

The APPARTS Method of Document Analysis

Historians work with **primary documents** in trying to understand the past. However, the documents are hard to decipher unless one knows about the creator of the document, the background of the document, and why it was created. In an APPARTS analysis, historians look at a document this way:

(A)uthor—Who created the document? This is more than simply providing a name. Sometimes the author is someone everyone knows. Other times, it is someone no one knows. In any case, WHO is the person? What does this document say about the author? **Describe** the author as completely as possible. Base your description on the contents of the document. Do NOT view this part of the analysis as a biography of the author.

(P)lace and time—Where and when was the source produced? This is more than simply a date. What event(s) and/or era(s) provide the backdrop and context for the document? What was going on in history that might help explain why this document was created when it was? What was the specific event/issue of the time that prompted the document's creation?

(P)rior Knowledge—What do you already know that would further your understanding of the source?

(A)udience—For whom was the source created? Does this affect the reliability of the source? Who does the author plan on delivering this message to? What does the author think about his/her audience? Why is the audience paying attention to this document? Describe the audience as completely as possible. What do you think the audience's reaction(s) was/were?

(R)eason—Why was the source produced at the time it was produced? What does the speaker hope to accomplish? This paragraph is a perfect place for a quote from the document to illustrate meaning (with an explanation of its relevance).

(T)he Main Idea—What is the source trying to convey?

(S)ignificance—Why is this source important? What does it say about the era in which it was created? What, if anything, did it lead to? What was the response to the document? Did the speaker accomplish his/her purpose? Explain. Is there a connection to later historical events or the modern world? If so, explain.