

By this point in the semester you are gaining familiarity with what to do with historical documents and other primary sources and how to connect them to historical arguments. Now you'll do the same thing on a slightly larger scale for this project, which is a 5-page essay based on at least two primary documents that have something in common.

Choose a book from the list attached at the end of these guidelines. Each one is a collection of historical documents on a theme related to the course. Develop a question for historical investigation, using at least two documents from within the same book as evidence. Your question shouldn't be just a question of fact (—what happened?) but rather of interpretation (—How? Why? What did it mean?). You will use *and quote from* the primary sources in order to answer your question. In your paper, correctly and completely cite (using footnotes) the documents you use.

Schedule

Oct 12 Choose your book and documents, formulate your question (in-class workshop Fri Oct 12)

Oct 19 Rough draft of your paper is due in class for peer review

Oct 26 Final essay is due in class in hard copy (please, no electronic submissions)

The paper is worth 24 points of your final grade

Begin your paper by **ASKING** the historical question you investigated. This does not have to be in the actual form of a question. (approx 1/2 page)

Then **DESCRIBE** each of your two (or more) historical sources, placing them each in its historical context, answering some of the —A and —B questions from the attached list. This part is similar to what you do in your Skill Builder papers. (approx 2 pages)

Then **ANSWER** your question, **USING EVIDENCE** from the two documents – in the form of quotations, summary, description, or comparison. Remember to —frame your quotations (no orphans!) to make it clear which document they come from, and footnote all quotations. (approx 2 pages)

Provide a **CONCLUSION** that summarizes your argument and the relevance of these documents to it. (approx 1/2 page)

Total length = 5 pages. Use footnotes (as we do in the Skill Builders). There is no need for a cover page, but do make sure your paper has a useful & interesting title (i.e. not —Primary Source Project!).

Some helpful transition & argument phrases:

This suggests that...

As [author's name] argues...

[*Document A*] provides evidence of...

In contrast to [*Document A*]...

[*Document B*] offers a glimpse into...

Some Questions to Ask Primary Sources

Primary sources do not speak for themselves—they have to be interpreted. You do not just simply read about the past, you must investigate the past by asking questions. You must be the detective, and interrogate the document.

Ask it questions, like:

A. Historical context

Who wrote it? What do you know about this person? Where and when was it written?

How much time has lapsed between the document's creation and the event it portrays? Why was it written? Was it meant to be public or private? Who was it written for? What do you know about its audience?

Did the author have firsthand knowledge of the event? Or did he/she report what others saw and heard?

B. Understanding the document

What are the key words and what do they mean?

Does the author wish to inform or persuade others? Check the words – they may tell you whether the author is trying to be objective, or persuasive. What point is the author trying to make? Summarize the thesis. Can you restate it in one sentence?

What evidence does the author give to support this thesis? What assumptions does the author make?

Was the author a neutral party, or did she/he have opinions or interests that might have influenced what was recorded? Does the author have reasons to be honest or dishonest?

C. The document as a source of historical information

Is this document similar to others from the same time period? How widely was it circulated? What problems, assumptions, and ideas does it share with other documents from the time period?

Why are you looking at it now?

How might you verify the information in this document?

All sources have biases and limitations. Their reliability and usefulness are determined by the questions asked of them. If your source can't be trusted to tell you facts, ask about opinions. For example, if someone swears that Elvis was abducted by Martians, the question you should ask is not, "Was "The King" really snatched by space invaders?" but rather, "Why would an American living in the 1990s want to believe this story?" What does the existence of such a belief tell us about the individual, the society, or the era?

Resources:

Wisconsin Historical Society, —Using Primary Sources, <http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/turningpoints/primarysources.asp>

—How to Read a Primary Source, www.ups.edu/faculty/wbreitenbach/how'to'prmy.doc

Library of Congress, —Questions for Analyzing Primary Sources <http://memory.loc.gov/learn/lessons/psources/studqsts.html>

Books for 112 Research Paper Reserve List

<i>Author</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Time Period</i>
Jane Addams	Twenty Years at Hull House	Late 19 th century
Jo Ann Argersinger	Triangle Fire	1911
Eric Arnesen	Black Protest and the Great Migration	1900-1940
Colin Calloway	Our Hearts Fell to the Ground: Plains Indians Views of How the West Was Lost	Late 19 th century
Richard W. Etulain	Cesar Chavez: A Brief Biography with Documents	Mid 20 th century
Jeffrey B. Ferguson	The Harlem Renaissance	1920s
Ellen Fitzpatrick	Muckraking: Three Landmark Articles	Late 19 th century
David Howard-Pitney	Martin Luther King Jr, Malcolm X and the Civil Rights Struggle of the 1950s and 1960s	1950s-1960s
Jacqueline Jones	Southern Horrors and Other Writings	Circa 1900
William Link	The Rebuilding of the Old Commonwealths and Other Documents of Social Reform in the Progressive Era South	Late 19 th century
Waldo E. Martin Jr	Brown v. Board of Education: A Brief History with Documents	Mid 20 th century
Jeffrey P. Moran	Scopes Trial	1920s
Richard Polenberg	The Era of Franklin D. Roosevelt 1933-1945: A Brief History with Documents	1933-1945
Ellen Schrecker	The Age of McCarthyism: A Brief History with Documents	Mid 20 th century
Ronald Story and Bruce Laurie	The Rise of Conservatism in America, 1945-2000: A Brief History with Documents	1945-2000
Nancy A. Walker	Women's Magazines 1940-1960: Gender Roles and the Popular Press	1940-1960
Susan Ware	Title IX: A Brief History with Documents	1970s
Nancy Woloch	Muller v. Oregon	Circa 1910
Reed Ueda	Postwar Immigrant America: A Social History	1945-present