

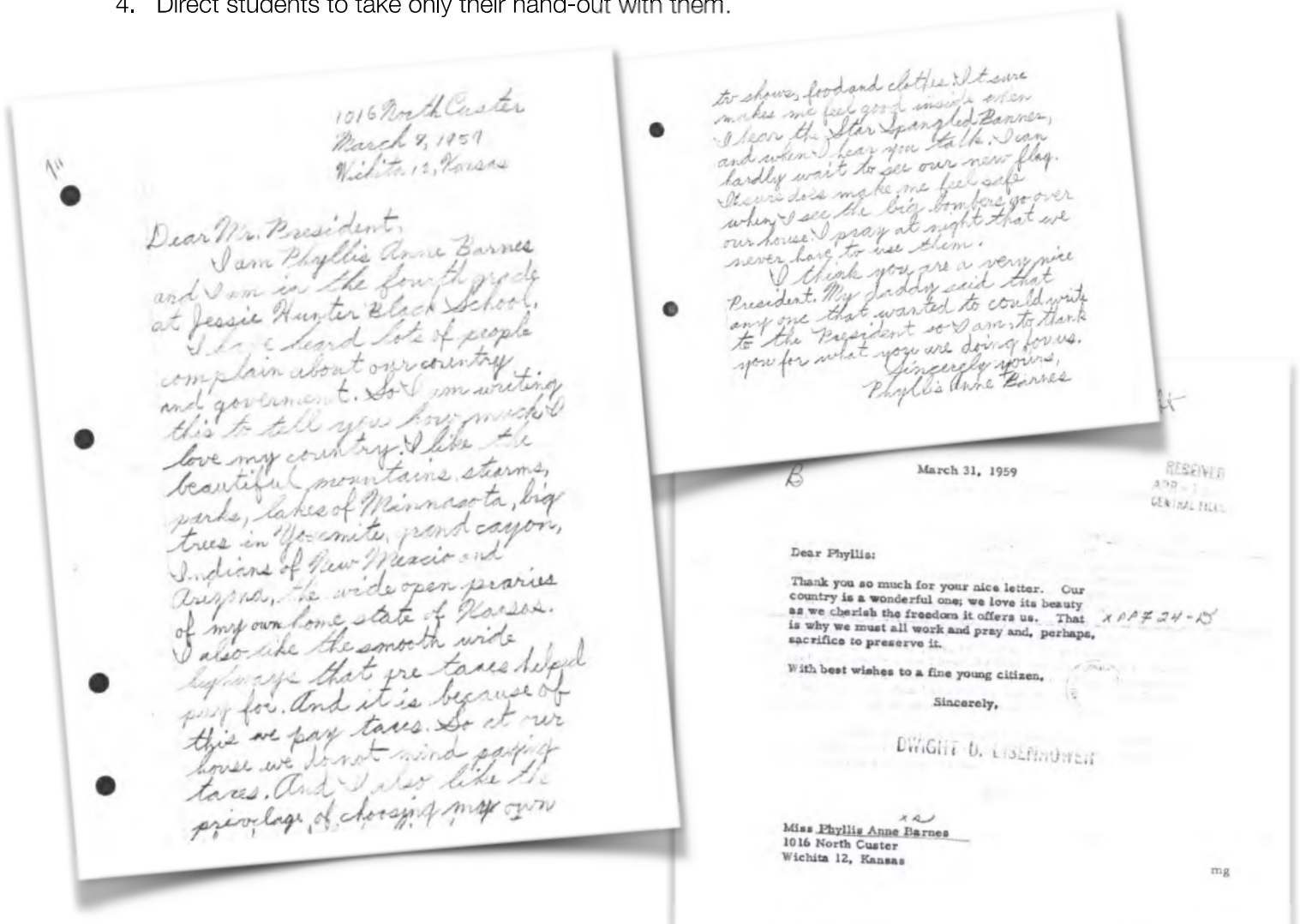
Activity 1 Holding History

Students will be introduced to the term “primary source” and will examine letters that children wrote to President Eisenhower.

Materials needed:

- copies of student hand-out “Holding History: Primary Sources,” pencils, easel
- laminated, enlarged version of the student hand-out, dry-erase marker and eraser
- copies of one child’s letter to President Eisenhower for each student to view as example
- copies of multiple children's letters to President Eisenhower—enough for each student to use a different one

1. Read through the hand out with students. Complete one example on a laminated, enlarged version of the page with a letter that all students have in front of them.
2. Hand out different letters to each student. Direct them to examine their letter and complete the hand-out.
3. Have students share what they learned from the letter they examined. Create a visible list of the topics that children wrote to Eisenhower about.
4. Direct students to take only their hand-out with them.



Holding History: Primary Sources

What is a **primary source**? Primary sources are what remain from the past. They vary widely from objects like artifacts, photographs, autobiographies, maps, movies, newspapers, and letters. The key is that they were created during the time period being studied. The Eisenhower Presidential Library, Museum, and Boyhood Home are full of them!



Most of the time, we learn from secondary sources, like text books and websites, which are the result of someone else learning about a topic. Those can be great tools from which to learn, but when you learn with primary sources, you actually get to hold a real piece of history in your hands and come up with your own conclusions. Start by examining it and asking a lot of questions about the source itself. Who created it? When and why?

Remember, as President, Eisenhower was the leader of the **Executive Branch** of the government, and that writing letters to our President is one way that citizens (you!) can interact with the Executive branch. They can exercise their **Constitutional rights** and become involved with their ruling government by letting them know how they feel, or to ask questions about governmental issues.

Examine one of the letters that a child wrote to President Eisenhower and answer the questions below. Be ready to share what you have learned with the class.



1. Who wrote the letter? _____
2. On what date was it written? _____
3. Why did the child write it? _____

4. What does this tell you about the author or the time period in which the letter was written?

