



### Description:

In this lesson students will be given some “artifacts” that might simulate what someone might find in a forgotten envelop in an attic. Students will take a stab at deciphering and connecting the pieces. Then students will listen to an interview (Mona Painter of Cooper (s) Landing) that will help explain the significance of these and give a glimpse into life on the early trails of the Kenai

### Materials:

- *Copies of Letter (with Envelope)*
- *Transcribed Letter (for modified assignment)*
- *Airline Ticket*
- *Western Union Cable*
- *Audio interview with Mona Painter*

### Photos:

- *Jack Lean Dog Team in Seward*
- *Mona Painter (as 11-year-old girl)*
- *2 Photos: Road to Cooper's Landing*

### Alaska Content Standards:

**A-2** Understand that the interpretation of history may change as new evidence is discovered.

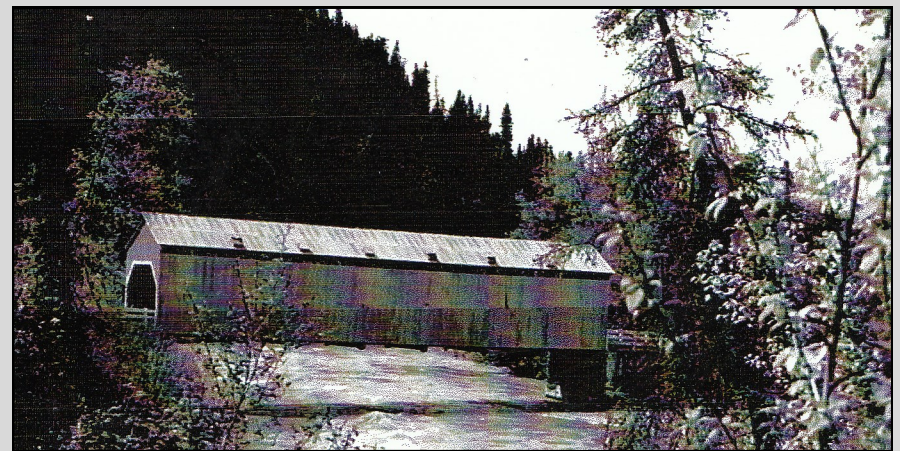
**A-4** Understand that the history relies on the interpretation of evidence.

**B-5** Evaluate the influence of context upon historical understanding.

### Inquiry Based Thinking Strategies Utilized:

**Interpreting:** Students will read “raw” text, edit, and describe the intent or meaning of the passages.

**Hypothesizing:** Students will take the known artifacts to try to construct the meaning that connects these.



Photos used by permission Mona Painter

**Observing:** Students will observe documents and photos and take note of details that will help tell the story.

**Following the Questions:** Through this assignment, it is likely to create more questions than answers. Students ask the questions and see resolution using other resources as necessary.

# Byways and Highways: The Missing Link - The Living Primary Source



## Background Information:

This lesson is a culminating activity that illustrates the importance of students conducting primary resource research within their area. Alaska is different from other areas. The footprints of the early people and of the settlers can still be seen on the land. The habitations, the trails, the stories — they are still fresh. In many cases, these can still be seen. They are, in many cases, still within the living memory. In the earlier archaeological power point, Dr. Aron Crowell uses the memories of the living descendants to provide the contextual clues that remain silent in artifacts. Without this living interpretation, it is difficult to tease out this contextual knowledge. We can only guess.

In this lesson the students have a go at being a historical detective. They will be presented this scenario: They've been rummaging in a dust filled attic when they've come across an old steamer trunk. Inside there is but one item — a tattered manila envelop. On the envelop it simply says: "Important - don't discard. Save." They open it and find inside an old letter, some documents, and some photos. Nothing else. Somehow the items are connected (at least we can assume this because of their packaging within the common envelop).

It is up to the students to use the skills that they've learned during this unit to decipher this story. (Understanding, this is not a contrived story but one that will be described later in an interview.) Their first job will be to inspect the items — prospect for details (there's gold there after all). Take notes. Analyze... but, at first, only on the individual item's own terms — singularly. As necessary, students may try to answer those questions that arise by using other resources (books, maps, or internet). Analyze singularly, but not in a vacuum. Remember, one can't find connectivity until one fully understands the item itself.

Then, once done, it is the students' job to interpret the connection between the items. They will hypothesize why these have been placed together. What is the story that ties them together? It's important to remember, this isn't a story based on fantasy or supposition; it's a real story with real people — don't go beyond what has been provided and researched.

The students will share their versions and critique them according to the information that is available. Then the artifacts get a chance to "speak." Earlier in the archeological video, Rhonda Moonin lamented that "she did not listen" to her "Poppa." Students will get the opportunity to listen to an interview of Mona Painter, resident of Cooper Landing, who arrived on her own to Alaska as a 11 year old girl, her adventures traveling the route from Seward, and later developing a very special relationship with Jack Lean — long time settler of Cooper's Landing and mail runner on the Iditarod Trail.





# Byways and Highways: The Missing Link - The Living Primary Source



## PROCEDURE

### 1) Set the Stage:

In this lesson the students have the chance to put together all their skills as primary source researchers to decipher a story. When finished, accuracy can be checked by listening to a personal interview that tells the context behind these items.

### 2) The Scenario:

The students have been rummaging around in an dusty attic when they came across an old steamer trunk. Like all inquisitive sluthers, they open it (no doubt with a resounding creak) and inside is found an envelope labeled, in fading pencil, "IMPORTANT - DON'T DISCARD - SAVE." They blow off the dust and open it. Inside are several objects. They are to examine these and try to put together a credible story.

### 3) Provide the materials/Start taking notes

Start making observations and inferences regarding the photos and documents. Write these comments directly on copied documents and photos. Careful, photos and documents are not necessarily directly interrelated (one leading to another) don't overextend assumptions. Keep only to facts.

Pay attention to names, dates, and context within photo/document

### 4) Decipher Letter

First, rewrite letter correcting grammar, punctuation, spelling and paragraphs. (Careful, less editing is good. Just do enough to provide readability) If words or letters are added show this in (\_\_\_). If words are taken away show this with . . . Remember, edit only enough to increase readability.

At the end make a note saying that the document has been altered to improve readability.

Set right margin to 3 inches and print.

In margin, provide possible explanations or connections. If questions arise note these as well (in a different color).

In addition, look at what the writer is saying, how he is saying it. What is going on between the writer and the recipient? Consider the information that is being shared. Put historical context onto the information.

### 5) Consider the bigger "story"

This is not a linear story. Rather the task is to discover who are these people and what is their relationship to each another. Look for any possible connections between items. Look for what information is present. Although assumptions can be made, they have to be grounded in the information that is provided. Don't look for a bigger story than what is present — again, look just for the information that is available.

### 6) Write out a summary of your thoughts

Summarize thoughts. Note: it's not important to connect specific photos as being specific events. Think "contextually." We have two different people that represent two different eras of history. We want to get to know the people involved, the relationship between these people, and their relationship in history — both time and place.

Consider crafting your summary in this way — with a statement of fact next to supporting details. Consider the statements based on the following documents which are in larger format at the end of this lesson.:

Documents are at the end of lesson and also online at [www.kmtacorridor.org](http://www.kmtacorridor.org)

### FACT

On June 5, 1949  
Mona Funk traveled to  
Anchorage as an 11 year old.

### SUPPORTING DETAIL

Plane ticket is in her name  
Ticket says 11 year old child.  
Telegram has year (1949). Plane  
ticket smudged.



### 7) Share . . . And be ruthless!

In groups or as a class share interpretations. Interpretation might not be a) like others or b) correct, however that doesn't mean that there isn't a wrong interpretation. Every statement that is suggested must have concrete evidence to support it. If it doesn't, group members should point it out. Make the researcher be accountable for every single point. Don't allow the researcher to go off on tangents that are not supported by evidence.

### 8) Listen . . . And learn. And now, the Rest of the Story

**Listen to the interview of Mona Painter in Cooper Landing** September 13 and October 4, 2012. Be prepared to stop the interview from time to time. Students should note on their paper when the interview validates one of their points or when their assertions are inaccurate or incorrect.

**IMPORTANT:** In addition, make notes for new information that could not have been determined from the artifacts.

And here lies the biggest lesson . . . We can only learn so much from objects.

Objects and artifacts are stubbornly silent. There is only so much that can be learned from photographs, maps, and documents. Photographs can show an image but it can't tell about the kinship between 3 generations of Aluutiq fisherman pictured leaning against their seiner. A map can show a dotted route through a given pass, but it can't speak to the perils and death encountered while mushing it. And a plane ticket can give a name and a date, but it's mute to describe the feelings that that little girl had when her plane landed in Alaska and how it changed her entire life.

And that's why, as a student in this state of new and raw history, it is important to be part of this process of recording history through the elders that still live in our communities.

### 9) How Did Your Interpretation Change?

Have students select 4 -5 statements from Jack Leans letter (or from photos) in which their interpretation changed substantially after hearing the interview with Mona Painter. Explain their earlier interpretation and then discuss their current interpretation based on the new information.

In addition, have students write at least 4 questions they would ask to help understand this story. Next to the question describe what is it that is hoped to be learned from this question.



# Byways and Highways: The Missing Link - The Living Primary Source



**Assessment for summary:** This assessment will evaluate the student's ability to create interpretation then reassess when new information is provided.

Through this lesson students will understand that the process of historic interpretation is a dynamic force that can change when new information is discovered.	Students will write an interpretation based upon evidence and historical context.	5	4	3	2	1
		Student's initial interpretation reflects thoughtful consideration. Explanations are plausible.		Student's initial interpretation is historically plausible and is based upon evidence presented. Interpretation may lack depth of connectivity (isolated unrelated facts).		Interpretation lacks credibility. Interpretation may be random or historically far fetched. Connection between artifacts seems contrived.
	Students will evaluate their interpretation based upon new information.	5	4	3	2	1
		Student recognizes that initial interpretation is either not accurate or not complete. Thoughtful consideration is provided to why initial interpretation was inaccurate.		Student recognizes instances where their initial interpretation is inaccurate, however they do not fully explain why and what factors lead them to this conclusion.		Student may recognize inaccuracies or inconsistencies, however there is little or no attempt to explain either the correct interpretation or the elements that lead them to a different conclusion.
	Students will pose questions to seek further information.	5	4	3	2	1
		Student proposes questions that will potentially provide useful information for the understanding of this story. Student successfully articulates objective for questioning strategy.		Student proposes potentially effective questions. However, questions seem somewhat haphazard without stating what is hoped to be accomplished.		Questions are weak and shallow. Structure of question will only gain short answers with little depth.

Note to teachers: Columns 4 and 2 are blank to allow for assessment that blends elements from adjacent columns. Teachers can underline criteria that describe student performance and use blank column to add comments specific to student.





Jack Lean at Upper Russian Lake 1951 by Mamie Elwell



1207

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Jack Lean  
Pioneer Home  
Sitka Alaska 99835



Mona Mlynarik  
Cooper Landing  
Alaska 99572



Jack Lean  
Pioneer Home  
Sitka Alaska

Well Honey I got the watch  
you sent me and it is running  
fine I got one of the nurses  
to wind it up for me and I  
wore it to bed and got up by  
it I would like to have a moore  
camera and take pictures of you  
running that god devil when you  
practise more take plenty of time  
I wish I were there to teach you  
Hea Hea it is raining here the  
snow is about all gone quite a wind  
blowing we use to hunt brown and  
grizzly bear in the spring if we did  
not have a hunting party I use to  
guide when I got a party and trap  
beaver early spring I made two  
thausen dollars one spring with  
beaver hides and I made moore



I  
than that one year with ~~kyates~~  
and I use to guide hunting  
parties that was good money  
I was out with Woody and  
Merrill they were two of the  
first flyers that was here  
they both cracked up two fine  
fellows god bless them

I was going to see what time  
it was I got to the dock and thought  
of the watch god bless you seven  
past ten and all is well I guess  
that was my dog team with  
Reverell and lots of people with  
cameras wanting to take picture  
yes the Shellbarns were at coopers  
Landing they had one Boy I  
don't know what become of



3

him you wanted to know  
about carrying the mail was  
like, some of it was hell and  
repete and some of it was  
not bad they gave me the Rainey  
Pass summit to the Kuskaquim to  
the Iditarod we did it by relays  
each driver had about one hundred  
miles more or less sometimes it  
would be good quite a bit of  
travel for about a month then  
we had to break our own trail  
well we hired out for tough  
men we had to prove up "Hä"  
I was just thinking I believe  
those goddervels that you run around  
with would be good for packing  
mail "Hä" "Hä" I would like  
to take a ride with you more  
god Bless you but it worries me

4

If you go shooting over those lakes  
you know we use to make good  
money with those bear hides  
the good ones and it kept a man  
in good shape well it looks as if  
the rain is over for a while I see  
a patch of blue sky and the wind  
is gone down thank goodness how  
many voters did you have there  
are more people there than I thought  
there were be carefull Honey with  
that skooter I know you wont be  
I know what I was like on a pair  
of skis and hook my dogs to the  
skis believe me you can make time  
but you need a good trail or open  
country what ever you do be carefull

Honey My kindest Regards

Yours Uncle Jack

**TYPED: NO CORRECTIONS**

Jack Lean

Pioneer Home

Sitka Alaska

Well Honey I got the watch you sent me and it is running fine I got one of the nurses to wind it up for Me and I wore it to bed and got up by it I would like to have move camera and take pictures of You running that go devil when You practise mona take plenty of time I wish I were there to teach you "Ha" "Ha" it is raining here the snow is about all gone quite a wind blowing we use to hunt brown and grizzly bear in the spring if we did not have a hunting party I use to guide when I got a party and trap beaver early spring I made two thousen dollars one spring with beaver hides and I mad moore than that one year with kyotes and I use to guides hunting parties that was good money I was out with woody and merrel they were two of the first flyers that was here they both cracked up two fine fellow god bless them I was going to see what time it was I got to the door and thought of the watch god bless you seven past ten and all is well. I guess that was My dog team with Revell and lots of people with cameras wanting to take picture yes the Shellanns were at coopers Landing they had one Boy I don't know what become of him you wanted to know about carreing the mail was like—some of it was hell and repete and some of it was not bad they gave Me the Rainey Pass sumit to the kuskokum to the Iditerod we did it by relays each driver had about one hundred miles moore or less sometimes it would be good quite a bit of travel for about a Month then we had to break our own trail well we hired out for tough Men we had to prove up "Ha" I was just thinking I believe those go devels that You run around with would be good for packing mail "Ha" "Ha" would like to take a ride with you Mona

If You go scooting over those lakes you know we use to make a good money with those bear hides the good ones and it kept a man in good shape well it looks as if the rain is over for a while I see a patch of blue sky and the wind is gone down thank goodness how maney voters did you have there are moore people there than I thought there were be carefull Heoney with that skooter I know you wont be I know what I was like on a pair of skiys and hook My dogs to the skiys believe Me You can make time but You need a good trail or open country what ever You do be carefull Honey My kindest Regards

Yours Uncle Jack