Letters

2012 TAH Summer Institute
Age of Roosevelts
Standards & Methods
Fran O’Malley
# Opportunities to Address Standards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard 1</th>
<th>Grades K-3</th>
<th>Grades 4-5</th>
<th>Grades 6-8</th>
<th>Grades 9-12</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chronology</td>
<td>Students will use clocks, calendars, schedules, and written records to record or locate events in time.</td>
<td>Students will study historical events and persons within a given time frame in order to create a chronology and identify related cause-effect factors.</td>
<td>Students will examine historical materials relating to a particular region, society, or theme; and analyze change over time; and make logical inferences concerning cause and effect.</td>
<td>Students will analyze historical materials to trace the development of an idea or trend across space or over a prolonged period of time in order to explain patterns of historical continuity and change.</td>
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<td>Analysis</td>
<td>Students will use artifacts and documents to gather information about the past.</td>
<td>Students will identify artifacts and documents as either primary or secondary sources of historical data from which historical accounts are constructed. Students will examine historical materials relating to a particular region, society, or theme; chronologically arrange them; and analyze change over time.</td>
<td>Students will master the basic research skills necessary to conduct an independent investigation of historical phenomena. Students will examine historical documents, artifacts, and other materials, and analyze them in terms of credibility, as well as the purpose, perspective, or point of view for which they were constructed.</td>
<td>Students will develop and implement effective research strategies for investigation a given historical topic. Students will examine and analyze primary and secondary sources in order to differentiate between historical facts and historical interpretations.</td>
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<td>Interpretation</td>
<td>Students will understand that historical accounts are constructed by drawing logical inferences from artifacts and documents.</td>
<td>Students will explain why historical accounts of the same event sometimes differ and relate this explanation to the evidence presented or the point-of-view of the author.</td>
<td>Students will compare different historians’ descriptions of the same societies in order to examine how the choice of questions and use of sources may affect their conclusions.</td>
<td>Students will compare competing historical narratives, by contrasting different historians’ choice of questions, use and choice of sources, perspectives, beliefs, and points of view, in order to demonstrate how these factors contribute to different interpretations.</td>
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Reading

Read letter found on the handout.
A President Writes a Parent

(Nov. 21, 1864)

Abraham Lincoln

Mrs. Bixby
Standards Based Questions

- What is the purpose of this letter?
- What is the point of view of the person who wrote the letter?
Video Clip

“Letters” in Saving Private Ryan
What is this scene communicating about the past i.e. “the letter?”

What would students learn from this scene?
The Letter More Recently

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ir8D9RElYCM

Commemorating 9/11.
The Research Standard (often ignored)

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Internet “research” mission. What happened to the 5 Bixby brothers?

[practice of historians – begin with questions]
Corroborate findings.

Cite sources.
“Uncoverage”
What Researchers Have Found

Bixbys Killed in battle

1. Private Oliver Cromwell Bixby, Jr. at Petersburg in 1864
2. Sergeant Charles N. Bixby killed in 1863.

Bixbys Saved Through Research

3. Henry Cromwell Bixby survived the war…buried in 1871.
3. Private George Way Bixby was captured by the Confederates, by one report deserted to the Confederates, and was said to be living in Cuba many years later.

Additionally
- Mrs. Bixby may have been a copperhead (confederate sympathizer).
- Sec. John Hay may have actually written the letter.
“Consoling Words

Tradition has it that in the fall of 1864, Abraham sent this letter to Mrs. Lydia Bixby, a widow who was believed to have lost five sons during the Civil War.”

[text of the letter follows]

How does this text present the Bixby letter?

The “Freedom” Project

Another meaning...

“free” citizens of misconceptions about American history.
Letter from Mrs. Sullivan

Waterloo, Iowa
January 1943

Bureau of Naval Personnel

Dear Sirs:

I am writing you in regards to a rumor going around that my five sons were killed in action in November. A mother from home came and told me she got a letter from her son and he heard my five sons were killed.

It is all over town now, and I am so worried. My five sons joined the Navy together a year ago, Jan. 3, 1942. They are in the U.S.S. SQUAW. The last I heard from them was Nov. 8th. That is, it was dated Nov. 8th, U.S. Navy.

Their names are, George T., Francis Henry, Joseph R., Madison A., and Albert L. If it is so, please let me know the truth. I am to christen the U.S.S. SQUAW, Feb. 18th, at Portland, Oregon. If anything has happened to my five sons, I will still christen the ship as it was their wish that I do. I hated to bother you, but it has worried me so that I wanted to know if it was true. So please tell me. It was rare to have five fine sons all at once to the Navy, but I am proud of my boys that they can serve and help protect their country. George and Francis served four years on the U.S.S. SQUAW, and I had the pleasure to go aboard their ship in 1937.

I am so happy the Navy has bestowed the honor on me to christen the U.S.S. SQUAW. My husband and daughter are going to Portland with me. I remain,

Sincerely,

Mrs. Alette Sullivan
93 Adams Street
Waterloo, Iowa

Letter from FDR

By dear Mr. and Mrs. Sullivan:

The knowledge that your five gallant sons are serving in action against the many enemies we face will bring you great comfort. I realize that to lose a son in this great cause is a sacrifice of the highest order.

As Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Navy, I want you to know that the entire Nation shares in your sorrow. I offer you the confidence and sympathy of our nation. We who remain to carry on the fight must maintain spirit, in the knowledge that such sacrifices are made in our behalf.

The Navy Department has informed me of the expressed desire of your sons, George Thomas, Francis Henry, Joseph Eugene, Madison A., and Albert L., to serve in the Navy. I am sure that all who read of the sacrifice that they have made, and that the Nation will be proud of them. This is the spirit which will end the war.

Last March you, Mr. Sullivan, were designated to christen a ship of the Navy, in recognition of your patriotism and that of your sons. I understood that you were also in a position to carry an important mission. This evidence of United States and of service serves as a great inspiration to me, as I am sure that all will appreciate, and that the spirit of loyalty and service continues to inspire the military spirit and of our people.

I send you my deepest sympathy in your hour of trial and pray that in sadness you will find the comfort and help that only He can bring.

Very sincerely yours,

FDR

Mr. and Mrs. E. T. Sullivan
30 Adams Street
Waterloo, Iowa
their sister was the girlfriend of Bill Ball, whose death at Pearl Harbor prompted her brothers to join the Navy to avenge him.

enlisted in the US Navy on January 3, 1942 with the stipulation that they serve together.

all killed in action during or shortly after the sinking of the light cruiser USS *Juneau* (CL–52), the vessel on which they all served, around November 13, 1942.

prompted the U.S. War Department to adopt the Sole Survivor Policy.
"Sullivan" by Caroline’s Spine

It's not hard to reach back to the day
underneath an Iowa sun
running to the tower of Waterloo
looking for the Sullivan train to come
His five boys would run to the top and salute him as he went
By
first he'd wave hello, and then we'd wave goodbye.
it's not hard to reach back to the days
after the attack on Pearl
and overnight my buddies turned into men
running out of time for games and girls.
The Sullivan boys were not overlooked
Uncle Sam called them each by name.
The very next day they left on a mystery train.
"...we regret to inform you,
the Navy has taken your sons away..." all five...
so put your blue star in the window.
It's not hard to reach back to here smile
when she'd receive a letter.
The letters sounded generally the same it said
if they couldn't be home at least they were together
on a mighty fighting battleship,
somewhere in the south pacific.
The letters never got much more specific.
Say goodbye Mrs. Sullivan and don't you cry
"...we regret to inform you
that the Navy is keeping your sons away" all five...
so keep your blue star in the window.
It's not hard to reach back to the day the war finally came Home
Uncle Sam will send you a telegram,
so he doesn't have to tell you over the phone.
I heard she cracked up when she found what the war had cost.
All five of her boys were lost.
Say goodbye Mrs. Sullivan don't you cry.
"...we regret to inform you all your sons have passed away."
All five...
So change your blue star to gold.
Debrief

- Has the story of Lincoln’s letter to Bixby letter been represented credibly in...
  - movies?
  - Commemorative addresses?
  - young adult non-fiction?

- Are the references to the Bixby letter in Saving Private Ryan and the anniversary of 9/11 “problematic?” Explain.

- Does this “Saving Privates Bixby” lesson address concerns about raising students’ awareness of problematic prior learning?