

Analyzing Primary and Secondary Sources

Virginia and United States Government

Throughout this course, you will be responsible for analyzing primary and secondary sources. A primary source is an original document or an account from someone that witnessed an event or series of events. A secondary source is an account from someone that was not there. He or she has “second hand” knowledge of an event or series of events.

As you analyze the documents or sources, you should attempt to answer the following questions.

Who x 2

First Who

- Who is the author of the document, or who is the source?
- Is it an original document or a firsthand account of an issue or event?
- What do you know about the author? How credible is the author?

Second Who

- Who is the audience?
- For whom was it written?
- Who did the author intend to see or hear the work?

When

- When was it written or said?
- How involved in the event or the issue was the author?

Where

- Where was it written or said?
- How close to the event or the issue was the author?

Why

- Why was it written or said?

What

- What is/are the main point(s) and the significance?
- What else may have been happening at this time?
- What may have influenced what was written or said in any way?