

# BEAM Me Up: Considering Usefulness for Source Synthesis

## Background

- the originator of BEAM, Joseph Bizup, started by questioning source classification of texts into primary, secondary, and tertiary, explaining that because these students tend to be slippery based on what discipline they are used in, they are often difficult to explain and comprehend.
- Bizup suggested we teach students to examine the “effects” of different kinds of writing to better understand authors’ “postures” - or how they are reacting to and incorporating different kinds of texts.
- Students who can analyze an author’s posture can appropriately use the same posture in their own writing, making BEAM useful for both critical reading and writing

## Learning Objectives

Students will:

- Assess the utility of several pre-selected sources by reading the source and sorting it into one or more categories of BEAM
- Defend their choice given a pre-defined research topic
- Discuss how the given sources support (or do not support) one another in a means conducive to creating an argument using the BEAM framework

## Activity

### Part 1. (5 - 7 mins)

Discuss BEAM as a class using the BEAM slide

Class activity categorizing how a pre-chosen source could be used according to BEAM.

- Encyclopedia article is fairly obviously Background Information, but the Scholarly Article is more challenging because it has nothing to do with Stax - I like to point out that the author’s Method (lyric coding) is one that could be repeated, if so inclined.
- Bonus thought - could you use an article that is not about your topic in your paper - and how?
  - Good answers:

- No, if it isn't relevant
- Yes, if you are using a method or critical lens borrowed from the author, as long as it is cited.

### Part 2. (1 min)

Explain example topic: *The music and politics of Stax Records played a valuable part in our national history of racial integration.*

- Students will be working with this topic as a demonstration of how to analyze and use a variety of sources, from scholarly to popular.

### Part 3. (10 mins)

Group students into approx 8 groups (3 - 4 students per group)

- Have a topic packet pre-prepared
- Handout source folders (each group gets one, sources will be repeated)
- Give time to skim sources (10 - 12 minutes)
- Ask groups to follow instructions on session card in packet
- Students will categorize according to one or more categories of BEAM on whiteboard
- A source can be categorized by one or more aspects of BEAM!

### Part 4. (15 mins or longer)

Class discussion: Have groups report on the choices they made while looking at the sources on the overhead.

- Use whiteboard or large easel to lead discussion
  - Ask what evidence lead them to decide where to categorize it. Sources will be repeated among groups - be sure to get all responses. All responses are valid, and indeed, different classes will have very different ideas of what information is categorized in what ways.
- Do these sources work together to support an argument? How?
- Reinforce:
  - A single source can have multiple kinds of utility according the writing and how the author frames it. A good takeaway is that if a single piece of writing can have multiple categories represented, then that is a model for how to structure an argument.
  - The information that goes into a draft doesn't need to be in the order of the acronym. For example, background material can come before, after, or during the analysis of the exhibit, or the methodology could come after background and before argument.

## Suggestions

Having pre-prepared folders made this session work smoothly multiple times. However, we created the cards to have color labels with the idea of doing another grouping using the colors. Ultimately, this was too confusing. I would suggest not being concerned with the colors - unless you come up with a good use for them. In which case, please share it with me!