



Primary Source Analysis
Questions to guide the examination of a document or image
ICE AGE

Identify:

1. Type of document or image (newspaper, diary, painting, letter, image, map, song, photograph, etc.)
2. The creator of the document or image; is the creator's background known? (Is this person credible?)
3. When was the document or image produced? (Date)
4. Where was the document or image produced? (Location)

Contextualize:

1. What significant events were happening when the document or image was produced?
2. How was the creator connected or witness to the event recorded?
3. What were the motivations behind the creation of the text or image?
4. Who was the intended audience for the text or image?

Explore:

- 1) What factual information does the document or image convey? Identify ideas or images that you think are important.
- 2) What opinions are offered?
- 3) Does the document or image reveal the implied beliefs of the document creator?
- 4) What is not stated, shown, or revealed in the document or image?
- 5) What was surprising or noteworthy about the document or image?

Analyze:

1. How is the information presented in the document or image conveyed? (Does the creator use humor, evocative images, symbols, patriotism, anger, guilt, etc?)
2. Historical context – values at the time, social mores, methods of communication?
3. How might others at the time have reacted to this source?
4. What ideas or beliefs can be inferred or suggested from this document or image?

Gaps:

1. Is there any missing information or information that requires further investigation?
2. Was the information or image recorded during the event, immediately after the event, or after some time has passed? How much time?
3. Are any references which require further clarification such as named individuals, symbols, ideas, terms, or jargon?

Evaluate:

1. How does this source compare with other primary sources on the same subject?
2. How does this source compare to secondary sources on the same subject?
3. Does the source present credible information about the subject or event?
4. Does this document or image help you better understand the event or the times? Explain.