

Extended Analysis of Documents ~ Handout

Four ways to extend the analysis of primary sources include correctly analyzing:

- Author's Point of View (POV)
- Author's Purpose
- Intended Audience
- Historical Context

Point of View (POV)

The best way to earn the Point of View (POV) point is to go beyond the basic identity of the source author and the source itself, as described in the document source line. In order to write a successful POV statement, you should try to establish a better understanding of the identity of the author; you can do this by asking yourself questions about the author and the source. What is the author's profession? What is the author's gender or social class? What religion does the author follow? Does the author have an identifiable ethnicity, nationality, or other allegiance to a particular group? Once you've asked these questions, go further and explain how one of these factors may have influenced the content of the source. Your complete POV statement should both identify an influence that may have shaped the author or source and explain how that particular influence specifically affected the content of the document.

Put simply, to do POV identify an important aspect of **WHO** the author is, and explain **HOW** the author's personhood might have impacted what they wrote.

Author's Purpose

Author's Purpose can be thought of as the goal sought by the author. It involves identifying the author's endgame, what they hope to accomplish, and why they are writing the document. Common purposes include attempts to inform, to entertain, to persuade, to influence, to teach, to record, requirements of the author's job or profession, to describe, self-aggrandizement, and/or to regulate (as in laws or rules).

If you pick up on a 'purpose' of the author in producing the document write sentences which describe the purpose conveyed. In describing author's purpose in creating a source include the phrases "the author's purpose in writing was to _____" and "is shown by_____."

Intended Audience

Authors aim what they write to particular groups of people. Observing the ‘intended audience’ of a source involves identifying a person or group the author expects to inform or influence in creating the source. It is very important in constructing your argument about the intended audience that you go beyond what is noted in the source line of the document. Credit for extended analysis of a document will not be granted for mere repetition of an audience identified in the source line.

If you know the ‘intended audience’ of the author write sentences which describe the audience. In describing author’s intended audience include the phrases “the author’s intended audience was _____” and “is shown by_____.”

Historical Context

Analysis of ‘Historical Context’ involves connecting a document to specific historical events, to specific circumstances of time and place, and/or to broader regional, national, or global processes. Identifying the Historical Context places the document within broader trends contemporary to the source. It might also connect the document across time to earlier and later eras, or across space to events happening in different places.

To place a document within an historical context, identify the particular historical trend or process in which the document fits. Write a sentence which describes the context, explain how the document participates in that historical trend or process. Include the phrase “the historical context of this document is _____”.