Primary Sources in the Science Classroom

How do scientists and engineers practice in the real world?

- Cellular structure of cork plant and cells of a honeycomb, Robert Hooke, 1665.
- Alexander Graham Bell Notebook, 1875 to 1876.
- Crumpled glider wrecked by the wind on Hill of the Wreck, Wright Brothers, 1900.

How do scientific ideas change over time?

- First periodic table of elements, Dmitry Ivanovich Mendeleyev, 1869.
- Ptolemy’s model of the universe, from Harmonia Macrocosmica, 1708.

How is science related to society at large?

- The Johnstown calamity. “A slightly damaged house.”
- “Streptothricosis Germ on the Run”. The San Francisco Call. Nov. 7, 1913.
What is primary source analysis?

Close observation of historical photographs, drawings, manuscripts, multimedia, and more where students:

- Engage in close, detailed observations,
- Develop hypotheses based on those observations, and
- Formulate questions that can be used for further research or experimentation.

Teachers tell us that primary source analysis helps students:

- Become and stay engaged,
- Think critically,
- Construct knowledge on their own, and
- Inspire additional research.

To learn more, and for additional resources, visit our Teacher’s Page (www.loc.gov/teachers)