Connected Histories of the BBC

Primary and Secondary Research Worksheet

A-Level

Objective: This worksheet will introduce primary and secondary information sources, using the Connected Histories of the BBC website (CHBBC).

Introduction

This worksheet defines primary and secondary research, and oral histories. It uses the [Connected Histories of the BBC website,](#) an Oral History collection about the BBC, as an example of primary research.

The worksheet uses a specific example: the banning of 'The War Game' a BBC film produced during the Cold War, about the aftermath of a nuclear war; and considers the conflicting accounts of how this film came to be banned. Ways of dealing with conflicting accounts of events are considered.

Students are invited to explore their own topic using resources from the collection, to read, watch and hear first-hand accounts of historical events.

Themes: Primary Research; Secondary Research; The Cold War; Reliability of Eye-witness accounts; Conflicting versions of events;

The Connected Histories of the BBC website.

Olive Shapley (producer who pioneered ordinary people speaking on the radio, here with Mrs Emerson in the colliery village of Craghead, County Durham, 01/01/1939'. ©BBC

Connected Histories of the BBC
Primary & Secondary sources worksheet

Objective: This worksheet will introduce primary and secondary information sources, using the Connected Histories of the BBC website (CHBBC).

Primary source: this is first-hand information that has been collected by researchers. The CHBBC website is an example of a primary source, as the researchers collected oral histories about the BBC, and made them available online. Other examples include surveys; observations; focus groups and interviews.

Secondary Source: this is when information published or organised by others is used and analysed. Examples of this include: books; journals; newspapers (reporting); data collected through research and websites.

Question 1: Name two examples of primary research sources:

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Question 2: Name two examples of secondary research sources:

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Oral History: a field of study and a method of gathering, preserving and interpreting the voices and memories of people, communities and participants in past events. (Oral History Society UK)

Question 3: One of the problems with interviews is that the person being interviewed may make mistakes, forget or leave out information, or perhaps even add to it. Which of the following will help ensure information is accurate? (Tick all that apply)

☐ Checking against other sources—fact checking

☐ Believing everything someone says in an interview

☐ Listening to other interviews describing the same event

☐ Considering how reliable the interviewee is / are they an expert?

☐ Only choosing sources that agree with our opinion

The Connected Histories of the BBC website is a collection of Oral History interviews with people who worked for or were associated with the BBC. The interviews offer first-hand accounts of major historical events; insight into the development of radio and TV broadcasting; the history of the BBC, and insights into social history and social change in the UK.

The War Game was a 1966 BBC television film about nuclear war. It was written and directed by Peter Watkins, and shows a nuclear war, and what happens afterwards, themes that are integral to the Cold War. It won the Academy Award for Best Documentary Feature in 1967.

The film is disturbing, and was banned from public broadcasting. It was eventually televised in 1985.

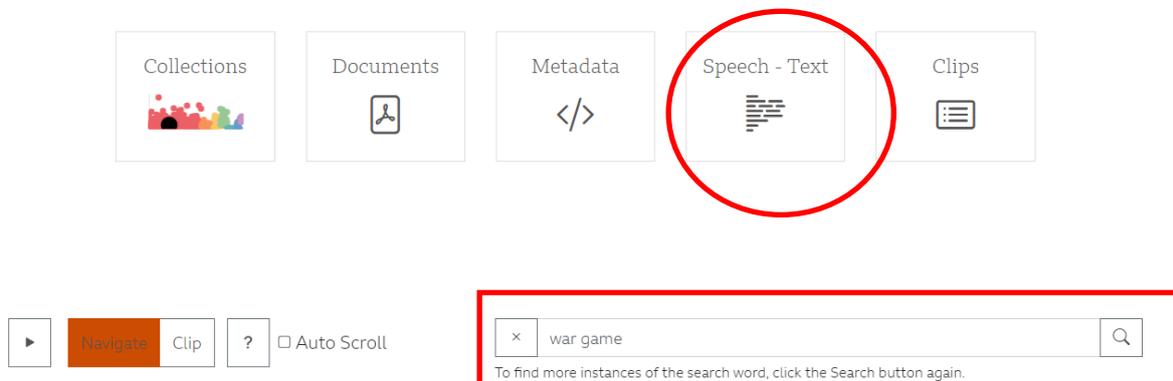You can watch the film on the BBC website:

https://www.bbc.com/historyofthebbc/100-voices/coldwar/war-game/

For question 4, you will need to go to the Connected Histories of the BBC website:

https://connectedhistoriesofthebbc.org/

In the search bar, type in 'The War Game'. You will see that John Arkell; David Attenborough; Humphrey Burton; George Campey and Hugh Greene all talk about this programme.

Select the interview with Hugh Greene, and click on Speech–Text. (You have to agree to the terms and conditions to see the transcript) This gives you a machine created transcript of the interview. In the search box, type 'war game' to go to the section where he talks about the programme. (**note:** This is the quickest way to search, but there are mistakes in these transcripts. However, you can check by watching / listening to the clips, or by looking under 'Documents' for the transcript typed by a human.)

Collections	Documents	Metadata	Speech - Text	Clips

▶	Navigate	Clip	?	☐ Auto Scroll		✕	war game	🔍

To find more instances of the search word, click the Search button again.

Question 4

4.1) What was film about?

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4.2) Who does Hugh Greene say decided to cancel the programme?

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4.3) In another interview Anthony Wedgewood Benn, (The Postmaster General at the time) claims it was a government decision to ban 'The War Game': See https://www.bbc.com/historyofthebbc/100-voices/coldwar/war-game/) On this page Dr Alban Webb, one of the CHBBC's academics, writes about the film. (You can also watch 'The War Game' here)

How does Dr Webb deal with the two different versions of events?

☐ He tells us both versions

☐ He only gives one version of the story

☐ He tells us his own opinion

☐ He ignores the different versions

4.4) The CHBBC website has eyewitness accounts from people who saw: the fall of the Berlin Wall; the assassination of Indira Gandhi ; the Second World War; the Cold War; Coronation of George VI; The Cuban Missile Crisis; UK Elections; The Suez Crisis among many more. Try searching for any one of these and read the account. (**Tip**: use the event name as your search word)

We have created a video to help with searching the catalogue, which you will find here: https://blogs.sussex.ac.uk/connected-histories-of-the-bbc/using-the-chbbc-catalogue/

Make notes of what you discover

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