

Primary Source Document Analysis S.H.E.A.T.s

Source Type and Subject:

- What is the form or type of document? (diary, government report, speech, fiction, photo, painting, etc)
- What is the topic or Content?
- How does the form of the document affect the meaning of the piece or our interpretation of its reliability and validity?

Historical Context:

- In what time and place was the piece created?
- What were the circumstances that led to the creation of the document?
- How might time and place affect the meaning of the document?
- What do you know about the time, context, event/movement the document is about?

Evaluate the Author's Point of View:

- Who is the author, creator, or speaker?
- What is the author's gender? Occupation? Social class or rank? Nationality or ethnicity? Religion? Level of education?
- What is the author's point of view? And what is it based on?
- Is the author a reliable commentator on the topic? Why?

Author's Purpose and Argument:

- What is the main idea or purpose of the document?
- Who is the intended audience for this document?
- How does the intended audience affect our interpretation of the document?
- What is the reason behind this document's existence?
- Why was it created—to inform, persuade, frighten, delight, deceive, etc.?
- Why is this source important to the topic or question?

Tone:

- What does the author's tone or diction indicate about the author's attitude?
- How is this tone conveyed? (wording, rhetorical style, etc.)

Questions:

- What questions do you have about the document?
- What questions do you have about the author?
- What other types of documents might improve your understanding of the topic?
- What confidence do you have in the completeness and reliability of the source?