

Document Analysis

NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ADMINISTRATION & LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

adapted from an OCTELA
2016 “Teaching with
Primary Sources”
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GRAPHIC ORGANIZERS & QUESTION WORKSHEETS TO
HELP STUDENTS ANALYZE PRIMARY DOCUMENTS

TOOLS FOR ANALYZING PRIMARY DOCUMENTS

The use of primary sources challenges students to use critical thinking skills as they interpret text, make connections, and question assumptions. Primary sources are often incomplete and have little context. Students must use prior and intertextual knowledge to work with multiple primary and secondary sources in order to find patterns. Inquiry drives analysis of primary documents and integration is key to constructing knowledge. Therefore, students may need some tools to scaffold their study of documents. Here are two forms and numerous resources that can help them with analysis.

1. **Written Document Analysis Worksheet** from Education Staff, National Archives and Records Administration

-This form can be found in an interactive PDF version at https://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/worksheets/written_document_analysis_worksheet.pdf. The National Archives and Records Administration also has PDF and HTML versions of each of the following at their Document Analysis Worksheet Page <https://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/worksheets/>:

- Photograph Analysis Worksheet
- Poster Analysis Worksheet
- Artifact Analysis Worksheet
- Sound Recording Analysis Worksheet
- Cartoon Analysis Worksheet
- Map Analysis Worksheet
- Motion Picture Analysis Worksheet

2. **Analyzing a Primary Source** from the Library of Congress

-This form can be found with leading questions at http://www.loc.gov/teachers/usingprimarysources/resources/Analyzing_Primary_Sources.pdf, and without leading questions at http://www.loc.gov/teachers/usingprimarysources/resources/Primary_Source_Analysis_Tool.pdf. The Library of Congress also has PDF and HTML versions of each of the following at this site <http://www.loc.gov/teachers/usingprimarysources/guides.html>:

- Analyzing Books and Other Printed Tests
- Analyzing Maps
- Analyzing Newspapers
- Analyzing Photographs and Prints
- Analyzing Sheet Music and Song Sheets
- Analyzing Manuscripts
- Analyzing Motion Pictures
- Analyzing Oral Histories
- Analyzing Political Cartoons
- Analyzing Sound Recordings

Written Document Analysis Worksheet

1. TYPE OF DOCUMENT (Check one):

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper | <input type="checkbox"/> Letter | <input type="checkbox"/> Patent |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Memorandum | <input type="checkbox"/> Map | <input type="checkbox"/> Telegram |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Press release | <input type="checkbox"/> Report | <input type="checkbox"/> Advertisement |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Congressional record | <input type="checkbox"/> Census report | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |

Designed and developed by the
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Archives and Records
Administration, Washington, DC

2. UNIQUE PHYSICAL QUALITIES OF THE DOCUMENT (Check one or more):

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Interesting letterhead | <input type="checkbox"/> Notations |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Handwritten | <input type="checkbox"/> "RECEIVED" stamp |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Typed | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Seals | |

3. DATE(S) OF DOCUMENT:

4. AUTHOR (OR CREATOR) OF THE DOCUMENT & POSITION/TITLE:

5. FOR WHAT AUDIENCE WAS THE DOCUMENT WRITTEN? _____

6. DOCUMENT INFORMATION (There are many possible ways to answer A-E.)

A. List three things the author said that you think are important:

B. Why do you think this document was written?

C. What evidence in the document helps you know why it was written? Quote from the document.

D. List two things the document tells you about life in the United States at the time it was written:

E. Write a question to the author that is left unanswered by the document:

Analyzing a Primary Source

Library of Congress Analysis:

OBSERVE (Identify and Notice Details)	REFLECT (Hypothesize/Make Meaning about the Source)	QUESTION (What Do You Wonder About?)
<p>Describe what you see. What do you notice first? Are there any images or decorations? Is there any text you can read? What does it say?</p> <p>How are the text and other information arranged on the paper? Describe anything about this text that looks strange or unfamiliar. What other details can you see?</p>	<p>Who wrote this text?</p> <p>Author's Purpose:</p> <p>Intended Audience:</p> <p>What was going on at this time?</p> <p>What can you learn from examining this text?</p> <p>If someone created this text today, what would be different?</p>	<p>What are some questions you still want to know about this text?</p> <p>Who?</p> <p>What?</p> <p>When?</p> <p>Where?</p> <p>Why?</p> <p>How?</p>

Further Investigation (Choose One):

1. Read the text again and highlight key words and phrases that express the main idea of each paragraph. Write a summary statement of the main idea for each paragraph in the margin next to the paragraph.
2. Write down words or phrases which infer the author's point of view. Then, summarize the author's point of view in your own words. Write down arguments that someone with an opposing viewpoint might make about the issues and events described in this text. How might the opponent present the information differently?
3. Examine a section of the text. Think about what you already know about this period in history. How does the text support or contradict your current understanding of this time period? Can you see any clues to the point of view of the author of this text? Use quotations from the text to support your claims.