

Reading Primary Sources

Grade 5 • SOCIAL-STUDIES • Students analyze letters, speeches, and photographs to identify a source's creator, purpose, perspective, and historical evidence. • Standards: D2.His.10.3-5, D2.His.11.3-5

Read each primary source carefully and answer the questions based on the evidence you find. Use what you can observe or reasonably figure out from the source itself.

1. A photograph from 1920 shows a large group of women holding signs that say 'Votes for Women.' What is one thing you can learn from this primary source?
2. A letter begins: 'Dear Mayor Johnson, I am writing to ask you to fix the broken streetlights on Oak Avenue.' Who is the audience for this letter?
3. A photograph from 1935 shows a long line of people waiting outside a building with a sign reading 'Free Soup.' What can you observe directly from this photograph?
4. A speech from 1850 states: 'We must build a railroad connecting our town to the capital city so farmers can sell their crops more easily.' What was the speaker's purpose?
5. A diary entry from 1862 reads: 'Today I sewed bandages for the hospital. My brother is fighting far away, and I worry about him every day.' What is the writer's perspective about the events happening?
6. A newspaper article from 1905 has the headline 'New Factory Opens, Promises 500 Jobs' and includes a photograph of the factory owner shaking hands with the governor. Who likely arranged for this photograph to be taken?
7. A letter from 1776 states: 'Dear Wife, we have been marching for three days with little food. The cause of liberty keeps our spirits strong, though our feet are sore.' What evidence suggests the writer is a soldier?
8. A photograph from 1960 shows children of different backgrounds sitting together at school desks, with adults watching from the doorway. A newspaper caption reads 'First Day of Integration at Lincoln School.' What can you reasonably infer about the

adults in the doorway?

9. Two sources describe the same 1889 event. Source A (a company report) says: 'Our factory provided good jobs and helped the town grow.' Source B (a worker's letter) says: 'We work twelve hours daily in dangerous conditions for low pay.' How do the perspectives differ?

10. A speech from 1830 states: 'I have traveled the proposed canal route by foot. The land is flat for most of the distance, with only two hills requiring extra digging. I estimate the project will take three years.' Why would the speaker include these specific details?

Answer Key — Reading Primary Sources

For the teacher / parent. Do not distribute with the worksheet.

1. That women were working to win the right to vote in 1920. *(The signs in the photograph show women asking for voting rights.)*
2. Mayor Johnson *(The letter is addressed to Mayor Johnson, making him the intended audience.)*
3. People were waiting in line outside a building that offered free soup *(This is what can be directly seen in the photograph without making inferences.)*
4. To convince people to support building a railroad *(The speaker is arguing for the railroad to be built, trying to persuade the audience.)*
5. The writer is personally affected and worried because her brother is involved *(The writer expresses personal worry and connection through her brother's participation.)*
6. The factory owner or the newspaper *(These parties would benefit from positive publicity about the factory opening.)*
7. He mentions marching for days, having little food, and fighting for liberty *(These details describe conditions and language typical of a soldier during wartime.)*
8. They were there to observe or ensure the integration went smoothly *(Adults watching on such a historically significant day would likely be officials, parents, or observers monitoring the event.)*
9. The company focuses on positive contributions while the worker focuses on difficult working conditions *(Each source reflects the interests and experiences of its creator, showing different viewpoints of the same situation.)*
10. To provide evidence based on personal observation that supports his estimate and makes his speech more convincing *(The speaker establishes credibility through firsthand observation and uses concrete details to justify the time estimate.)*