organizing thoughts.”

## CHAPTER FIVE

## SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

*Summary*

The participants in the preliminary study were 14 novice and veteran social studies teachers who attended the state conference. The participants in the follow up study were 17 preservice teachers in an undergraduate social studies methods course. Both studies included the two PowerPoint presentations that reported the background history on Frank E. Powers, the documents' author, and the research literature on the use of primary documents in the classroom. The preliminary study included questions about the organization of primary documents and whether the same activity could be successfully replicated in the participants' classrooms. The refocused follow-up study included thematically guided questions based on eight themes. In both studies the participants expressed an interest in using similarly designed lesson activities in their own classroom.

The principal question sought to determine whether students would be able to gain a deeper understanding of an historical event when presented with a thematically organized collection of primary resources. A review of the research suggested that using primary documents provides students with a deeper understanding of an historical event and thus helps them to develop historical empathy.

Primary documents can teach historical empathy by providing students with a first-hand account created by a "real" individual. This account allows students to grasp a new understanding of an historical event through the experiences of an individual who was directly involved. The participants in both studies believed their students would enjoy reading primary documents and suggested that a thematic organization would indeed improve their students' understanding.

Primary documents are becoming increasingly accessible due to increasingly available digital archives. The development of digital archives allows students to grasp a new understanding of an historical event by presenting documents through a contemporary technological medium. Likewise, the ease of document transcription and analysis has improved thanks to the growth of technology and its interactive format. Participant responses suggest the believed that a thematic organization through the growing medium of digital archives, conservation, and accessibility provides better transcription and analysis of an individual's documents would improve their students' understanding.

The research literature suggests that using primary documents improves students' historical understanding. Critical thinking and comprehension are improved through primary documents by using scaffolding and guided questions. Critical thinking about bias, opinions, reasons, and intended audience leads to active learning and encourages students to develop greater command of the curriculum they are seeking to master. Participant responses suggest they believed that thematic organization through scaffolding and guided questions would encourage active learning and critical thinking as well as improve student understanding.

This study also sought to answer the question whether in-service and preservice social studies teachers believe their respective students would be able to gain new personal perspectives using primary documents as an alternative instructional method. The research literature suggests that primary documents help students develop new perspectives because they provide alternatives to textbook instruction, make the ordinary individual extraordinary, and heighten global awareness.

Primary documents provide alternatives to textbook instruction. Primary sources actively allow students to position themselves in response to the context and perspective of the author. Primary sources make the impersonal direct and personal. Primary sources offer students the

opportunity to identify bias, opinion, context, and a sense of humanity. The findings suggest the participants believed that a thematic organization of an individual's authentic documents is preferred over the impersonality of a textbook written by multiple authors.

Primary documents make the ordinary individual extraordinary. Primary documents help bring past events to life by exemplifying the human aspect of a situation. Students are able to have a personal connection with primary documents. The findings suggest that the participants believed that a thematic organization of an individual's documents is engaging and that students gain new personal perspectives.

Primary documents heighten global awareness and expand the worldview of students. Primary documents introduce students to perspectives different than their own. Yet, they can also expand their worldview. Socio-cultural tools such as history-specific scaffolds, discourse practices, and technology help students to work with and analyze primary sources. The findings suggest that a organization has the potential to enhance global awareness and personal perspectives.

### *Conclusions*

The typical classroom includes students from varying backgrounds with different interests and learning abilities. While the findings suggest that teachers are interested in using primary documents in their classroom, they must be able to adjust their curriculum to their own particular context. Thematically organized documents make for easy preparation and use as they can be accordingly assigned to different groups of students. Teachers should have a master file from which they can make copies as needed. Adaptations should include grade level appropriate documents and expectations. Some documents may require omission due to appropriateness for particular grade levels. Likewise, scaffolding may be necessary.

Successful use of thematically organized primary documents is dependent on both the teacher and the availability of materials. As the research literature suggests, teachers now have greater access to digital online primary documents as databases are growing daily, including, for example, those at the National and Regional Archives, in Presidential and Depository Libraries, and the Library of Congress (Nelson, 2005; Stoddard, et al, 2008). Teachers have the freedom to decide to which degree they will use primary documents to supplement lessons. Thus, they alone decide to what extent to intersperse thematically organized primary documents in their classroom text or use as an alternative to textbook instruction. Thematically organized primary documents must, however, be responsive to the context of the classroom.

The participants indicated that the binders and themes would be helpful in developing individual lesson plans. According to some of the participants, however, some of the letters would hard to read due to the handwriting. They suggested that a digital transcription (available on some online archives) would be beneficial to their students. Others, however, disagreed and argued that part of the experience of document analysis should include deciphering the original handwriting.

As suggested by Fresch (2004), “Photographs, diaries, and letters written by children, and adults’ memoirs of their childhoods give our students the opportunity to be “historians” because they can construct their own interpretations of what they view and read” (p. 3). The participants in both studies agreed that organizing primary documents by theme would help their students in gaining a deeper understanding of World War I. However, they also suggested that classroom context is crucial for the successful use of primary documents and requires due preparation and adaptations to consider the strengths and weaknesses of their students. As suggested by Fresch (2004) as well, using primary sources by children generates a genuine interest, “To connect with

children in the past, our students must determine their values, ideas, beliefs, and attitudes in addition to finding out what they did and what their lives were like” (pp. 144-145).

### *Recommendations*

Recommendations for further research include examining the effectiveness of modeling the use of thematically organized primary documents in diverse settings including professional development workshops, methods courses, and social studies classrooms. Furthermore, longitudinal studies may yield significant findings regarding student long-term understanding and enjoyment of thematically organized primary documents.

Recommendations for classroom teachers include using a variety of primary document topics in different historical contexts. Teachers should offer topics that are interesting and wide-ranging. Fresch (2004) also suggests using a variety of resources and listing students’ findings as a class composite and making a Venn diagram to compare similarities and differences in their own lives (p. 63).

In summary, the findings of this study suggest that, although many teachers may already use primary documents in their classroom, a thematic organization may well improve their students’ understanding of historical events. Thematic organization benefits both the teacher and student by providing more structure to the instructional process while simultaneously addressing individual interests.

## APPENDIX A

## HISTORY OF FRANK POWERS AND HIS LETTERS

Love and War:  
Teaching with Primary Documents

Matt Carlstrom  
Frans Doppen  
Ohio University

OCSS Annual Conference  
March 27, 2009

Frank E. Powers

"Mike"

Pottsville, PA  
October 13, 1887

Pottsville High School  
Class of 1903

**University of Pennsylvania**

Senior Class  
1908

Elected to Sigma Xi  
Civil Engineering

## University of Pennsylvania "Penn"



1892



2009

## University of Pennsylvania



FRANK ETHELWULF POWERS, J. J.  
"Eth"

Pottsville, Pa. Civil Engineering

Born October 22, 1897, at Pottsville, Pa.  
Graduated University, Penn. (Class 1917); Civil Engineering De-  
gree, D. Sc. 1921. Member American Soc. Consulting Engineers  
Civil Engineering Society, etc.

## Woodrow Wilson



## Pershing's Expedition

March 16, 1916 – February 7, 1917

Pancho Villa raids Columbus, TX  
March 9, 1916



## Pershing's Expedition

Company C, 28<sup>th</sup> Division



## Pershing's Expedition

Company C, 28<sup>th</sup> Division



## Pershing's Expedition



## Declaration of War

April 6, 1917



**Selective Service Act**

**May 18, 1917**

**All men; Ages 21-30**

## Pottsville – Camp Hancock

August 13, 1917



### Camp Hancock



### Camp Hancock



### Camp Hancock



## Company D

May 8 – August 18, 1918



- 103<sup>rd</sup> Engineers
- 28<sup>th</sup> Division
- American Expeditionary Force [AEF]
- First Lieutenant

## Company B

August 18, 1918 – May 18, 1919



- 103<sup>rd</sup> Engineers
- 28<sup>th</sup> Division
- American Expeditionary Force [AEF]
- Promoted to Captain – October 9, 1918

**"Dock Hoboken Thursday Morning"**  
**"Love, Mike"**

April 30, 1919

"Arrived New York Safe"

"Destination Camp Dix"

May 1, 1919

"Everything Fine"

Camp Mills, NY

May 11, 1919

### Twentieth Anniversary



### Lorraine E. Richards

m. 1920



### Frank E. Powers

d. February 12, 1955



### Lorraine E. Richards

d. November 20, 1993





## APPENDIX B

## CONDUCTING RESEARCH WITH PRIMARY DOCUMENTS

### Conducting Research with Primary Documents



### Benefits of Using Primary Sources

- NCSS: Meaningful teaching focuses on a few big ideas that connect to student interest.
  - Address standards of culture; time, continuity, and change; people, places, and environments; and civic ideals and practices. (Dallmer, 2007)
- NCHE: Learning about the past becomes real and meaningful as students develop empathy for people faced with issues and obstacles that might otherwise be unfamiliar to them. (McCormick, 2004)

## Benefits of Using Primary Sources

- Allows educator to teach using multiple perspectives.
  - Activities in which students encounter documents for multiple purposes, such as noting points of view and bias and thinking about why different accounts vary. (Tilly, et al., 2005)
- Alternative to textbooks.
  - Textbook market grows steadily, but so the attacks on the veiled ideological stances in these books and their rhetoric. (Bain, 2006)

## Benefits of Using Primary Sources

- Digital Archives becoming prevalent.
  - Typed transcripts appearing over the handwritten script. (Allen, et al, 2006)
- Interdisciplinary and Improve student socialization.
  - Students need to get to know each other and the teacher. (Morgan, 2002)

### Benefits of Using Primary Sources

- Students can feel ownership to material.
  - Understanding contexts in which documents were produced. (Baron, 2006)
- Assist in activating prior knowledge, and improve comprehension. (Boak, et al., 1992)
  - Source might be from a family collection.

### Benefits of Using Primary Sources

- Develops empathy toward the past and understanding of the present.
  - Studying [history and literature] helps young people realize how the world they know evolved and how people like them coped with challenges, sometimes successfully, sometimes not. (Nelson, 2006)
- Define the significance of ordinary people.
  - The human past was made by everyone and not solely by the few in power. (Sheff, 2007)

## Benefits of Using Primary Sources

- Lessons are more student-centered with active-learning participation. (McCarthy, 2000)
- Invokes the civic mission of schools.
  - Within the civics classroom, there is a great deal that we can do to use innovative methods that engage students, such as the use of primary sources.(Social Education, 2005)

## Tasks

- **Observation:** Scanning the document, observing details.
- **Sourcing:** Who made the documents and what their motives were.
- **Inferences:** Making inferences about the meaning.
- **Evidence:** Citing evidence when making inferences.
- **Posing Questions:** Cultivating and organizing questions.
- **Corroboration:** Comparing what is discovered with what one already knows.

(Tally, et al., 2005)

## Questions to Ask

- What can we learn about history instruction by situating textbooks and teachers within the realm of historical inquiry, making them the objects of students' historical investigations?

(Bain, 2006)

## Questions to Ask

- Who wrote the document?
- Why did they write it?
- Did the writer have first-hand knowledge of the event?
- Did the writer have reasons for bias?
- Was the document written for a personal or public audience?
- Was the document written during the event or immediately after?

(McCormick, 2004)

## Themes from the Letters of Frank Powers

1. Freedom of Choice
2. Social Network
3. Leisure Activities
4. Love
5. Military Career
6. Descriptions of the Enemy
7. Evolution of Language
8. Daily Life and Conditions



## Online Archives

- National Archives and Records Administration: [www.nara.gov](http://www.nara.gov)
- Regional Archives: [www.archives.gov/facilities/index.html](http://www.archives.gov/facilities/index.html)
- Presidential Libraries: [www.publiclibraries.com/presidential\\_library.html](http://www.publiclibraries.com/presidential_library.html)
- Depository Libraries: [www.gpoaccess.gov/libraries.html](http://www.gpoaccess.gov/libraries.html)

(Wilson, 2005)

## Online Archives

- **Battle Lines:  
Letters from America's Wars**

[www.gilderlehrman.org/collection/battlelines/index\\_good.html](http://www.gilderlehrman.org/collection/battlelines/index_good.html)

(Allen, et al., 2006)

## Online Archives

- **America's Story from America's Library:**  
[www.americaslibrary.gov](http://www.americaslibrary.gov)
- **American Memory – Historical Collections for the National Digital Library:** <http://memory.loc.gov>
- **Electronic Texts and Primary Sources:** [www.digital-librarian.com/electronic.html](http://www.digital-librarian.com/electronic.html)
- **EuroDocs – Primary Historical Documents from Western Europe:** <http://library.byu.edu/~rdh/eurodocs>
- **Images Online – British Library:**  
<http://ibs001.colo.firstnet.net.uk/britishlibrary/index.jsp>
- **National Archives Digital Classroom:**  
[www.archives.gov/digital\\_classroom](http://www.archives.gov/digital_classroom)

(Young, 2004)

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## APPENDIX C

*Theme 1: Daily life and conditions*

August 7, 1918

Page 1

Header on stationary – [MM. A. REP & FILLIETTE/ 8 Rue du Chateau, a CHATEAU-THIERRY/ COMMIS par M \_\_\_\_\_ Expedition May 4, 1918 Condition \_\_\_\_\_]

Rainie Dearest, The circus is still moving, and we are now in another woods. I couldn't tell you where I am on a bet because I don't know myself, however we are right in a valley back of the front line, and old Fritz is zipping his shells over in our direction, but as yet hasn't put any of them close enough to be unpleasant. There is our Artillery on the reverse slope behind us and a road in front of us that he is strafing, and I hope he doesn't make a miscue and put one in between. Did you ever stay up all night and feel so wide awake the next morning that you couldn't sleep no matter how hard you tried, well that is my case this morning. Yesterday morning we had a good spot in a little valley, but they moved some big gems in there and we wanted to leave. So in the afternoon we picked another woods – by the way I think I will have slept in all the little woods in France if we keep on the way we are going now – and made our camp, but at 11 o'clock last night

Page 2

we had to move, and were on the go all night till dawn where they located a small grove and dumped us there in to be out of sight of the Bosche. It has rained every day this month, so far, I can see from here that August is the rainy month in France, and the roads are all the slippery mud

that the S.E. Post says. This night marching is hell. Sometimes there are as many as 4 columns on the road at the same time, and lomes(?), wagons, and mule hauled machine guns, and one must keep a sharp eye or he will loose his column and find that he has been trailing another outfit for goodness knows how long. Then the column gets tied up and you hang around for half an hour waiting for it to get under way again and at such times the shells are apt to fall, so we are ? to linger to long in the same spot. I just reread all your letters that I had not previously destroyed, and then put them beyond the gaze of any other eye. It tickled me to read about Max Baber all dolled up in his nice white uniform and fixings. That's the way to fight the war. Just a short picture of myself at present, it don't make much difference whether I begin from the top or the bottom, I am all mud.

Page 3

Header on stationary – [MM. A. REP & FILLIETTE/ 8 Rue du Chateau, a CHATEAU-THIERRY/ COMMIS par M \_\_\_\_\_ Expedition \_\_\_\_\_ Condition \_\_\_\_\_]

Don't know what I look like from the neck up but if it looks as bad as it feels it's some sight. Sitting here in my overcoat, overcoat all mud, wrinkled and fairly damp. I chuckle when I think of the fine \$75.00 overcoat Bill Green bought with a silk lining, etc, just wait till it gets introduced to army life. My whipcord, my \$60 whipcord, all faded, ripped in the seams, mud ingrained in the goods, but still I am happy to say with a whole seat and two good knees, wrapped leggings, all caked with mud, because I stepped in a ditch full of liquid mud last night right up to my knees, and finally a fine pair of hobnailers, that haven't been dry for a couple of days, I'll bet I am a hard looking object. I just ate breakfast a bit ago – one hardtack for dinner we will open a can of monkey meat (tinned beef) and I am toting a can of baked beans with me; that will be a choice meal. I have some cigarettes, some water in my canteen, no aches or pains, the most wonderful girl in the world waiting for me back in the states, outside of being so very

Page 4

Far away from her this isn't such a very bad world after all. Our boys are sending over a barrage on the Hun now, blasting them back with every shot I hope. I hope I am right when I figure all this means an early end to this war. And then – a long happy life together for you and me. Rainie girl, that future pulls me through many a dark spot and gives me pep to keep going. When are these Yanks get over here that are on the way we will sure give it to the Bosche. I hope that Dot will be fine after her operation. From your description it must have been rather intricate, but I don't just gather what the trouble was. I am enclosing a letter I got from one of our kids that is in the hospital. He is a little kid from Jersey City, tough as they come and goes by the name of "Jersey Mosquito." I guess he felt privileged to address me as "Dear Mike" being in the hospital.

Honey dear, this is just chock full of love from me to you, and every letter is held fast to the paper with a kiss. Be a patient little girl, for Mike will come back to you as soon as he can. Remember me to all the people and tell Jack and Kitty Uncle Mike often thinks of them and here's an extra big kiss.

Forever and ever your

Mike

FEPowers

1<sup>st</sup> Lt. U.S. Eng.

*Theme 2: Descriptions of the enemy*

July 22, 1918

Page 1

Still in France

July 22, 1918

Rainie sweetheart,

It surely has been a most terrible long time since I have written to you last but, honeybunch, as the French say “C’est la guerre” that has kept me from my daily letter to you. We loafed around at Camp Hancock for many long months, but once they brought us over here, no more loafing. We used to call ourselves “Stationary Engineers” but no more, it seems we are continually on the move, and I hope we will move for some days to come because we are right after the Hun, at the present time he is on the run and we are right after him, and I would be most happy to play over the rest of France and through Germany to Berlin in one night stands and then have the ware over and come back to you and settle down for the rest of our lives. See, but I know I will be a confirmed stay at home of a husband, when we once get our own fireside it will take a war in our front yard to pry me away from it.

But to turn back ten days and give you

Page 2

as much of an idea as the censorship rules will permit of what we have been doing since I last wrote. First and foremost we have been chasing the Hun, and doing our bit as Engineers to “make the world safe for Humanity.” One has a hard time to keep track of days or dates or times, I think I have expressed myself as above in most all my letters to you, but it is so very true. When last I wrote you we were digging trenches by night and sleeping by day, not very thrilling

but very necessary. Those trenches will never be used I hope as we have pushed far beyond them. Well, an “alert” was called on July 14<sup>th</sup> which is the French “4<sup>th</sup> of July.” Bastille Day they call it. And to celebrate our company had to go out and live in the trenches so as to be on the job when the Hun made the drive which he attempted to pull off about that time. Of course we were not in the front line, but way back in the reserve, but the trenches are just as uncomfortable there, as anywhere else. The night of the 14<sup>th</sup> of July, 1918 will remain indelibly marked on my mind for the rest of my life, at 12 Midnight the Hun started a barrage all over the country in front of him and I figure we got a bit more than our

Page 3

share of the shells. High explosive shrapnel and gas, dropping like hail stones all about us. And the only thing that we could do was to lay there and pray that we would be missed. They hushed a bunch of gas at us, and we had our gas masks on for 5 hours, our despised gas masks that we curse and swear at because we have to wear them slung about our necks like a huge necklace, they are a soldier’s best friends. I used to think I couldn’t possibly endure the wearing of one for more than an hour but we learn every day. I got lots of experience in the way shells sound, the high explosives come with a “sursh” and then burst with a loud bang and scatter the shell fragments in all directions. Maybe theoretically not, but to the best of my knowledge and belief – yes. Then the gas shells burst with a dull – plop – like throwing a rotten egg on the floor – and the fragments do not scatter. And some of them sound like a motor cycle going up a hill chug – chug – slower and slower till at last they hit the dirt. They shelled us from 12 to 8 with a heavy barrage and then eased up a bit but did not cease altogether till about 1 P.M. and where daylight came a Bosche plane circled round over head and gave his gunners the range and took shots at the men with his machine gun.

Page 4

Believe me, that was some night Honey bunch and I think you must have been praying hard for me about that time. We stayed right there, and worked the next night and so on till Wednesday night when we were relieved and maybe we were not a happy crowd when the order came. We marched back to our billet in the dark and it rained torrents and was as black as pitch. The lightning would brighten things up for a few seconds and then it would be worse than ever, but we worried our way back over the hill side; we had been sleeping in snatches the early part of the week so we were to get 4 days rest in billets and believe me I slept and ate. I think I had a touch of the gas because I felt rotten but I am O.K. now. Went down to the creek and took a bath to get the three days accumulation of dirt off my person and just loafed around. I tried to write to you then but felt too bum. Well, about that time we started to push the Hun, so Sunday morning we moved and got here about 4 hours after the Germans left the other side of the river. With a company of French Engineers that we have been working with we put a bridge across the Marne and sent the artillery and supply trains up to the infantry that were hot on the trail of the retreating

Page 5

Hon. We started at 2 P. M. Sunday afternoon and the bridge was finished at 9 a.m. the next morning. We sure were all in and the boys worked on their nerve but there was a bunch of wagons and artillery waiting to cross and we had to keep moving till we had completed the job. I think we could have done better by ourselves the French were the bosses and we the laborers, but they talk to much and work too little and our Bridge Section could work rings around them we are all hoping for a chance to put a bridge of our own up sometime; the French sure handed it to our company for being a crowd of workers though and I say so myself. It was a real war bridge. Cut down telegraph poles and rustled lumber and material where ever we could get it our boys

had to carry most of the plank about half a mile – and it was darn hard work but they stuck right with it. We were to have gone out again this morning at 3 A.M. again but it was raining so we did not go our till 5 just some finishing touches on the bridge till noon, and now are through till – one never knows. Any minute we may get word to pack up and move on, but as long we are keeping Fritzie on the run, we should worry.

Page 6

This town we are in now is being mentioned rather extensively in the papers just now. The Germans hold it on one side of the river and the Americans and French on the other and they must have had some great skirmishes with the River as no mans land judging from the bullet holes in the walls. The streets were blocked with breast (?) work and barricades and the houses facing the river look loaded (?) and reinforced with sand bags. And believe me the artillery sure had knocked the buildings to pieces and the Huns looted the houses and put them on the bum, a description of such a scene, no matter how vivid can give on the same feeling as seeing it and I hope that I am near the head of the push when it gets into Germany. I want to see what the French soldiers will do when they hit a German town, they have been fighting for so long and seen so many evidences of the Hun brutality that I think they will demand a tooth for a tooth and an eye for an eye according to the old Mosaic Law and will not be governed by the Christian text of forgiving your enemies. This town must have been filled with wealthy, intellectual people. I slept yesterday in the house of an

Page 7

artist. The garret was all filled with plaster casts and clay modeling, and everything all over the house pulled on the floor in confusion. There is most wonderful inland furniture here, and some fine homes. I was in the house of a man who must have been a lover of art and many of his pictures looked as though the Huns were getting ready to take them away when they had to

leave. There were volumes of original etchings and pen acid ink drawings. All scattered over the floors. I can imagine the feeling of these people when they come back to their homes and see what the Huns left behind. There is no question. Germany must repay for the damage she has done in this war. Peace on any other terms would be a German victory. France is a game nation and I think there will be a wonderful feeling between U.S. and France from now on. I do hope we can keep the Germans on the run, they will have a wholesome fear of our Yankee lads by the time this war is over. The French are tickled to death over the way they fight and work, and it is filling them with new life and spirit.

I saw Bob Sunday afternoon for the first

Page 8

time since I have been across, though we have been within a few miles of each other for a month. He was on his way up the line and passed us when we were working on the bridge. I walked along with him a short way, he looks fine, but thin, we both argued that we preferred Pottsville to France. I was mighty glad to see him, and hope to meet up with him soon again. I also saw Charlie Nadluiger this morning. I have gotten 10 letters from you so far hon, that is fine dear. I wish you had gotten more from me. I feel really guilty because I have not written oftener, but Rainie, you know it is not because I am not thinking of you. My favorite thoughts are of you and me and the swing on a fine summers night and the good old moon smiling at us, it is hard to think I am so many miles from you, but little girl, when I get back to you we will do all our traveling together. I should like to bring you over here and show you all the places I have been. Au revoir, sweetheart of mine, keep well and brave and happy, and keep on praying hard that I will come back to you soon. All my love and thoughts and kisses are yours, dear girl,

Forever your own

Mike

Frank E. Powers

1<sup>st</sup> Lt. U.S. Eng.

*Theme 3: Military career*

October 15, 1918

Page 1

Dearest Sweetheart,

We have been doing quite a bit of traveling since I last wrote you, and now we are back for a "rest," however I am a bit leery of these rests because just about the time we get comfortably settled they drag us out and send us up on the line to start another push. This peace talk has us all guessing, and I hope that it will come through though, I don't think that Germany will be willing to meet all the conditions that will be imposed on it and there will likely be more fighting before peace actually is declared. We left Varennes

About a week ago, and hiked about 6 miles to a spot where trucks were to meet us at the appointed hour of 3 P.M. as might have been expected, the

Page 2

trucks did not appear until 9 P.M. and we hung around the road waiting for them to show up, almost freezing as it has been quite cold here lately,. They finally came however and we had the pleasure of another all night truck ride, however, I was wise this time, and when the rest of my other officers were scrambling fore on of the seats along the side of the truck, I picked my abode right on the floor, and got plenty of space to stretch out and get a nights sleep while the truck when bouncing over the road. The truck drivers were Chinese, but they didn't run us in a ditch although they kicked on putting all the officers in the same truck as on one previous trip the officers' truck went over the bank and 5 were killed and then there was the deuce raised because they put the officers together. We arrived at a little town of Lagny, about

Page 3

5 miles from Toul. It was quite a nice little village, as the French villages go, and had stores where we could buy grapes, cheese nuts, and eggs. They had big white grapes which were wonderful, the finest I have ever eaten; they were sweet and firm and melted right in your mouth. It was grape picking time here and the vineyards were full of old men and women gathering the grapes into baskets which they had slung on their backs, then they carry them to wagons which are made of half a large barrel mounted on wheels. Then they take the grapes to the wine presses and some guy jumps on the grapes, with his dirty shoes and squeezes out the juice. A very sanitary process. I went into Toul, and it is a funny old city. It has a stone wall and moat around part of it and the streets are little narrow things and twist and turn in all directions. They had some

Page 4

real stores there, one large department store. Toul is about 25,000 in peace times. There is an officers YMCA there and a hotel where we got a good meal. Also candy shops, but they use honey to sweeten their dope with and prices are out of sight. I think the American soldiers are the only patrons they have. The army is the only place you can get two things over here- chocolate and cigarettes. It is impossible to get these except from the YMCA, Red Cross and Salvation Army. Say, hon, I never thought much of the Salvation Army but however they accomplish it they seem to have plenty of chocolate for the boys when the YMCA and Red Cross haven't a speck. And they bake doughnuts and pass them out to the boys with a cup of hot chocolate free of charge. Those 3 organizations are doing wonders to help this army on its feet because I don't know how

Page 5

the boys would stand it if they didn't get their smokes and chocolate. This section of France has not been touched by the war except an occasional air raid and is in good condition and very pretty, but the houses in the villages do not strike me as desirable places to spend a cold winter as they have only one little hearth in the whole house and the chimney carries all the heat night out into the open air and furthermore wood is a mighty scarce article. We were just about comfortably settled when we got orders to move yesterday so at noon we hiked over to a little town Ville-Issey near Germany, we got in just about dark, and had our billets waiting for us. I picked a good one the old dame made me an omelet and gave me some fresh strawberry preserve and then I sat and talked to her and her husband for about an hour, in French mind you, and I am no

Page 6

fluent talker and have absolutely no grammar but know a few words and with many gestures can carry on a conversation if it does not get too deep and I told her my life's story and showed her your picture, and told her all about my family and we discussed the war and cursed the Germans and had a fine time. I told her I had a brother in the same regiment and today Jimmy came into see me and right away she asked me if he was my brother. I never thought you could pick any resemblance between Jimmy and me. I sure can get along with these old French people we billet with, tell them how brave France is and how much America likes France and they say "woof-woof" and right away they will go out and get you a couple of eggs and make an omelet. I fear that I will lose this home soon though as the dope is we are going to move again, why I don't know, but then we are not supposed to know.

Page 7

Our Regiment is all disorganized now, and we have no Majors one was sent to the hospital, complete breakdown and will not be back again, and one was dismissed- we have had not Lt. Col. for three months. Jack Reese got an appointment as instructor in a Corps school, he worked it well however he did it. He sure has seen but little service with his company, he always gets sick or something when there is anything going on, don't say anything of that because it's poor dope to get about. I am still a Lieut. In B Company, although the Colonel says he expects I will get my commission at any time, and there may be a chance that I will get back to D company as Capt. I do hope it will work out that way because I haven't been very contented since I have been over here in B Company. Still we can't be consulted as to our wishes in this Army.

I had a quiet birthday. Your cable gram came on the proper day. It

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was mighty nice of you to send it home, and must have cost you're a bunch of money. I am looking for the box from Wanamaker in the next mail. Hon, you don't understand the package regulation. The order must be signed by a Colonel, and must request articles that are impossible to be obtained in France and I had a letter from Al the other day. He must have missed the last 2 letters I wrote him from the way it sounded. He says Flo is in the hospital again that sure is tough. I guess we will be on the line soon again; there doesn't seem to be any rest due us until this war is over which will be soon I hope. Good night little sweetheart. All my dearest love is yours and a great big kiss for you. I sure am tired of being away from you and wish they would sign up for peace real soon. Keep well and don't worry.

Forever your own.

Mike

Envelope

Lt. F.E. Powers.

Soldiers Mail

U.S. Engrs

October 15, 1918

Miss Loraine E. Richards

1311 Howard Ave.

Pottsville, Pa

U.S. A.

*Theme 4: Evolution of language*

July 23, 1918

Envelope 1

Lt. F.E. Powers

Engineers. U.S.A.

Stamp – U.S. Army Postal Service: July 26: 1PM

Miss Loraine E. Richards

1311 Howard Ave.

Pottsville. Pa.

U.S.A.

Stamp- AE.F. Passed is censored. A. 1347

Frank E. Powers

1<sup>st</sup> Lt. U.S. Eng

Envelope 2

Blank

Page 1

Rainie mine,

At last I have succeeded in writing to you two days in succession – the first time I have done this for many a moon, but I think that I will not have much of a chance to write soon again as things look as we will be on the go once more tomorrow and keep moving for some time. You see the hard part is not to write letters but to get them to Regimental Hdqrs to have them censored, these headquarters being often 8 miles from us and no means of communication. But I

will do my best, dear heart to keep you posted on what I am doing. Among my other duties I help censor the boys mail, it is quite a look as some of them are enthusiastic letter writers and write volumes, they have been short on paper and envelopes for some time and that held the mail down, but since we hit this town there is lots to be had, so I guess they

Page 2

are all stocked up again.

I saw an officer this afternoon who says that Tom Beddal is here and that he saw him yesterday. I sure would like to see him. I am hoping that I get a chance to see Al or Laurie soon but one does not get much of a chance to look up ones friends over here. I have not seen brother Jim for over a month and we are in the same Regiment. This afternoon in preparation for a move I read all the letters I have gotten from you and consigned them to the flames. It made me feel badly to do it, because it is mighty comforting to read one of your letters over again when I feel blue, it cheers me up a heap when you talk of all the wonderful times we have had together, may the day come soon when we will be together again, I will have heaps and heaps of stories to tell you when I am with you again. It used to be a joke to talk about our trip to the Border, but this is the real thing in wars, believe me.

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The Germans surely left here in a hurry, one could pick up all kinds of swords and rifles and other souvenirs if he had a means of transporting them, but we move fast and must travel light, and at every stop I leave a few more things behind that I do not consider necessary. I laugh every time I think of the "necessary" list that we were obliged to buy before we came across. The white shirts and collars and cuffs, the man who made up that list must have been fighting a terrible war in Paris. I can go to bed in quick time now, just tip my tin hat over my eyes, wrap up in my overcoat and I'm off. Then again when we get into a soft billet like this one, sheets and beds and

carpet on the floor, pajamas could be used. My tin hat is spoiling my hair terribly, another one of the curses of war. We do not wear anything else now, as we are usually near where a tin hat is useful.

There was a girl at about 20 brought out of ----- today, she said she had been

Page 4

held prisoner for the pleasure of the German officers. The things we used to hear about back in the states are getting more real every day.

I can imagine your rage when they used your name in the Movie contest, you ought to have me for your protector at all times, you need me at all times, honey bunch. I will be a bold bad man if any one tries to run anything like that on you again. Tell Harry Sellsman to catch his step because I never did like the way he wears his hat. Gee, hon, but I would enjoy taking you into Hodgrons for a milk and egg then back to 1311 and ransack the pantry for fruit cake and a glass of milk. How is Mart, has she landed a clergyman yet? I wish I could see you, it makes me feel so far, far away when our letters are so long getting to each other. Good night dearest girl. All my love is yours and very and very many hugs and kisses.

Forever your own

Mike

Frank E. Powers

1<sup>st</sup> Lt. U.S. Eng.

*Theme 5: Leisure activities*

March 3, 1919

Page 1

Dearest Rainie Jane,

You will have to blame it on my leave that I have not written you for such long time, but now I will start and tell you all about it. I last wrote you to you from Biarritz on Sunday, the next day I left there and took my little self up to Paris. The train that I traveled on was made up in Spain and by the time that it reached Biarritz it was crowded to the eyes and I had prospects of an all night ride to Paris standing up in the corridor staring me in the face, these Frog trains sure are the limit, one buys a first class ticket and there will be perhaps one first class coach on the train, and that always is crowded. Well I considered the best way to get a seat and remembering that these Frogs would sell their grandmother, I gave the conductor five franc to note and with few words and many signs made her understand that I cared to have a seat. She stuck the bill in her stocking and gaily proceeded on her way and after two hours I thought that I had been played for a sucker, but the old hag was on the job at the end of that time and came along and dragged me by the arm through the train and made motions where from I understand that at the next station there would be a vacant seat. The corridor was crowded with Frog officers and when they saw me slide into that seat they were wild, and started to give the old lady rats, but she was a match for them and I chuckled to think that I had at last gotten the best of a Frenchman in his own country, and after a nights sleep it tickled me still more to see some of these frogs still standing, having been that way all night. One is supposed to stop in Paris only long enough to get from one station to another, but I pulled a stall on the A.P.H. and told him all about the baggage that I had to find and he gave me permission to stay in

Page 2

the city for two days. I met some of the boys from our regiment who are going to school there and played around with them, they are living in an apartment so I bunked with them and beat a hotel out of the price of my board. I saw a lot of the historic sights of Paris, the Tuilleries, and Arch of Triumph, Napoleon's Tomb, was in the Louvre, there is too much to Paris to get away with in a short time. A person could browse around in the Louvre for weeks and at the end of that time still find something to interest him. I had getting up to Crézancy to get a picture of Bob's grave all the time, so I bought a camera and believe me cameras are mighty high in Paris just now and films mighty scarce. There is only one train a day that stops at Metz which is the nearest station to Crezancy, and I had a step of about one and a half hours in Chateau Thierry and took a walk through the town, it did not look so very different than it did just after the Germans left it last July, it is very dirty and any attempt had been made to clean up any of the ruins except what blocked the street. When I get to Metz I had to set out and look for Crézancy and locate where Bob is buried, I found it alright and located Bob's grave. The cemetery ins right where the Germans pushed over the Marne last July and is pretty well battered to pieces and right back of the cemetery are dugouts where the infantry of the 3rd Division were dug in, so Bob is buried in a spot where there was lots doing. It was a rotten day raining in fits and starts and I had some time trying to get a picture I had no tripod and had to scout around and get some old ammunition boxes to rest the Kodak on enough so I could get a timed exposure. I am sending the pictures to Ruth, they are not as good as I wish they could have been, but the day was too much for me. After I got the pictures I went down to the station and waited for the train. As I still had a couple of days left on my leave I decided that I would get

Page 3

back to Paris to see if I could play around there for a few more days without the M.P. getting ahead of me. The guy at the station looked at my travel orders long and searchingly before he decided to let me enter the city but finally stamped me in, so I looked up the school bunch and accepted their hospitality for a few more days, there are so many officers going to school in Paris now that an M.P. never bothers to ask you for a pass after you are in the city so I got away with a total of six days there and no one was on my trail. Paris is a fine city and there is lots to see there, but all the stories that I have heard about its wickedness have been greatly overdrawn, though I guess it is not the same city that it was before the war. All the cafes and restaurants are closed at nine and at the Follies Bergère they were having wrestling championships contests so I did not get to see one of the wicked shows that I have heard so much about. There is a lot of interesting historical stuff to be seen there, and they are strong for a lot of statues and fancy building and their subway system is a wonder, even an American can get around on it without any trouble. And the taxis buzz around like a swarm of fleas and as there aren't any regulations, one must be careful they don't crawl on you like cooties. I sure enjoyed my stay in Paris and would like to get there again for a few days before we leave. On going back to the regiment I found that My Battalion had left Uruffe and had gone to Le Mans as an advance party of the Division to get things into shape so I had to leave and rejoin the outfit. I sure am tired of traveling on the railroads, and was not at all glad to have to turn around and take another trip but it brings us nearer home and that is what we are all waiting for. The official dope now is that we will leave France between the 10 and 20 of May, that is the best they can do for us, and that the Engineers will be the last of the Division to leave, but at

Page 4

least there is something definite and we can count the days till we leave. The first battalion had some trip down here in the usual box cars and I am not sorry that I was on leave so that I could not make the trip with them. The second battalion are supposed to be the last of the division to leave there so I guess we will be away from the loving care of the Colonel for a couple of weeks. I was much surprised on getting back to the regiment to learn that there had been quite a number of promotions made. Major Bradford was made a Lt. Col. and Jake Schlettman made a Capt. I sure was glad about Jake as he had been recommended before the armistice and his promotion held up when the war stopped. Our football team lost to the 7th Division. We were rather unfortunate in playing four games with the 5 Div. team while the 7th Div made more yards in the game so they gave it to them, they never could have beaten us in the world. The game cost me a few francs but I guess I still won them so it's all in the family. I hear that Bill has left the 7th and is on his way home to be separated from the service. I am glad that he could get out because I think the division will be over here for some time. It is fine that Laurie got home and he got the Croix de Guerre, give him my best congratulations, he certainly deserved it. It sure must be good to have him home again. So Hazel has turned to Frank Hill, I am glad that Laurie does not take it to heart and Al and Kitty are not ardent lovers they used to be. I guess the war had done Al good anyhow.

Well little girl, it will be just about two more months before we will be getting out of here. Until that time get to bed early and get your health. I hope you get the waist I sent you. It is for your birthday and a lot of love goes with it and many kisses. All my love is your and a big kiss. Forever your own.

Mike

*Theme 6: Love*

August 13, 1918

Page 1

Header on Stationary- Header on Stationary- No. \_\_\_\_\_ MM. A. REP & FILLIETTE 16

8, Rue du Chateau, a CHATEAU -THIERRY (Aisne)

COMMS par M \_\_\_\_\_

*Expedition- August 13-1918 Conditons* \_\_\_\_\_

Rainie Sweetheart,

Just one year ago today that we pulled away from the station of good old Pottsville to start out the first stage of this long journey. This has been a most busy filled with the experiences that do not come often, I am glad to say. But the thing that I feel most in this past year is the very, very, few times that we have seen each other, isn't it awful dearest that two perfectly good engaged people should see so little of each other, I still rejoice in the fact that I held out for my 15 days at Christmas time, just see how that extra 5 days increased the percentage of days in the past 365 that we have been together. Honey, I am looking hard Aug. 13, 1919, will see us happily married to each other and the Germans licked to a frazzle. Things are pretty slow on our front now. I say slow in the sense of an advance, but there is lots doing as

Page 2

The Dutch are putting up quite a resistance. However on the Mondidier sector they are catching the deuce. If they get pushed back all along their front, it will not take long to convince the German soldier that he is beaten, even though the Kaiser maintains that they are winning the war, but now they are all taken in with the lies told them and imagine that the Germans have overrun England and have invaded the U.S., and they really could believe that there were enough

Yankees over here to put up a scuff, and they are most surprised to find how many Americans are over here.

We moved again this morning to another woods. Believe me, I prefer living in woods to towns now, they are so much safer even though not quite so comfortable. I have been living mighty close to nature for some time past. Yesterday I had a bath. In a huge agate tube we found in the woods, it made me feel fine and clean, and I am already making

Page 3

Header on Stationary- Header on Stationary- No. \_\_\_\_\_ MM. A. REP & FILLIETTE 16

8, Rue du Chateau, a CHATEAU -THIERRY (Aisne)

COMMS par M \_\_\_\_\_

*Expedition-* \_\_\_\_\_ *Conditons* \_\_\_\_\_

plans for another. I have some kind of bites all over my person, not cooties but just as itchy, and I have an awful time scratching myself. I now realize why a man was given his finger nails. We have been resting for 2 days since we came back from our last adventure but I guess we will be sent our tonight on some kind of other job. Jack Reese is a bit under the weather since we were there and has been staying at Regtl Ldgs for a few days, he will be back soon, and meanwhile I am commander again. His nerves seem to be shot to pieces. Lord, he hasn't been through 10% of what the rest of us have, I think I shall develop a case of nerve and get a little rest, think I could start one. It would be perfect if I could get about 10 days off and be instantly transported back to you till my time was up. That is where the English and French have the great advantage over us. When they get a few days off they can go home, but we

Page 4

Yanks sure are a long, long way from home. They say a married man can go home on leave after he has been here for 12 months and 18 months for a single man. Why didn't we get married hon? And then too, I hope everything will be settled here before 12 months are past.

The latest hope is that Bill McCool and I are to be captains. Maybe So don't immediately rush down and buy me a pair of double bars. When the deed is did I will give you full particulars and then you can change the way you address my letters. To be honest, I think I will make a better captain than lots I have seen, but then I always did pat myself on the back.

Your letters 26 & 27 came last night. Also a letter from kid Eleanor. I am glad that Dot is getting along so well, and

Page 5

Header on Stationary- Header on Stationary- No. \_\_\_\_\_MM. A. REP & FILLIETTE 17

8, Rue du Chateau, a **CHATEAU -THIERRY** (Aisne)

COMMS par M\_\_\_\_\_

*Expedition*-\_\_\_\_\_ *Conditons*\_\_\_\_\_

hope she will soon be able to go back to Pottsville. Theoretically I can get 7 days leave after I have been here 4 months and if I can I am going to scout up Al and Laura. The both owe me letters now and I hope I am soon in a district where they can come to see me if they get a chance, at my present address is not a vicinity where one would care to go a careless like.

One of the fellows told me that he heard the Patriotic League had news from Washington but it could not make it public. I can guess what it was, and I guess it has been released by this time. Old Pottsville is having the war brought home pretty close to her, and the YMCA is the way she can help because one cannot say enough of the wonderful work done by then over here.

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I guess you think I am getting to be a nut on them, but how, you or anybody on the other side cannot realize how really wonderful work they do. One must be here on the job to appreciate it.

It is a wonderful afternoon. The woods are all green, a gentle breeze is blowing and only an occasional shell makes one realize that is war. I guess the gunners are all taking a nap, hope they forget to wake up. My thought are all with you, dearest girl, my wishes are all for you.

Something tells me I will be back with you some day because I never started anything without finish, and I started to marry you and I must come back and do it. So wait for me, Rainie mine and I will come back as soon as this war is over and finish what I have started. All my love is yours dearest and a big kiss.

Forever yours,

Mike

APPENDIX D  
GUIDING QUESTIONS BY THEME

*Theme 1: Daily life and conditions*

1. How do these letters document his daily life?
2. What are his major activities?
3. How did he or did he not have control over them?
4. List any occurrences that are particularly striking.

*Theme 2: Descriptions of the enemy*

1. What terminology does Powers use to describe the enemy?
2. What descriptions are made about enemy territory?
3. How does Powers describe different enemy actions?
4. How does Powers describe the Allies?

*Theme 3: Military career*

1. How did Powers progress through the ranks?
2. How do his privileges differ from regular active duty infantry?
3. How does he become Captain?
4. How does his military career conflict with how World War I actually was?

*Theme 4: Evolution of language*

1. Identify terms and words typical for the era.
2. What do these words mean, and how have they changed (if at all)?
3. Describe the role of language in these letters.
4. Are these letters a form of literature?

*Theme 5: Leisure time and activities*

1. What did Powers do for leisure?
2. What is he not able to do?
3. How did the war determine his leisure?
4. How has leisure evolved?

*Theme 6: Love*

1. What are his different descriptions of love?
2. Why does he continually profess his love in this manner?
3. What are his terms of endearment?
4. What are his dreams?

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