

HIPPOS Historical Source Analysis

What?

Historical documents are what create the actions, not just the record, of history. They are the political speeches that introduced new laws, they are the private letters that dreamed an end to social struggle, they are the powerful photos that exposed hidden atrocities, they are the truth in understanding human kind.

All historical sources can be much more deeply understood and appreciated for their contributions when examined through a handful of careful lenses. Analyzing the story behind the artifact is where true human understanding occurs, allowing us, today, to make better choices going into the future.

Why?

Historical Context: What is the setting in which this document was created?

- What has just happened? What's been happening for a long time?
- What is on the verge of happening? What won't happen for a long time?
- What deep-rooted issues are causing this document to be created?
- How does this document represent this era/period or issue?

Intended Audience: For who is this message meant? Who else would hear/see it?

- Single person, a specific group, a large sector of society?
- Is this audience one in which the speaker belongs?
- Is there a reason this audience has been targeted in particular?
- Who else would likely hear this during this time?

Point of View: What is the author's background, feelings, or characteristics?

- Race, gender, age, ethnicity, religion, other general background
- Education level, profession, role in the issue or society
- Personality, values, viewpoints on the issue

Purpose: What is the author trying to accomplish?

- Compliment Honor Inspire Encourage Praise
- Oppose Expose Contrast Warn Question Demand
- Solicit Suggest Offer Connect Prove Justify
- Introduce Predict Propose Establish Outline

Outside Information: What other facts, ideas, events are related to this document?

- Names of related people, events, laws, ideas
- Stats or facts about the person, event, era
- Long standing trends about larger topic, group of people

So what?: How can you put all these pieces together in a concise sentence?

- What does this document prove to you, the historical student?
- How does this document represent or defy the larger trend of the era?
- How does this document help support your understanding of the era?