Women and the Temperance Movement Primary Source Set
dp.la/primary-source-sets/women-and-the-temperance-movement

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One of the challenges of primary source instruction is identifying a set of compelling and varied primary sources around a single theme. In this review, I will discuss the Digital Public Library of America (DPLA) as a general resource for primary source sets and then focus on Melissa Strong's "Women and the Temperance Movement" as an excellent example for class session use.[1] Melissa Strong is a tenured English professor at the Community College of Philadelphia and curator of three other primary source sets for the DPLA, focusing especially on women in the nineteenth century.

Planned in 2010 and formally launched in 2013, the DPLA is a nonprofit organization that serves as an online aggregator for digital collections and metadata produced at various public heritage institutions throughout the United States.[2] Alongside its role as a union catalog, the DPLA also hosts exhibits, publishes e-books, and generally positions itself as a national public library in the digital space. As part of this larger mission, the DPLA hosts 141 primary source sets as of March 2021. Each set focuses on a different aspect of American history, starting with the arrival of Europeans on the continent in the late fifteenth century and continuing to the present day. The primary source sets are tagged with nonexclusive subjects and time periods, with a particular emphasis on US history and materials from the 1800s onwards. A recorded webinar produced in 2018 and a list of recommendations on the website give advice on using the primary source sets.

"Women and the Temperance Movement" follows the standard format of the source sets and is subdivided into four broad areas: an introductory essay and three tabs comprising the "Source Set," "Additional Resources," and the "Teaching Guide." For sources, Strong chose fifteen items consisting of excerpts from books, pamphlets, engravings, two photographs, a typewritten letter, and an advertisement for a for-profit alcohol treatment facility. Each item can be examined in a viewer, typically with an accompanying caption, or outside the primary source set with a link to HathiTrust or a digital version hosted by the library that owns the original item. The

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[1] Melissa Strong, "Women and the Temperance Movement," Digital Public Library of America, accessed March 10, 2021, https://dp.la/primary-source-sets/women-and-the-temperance-movement.

[2] "History," Digital Public Library of America, accessed April 30, 2021, https://pro.dp.la/about-dpla-pro/history.

primary sources in this set are supplemented by links to projects at [Virginia Commonwealth University Libraries](#), [the Mob Museum](#), [Ohio History Central](#), and [PBS](#). Finally, the teaching guide provides six discussion questions tailored to specific items in the primary source set as well as two classroom activities. One classroom activity requires close analysis of the materials and the other one offers a prompt for connecting the materials with outside research.

Strong's source set is fairly typical of what the DPLA offers in terms of the amount of materials provided. Each DPLA primary source set includes twelve to fifteen items, three to four additional materials, at least six discussion questions, and two classroom activities. The approach to captions in the source set is patterned after those in a physical exhibition. They are typically short, perhaps fifty to seventy-five words long, and they provide context without much in the way of overt interpretation. The captions seem intended mainly as a reference aid rather than a teaching moment in their own right, with the focus being placed on the discussion questions. Each question asks the students to make connections between two to four sources in the collection, encouraging them to think about sources in relation to one another rather than in isolation. This emphasis on interrelatedness makes the discussion questions the real strength of the source set and a good way for students to practice their primary source literacy skills. Two or three discussion questions are likely enough to maintain a conversation in an instruction setting for an hour, particularly if the instructor provides additional context.

The variety of media included in the source set is impressive. Strong does not confine herself to text, but also provides illustrations ranging from engraving to early photography. The choice to include images as well as text may appeal to different kinds of learning styles. Strong's decision to also include an advertisement and a letter allows instructors to highlight information transmission in a variety of contexts and modes. If the source set has a weakness, it is that it is a little one-sided: the source set does not include documents or sources relating to the "wet" faction during Prohibition, which might have set up a few interesting discussion questions about different viewpoints and how different sides in the debate made their arguments. That said, this is a comparatively minor quibble since the source set places its focus on the Temperance Movement itself rather than the repercussions of the Eighteenth Amendment.

Melissa Strong's primary source set, and by extension, the DPLA's primary source sets in general, is a strong example of a course module for teaching with digitized archival materials on a US history topic. It might serve as a template to be modified to suit an instructor's specific course objectives or, in a pinch, as a ready-made class session without customization. Its greatest strength lies in the discussion questions, which require students to make connections between materials and demonstrate primary source research. It could be used to set up a longer project on the Temperance Movement or as part of a general unit on historical research. The digital format lends itself to online teaching sessions and highlights how historical materials are sometimes distributed across multiple institutions.