

Document Analysis

1. Examine your item. If it is published, note the author (individual, organization, or governmental unit) and title. Note the publication information: place of publication, publisher, and date. If it is a manuscript or ephemeral print item, note the collection name and the person or organization responsible for the document. Try to use clues to guess at the approximate date if it is not apparent.
2. Whose perspective does it provide? What is its purpose? Can you discern a political or propagandistic intention? If so, what is it?
3. Speculate a bit: What might some of the larger stories surrounding the document be? What do you already know about the period your document was made and what might your document reveal about this period that is unfamiliar to you?
4. How might you or another historian use this document as a primary source? What historical arguments could it support?
5. Historical documents stimulate questions. In order to understand more completely the story of this document, what are some things you need to know?