

First Paper: Primary Sources

The first paper will be an approximately 1000-word essay based on the set of primary sources provided on the course website. These sources are also available in your coursepack. All these sources address the issue of lynching and accusations of rape at the turn of the twentieth century. Between 1880 and 1930, mobs lynched over 4600 people, over 3300 of whom were African Americans. You will interrogate the origins and dynamics of this violence through contemporary explanations of it.

Your task is to use those sources to develop an argument about lynching in its historical context. Imagine your audience as intelligent readers craving new knowledge about the past, but unfamiliar with these documents. What can you tell them about the sources that will surprise them—that will deepen their understanding of American history?

The Sources

- 1) Thomas Nelson Page, “The Lynching of Negroes: Its Cause and Its Prevention” (1904)
- 2) Senator Ben Tillman, Speech before the Senate (1900)
- 3) Mary Church Terrell, “Lynching from a Negro’s Point of View” (1904)
- 4) Ida B. Wells, excerpt from *Southern Horrors* (1892)

Requirements and Deadlines

- This paper is due September 17 at the beginning of lecture. Bring a hard copy to class and submit an electronic copy to the appropriate Canvas dropbox for your section.
- This paper should be 900-1200 words long (around 3-4 pages).
- You must use *at least* three (3) of the four (4) provided sources in your paper.
- This paper is worth 150 points.
- All papers must include footnotes. See the Citation Guide on the Explore History website.
- Be sure to proofread your paper to avoid spelling and grammatical errors.
- Any papers turned after 3:15pm on the due date will be penalized at least 5 percentage points. After that, late papers will be penalized by 10 percentage points per 24-hour period after the due date. No late papers will be accepted more than a week after the due date.

Writing the Essay

Success in these assignments will depend on careful research and clear writing. The website features tutorials to help you:

- **Crafting a Thesis:** A strong thesis goes beyond simply reporting what you found; it uses the evidence to broaden, qualify, or even contradict our understanding of an important theme in U.S. history. Your thesis may emerge gradually as you wrestle with

your documents In your finished paper, however, feature your thesis in the introduction.

- **Working the Evidence:** Most of a history essay should consist of “evidence paragraphs,” which develop and support the thesis with quotations and/or paraphrasing from the sources. Each paragraph should begin with a topic sentence that connects to your thesis. Quotes need to be set up: who said it, when and why. After you quote, always *explain* the quote you have provided. Check the quoted material carefully to ensure that your quotations support the points you are making. Cite your sources when you quote.
- **Structuring the Essay:** As your paragraphs begin to emerge from this process of working the evidence, unify each one with a topic sentence, and arrange them in a sequence that builds toward your strongest claims. Your finished essay should thus feature a clearly sign-posted order as it advances from the introduction through your body paragraphs and, finally, to your conclusion.