

Guide to Analyzing Sources

Introduction

There are many different types of information that we call "sources" in Social Studies. These include quotes, cartoons, graphs and pictures. Each one is selected to present someone's opinion on an issue. The job we have is to identify what the perspective of the source is, how we know, and why it is important to helping us understand the issue. Below are some important considerations when analyzing a source.

Quotation

- 1) Explain the source
 - Discuss any background or contextual information. For example:
 - Who is the author? Where is he/she from?
 - author's political, economic, and/or social views
 - events that may have shaped his/her perspective
 - Discuss the message, intent, or purpose of the author/speaker without repeating the source
 - 2-3 sentences "describing the meaning" of the quotation, as it relates to your topic
- 2) Identify the perspective
 - terms, concepts, or ideas involved
 - Does the author accept or reject any terms, concepts or ideas?
 - Is there bias?
- 3) Provide Support
 - Use direct quotations and/or facts from the source to support your interpretations

Political Cartoon

- 1) Review the entire cartoon, identify what you know
 - first impression
 - terms, symbols, and concepts
 - background information
 - historical context
- 2) Identify satire (criticizing an idea or perspective)
 - identify the idea or perspective that is being criticized
- 3) Identify and explain techniques
 - labeling, exaggeration, analogy, symbolism, irony
 - overall message and how it relates to the topic: globalization, nationalism, liberalism
- 4) Provide support for your interpretations using evidence from the image

Picture

- 1) Explain the Picture
 - important details of the picture (1-2 sentences)
 - background or contextual information
 - 2-3 sentences "describing the meaning" of the picture, as it relates to your topic
- 2) Identify the perspective

- terms, concepts or ideas
- does the picture appear to support or reject any terms, concepts or ideas

3) Provide Support

- specific references to aspects of the picture to support your interpretations

Graphs, Tables, Statistics, Map and Charts

1) Describe important details presented in the source (1-2 sentences)

- X and Y axis?
- compared/contrasted
- background or contextual information
- 2-3 sentences “describing the meaning” of the picture: globalization, nationalism, or liberalism
- conclusions drawn
- predict possible trends
- specific references to aspects of the sources to support your interpretations