


# Document Analysis Worksheets

Teaching students to successfully analyze primary sources begins with teaching them to ask (and answer) good questions. The following worksheets, developed by the education staff of the National Archives, are intended to guide student analysis.

The first worksheet, "Introduction to Documents" suggests an activity to orient students to documents. The subsequent worksheets focus on different types of primary sources: written documents, maps, photographs, cartoons, artifacts, sound recordings, motion pictures, and posters. Each offers suggestions for how students might "read" a document in order to understand its content and significance. They begin by asking students to locate and identify the basic

components of the document—the date, author, physical qualities, etc. Later questions encourage students to think critically about the document's content. 



# Introduction to Documents Worksheet

1. This evening, with the help of a family member or an adult who is close to you, look through the souvenirs of your life that have been saved as you have grown. For example, these might include a photograph, a letter, a diary, a newspaper clipping, a birth certificate, a report card, or a library or social security card. Select one item to bring into class that you are willing to share with your classmates and teacher.
2. During your turn in class, present your document and provide the following information:
  - a. What type of document is this?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - b. What is the date of the document?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - c. Who created the document?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - d. How does the document relate to you?
3. Consider, for your document and the documents of your classmates, responses to the following questions:
  - a. What does the existence of this document say about whoever created it?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - b. What does the existence of this document say about whoever saved it?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - c. What does the existence of this document say about American life in this era?

# Written Document Analysis Worksheet

1. Type of Document (Check one):

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

2. Unique Physical Qualities of the Document (check one or more):

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

3. Date(s) of the 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:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

B. Why do you think this document was written?

C. What evidence in the document helps you to 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:

- 1.
- 2.

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

# Map Analysis Worksheet

1. Type of Map (check one):

- |   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Raised relief map    | <input type="checkbox"/> Satellite photograph/mosaic | <input type="checkbox"/> Artifact map     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Political map        | <input type="checkbox"/> Weather map                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Contour-line map |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Natural resource map | <input type="checkbox"/> Topographic map             | <input type="checkbox"/> Pictograph       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bird's-eye view      | <input type="checkbox"/> Military map                | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____     |

2. Physical Qualities of the Map (check one or more):

- |                                  |                                       |   |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Compass | <input type="checkbox"/> Title        | <input type="checkbox"/> Notations        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Date    | <input type="checkbox"/> Legend (key) | <input type="checkbox"/> Name of mapmaker |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Scale   | <input type="checkbox"/> Handwritten  | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____     |

3. Date of Map:

4. Creator of Map:

5. Where was the map produced?

6. Map Information

A. List three things in this map that you think are important:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

B. Why do you think this map was drawn?

C. What evidence in the map suggests why it was drawn?

D. What information does the map add to the textbook's account of this event?

E. Does the information in this map support or contradict information that you have read about this event? Explain.

F. Write a question to the mapmaker that is left unanswered by this map.

# Photograph Analysis Worksheet

## STEP 1. OBSERVATION

A. Study the photograph for 2 minutes. Form an overall impression of the photograph and then examine individual items. Next, divide the photo into quadrants and study each section to see what new details become visible.

B. Use the chart below to list people, objects, and activities in the photograph.

PEOPLE	OBJECTS	ACTIVITIES

## STEP 2. INFERENCE

Based on what you have observed above, list three things you might infer from this photograph:

1.

2.

3.

## STEP 3. QUESTIONS

A. What questions does this photograph raise in your mind?

B. Where could you find answers to them?

# Cartoon Analysis Worksheet

Visuals

Words (not all cartoons include words)

## STEP ONE

1. List the objects or people you see in the cartoon.
2. Identify the cartoon caption and/or title.
3. Locate three words or phrases used by the cartoonist to identify objects or people within the cartoon.
4. Record any important dates or numbers that appear in the cartoon.

## STEP TWO

1. Which of the objects on your list are symbols?
2. What do you think each symbol means?
3. Which words or phrases in the cartoon appear to be the most significant? Why do you think so?
4. List adjectives that describe the emotions portrayed in the cartoon.

## STEP THREE

1. Describe the action taking place in the cartoon.
2. Explain how the words in the cartoon clarify the symbols.
3. Explain the message of the cartoon.
4. What special interest groups would agree/disagree with the cartoon's message? Why?

# Artifact Analysis Worksheet

## 1. Type of Artifact

A. Describe the material from which it was made: bone, pottery, metal, wood, stone, leather, glass, paper, cardboard, cotton, wood, plastic, other material.

## 2. Special Qualities of the Artifact

A. Describe how it looks and feels: shape, color, texture, size, weight, movable parts, anything printed, stamped or written on it.

## 3. Uses of the Artifact

A. What might it have been used for?

B. Who might have used it?

C. Where might it have been used?

D. When might it have been used?

## 4. What Does the Artifact Tell Us?

A. What does it tell us about technology of the time in which it was made and used?

B. What does it tell us about the life and times of the people who made it and used it?

C. Can you name a similar item today?

## 5. Bring a Sketch, a Photograph, or the Artifact Listed in 4C Above to Class.

# Sound Recording Analysis Worksheet

## Step 1. Pre-listening

A. Whose voices will you hear on this recording?

B. What is the date of this recording?

C. Where was this recording made?

## Step 2. Listening

A. Type of sound recording (check one):

- |  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Policy speech           | <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment broadcast | <input type="checkbox"/> Arguments before a court |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Congressional testimony | <input type="checkbox"/> Press conference        | <input type="checkbox"/> Panel discussion         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> News report             | <input type="checkbox"/> Convention proceedings  | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Interview               | <input type="checkbox"/> Campaign speech         |   |

B. Unique physical qualities of the recording

- |   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Music          | <input type="checkbox"/> Narrated              | <input type="checkbox"/> Background sound |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Live broadcast | <input type="checkbox"/> Special sound effects |   |

C. What is the tone or mood of this recording?

## Step 3. Post-listening (or repeated listening)

A. List three things in this sound recording that you think are important:

1.

2.

3.

B. Why do you think the original broadcast was made and for what audience?

C. What evidence in the recording helps you to know why it was made?



D. List two things this sound recording tells you about life in the United States at the time it was made:

1.

2.

E. Write a question to the broadcaster that is left unanswered by this sound recording.

F. What information do you gain about this event that would not be conveyed by a written transcript? Be specific.

# Motion Picture Analysis Worksheet

## Step 1. Pre-viewing

A. Title of film: \_\_\_\_\_

Record Group source: \_\_\_\_\_

B. What do you think you will see in this motion picture? List three concepts or ideas that you might expect to see based on the title of the film. List some people you might expect to see based on the title of the film.

Concepts/Ideas	People
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.

## Step 2. Viewing

A. Type of motion picture (check where applicable)

- |   |   |                                       |
|---|---|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Animated cartoon | <input type="checkbox"/> Propaganda film          | <input type="checkbox"/> Combat film  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Documentary film | <input type="checkbox"/> Theatrical short subject | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Newsreel         | <input type="checkbox"/> Training film            |                                       |

B. Physical qualities of the motion picture (check where applicable)

- |  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Music           | <input type="checkbox"/> Color            | <input type="checkbox"/> Animation      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Narration       | <input type="checkbox"/> Live action      | <input type="checkbox"/> Dramatizations |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Special effects | <input type="checkbox"/> Background noise |   |

C. Note how camera angles, lighting, music, narration, and/or editing contribute to creating an atmosphere in this film. What is the mood or tone of the film?

## Step 3. Post-viewing (or repeated viewing)

A. Circle the things that you listed in the previewing activity that were validated by your viewing of the motion picture.

B. What is the central message(s) of this motion picture?

C. Consider the effectiveness of the film in communicating its message. As a tool of communication, what are its strengths and weaknesses?

D. How do you think the filmmakers wanted the audience to respond?

E. Does this film appeal to the viewer's reason or emotion? How does it make you feel?

F. List two things this motion picture tells you about life in the United States at the time it was made:

1.

2.

G. Write a question to the filmmaker that is left unanswered by the motion picture.

H. What information do you gain about this event that would not be conveyed by a written source? Be specific.

# Poster Analysis Worksheet

1. What are the main colors used in the poster?
2. What symbols (if any) are used in the poster?
3. If a symbol is used, is it
  - a. clear (easy to interpret)?
  - b. memorable?
  - c. dramatic?
4. Are the messages in the poster primarily visual, verbal, or both?
5. Who do you think is the intended audience for the poster?
6. What does the poster's creator hope the audience will do?
7. What purpose(s) is served by the poster?
8. The most effective posters use symbols that are unusual, simple, and direct. Is this an effective poster?