
MODULE 1 GUIDEBOOK

*Discussion Board Week 1
Created 2018, Updated May 23, 2018*

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MODULE 1 GUIDEBOOK: READING AND ANALYZING PRIMARY SOURCES

OVERVIEW

Week One teaches you how to read and analyzing primary sources. You will define analytical terms and define, followed by a practical activity using these new skills. At the end of the week, you will submit a writing response, no more than five-paragraphs long, detailing your assessment of the primary source.

OBJECTIVES

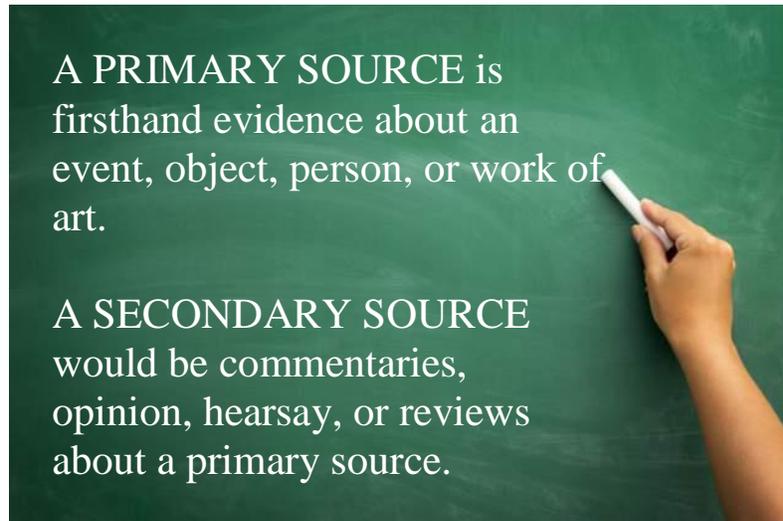
Successful completion of this module will enable you to:

- Understand the purpose of reading primary sources
- Differentiate the many parts to understanding primary sources
- Examine the terms associated with analytical reading

WEEK ONE SUMMARY: HOW TO READ PRIMARY SOURCES

By Kelly Perez

WHAT IS A PRIMARY SOURCE?



It's tempting to read a review or commentary on a primary but that severely cripples your critical thinking skills. When the instructor asks you read a story, poem, or look at art, the instructor wants to know what you think and how you comprehended the material, not what Joe Schmoo, editor of ABC Weekly, thought. Unfortunately, reading most primary sources can be long and exhaustive. As college students, spending a week on one primary source is just not feasible. There will be times when the instructor demands you read two or three primary sources for just one weekly assignment. This handout teaches you how to quickly skim mass amounts of information -- intelligently. Then, summarize your ideas into a coherent paragraph and earn high marks every time!

QUICK TIPS FOR ANALYTICAL READING

Along with this assignment, I have included an additional handout that compliments the information that follows in this module. The handout covers crucial information needed to analyze primary sources. Topics covered in the handout:

- 1) Suspend All Judgements
- 2) Define Significant Parts and How They Are Related
- 3) Make the Implicit Explicit
- 4) Look for Patterns
- 5) Keep Reformulating Questions and Explanations
- 6) Read What Is Missing

PURPOSE & RATIONALE

First, you must understand the purpose and rationale behind reading primary sources. Then, you must learn how to break them down into a manageable size. Finally, we take the main idea from the primary source and sift them through our own thinking process and beliefs. Viola, you're on your way to successful critical thinking!

Too often we read primary sources with angst and discouragement (but, what would college be if not for a little light reading, *right!?*). Bayard Faithfull, of the *Roy Rosenzweig Center for History*, reminds us that reading primary sources is all about weeding through the thicket with purpose in one hand and rationale in the other hand,

“When historians read primary documents, they read at many different levels. They simultaneously pay attention to argument, purpose, context, content and credibility. Too often students will read a primary document as if it is a textbook. Students need to learn that reading a primary document is a different reading process and involves understanding the main point, but also contextualizing and asking skeptical questions about that point. Breaking the “reading” process into different steps helps students learn this.” ~Bayard Faithfull



Reading with **purpose** is not reading for reading sake. Consider someone on a Sunday drive with no destination in mind. They might end up at the mall, the movies, or just drive for driving sake. However, that is not a feasible plan when reading for an assignment. If the instructor lectures on the successes and failures of democracy and require students to read Plato’s 500-page essay, *THE REPUBLIC*, it’s not advisable to read the entire thing in one weekend. However, reading Plato ‘with democracy on the mind’ now adds purpose to the journey. Now we know what we’re looking for and where to direct the mind’s eye. Reading with purpose and direction helps students intelligently skim mass amounts of information in a shorter amount of time.

The **rationale** behind reading primary sources aims to fine-tune critical thinking skills, construct an intelligent knowledge base, and enrich the students understanding of first-person narratives. Historian Patrick Rael makes a valid point when he says reading primary sources encourages the mind to imagine a new world, experience someone else’s ideas, and gain a deeper understanding of someone else’s emotions,

“Reading primary sources requires that you use your historical imagination. This process is all about your willingness and ability to ask questions of the material, imagine possible answers, and explain your reasoning.”

For example, a basic reading of Walt Whitman's poem on love shows the idea of love vs hate. However, going back to what Rael said about stepping into the mind of another person, we're forced to read the poem in a new way. He not only speaks of a love for his wife but the hate and misery surrounding him that blocks love from him. Love, for him, existed even when she was not next to him but now love was snuffed out by hate. Surely, we can relate to such a feeling if we allow ourselves a moment to feel such a thing. The rationale behind reading primary sources for yourself allows you to personally understand the first-person account instead of reading what someone else thinks of it.

*"As if a phantom caressed
me, I thought I was not
alone walking here by the
shore;
But the one I thought was
with me as now I walk by
the shore, the one I loved
that caressed me,
As I lean and look through
the glimmering light, that
one has utterly*

BREAKING DOWN LARGE AMOUNTS OF INFORMATION

With any luck, the text you're reading exists in a fashion that allows you to break it down electronically. If not, you will have to rely on good ole highlighting and mental notes. For this example, I have selected Plato's *The Republic* to aid us in our demonstration.

Task: Read Plato's *The Republic* to determine the successes and failures of democracy according to Plato.

Requirements: Students will read and select a portion of the work to orally explain Plato's ideas and thoughts on the democratic process.

At first glance, we see this primary source is over 500 pages. Then, flipping through the text we see block text with absolutely no breaks whatsoever. Time to close the book and YouTube it, right? **NO!** You can do this with a little skill and know how!

Step 1: Intelligent Internet Searching

Step 2: Select the Primary Source for Dissection

Step 3: Highlight, Note, and Remove

Step 4: Summarize in Your Own Words

STEP 1: INTELLIGENT INTERNET SEARCHING

If you search the internet for “Plato+Democracy” these are your possible results. (Google search: Jan 2018)

Scanning my list, do you see a running theme amongst the search hits? Right off the bat, I see a few keywords, *failure, problems, and tyranny*. I gather from this that Plato was not a fan of democracy. Already I’m making assertions and fine-tuning my understanding of Plato. Then, I notice one hit shows me where within *The Republic* that Plato specifically talks about democracy. A further scan shows something I heard in class from the instructor, *Ship of Fools*. Now I can narrow my search from 500 pages to about 20 pages!

Plato: Democracy - Faculty.frostburg.edu
<https://faculty.frostburg.edu/phil/forum/PlatoRep.htm> ▼
Plato: The Failure of Democracy. Plato (427-347) is often described as the greatest Western philosopher. Historians like to quote A. N. Whitehead who said: "The safest general characterization of the European philosophical tradition is that it consists of a series of footnotes to Plato." Plato was born into an aristocratic ...

Plato and the Disaster of Democracy - Classical Wisdom Weekly
classicalwisdom.com/plato-and-the-disaster-of-democracy/ ▼
Jul 8, 2013 - Plato warns that our pursuit of liberty will enslave us all. Could it be that our demands for freedom and reliance on democracy could lead us to tyranny?

Plato's five regimes - Wikipedia
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plato%27s_five_regimes ▼
Jump to **Democracy** - Plato uses the "democratic man" to represent democracy. The democratic man is the son of the oligarchic man. Unlike his father, the democratic man is consumed with unnecessary desires. Plato describes necessary desires as desires that we have out of instinct or desires that we have in order ...
Aristocracy · Timocracy · Oligarchy · Tyranny

[PDF] PLATO ON DEMOCRACY (REPUBLIC BK VIII)
www.mc.maricopa.edu/~yount/text/plato-democ2.pdf ▼
PLATO ON DEMOCRACY, PART II, AND HOW DEMOCRACY LEADS TO TYRANNY (REPUBLIC BK VIII). Come then, tell me, dear friend, how tyranny arises. That it is an outgrowth of democracy is fairly plain. Yes, plain. Is it, then, in a sense, in the same way in which democracy arises out of oligarchy that tyranny arises ...

The Ship of Fools | Issue 101 | Philosophy Now
https://philosophynow.org/issues/101/The_Ship_of_Fools ▼
Anja Steinbauer explains why Plato had problems with democracy.
You've visited this page 5 times. Last visit: 1/12/18

STEP 2: SELECT THE PRIMARY SOURCE FOR DISSECTION

After reading through my internet search of secondary sources, I landed on a magazine article called, *Ship of Fools* from Philosophy Now. After I establish the credibility of the website, I use it to establish the whereabouts of the primary source. In that article, the author told me exactly where to find the primary source of his Plato's parable on democracy using a ship captain as his example, *The Republic Book VI*. I proceeded to find an eBook and use my best friend, Control + F to locate the text within the book. This tool allows you to scan electronic text quickly by finding the exact words you are looking for, in my case, 'ship' 'democracy' 'captain' 'parable'. Now that I have my text, it's time to read with purpose.



By selecting the keys "control" plus the letter "F" at the same time, you can search for any word or



Adeimantus: how can you be justified in saying that cities will not cease from evil until philosopher's rule in them, when philosophers are acknowledged by us to be of no use to them?

Socrates: You ask a question, I said, to which a reply can only be given in a **parable**.

Adeimantus: Yes, Socrates; and that is a way of speaking to which you are not at all accustomed, I suppose.

Socrates: I perceive, I said, that you are vastly amused at having plunged me into such a hopeless discussion; but now hear the **parable**, and then you will be still more amused at the meagerness of my imagination: for the manner in which the best men are treated in their own States is so grievous that no single thing on earth is comparable to it; and therefore, if I am to plead their cause, I must have recourse to fiction, and put together a figure made up of many things, like the fabulous unions of goats and stags which are found in pictures. Imagine then a fleet or a **ship** in which there is a **captain** who is taller and stronger than any of the crew, but he is a little deaf and has a similar infirmity in sight, and his knowledge of navigation is not much better. The sailors are quarrelling with one another about the steering --everyone is of opinion that he....

STEP 3: HIGHLIGHT, NOTE, AND REMOVE

Adeimantus: how can you be justified in saying that **cities will not cease from evil until philosopher's rule in them**, when philosophers are acknowledged by us to be of no use to them?

Socrates: You ask a question, I said, to which a **reply can only be given in a parable**.

Adeimantus: ~~Yes, Socrates; and that is a way of speaking to which you are not at all accustomed, I suppose.~~

Socrates: ~~I perceive, I said, that you are vastly amused at having plunged me into such a hopeless discussion; but now hear the parable, and then you will be still~~

~~more amused at the meagreness of my imagination: for the manner in which the best men are treated in their own States is so grievous that no single thing on earth is comparable to it; and therefore, if I am to plead their cause, I must have recourse to fiction, and put together a figure made up of many things, like the fabulous unions of goats and stags which are found in pictures. Imagine then a fleet or a ship~~ in which there is a captain who is taller and stronger than any of the crew, but he is a little deaf and has a similar infirmity in sight, and his knowledge of navigation is not much better. The sailors are quarrelling with one another about the steering --everyone is of opinion that he has a right to steer, though he has never learned the art of navigation and cannot tell who taught him or when he learned, and will further assert that it cannot be taught, and they are ready to cut in pieces anyone who says the contrary. They throng about the captain, begging and praying him to commit the helm to them; and if at any time they do not prevail, but others are preferred to them, they kill the others or throw them overboard, and having first chained up the noble captain's senses with drink or some narcotic drug, they mutiny and take possession of the ship and make free with the stores; thus, eating and drinking, they proceed on their voyage in such a manner as might be expected of them. Him who is their partisan and cleverly aids them in their plot for getting the ship out of the captain's hands into their own whether by force or persuasion, they complement with the name of sailor, pilot, able seaman, and abuse the other sort of man, whom they call a good-for-nothing. ~~The pilot should not humbly beg the sailors to be commanded by~~ him --that is not the order of nature; neither are 'the wise to go to the doors of the rich' --the ingenious author of this saying told a lie --but the truth is, that, when a man is ill, whether he be rich or poor, to the physician he must go, and he who wants to be governed, to him who is able to govern. The ruler who is good for anything ought not to beg his subjects to be ruled by him; although the present governors of mankind are of a different stamp; they may be justly compared to the mutinous sailors, and the true helmsmen to those who are called by them good-for-nothings and star-gazers.

Pull out what you need and break it down further. Begin to manipulate the text to work with your learning style. In my case, I read it once **completely**, then ran back over it by removing anything I did not need.



Imagine a ship in which a captain who is taller and stronger than any of the crew, but he is a little deaf and has a similar infirmity in sight, and his knowledge of navigation is not much better.

The sailors are quarrelling with one another about the steering --everyone is of opinion that he has a right to steer, though he has never learned the art of navigation and cannot tell who taught him or when he learned, and they are ready to cut in pieces anyone who says the contrary.

They begging and pray [that the captain] commit the helm to them; and if at any time they do not prevail, but others are preferred to them, they kill the others or throw them overboard,

and having first chained up the noble captain's senses with drink or some narcotic drug, they mutiny and take possession of the ship and make free with the stores; thus, eating and drinking,

Him who is their partisan and cleverly aids them in their plot for getting the ship out of the captain's hands into their own whether by force or persuasion, they complement with the name of sailor, pilot, able seaman, and abuse the other sort of man, whom they call a good-for-nothing.

The pilot should not humbly beg the sailors to be commanded by him --that is not the order of nature; neither are 'the wise to go to the doors of the rich' --the ingenious author of this saying told a lie – but the truth is, that, when a man is ill, whether he be rich or poor, to the physician he must go, and he who wants to be governed, to him who is able to govern.

The ruler who is good for anything ought not to beg his subjects to be ruled by him. They may be justly compared to the mutinous sailors, and the true helmsmen to those who are called by them good-for-nothings and star-gazers.

Then, I broke it down further in bullet form.

- Captain is deaf, can't see, and doesn't know who to leave in charge
- Sailors fight and believe they are smart enough to be in charge
- But, they don't have any experience with the job whatsoever
- Anyone who disagrees or challenges them is killed or defamed.
- They dragged the captain and dull his senses, make it easier to take over
- They take over and they are worse off than before the storm
- The true captain should be wise and not susceptible to desires.
- The True captain should know how to lead by the stars, not but the rum.

Of course, you do not have to do all this work but, you can see the advantages of breaking down large parts of the text.

STEP 4: SUMMARIZE IN YOUR OWN WORDS

Now that you have a basic understanding of the text, summarize what you've read in a way you understand it.



Plato laid out a democracy full of flaws but a pure democracy is possible if 'humans' get their act together. First, Plato describes democracy as a group of people battered by the waves, and the only way to survive the storm is rally together for a sole purpose. Understanding what the 'purpose' is, in the form of a democratic State, should only be left to those who truly know how to run a State and not those who merely scream the loudest. Plato describes a situation where the loudest and most dominant prevail. They push their way to the top by making unrealistic promises and strong-arming the conversation. Plato speaks of a tyranny with a total loss of freedom to anyone who defies the dominant party, and in his parable, those who defy the tyrant are thrown overboard to their deaths. A democratic State, Plato says, controlled by the irrational and uneducated are doomed to fail. If the people allow such a tyrant to exist in their State they deserve the fate that awaits them. Instead, he recommends a philosopher should lead the State because a philosopher would seek wisdom and justice in all his deeds. A philosopher would put the success of the whole before the needs of the individual; Reason over desire, knowledge over wants.

ASSIGNMENT INSTRUCTIONS FOR WEEK ONE

DUE DATE: MAY 20TH, 2018

Task: Writing Assignment: Critically Analyze A Primary Source

Writing Style: Informal, cite all sources APA/MLA

Required Reading: Module One Guide & Handout: What is Analysis?

Reply Comments Required: None

QUESTION TO ANSWER:

Students must read one of the following primary sources and answer each bullet separately.

- Background information on the source.
- Using one word at a time, identify the main themes and concepts provided by the author. *(This bullet only requires you to notice things, not comment on it)*
- Of the themes and concepts, you identified above, explain and discuss the intention behind the author's motivations for using these themes and concepts.
- How should modern day readers interpret this primary source?
- Analyze what you believe was significant about this piece during the era in which it was published.
- Appraise the value or worth of the primary source in its era, and then in our modern-day era.

Primary Sources:

[The New Negro](#) By Alain Locke

[This Is Not The Place Where I Was Born](#) By Miguel Piñero

[No King, No King of Kings](#) By Raza Ali Hasan

[Mimesis](#) By Fady Joudah

[The Mark On The Wall](#) By Virginia Wolfe

EXAMPLE

(adapted from a previous student but the name and content altered to preserve their identity)

Name: John Doe

Date: Jan 2018

Assignment: Primary Sources: Declaration of Independence

1. Background information on the source.

The Declaration of Independence (DOL) was a major part of its era and an important factor of United States of America history. The DOL explains why the Colonies wished to separate from England and King George the III. Thomas Jefferson, on the order of John Adams and Benjamin Franklin, crafted many different versions of the DOL. Jefferson was

heavily influenced by the French Enlightenment and Liberal English thinkers such as John Locke.

2. Using one word at a time, identify the main themes and concepts provided by the author.

Freedom, Rights, Humanity, Sovereignty.

3. Of the themes and concepts, you identified above, explain and discuss the intention behind the author's motivations for using these themes and concepts.

The main themes of the DOL provided by the author is that all men are created equal, their basic human rights are given to them by their creator, and that there should only be a government to protect these rights, and if they're not protected it is the right of the people to alter or abolish them. It also lists the complaints that the colonists had against the king at the time, along with their reasons to why they were wanting to be free from England.

4. How should modern day readers interpret this primary source?

Modern day readers should understand that this document holds great importance in respect to U.S American democracy, along with history in general. This document could become a blueprint for other commonwealth nations to declare their independence from their sovereign as well (which happened 100+ times since the inception of this one document).

5. Analyze what you believe was significant about this piece during the era in which it was published.

The DOL explained what the ideals and goals of the nations were to be and how they planned to implement them. This is a huge feat being at the time no other country had successfully spilt from the English Empire, not to mention sans a military! The Colonies didn't have a pot to piss in let alone take on the English Empire. An act such as this would be like David fighting Goliath, and everyone's betting on Goliath to win.

6. Appraise the value or worth of the primary source in its era, and then in our modern-day era.

The author's motivation was to give readers a better understanding of their definition of freedom and democracy. The author did this by breaking it down important concepts and theme. This gives the readers more clarification and justification of the actions taken by the Colonies and their reasons behind set actions. The value in that aspect is actions always require logical justifications or there are senseless and not worth much.

Finished with week one

Finished
project

