

Understanding Perspective in Primary Sources

Every person has a perspective. Background, beliefs, and experiences shape their point of view. Anytime a person creates something, they bring their own perspective into their work. This tool will help you identify perspective. Answer the following questions as best you can based on the primary source.

Meet the primary source.

What type of primary source is this? (letter, report, photograph, artifact, map, poster, cartoon, video, sound recording, artwork, etc.)

What do you notice first? Describe it as if you were explaining to someone who can't see it.

Observe its parts.

Who made it? Can you tell if one person created it? Or was it a group, like an organization?

When was it made?

What personal or specific information is included about the person or group who made it?

Who is the intended audience?

Try to make sense of it.

What do you know about this primary source or where it comes from that helps you understand it?

What else was happening at the time this was created? How does that context (or background information) help you understand why it was created?

List details that reveal the creator's perspective. What clues can you find about their background or point of view?

Why was this primary source made?

Use it as historical evidence.

This is one piece of a larger story. What questions do you have that this primary source doesn't answer?

What evidence does the creator present that you should "fact check" (verify as true)? Do other sources support or contradict this?

This primary source shows one perspective on this topic. What other perspectives should you get?

What perspective do **you** bring to this topic and source? How does your background and the time in which you live affect this?

