

How does bias shape our understanding of a historical event?

Focused Inquiry

In this focused inquiry, students investigate the question How does bias shape our understanding of a historical event? Students engage in deep reading of primary and secondary sources, analyzing the different perspectives of the execution of Chief Leschi. After small and large group discussions, students will develop an argument answering the compelling question using evidence about the execution of Chief Leschi from the sources.

Standards

- **SSS1.6-8.1** Analyze positions and evidence supporting an issue or an event.
- **SSS2.6-8.2** Evaluate the breadth, reliability, and credibility of primary and secondary sources to determine the need for new or additional information when researching an issue or event.
- **SSS3.6-8.1** Engage in discussion, analyzing multiple viewpoints on public issues
- **C2.6-8.2** Distinguish the structure, organization, powers, and limits of government at the local, state, and tribal levels

Learning Goals

1. Students will cite and use evidence from a source to support a claim.
2. Students will determine the perspective as well as the values and limitations of primary and secondary sources.
3. Students will engage in small and large group discussions to share multiple viewpoints.
4. Students will create a written response to the compelling question How does bias shape our understanding of a historical event?

Compelling Question

How does bias shape our understanding of historical events?

Staging the Question:

- As a class, have the students brainstorm bias that they think that people have about middle school students. Have them think of why people may have bias.
- The teacher may wish to share what are things about their life that may shape their bias (i.e. where they grew up, where they went to school, how old they are. etc.)
- Have the students watch [THE LAB: A portrait session with a twist \(3:16\)](#). While the students watch them have them take notes on how what the photographer was told about the man changed the way they interacted with him and how the photo looked.
- When they are done, have the students discuss with a partner "how does bias shape our understanding of historical events?" After their discussion have students write their thoughts on a scratch paper.

Supporting Question

What is the story of Chief Leschi's execution?

Formative Performance Task:

- Use the **Analysis Organizer** (Appendix A) to hold thinking about the sources in Appendix B.
 - Students will use their understanding of the different sources to answer the support question "What is the story of Chief Leschi's execution?"

Notes to teacher:

- *There may be a need to activate and build general background knowledge before having students engage with the sources in Appendix B.*
- *Page 40 of Chapter 3 of The State We're In: Washington has a page about Chief Leschi but it is best read after engaging with this focused inquiry as it may rob students of the opportunity to think about the compelling question without prejudice.*
- *The sources present views that may be hurtful and/or offensive so it is important to be able to address this depending on the nature of the environment and culture of the classroom.*

Featured Source(s):

- ["Execution of Leschi"](#) Pioneer and Democrat, 2/26/1858, Page 2, Column 1
- ["Leschi, Last Chief of the Nisqually"](#) The Indian War section only
- ["Historic Nisqually chief exonerated"](#) Seattle Times 2004

Argument:

After students analyze various sources to answer the supporting question and discuss their thinking with the class, they will write a brief response to the compelling question: How does bias shape our understanding of historical events? Responses should include a claim, evidence, and reasoning and cite specific information from sources.

Taking Informed Action:

Engage students in a whole class discussion about the different strategies that they engaged in with each of the documents to detect bias. Have the students create an anchor chart that has questions and reading strategies to help then look at sources with scepticism. Have students apply questions and strategies using a current news article.



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Appendix A: Analysis Organizer

Source	Summary of information	What factors do you think influenced the author?	What words or phrases does the author use that shows their bias?
Document A: <i>Execution of Leschi</i>			
Document B: "Leschi, Last Chief of the Nisqually: Cecelia Svinth Carpenter" (<i>The Indian War</i> section only)			
Document C: "Historic Nisqually chief exonerated"			

Appendix B

DOCUMENT A: "Execution of Leschi"

From Pioneer and Democrat, 2/26/1858 (excerpt)

Olympia based newspaper that was one of Washington's first newspapers.

Olympia, Washington Territory

Friday, February 26, 1858

J.W. Wiley and E. Furste, Editors.

Execution of Leschi,

In obedience of the law, the verdict of the jury, and sentence of court, Leschi, the noted Nisqually chief, and head leader of the hostile tribes, who had combined a few years since to extirpate (*root out and destroy completely*) the white population from the Territory, was hung in Pierce county, on Friday last, by the deputy Sheriff of this (Thurston) county, to whom the execution of the sentence of the court had been confided, all confidence as to the ability or will of the sheriff of the former count to do so, to whom had been entrusted its former execution, having been lost.

As much interest has been [shown] by our readers and citizens in the fate of this unfortunate man, from the time of his capture to his final doom, we will briefly relate matters and things connected therewith- from personal observation of junior, who was present on the occasion.

On the day preceding that of the execution, Mr. Wm. L. Mitchell, the deputy sheriff at Thurston county (the sheriff being absent,) proceeded with a posse of twelve men, ourselves among the number, to Steilcoom, in order that he might be in readiness at the early hour of the day appointed for the execution of his order. Arriving there, he found everything far more quiet have been expected after the occurrence which transpired there on 22nd January, the day [scheduled] for Leschi's execution. There was no excitement. There did not seem to be the least interest, and everyone seemed to have come to the conclusion to let law and justice take its course...

...From the guard-house he was conveyed on horseback to the place of execution, distant about a mile from the military post, surrounded in such a manner that escape would have been impossible, had he attempted such a thing. But of this we believe he had not the least desired. In fact, had escape been offered him, we doubt whether he would have availed himself to it. To us it seemed as if he had grown tired of life, and preferred death to a continued incarceration. Arriving at the place of execution, we found the gallows erected in a low gulch in the prairie; here the unhappy man was assisted in dismounting and immediately led to the scaffold. At the foot of the latter, looking up at the rope which hung suspended, from its sliding noose, he hesitated for a moment, but instantly collected himself, he ascended with a firm step, as if he desired to show the white man how fearlessly an Indian can meet death. The prisoner is evincing no desire to speak or make any confession, his arms were secure behind him, when perceiving his life was drawing to a close, he bowed himself to the

speculators, and for the space of some ten to fifteen minutes engaged in fervent prayer said (in the jargon of the country) that he "would soon meet his maker - that he had made his peace with God, and deserve to live no longer - that he bore malice to none, save one man,"... Having concluded, the rope was adjusted, the cap drawn over his eyes, and then 35 minutes past eleven o'clock the drop fell and Leschi, the brave in battle was launched into eternity, without having moved a muscle to indicate fear of his death (by hanging) so dreadful to an Indian. He made no disclosures whatever, and proved "a true as the needle to the pole" to his confederates.

Attribution

["Execution of Leschi."](#) Newspapers- Moments in History , Washington State Library, 27 June 2019. Text transcribed from newspaper image and used pursuant to fair use. Download original newspaper article at: [www.sos.wa.gov/legacy/images/newspapers/sl_dir_olympiapiondemo/pdf/sl_dir_olympiapiondemo_02261858.pdf#page=2]

DOCUMENT B: "Leschi, Last Chief of the Nisquallies"

By Cecelia Svinth Carpenter Nisqually Tribal Historian

Read [Leschi, Last Chief of the Nisquallies](#) ("The Indian War" section only)

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Leschi, Last Chief of the Nisquallies. May 14, 2009. The First People • Euro-Americans Arrive (1800 - 1872) • Little War on the Prairie by Yelm History Project [<http://www.yelmhistoryproject.com/?p=687>].

DOCUMENT C: Historic Nisqually chief exonerated

By Florangela Davila, Seattle Times

Read [Historic Nisqually chief exonerated](#)

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