



# SEWARD HOUSE MUSEUM

## Primary Resources Lesson Plan Grades 1-3

**Lessons Focus:** Primary source documents help us learn about the past by providing us information about people, places, and events.

**Description:** Students will use primary sources to understand the experiences of Fanny Seward, a young woman who grew up in Auburn, New York during the Civil War. Her aspirations as an author, coupled with her family's unique position in society due to her father's role as Secretary of State during the conflict, leaves behind a vast collection of primary sources for historians to access. Students will analyze these sources to help them understand Fanny's experiences through a gallery walk.

**Objectives:** Students will:

- Understand what a primary source is, and how they help historians learn about people, places, and events of the past.
- Examine primary sources to learn about the past.
- Use primary sources to draw conclusions about life in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

**Essential Questions:** Students will be able to answer:

- How are people of the past similar/different to people today?
- How do historians learn about the past?
- Why are primary sources so important to historians?

**Time Frame:** 1-2 class periods, based on students' background knowledge, schedule, and individual needs.

**Materials:**

- Primary Source Guide and sources-attached to lesson plan
- Pencils and pens.

**Vocabulary:** Primary Source, 19<sup>th</sup> Century, Paper Theater, Journal, Author, and Historian.

## Procedure:

**Pre-Lesson Prep:** Teachers will print out a primary source guide for each student, and one copy of each primary source image. Teachers will then tape one of each of the primary source images on the walls throughout the classroom, creating a “gallery walkthrough”, and familiarize themselves with the brief bio below.

**Background:** *Fanny Seward was born in December of 1844, to future Secretary of State William Seward, and his wife, Frances Seward. She was an aspiring author who wanted to write poems, plays, and books. While growing up in Auburn she saw her mother’s involvement in the UGRR, along with her father’s political career. Fanny was close to both her parents, and also loved animals—especially dogs. While she would pass away young at the age of 21, she would leave behind a personal library and series of journals that have helped historians understand her.*

## Introduction:

- Tell students that for today they will be doing the work of historic detectives to try and learn about the past.
- Define what a historian does (*studies the past*) then ask the class questions prompting a discussion about how historians learn about the past (*what things do you think historians are looking for? What are some things that might tell us about the past? How do we learn about people before us? Why might we be interested in their experiences?*)
- Explain to the class what a primary source is (*a source taken from the period being discussed/from the event being studied IE: Journal, letter, artifact, etc...*) then tell them they will be using primary sources to learn about a young woman from the 19<sup>th</sup> century (*define the time range of the 1800s, along with significant historic events that occurred throughout like the Civil War, the UGRR, etc...*)
- Tell students that their job as historians will be to find out about Fanny Seward by using primary sources throughout the classroom. Hand out their Fanny Seward primary source guide and then divide the class into five groups, starting each group at a different station of the gallery space.

## The Activity:

- Dependent on your class size and the time you’ve allotted to the activity, set a timer to let students know how long they have at each station. Tell them their goal is to work together to write down any information they think is important to learning about Fanny Seward, then fill out the guide for each station.

- Once the timer had started walk around the classroom and help guide students to relevant information if it appears they are struggling, or ask more difficult questions if it appears they need to be challenged. This is a great way to gauge understanding and assess individual student knowledge.
- Once the buzzer rings signaling the end of the first station, have the groups move clockwise to their next gallery space. Repeat the process until they've had a chance to see each station.
- Once they've seen all the primary sources, ask them to answer the two questions at the bottom of the guide.

### **Conclusion:**

- Have the class join back together with their worksheets and begin to ask questions about Fanny, her likes and interests, and what the students found about her. With each response, ask the student how they discovered their answer to re-enforce skills used to analyze primary sources.
- Once the class has answered, provide a brief conclusion about who Fanny was, making sure to tie it in to their answers so as to validate their research.
- Congratulate them on their hard work as historians.
- Lastly, ask them if there are any questions about Fanny which haven't been answered, along with what primary sources they might use to answer future questions which might arise.

### **Assessment:**

- Review students' gallery guide worksheet, and their answers to the last two questions.
- Informal assessment throughout class discussions, along with the activity itself.





### **Extensions:**

- Have students research the Seward family or 9<sup>th</sup> century further using online resources and books.
- Have students bring in pictures of themselves and their family and explain to the class how their pictures include clues historians will use in the future to understand their story.
- Schedule a virtual tour of the Seward House Museum to see the house Fanny grew up in, and spent much of her life.

Name:

Gallery Station Guide

Date:

Primary Source	Observations:	Questions?
	Describe this primary source:	What are you looking at?  What does this tell you about Fanny?
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Describe this primary source:

What are you looking at?

What does this tell you about Fanny?

**1) Based on the primary sources you've looked at, what are some things you've learned about Fanny?**

**2) Based on what you've learned about Fanny, how is she different from you? How is she similar to you?**



**Fanny and her dog, Belle**  
**(Gallery Station 1)**



A toy theater, also called paper theater and model theater was a form of Miniature Theater dating back to the early 19th century. Toy theatres were assembled at home and performed for family members and guests, and were used to create stories.

**(Gallery Station 2)**

**A notebook, used to write notes in.**



**Fanny Seward's personal library.**

**(Gallery Station 3)**





**Fanny and her father, William Henry Seward in 1850.**

**(Gallery Station 4)**



**The House in Auburn, NY that  
Fanny grew up in.  
(Gallery Station 5)**