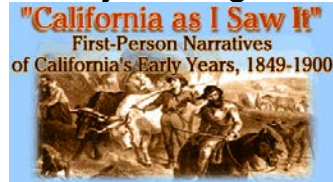


## Teaching with Primary Sources Lesson Outline

**Grade Level:** High School (9-10)

**Standard(s) or Objectives:** CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.1: Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information.  
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.8: Assess the extent to which the reasoning and evidence in a text support the author's claims.

### Library of Congress or Morris Special Collections Resources:



A letter from a gold miner, Placerville, California. October, 1850

<https://memory.loc.gov/cgi->

[bin/query/r?ammem/calbk:@field\(DOCID+@lit\(calbk155div2\)\)](https://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/calbk:@field(DOCID+@lit(calbk155div2)))

### Topic Background:

The discovery of gold nuggets in the Sacramento Valley in early 1848 sparked the Gold Rush, arguably one of the most significant events to shape American history during the first half of the 19th century. As news spread of the discovery, thousands of prospective gold miners traveled by sea or over land to San Francisco and the surrounding area; by the end of 1849, the non-native population of the California territory was some 100,000 (compared with the pre-1848 figure of less than 1,000). A total of \$2 billion worth of precious metal was extracted from the area during the Gold Rush, which peaked in 1852.

Excerpted from: <http://www.history.com/topics/gold-rush-of-1849>

### Source(s) Used:

The source used for this assessment includes excerpts of a letter written by a gold miner to his cousin on March 3, 1850 in Placerville, California. The letter was included in the book, "California As I Saw It: First-Person Narratives of California's Early Years, 1849-1900." In much of the letter, the miner focused upon the development of Placerville, the surrounding country, mining operations, the cost of provisions, and the dangerous conditions of a mining settlement.

### Answer Key:

Question 1: C

Question 2: B

**A letter from a gold miner, Placerville, California. October, 1850 [Excerpt]**

Dear Cousin,

...We pitched our tents, shouldered our picks & shovels & with pan in hand sallied forth to try our fortunes at gold digging. We did not have very good success being green at mining, but by practice & observation we soon improved some, & found a little of the shining metal. Wm Ramsdell & Cooke of our party were sick with the scurvy & could not work. This is the worst disease that we have to contend with here, it settles in the legs & ancles, making the person quite lame. The skin turns purple & if not arrested soon, spots will decay & fall off leaving a running sore. It is brought on by eating salt food & no vegetables. Some are also troubled with diarrhea, others with ague & fever & various other diseases incident to all new countries. It is quite sickly here & every person ought to be very careful & not expose himself more than is necessary. Many here are so anxious to get rich that they work, rain or snow, regardless of life or health. After working a few weeks I was taken sick very suddenly & became deranged & for four days the Drs all thought that I could not live, but that God in whom I trust for life & health, interposed his almighty arm & spared my life & restored me to health again. And I will praise him while I've breath & when my voice is hush'd in death I hope to praise him through a vast Eternity. After I got well five of us concluded to build a saw mill, so we went two miles below town & built us a fine log cabin & we have our mill nearly built. Lumber has been worth 4 & \$500 pr thousand. But now it comes in so fast from the states, that the price is down from 50 to \$100 pr thousand. Our mill is on a stream that dries up in summer so we shall not do much more to it until fall. We think of going up on the Yuba river this summer among the Sierra Nevada Mountains, where the Indians & Grissely Bear are plenty & troublesome. But gold is plenty too.

**Questions:**

- 1) What does the author state is the worst disease, or sickness, that miners had to deal with? (CCSS-RH.9-10.1)
  - a. Ague
  - b. Fevers
  - c. Scurvy
  - d. Starvation
  
- 2) The miner writes, "Many here are so anxious to get rich that they work, rain or snow, regardless of life or health." Which piece of evidence from the letter best supports the miner's claim?
  - a. "We did not have very good success being green at mining, but by practice & observation we soon improved some, & found a little of the shining metal."
  - b. "After working a few weeks I was taken sick very suddenly & became deranged & for four days the Drs all thought that I could not live."
  - c. "It is quite sickly here & every person ought to be very careful & not expose himself more than is necessary."
  - d. "We think of going up on the Yuba river this summer among the Sierra Nevada Mountains, where the Indians & Grissely Bear are plenty & troublesome. But gold is plenty too."