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Exemplifying the use of primary sources in learning, Jakub Simacek, center, discusses his exhibit with a visitor at the National History Day competition at the University of Maryland College Park. Mr. Simacek, a student from Newark High School in Newark, Del., detailed the capture of the Pegasus Bridge by British troops during the early hours of D-Day in World War II. —Ken Cedeno for Education Week

Evidence is front and center in learning today. Falling student engagement, performance and graduation rates—together with new career requirements—have forced changes in education. At the same time, learning technologies, ubiquitous connectivity, Google and other Internet-search tools have opened new opportunities.

Given this education transformation, teachers, librarians and media specialists must not only lead engaging learning but also guide students to develop research, evaluation and analysis skills. AwesomeStories works as a partner in that endeavor, helping librarians and media specialists, teachers and students to:

- Leverage the Internet;
- Develop critical discrimination skills; and
- Meet 21<sup>st</sup>-century research and learning standards.

Common Core standards ensure that U.S. students graduate with the skills and knowledge they need for new careers in industry to compete in the global economy. These standards and state implementation of PARCC, Smarter Balanced and ACT Aspire assessments are changing what (and how) students learn (and how they are tested). AwesomeStories' contextual story guides, primary sources, online assignment and storybuilding tools all address these learning-and-testing models.

Other important breakthroughs, in bringing primary sources to K-12 students, include Stanford University's History Education Group led by Sam Wineburg, professor of education and history. Wineburg and team have created a "Reading Like a Historian" curriculum that encourages high school students to dig into historical documents, such as letters and speeches, to reach their own conclusions about events.

*It's important for young people to discern truth from the goulash of voices out there. You don't get that in a math or engineering curriculum. The place where we learn to contend with conflicting voices, the training ground, the sandbox is history.* (Sam Wineburg, quoted by Caralee J. Adams "Reviving History Instruction: What's Old is New Again," *Education Week*, July 2013.)

Another major force in supporting education usage of primary sources is the Library of Congress. Its "Teaching with Primary Sources Program" works with colleges and other educational organizations to deliver professional development programs that help teachers use the Library of Congress's rich reservoir of digitized primary source materials to design challenging, high-quality instruction.

*Incorporating primary sources into K-12 instruction is mandated in all 50 states, and the new Common Core State Standards, which 45 states have adopted, rely heavily on their use," notes Vivian Awumey, program manager for the library's Teaching with Primary Sources program.* (Theresa Johnston, "History Detected," *Stanford Alumni Magazine*, May/June 2013.)

To aid in this endeavor, review an excellent guide to the use of primary sources which is available from the Library of Congress' "Teaching Through Primary Sources" website:

## Why Use Primary Sources?

AwesomeStories provides over 100,000 hosted and external primary-and-secondary sources selected from over 140 internationally respected archives (such as the Library of Congress, Imperial War Museums, NASA, the National Archives and National Geographic). We support authentic learning for students across all subjects from 3rd grade through adulthood.

See [Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:](#)

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### Examine the Evidence

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