

Questions for Analyzing Primary Sources

The following questions may help you judge the quality of primary sources:

Who created the source and why? Was it created through a spur-of-the-moment act, a routine transaction, or a thoughtful, deliberate process?

Did the recorder have firsthand knowledge of the event? Or, did the recorder report what others saw and heard?

Was the recorder a neutral party, or did the creator have opinions or interests that might have influenced what was recorded?

Did the recorder produce the source for personal use, for one or more individuals, or for a large audience?

Was the source meant to be public or private?

Did the recorder wish to inform or persuade others? (Check the words in the source. The words may tell you whether the recorder was trying to be objective or persuasive.) Did the recorder have reasons to be honest or dishonest?

Was the information recorded during the event, immediately after the event, or after some lapse of time? How large a lapse of time?

When you have finished reading this section, print out [Questions for Analyzing Primary Sources](#) to use later in this lesson.