

Primary sources – first-hand accounts - enable historians to get as close as possible to what actually happened during an historical event or time period. Examples include government records, letters, speeches, diaries, merchants' account books, literature, pictures, etc. Secondary sources are created later by someone who did not experience first-hand or participate in the actual event(s), and are generally scholarly books and articles. While both primary and secondary sources preserve the memory of past events, no single source gives historians a complete or totally unbiased picture. Each has its intended audience, purpose, viewpoint, as well as relative value, and certain limitations.

*In a Document-Based Question (DBQ), several sources (documents) are given (seven, precisely) that are to be used in order to fully answer the prompt (question). It is imperative to critically analyze these documents in order to gain a useful and coherent picture of the past. You must remember to **APPS** each document in order to fully analyze it:*

Audience:

- Who is the intended audience of this document?
- Was this source meant for one person's eyes, or for the public?
- If the audience is directed at a particular group, how does that contribute to the importance of the doc?
- How does the audience affect the source?
- Why/how does the intended audience matter when answering the prompt?

Purpose:

- What was the author's message or argument?
- What was he/she trying to get across?
- What inferences can you make from these documents?
- Why was this document written?
- What was it trying to achieve?
- Why/how does the purpose of the document matter when answering the prompt?

Point of View:

- What do you know about the author (race, sex, class, occupation, religion, age, political beliefs, region of origin (person or document), etc.)?
- Why does the POV of the author matter when thinking about the document in relation to the prompt?

Situation:

- What was going on during the time period this document was created?
- What considerations can be made about the events leading up to and/or following this time period?
- How is the situation relevant to the prompt?