Maine Memory Network

Using Primary Source Documents in the Classroom

Primary source documents provide unique opportunities for the past to be explored. Eyewitness accounts provide a rich and descriptive explanation of the past and can give insight into perspectives that are rarely examined in depth by textbooks.

Lesson Plan

The following lesson plan is an introduction for teachers and students using primary source documents for the first time. Portions of this plan could also be used to establish a model/guide that students could continue to use for subsequent examinations of primary sources in the classroom.

Objectives

Students will be able to...

1. define, identify, and explain the differences between primary and secondary sources.
2. analyze, contextualize, and interpret a primary source document.
3. cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text. (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.6.1)
4. identify central ideas in a text and provide an objective summary of the text. (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.7.2, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.8.2, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.2, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.11-12.2)
5. determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.6.6, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.7.6, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.8.6, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.6, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.11-12.6)

Definitions

(Teachers: keep in mind that the exact definitions of primary and secondary sources can vary depending on context.**)**

primary source – a document created or written during the time period under study; a contemporary account of an event; the original material on which historical research is based

secondary source – interprets, evaluates, analyzes a primary source or sources; a document created by someone removed by time from the event

Materials needed

- o a primary source document (students will need computers or tablets with internet access if they will accessing the document directly from Maine Memory Network)
    - ▪ examples: a diary, letter, map, cartoon, poster, picture. You can find a variety of primary source documents on Maine Memory Network (www.mainememory.net).

- o worksheets (see below) to record student's answers to questions

- o pen or pencil

Directions

1.) Discuss the definitions of primary and secondary sources with students. Provide them with a topic or scenario and ask them to name primary and secondary sources on that topic/scenario.

Questions for discussion:
Explain how the example you gave is an example of a primary/secondary source.

2.) Introduce the working with primary sources lesson:

We will begin practicing working with primary sources today by examining a primary source document from Maine Memory Network.   We use the word **practice** *because studying history and working with primary sources is a skill, not unlike learning to read, learning to play an instrument, or learning a new language; you need to start with the basics, understand that you may make mistakes and need support as you learn, accept new challenges as you grow in the skill, and that you will get better with consistent* **practice**.

You can instruct students to search MMN and choose a document themselves or direct them to/share with them a document on MMN that you have already selected. Depending on what works best for your students and on your access to computers/internet, you may want to have copies of the documents printed for them and ready to distribute.

3.) Inform students that you will begin this exercise by making a preliminary examination of the document. Ask them to read and look very closely at the document. You might even encourage them to write down what they are thinking **as they are**

reading, recording their thoughts directly on their copy of the document itself. You might also ask them to make note of or circle words/phrases they don't understand, underline words or phrases that stand out to them, etc.. Circulate among students and check in with their progress.

4.) Explain to students that to perform a close study of the document that they will complete three short worksheets: **Examine the Document**, **Put the Document into Context**, and **Interpreting the Document**. If staggering introduction of each worksheet over more than one lesson, modify introductions as appropriate.

5.) Distribute **Examine the Document** worksheet. Review the questions with students and make sure each question is clear. Ask students to refer back to their primary source document to complete the questions and record their answers on the worksheet.

- *What type of document is it?*
- *What is the date of the document? If you can't pinpoint an exact date, what is your best estimate? How did you arrive at that estimate?*
- *Who created the document? If you can't name the document's creator, what is your best guess about who might have created it? How did you make that guess?*
- *Why was the document created? If you don't know the reason for sure, explain your best guess.*
- *Any distinguishing marks or features on the document (date stamps, someone else's notes in the margin, etc.)?*
- *Is there anything about the document that confuses you or that you don't understand? Does your initial examination of the document leave you with any questions?*

6.) Review some of the questions and the students answer for **Examine the Document**; this can be done as a class or by the students working together in small groups and reporting out to each other.

7.) When students have completed **Examine the Document** and are ready, they may begin the **Put the Document into Context** worksheet and consider the following questions:

- *What was happening in Maine/the United States/the world when this document was created?*
- *What does this document say about Maine or American life in the era it was created?*
- *What does the existence of this document say about whomever created it?*

o *Do you believe the document is an accurate representation of what was happening? Why or why not?*

8.) When students have completed **Put the Document into Context** and are ready, they may begin the **Interpreting the Document** worksheet and consider the following questions:

o *What do you think is the historical significance of this document **or** why is document important?*
o *What can be learned from this document **or** what story does it tell?*
o *How do you think your own experience could influence the way that you are interpreting the document?*
o *If you could ask the author of the document a question, what would you ask?*

Suggestions for Modification:

➢ Stagger the completion of the **Examine the Document**, **Put the Document into Context**, and **Interpreting the Document** worksheets over more than one lesson or by introducing them only after a student or students have mastered the skills in the previous worksheet, (ie) don't instruct students to complete **Put the Document Into Context** until they have numerous opportunities to practice **Examine the Document** and have demonstrated mastery.

➢ Transfer the worksheet questions to a graphic organizer for completion.

➢ Depending of the skills and experience of your students, you may want to eliminate some of the questions from the worksheets and re-introduce them once they have had more practice and gained more experience.

Extension and Follow-up Activities

1. Ask students what primary source documents they have that would describe their lives to future historians. For example, driver's license, birth certificate, report card, yearbook, letter, diary, etc. Ask students to bring in such a document and have classmates analyze them in the same way they did historical source documents.

2. Ask students to choose a topic from their textbook that they think could be fleshed out better if the textbook included more primary source material on the topic. Ask them to search Maine Memory Network and identify primary sources that help expand their understanding of that topic.

Maine Learning Results:
Grade Level: PreK-2; Content Area: Social Studies: HISTORY (A1a, A1b, A1c, A1d, A1e, A3, E1a, E1b, E1e, E2a, E2b)
Grade Level: 3-5; Content Area: Social Studies: HISTORY (A1a, A1c, A1d, A1e, A3, E1a, E1b, E1c, E2a, E2b)
Grade Level: 6-8; Content Area: Social Studies: HISTORY (A1a, A1b, A1c, A1d, A1e, A1f, A1g, A1h, A1k, A1l, A3, E1a, E1b, E1d, E2a, E2b, E2c)
Grade Level: 9-Diploma; Content Area: Social Studies: HISTORY (A1a, A1b, A1c, A1d, A1e, A1i, A1j, A3, E1a, E1b, E1d, E2a, E2b)

Common Core State Standards:
Anchor Standards: COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS ANCHOR STANDARDS FOR READING (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.7); COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS ANCHOR STANDARDS FOR WRITING (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.2, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.3, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.4, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.5, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.6, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.7, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.8); COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS ANCHOR STANDARDS FOR SPEAKING AND LISTENING (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.2, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.4, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.5); COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS ANCHOR STANDARDS FOR LANGUAGE (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.L.1, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.L.2)
Kindergarten: WRITING (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.K.2, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.K.3, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.K.6, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.K.7); LANGUAGE (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.K.1, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.K.2)
Grade 1: WRITING (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.1.2, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.1.6, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.1.7, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.1.8); LANGUAGE (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.1.1, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.1.2)
Grade 2: WRITING (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.2.2, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.2.6, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.2.7); LANGUAGE (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.2.1, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.2.2, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.2.3)
Grade 3: WRITING (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.3.2, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.3.2.a, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.3.6, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.3.7); LANGUAGE (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.3.1, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.3.2, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.3.3)
Grade 4: WRITING (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.2, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.2.a, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.2.b, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.6, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.7, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.8, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.9); LANGUAGE (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.4.1, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.4.2, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.4.3)
Grade 5: WRITING (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.2, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.2.a, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.2.b, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.6, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.7, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.8, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.9); LANGUAGE (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.5.1, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.5.2, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.5.3)
Grade 6: WRITING (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.6.2, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.6.6, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.6.7, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.6.8, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.6.9); LANGUAGE (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.6.1, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.6.2, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.6.3)
Grade 7: WRTITING (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.7.2, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.7.6, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.7.7, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.7.8, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.7.9); LANGUAGE (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.7.1, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.7.2, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.7.3)
Grade 8: WRITING (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.2, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.6, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.7, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.8, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.9); LANGUAGE (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.8.1, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.8.2, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.8.3)

Grade 6-8: HISTORY AND SOCIAL STUDIES (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.1, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.2, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.3, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.4, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.5, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.6, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.7, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.8, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.9)

Grade 9-10: WRITING (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.2, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.2.a, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.2.b, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.2.c, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.2.d, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.2.e, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.2.f, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.6, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.7, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.8, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.9); HISTORY/SOCIAL STUDIES (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.1, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.2, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.3, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.4, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.5, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.6, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.7, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.8, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.9, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.10); LANGUAGE (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.9-10.1, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.9-10.2, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.9-10.3)

Grade 11-12: WRITING (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.2, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.2.a, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.2.b, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.2.c, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.2.d, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.2.e, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.2.f, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.6, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.7, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.8, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.9); HISTORY/SOCIAL STUDIES (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.1, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.2, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.3, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.4, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.5, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.6, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.7, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.8, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.9, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.10); LANGUAGE (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.11-12.1, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.11-12.2, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.11-12.3)

Examine the Document:

1.) What type of document is it?

_____

2.) What is the date of the document? If you can't pinpoint an exact date, what is your best estimate? How did you arrive at that estimate?

_____

_____

3.) Who created the document? If you can't name the document's creator, what is your best guess about who might have created it? How did you make that guess?

_____

_____

4.) Why was the document created? If you don't know the reason for sure, explain your best guess.

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5.) Are there any distinguishing marks or features on the document (date stamps, someone else's notes in the margin, etc.)?

_____

_____

6.) Is there anything about the document that confuses you or that you don't understand? Does your initial examination of the document leave you with any questions?

_____

_____

Put the Document into Context:

1.) What was happening in Maine/the United States/the world when this document was created?

_____

_____

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2.) What does this document say about Maine or American life in the era it was created?

_____

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_____

3.) What does the existence of this document say about whomever created it?

_____

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4.) Do you believe the document is an accurate representation of what was happening? Why or why not?

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_____

5.) How do you think outside factors or events might influence what a person might write or record about an event? Can you think of any factors or events that may have influenced the author/creator of this document?
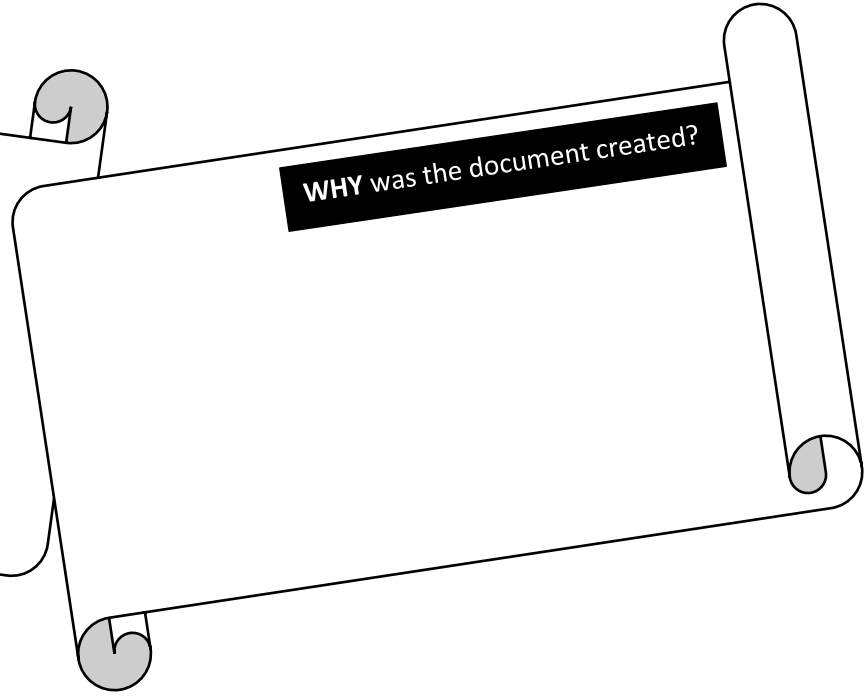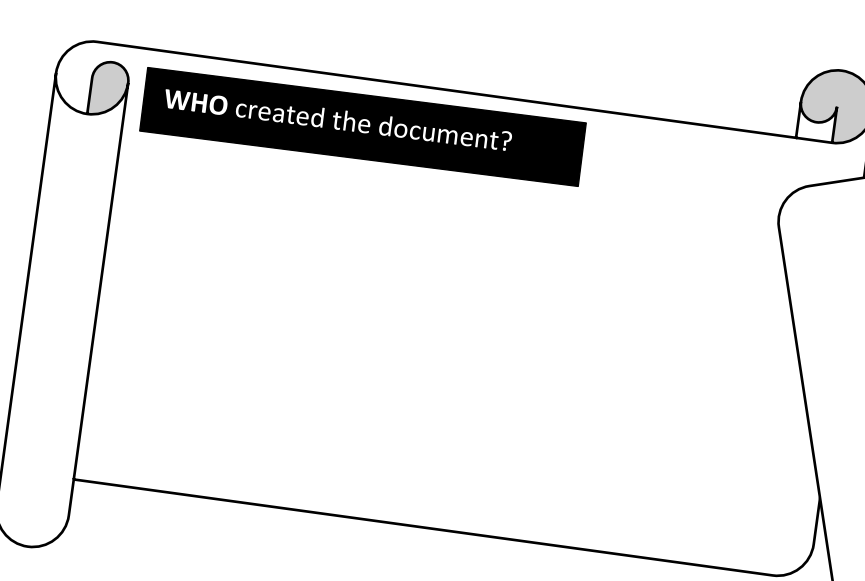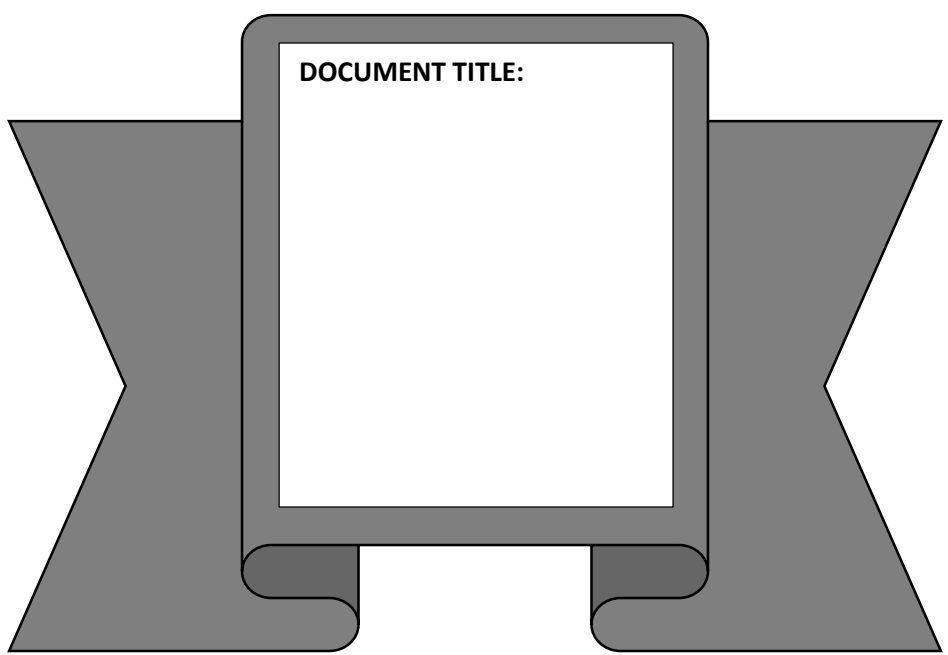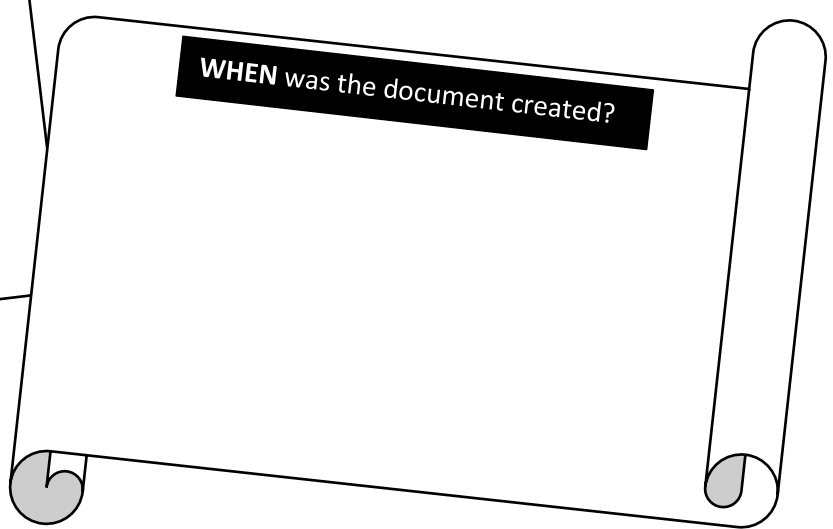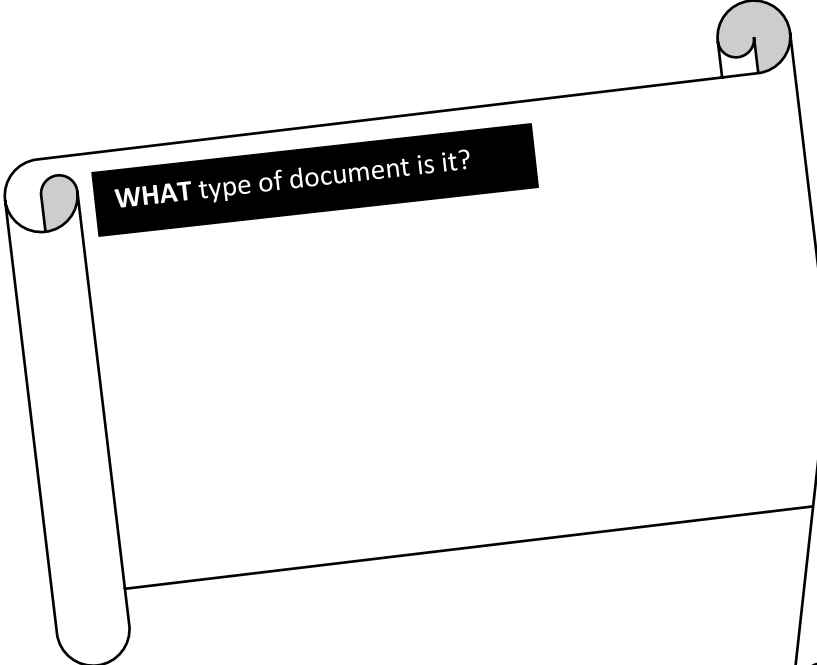
_____

_____

Interpreting the Document:

1.) What do you think is the historical significance of this document **or** why is this document important?

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2.) What can be learned from this document **or** what story does it tell?

_____

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3.) How do you think your own experience could influence the way that *you* are interpreting the document?

_____

_____

_____

4.) If you could ask the author of the document a question, what would you ask?

_____

_____

WHAT type of document is it?

WHEN was the document created?

DOCUMENT TITLE:

WHO created the document?

WHY was the document created?

What was happening in Maine/U.S. when the document was written?

What does this document say about American life in the era it was created?

Do you believe the document is an accurate repersentation of what was happening? Why or why not?

What does the existence of this document say about whomever created it?

What is the historical significance
of the document? Why is it
important?

What can be learned from this document? What
story does it tell?

How do you think your own experience could be influencing the
way you are interpreting the document?

If you could ask the author of the document a question what
would you ask?