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## *Primary Resource Comprehension: The Case of the Stolen Chickens*

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**Reporting Category:** Reading  
**Topic:** Expanding Vocabulary and Demonstrating Comprehension

**Primary SOLs:** 1.4; 1.5; 1.6; 1.7; 1.8; 1.10; 2.3; 2.4; 2.5; 2.6; 2.8

**Related SOLs:** 2.7; 1.9;

**Materials:** Interactive Video; Primary Source Document; Comprehension Worksheet; (see attached).

### **Directions:**

- Students will watch and educational video illustrating the following concepts:
  - o A brief history of why the Brentsville Courthouse is significant to Prince William County (it was where all the county documents were made and kept).
  - o How historians use those documents to learn about the past and the importance learning to read and write.
  - o Video will tie into the worksheet that students will have to complete as part of their lesson.
- Complete Worksheet

### **Context:**

#### **The Importance of Brentsville Courthouse**

Brentsville is an important place in the history of Prince William County. From 1822 to 1893 it served as the county seat of Prince William where all matters of county business took place. It is also where all the County records were kept during this time. There are three public buildings that made up the core of the county seat: The courthouse, the jail, and the Clerk's office.

Many different actions of business took place in the county Courthouse. It is where people voted, paid taxes, disputed both criminal (breaking the law) or civil cases (cases involving

money or property), validated deeds and wills, and more. Those who were awaiting trial for criminal cases would be kept in the Brentsville Jail until it was time for their case to be heard.

Everything that transpired in the Brentsville Courthouse was documented by the County Clerk and many of those records were kept in the Clerk's Office. These documents ranged from deeds, wills, and receipts to minute books and court transcriptions. Since they are official documents of Prince William County, every time the county seat moves, these documents go with them. They are still preserved by the Clerk of the Court today in Manassas.

## **The Importance of Primary Resources**

These documents serve as valuable **Primary Resources** to Prince William County's history. A primary resource is a first-hand document written or drawn by someone who was there. That means these deeds, wills, court transcripts, records, and more were written nearly 200 years ago by the Clerk of the Court or who people that were there. They give us valuable information and tell historians a lot about people in Prince William County. They tell us who lived in the county and where, how families are related, who owned certain property, what kind of jobs people had and how they lived. These documents can also tell us about how roads and buildings were built, what kinds of arguments people had, what people believed in and what they cared about.

Historians use primary resources all the time to learn about history and how it affected the world we live in today. To practice your reading and comprehension skills, read comprehend one of the court cases that was recorded by Prince William County.

**Exercise:** (See attached)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_



## Be a History Detective and go to the Source!

*Read the following story that took place at Brentsville in 1850 out loud and answer the questions.*



In 1850, a man named Lewin complained that Rebecca Davis had chickens that were taken from his sister, Jane. They needed to have a **trial** to solve the mystery so that they could find out where the chickens came from.



In March, Jane had a yellow chicken, a grey chicken, a brown chicken, and a red rooster that went missing. Jane's family members saw them on Rebecca's farm in June. But the tails were different. The tail feathers were cut.



When the **court** asked Rebecca about the chickens. She said paid money for the chickens from people travelling through town in February. She then cut the feathers so that everyone would know they were hers.

But when the court asked here who she bought the chickens from, she could not remember their names and she did not have any paper that said how much money she gave the men. Did Rebecca **steal** the chickens?



## Questions

1. What is the **conflict** in this story? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. What do you think the **resolution** is? Do you think the chickens Rebecca had were taken from Jane? Why?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. What is a **antonym, synonym, or definition** for the words below? Look them up in a reference material.
4. **Court:** Definition: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
**Trial** Synonym: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
**Steal** Antonym: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_