

TEACHING WITH PRIMARY SOURCES—MTSU

NEWSLETTER: MAY 2020

VOLUME 12, ISSUE 5

WELCOME!

Teaching with Primary Sources—Middle Tennessee State University, administered by the Center for Historic Preservation, engages learners of all ages in using primary sources to explore major issues and questions in many different disciplines.

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NEWS

- Like many of you, TPS-MTSU is adjusting to the uncertainty of the times. In our effort to continue being a resource to educators, we will be piloting some new virtual programming in the weeks to come. This will include a new webinar series “*Digging In with TPS-MTSU*” that dives into our monthly newsletter topic. Join us on Thursday, May 14th at 10 a.m. as TPS-MTSU staff goes in-depth on historic epidemics. To register, please email [Kira Duke](mailto:Kira.Duke@mtsu.edu).
- Have you checked out our [Facebook page](#) lately? We are posting new content here regularly. This will also be a good place to get the latest on resources, virtual programs, and information on some of our partners.

“AWESOME” SOURCE OF THE MONTH:



[Keep clean](#) [between 1936 and 1939]

The Federal Art Project, part of the New Deal, promoted cleanliness and sanitation for general public health and to help wipe out diseases. What are the graphics of this poster encouraging you to do, specifically?

THEME: HISTORIC EPIDEMICS, VOL. II

Back in August 2014, we produced a newspaper on the topic of [Historic Epidemics](#), never dreaming we’d be revisiting this topic in the midst of an epidemic of our own. In this Vol. II, we take additional looks at both the Spanish Flu of 1918 and the Black Death with new lesson ideas, and we also tackle typhoid fever and tuberculosis for the first time. Even though TN curriculum standards don’t make much mention of historic epidemics (surprisingly), your students may appreciate making connections between these historic events and what’s happening today.

If you have questions, comments, or simply want to hear more about how we put this newsletter together, be sure to join us for a webinar on the topic! See News above for details.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

- **May 7 (Online)** - “National History Day Webinar: Tennessee’s Finalist” with TN History Day and Andrew Jackson’s Hermitage from 10 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.
- **June 18 (Knoxville)** - “Industrial Revolution” workshop at the East Tennessee History Center from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. ET. To register, email [Lisa Oakley](mailto:Lisa.Oakley@mtsu.edu).
- **June 23-25 (Nashville)** - Battle for the Ballot: A Summer Teacher Institute. This institute is sponsored by The Official Committee of the State of Tennessee Woman Suffrage Centennial, Tennessee State Library & Archives, the Tennessee State Museum, and Teaching with Primary Sources-MTSU.
- **July 9-10 (Knoxville)** - “Teaching Historical Awareness” workshop at the East Tennessee Historical Center from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. ET. To register, email [Lisa Oakley](mailto:Lisa.Oakley@mtsu.edu).

LESSON IDEA— THE BLACK DEATH

The Black Death refers to a wave of outbreaks of the Bubonic Plague in medieval Europe and the Mediterranean. The most infamous wave began in 1347 and reportedly wiped out a third to a half of the European population. Because it was such a monumental event in medieval lives and memories, there are several eye-witness accounts of how the plague affected life in various European cities. The most famous of these is Giovanni Boccaccio's *Decameron*, a fictional work about a group of affluent young people from Florence who escape to the countryside and take turns telling stories.

There are other kinds of sources that also reveal people's experiences of the plague, such as a young woman's testimony to her local court in Marseille, France, after the death of her father. Professor Dan Smail of Harvard University takes us in-depth into this primary source through this [presentation](#), available through the [Middle Ages for Educators Web site](#). While Prof. Smail does offer a brief intro to the Black Death, it would help to preface the presentation with a student discussion of what they already know/think they know about the Black Death of the 14th century. Do they think of scenes like [this](#) (stop clip at 1:45)? Show them where Marseille is on this [animated map](#). Why might Marseille be among the earliest places in Europe to "catch" the plague? Also show them [this Library of Congress map](#) of Mediterranean port cities from around the time of the plague.

Then show them Prof. Smail's presentation. Students can follow the [transcript](#) of the primary source during the presentation, or take a closer look afterwards. At the bottom of p. 2/top of p. 3 of the transcript, there are three discussion questions. Students can discuss these in small groups, respond to them on message boards, or upload their answers to a class portal for assessment.

If you want additional eye-witness excerpts for students to read about the Black Death, you can find a bunch at [this page](#). This lesson idea meets TN state standards for 7th grade Social Studies (7.36).



[Old Harbor \(Vieux-Port\), Marseille, France, with Hôtel-Dieu Hospital in background](#) [between ca. 1890 and ca. 1900]

IMPORTANT LINKS:

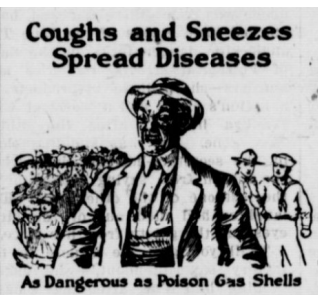
- [Historic Epidemics, vol. I](#) (August 2014)
- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\): Our History](#)
- [The Forgotten Plague: TB in America](#) (PBS)
- [How Epidemics of the Past Changed the Way Americans Lived](#) (Smithsonian Mag)
- [Pandemics That Changed History](#) (History Channel)
- [Infectious Historians](#) (podcast & blog)
- [Understanding the Black Death](#) (SHEG lesson plan)
- [Memphis—The Rebuilding of a Modern City in the Aftermath of Yellow Fever](#) (lesson plan)

LESSON IDEA— INFLUENZA PANDEMIC OF 1918

Many parallels are now being drawn between the Coronavirus epidemic of 2020 and the outbreak of the "[Spanish flu](#)" in 1918. Both are pandemics, caused by viruses that infect the respiratory tract and can be spread by microdroplets through the air; both are worldwide; and both overwhelmed the medical capacities in many locations. There are differences, too. The 1918 virus was a strain of H1N1 instead of COVID-19, and it was highly lethal to young adults, to a degree not seen in 2020.

One similarity between the two epidemics may be what is called a "second wave" of infection, which can be deadlier than the first. Some medical experts in the CDC are projecting a possible second wave of COVID-19, possibly next winter. For the 1918 flu, the second wave swept through America in October. That month, "Uncle Sam" made a concerted effort to distribute factual and practical information to Americans through the most common form of mass media at the time, newspapers. Several of them across the country printed this Q&A article (seen [here](#) excerpted from a Michigan paper). Have students read the article (while teachers can read [this blog](#) for a good, concise analysis of it). What does the government want people to do during this pandemic? If this was your only information (other than hear-say) about the flu, how would you react? Even with the advice distributed through newspapers, many people came up with their own reactions and solutions to the disease. Have students read about people's reactions in [this blog article](#). What sources of information do people rely on, if not expert advice through official channels of media? What would be the parallels to this behavior today in the midst of the Coronavirus outbreak? For more newspaper articles on the 1918 flu, check out [this guide](#).

[Charlevoix county herald. \[East Jordan, MI\], October 11, 1918, Image 1](#)



This lesson idea meets TN state standards for high school Sociology (S.15) and Contemporary Issues (CI.10), as well as Social Studies Practices (SSP.05).

FEATURED FEATURE— TYPHOID MARY

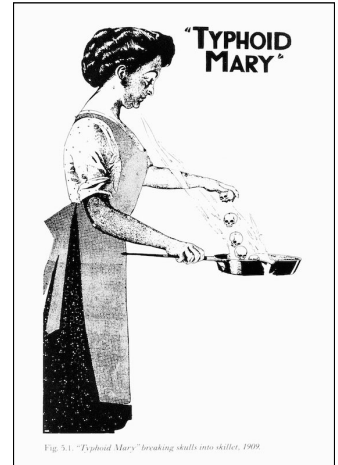
Villainized in history as “Typhoid Mary,” Mary Mallon was born in Ireland and emigrated to the United States in the late nineteenth century. Typhoid fever was an illness that many associated with the poor, but as the New York City Health Department eventually learned, it could be easily contracted when proper hygiene was not maintained, especially in the kitchen. Mary worked as a cook for wealthy families and her famed dish was ice cream with fresh peaches. Typhoid can be killed or cooked out on hot surfaces, but on Mary’s cold, well-loved dish, the bacterium thrived and infected many people.

Begin by asking students what they know about germs. How do germs spread? Is there a way we can stop germs from spreading? After this discussion, show students this [cartoon](#) and ask them to complete the online [Primary Source Analysis Tool](#) which they can then email to you. Encourage students to discuss their observations and questions and analyze how the woman in the cartoon is being portrayed.

Next, assign to students (in groups or individually) an article from the samples provided on the [Topics in Chronicling America: Typhoid Mary](#) page. Instruct students to pick one question from each category of the “25 Questions to Ask Your Primary Source” [handout](#) to use for further analysis of their articles. After reading the articles, ask students to share their observations and responses.

Refer back to your original discussion of disease control and prevention, and discuss with students that Mary Mallon would not have gotten the nickname “Typhoid Mary” if she had practiced good hygiene and washed her hands more often. Ask students to consider the importance of proper hygiene and handwashing to stop the spread of diseases.

This lesson idea meets TN state standards for high school Contemporary Issues (CI. 24).



[Illustration of 'Typhoid Mary' also known as Mary Mallon breaking skulls into a skillet \[1909\]](#)

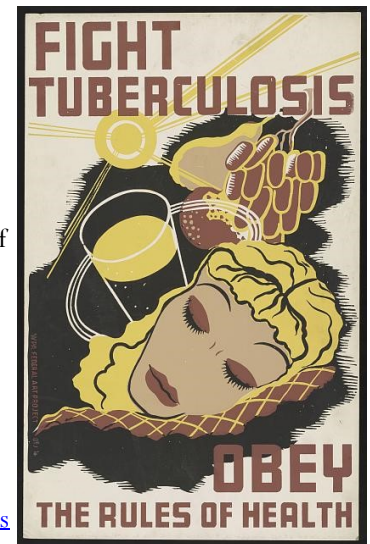
LESSON IDEA— THE WHITE PLAGUE

Most commonly referred to as consumption, but also known as the white plague, or simply TB, tuberculosis was one of the most common causes of death in the U.S. and Europe in the 18th and 19th centuries. At its peak in the early 1800s, TB accounted for almost 25% of all deaths. Overcrowding, poor nutrition, lack of hygiene, and a dearth of medical knowledge/care contributed to its impact on communities. Medical advancements such as the invention of the stethoscope and x-ray along with the discovery of the cause of TB led to more effective treatment and lowered the mortality rate of the disease. Public health policies were put into place by the early 1900s to educate the populace on how to avoid the spread of the disease. While still present today, tuberculosis is largely treatable and much less common.

Begin by having students view the online exhibit “[The American Lung Association Crusade.](#)” Have students list five key facts from the exhibit. Then have them share their list with a partner, adding new facts to their own list. Next assign students one of the following posters: [Obey the Rules of Health](#), [The Tuberculosis Family](#), [A “House Disease,”](#) [Fighting Tuberculosis in the Schools](#), [Food and Tuberculosis](#), and [Don’t Kiss Me](#). These posters were created as part of a public health campaign to inform the public about steps they could take prevent the spread of the disease. Have students analyze their poster and identify what action is being advocated. Why might posters like this be used to educate the public?

As reflection exercise, ask your students to compare both the content and medium of this public health campaign to current public health campaigns to combat the spread of COVID-19. You might choose to end the activity with having students to create their poster related to public health efforts today.

This lesson idea meets TN state standards for high school Contemporary Issues (CI.24) and English Language Arts (Reading Informational Text).



[Fight tuberculosis - obey the rules of health \[between 1936 and 1941\]](#)

VACCINATING IN SCHOOL



[Dr. Schreiber of San Augustine giving a typhoid inoculation at a rural school, San Augustine County, Texas](#) [1943 April]

School immunization programs are a proven way to ensure that vaccines are distributed to the largest number of children and to provide wide-scale protection for communities. Why is it important to make sure that vaccines are widely distributed? What vaccines are required for admission at your local school? Click [here](#) to learn more about these programs worldwide.

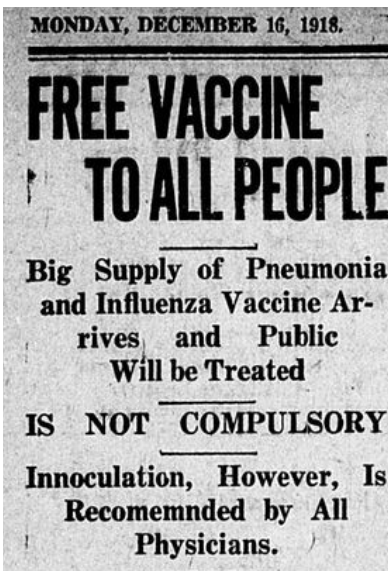
PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS



[Time Out for Margaret](#) [1948]

Polio was a disease that caused paralysis and primarily impacted children. By the mid-1900s, there were significant campaigns to raise funds and support medical research to better understand the disease and develop a vaccine. This video clip is one that would have been shown in movie theaters. What impact do you think this might have had on viewers at the time?

INFLUENZA VACCINES



[Webster City freeman, "Free Vaccine To All People](#) [1918]

Getting a flu shot is something that many people do each year as we approach flu season. While there were many

attempts to create an effective vaccine during the 1918 Spanish Influenza outbreak, widespread vaccination for the flu did not happen until the 1940s. Encourage students to discuss what diseases we have vaccinations for today.

MEASLES IN THE EARLY 1900S



[The Bridgeport evening farmer, "Measles Make Many Mothers Mourn."](#) [1913]

This newspaper article, from November 1913, is discouraging parents from taking children to "measles parties" to intentionally let their children catch, recover, and gain immunity to the illness. Discuss with students that today, in 2020, we have a vaccine for the measles, but in the early nineteenth century, thousands of children died each year from the disease.