Find Something & Bring it Back

Overview
For this assignment, the instructions are to find something interesting—and bring it back!

On the course page for each of the works or authors assigned, I have attached websites for further study—these are usually databases, repositories or digital humanities projects that host primary sources related to the work or author. That is, they have links to original manuscripts, first editions, letters from the authors, newspaper clippings, photographs, objects the author owned or which are related to the readings.

While browsing the connected websites and digital resources for the author or work each week, I ask that you try to find something that caught your attention, made you want to research more, inspired you, confused you—basically, something interesting. The following are some examples of what might be considered interesting:

- How the physical format of the book affects the way it can be read
- What the personal handwriting of an author looks like
- How the illustrations differ across many editions of the same work
- The cover of a book and what it markets to a potential reader
- Historical journals and newspapers and what they reveal about the beliefs of the past

After you’ve found something interesting, then it’s time to “Bring it Back”—that is, post the link to the item on the class blog and give a short explanation of what you found interesting about it. Instructions for how to access and post to the blog are below.

Instructions for Setting up an Account
[Students will need a step-by-step guide on how to create accounts on whatever platform your class has chosen for publication.]

Instructions for Writing a Post
You can find an example post on the blog itself, which I have also copied below with elaboration.

First, write a descriptive title that briefly identifies what the item is about.

Letter to Susan, from Emily Dickinson

To begin your post, give a brief introduction to the piece you’ve found—what is it (an image, a letter, a factual statement, etc.) and where did you find it (which archive/website).

I chose a letter from Emily Dickinson to her sister-in-law Susan as my interesting find for this post. I found it on the Dickinson Electronic Archives.

Then, explain what aspects you found interesting about it. What was it that stood out to you? Was it something you related to, or something unusual? Does it tie to something you already
knew about, or is it surprising and new? You can discuss questions other than those, but they may be starting points for analyzing why the item is interesting to you.

What interested me about it most was the perpendicular lines when she was writing—some are left to right, some are bottom to top. There are post-scripts along the edges instead of at the bottom, like you normally think of P.S.’s. I’ve read this is normally to save space when writing—and this is definitely a much longer letter than others I’ve seen Dickinson write. I also really liked the sign off—“Affy, E” (probably Affably?)—it seems so contemporary!

Be sure to include a link to the item or page the item is on. You may also include an image if the item is an image—but be sure to also include the link.

http://archive.emilydickinson.org/working/hl14.htm

Also, include your first name at the bottom! Just the first name is fine.

~Raven

As a guideline, your posts should be around 100 words in length. Be specific as to what you found interesting—try to avoid vague language like “cool” and “neat.” And try to have fun when exploring the databases!

Learning Outcomes

- Develop skills in navigating primary source repositories
- Discover items of interest in primary source repositories
- Analyze points of interest in found primary source materials
- Demonstrate the ways in which avenues of research can be discovered