Crop It

What is it?
Crop It is a four step hands-on learning routine where teachers pose questions and students use paper cropping tools to "crop" to an answer found in a primary source. The routine helps students look carefully at a primary source to focus on pieces of evidence that support their ideas. Students use the evidence from their "crops" to build an interpretation or story. Crop It is called a learning routine because it has just a few easily remembered steps, can be completed in a short period of time, and can be used in different subject areas (for example cropping a work of art, a poem, or a textbook).

Description
In our fast paced daily activities, we make sense of thousands of images in just a short glance. Crop It slows the sense making process down to provide time for students to think. Crop It gives students a simple process to seek evidence, multiple viewpoints, and complex understanding before determining the meaning of a primary source.

Teacher Preparation
1. Print a collection of primary sources related to the unit or topic under study. The collection may include:
    a. various types of sources, photographs, cartoons, advertisements, and newspaper articles challenging students to use varying amounts of background knowledge and vocabulary or sources that can be read by students working on different reading levels.
    b. sources representing different perspectives on the topic,
    c. sources depicting the critical people, places, and events that will be tested in a unit.
    d. sources representing perspectives that are missing in the textbook.
    *Students may be asked to bring in sources related to the unit of study.

2. Print and cut out enough Crop It tools so that each student has a set of two tools.

3. Prepare to display a series of questions either through a PowerPoint presentation or place questions on chart paper to display.

In the Classroom
Step One: Choose an Image
1. Ask students to choose a source from the collection that meets at least one of the following criteria:
    ● connects to an experience that you have had,
    ● relates to something that you know a lot about and/or
    ● leaves you with questions.

   *Note: other criteria may be substituted such as choose an image that relates to a question you have about the unit, choose an image that relates to your favorite part of this unit, or choose an image that represents the most important part of this unit.

Step Two: Explore the Image
2. Pass out a set of two Crop It tools to each student. Demonstrate how to use the Crop It tools to focus on a particular piece of a source. Show students how to make various sizes of squares, triangles, rectangles, and lines crop to "crop" or focus attention to an important part of the source.

3. Invite students to carefully explore their image by using the tools. Pose a question and ask students to look carefully and "crop" to an answer. Ask each question and then pause for students to crop to an answer. Invite students to revise their answer by choosing another crop that could answer the same question. Encourage students to think about if they could only have one answer then which crop would be best and ask them to consider what would make a crop better.

Sample questions
   ● Crop the image to the part that first caught your eye. *Think: Why did you notice this part?*

   ● Crop to a part of the image that tells who or what this image is about. *Think: Why is this person/thing important?*

   ● Crop to a part of the image that tells where this image takes place. *Think: What has happened at this place?*

   ● Crop to a part of the image that tells the time period this image reflects. *Think: What helps us recognize specific times?*

   ● Crop to a part of the image that shows tension or conflict. *Think: Do you see other problems?*

   ● Crop the most important part of this image. *Think: Why is this important?*

*Note: See Question Sets for additional question ideas.

4. Allow students to look at the crops of other students in different ways. For example, ask students to share their crop with an elbow partner and explain how the crop answers the question. Or ask students to place their source and crop on their desk and to stand-up and push-in their chairs. Then invite students to silently walk around their table to notice the different types of evidence that students used to answer the question.

5. Collect the types of evidence students cropped on large chart paper by asking students to recall the different types of details that students cropped. These charts encourage students to notice details and can be used during other assignments such as adding descriptions to writing or during discussions to support their answers with specific evidence. For this activity, the charts may help students seek additional evidence in their sources. The charts may look like this example and will constantly grow as students discover how details help them build meaning.

Details or evidence that might give us information			
Who	**Where**	**When**	**Problem or Tension**
Famous person	Name in Title	Sun	Broken window
Name written	Landmark	Clock	Gaze or stare of people
Location	Landscape/Trees	Season	Something fragile
Hat	Transportation	Clothes	Weapon
Tool	Buildings	Technology	Sign
Badge	Sign	Transportation	Something uneven or out of balance

5. Conclude the lesson by asking students what they learned about the topic related to the collection. Ask students to reflect on what they learned about looking at images and when in their life they might use the Crop It routine to help them understand something.

Common Pitfalls
Avoid asking too many questions during Step Two: Explore. Keep the questions and the cropping moving fairly quickly to keep students engaged and focused on thinking deeply about their primary source.

To increase the amount of thinking for everyone, don't allow students to share their own crops with a partner or the class right away. Ask students to revise their own crop by trying different ideas before sharing.

Example
See PowerPoint Questions for sample directions to lead students through this process.

Finding Collections of Primary Sources for Students to Crop
See example collections for the Great Depression and the Industrial Revolution

Use Federal Resources for Educational Excellence to find collections of photographs

http://free.ed.gov/sitemap.cfm

Find Primary Source Sets at the Library of Congress
http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/primarysourcesets/

Further Reading
Visible Thinking, Project Zero, Harvard Graduate School of Education
http://www.pz.harvard.edu/vt/visibleThinking_html_files/VisibleThinking1.html

Artful Thinking, Project Zero, Harvard Graduate School of Education
http://www.pz.harvard.edu/tc/index.cfm

Richhart, R., Palmer, P., Church, M., & S. Tishman. (April 2006). Thinking Routines: Establishing Patterns in the Thinking Classroom. Paper prepared for the American Educational Research Association.
http://www.pz.harvard.edu/research/AERA06ThinkingRoutines.pdf

Please cut on on dotted line and discard this center area.