

Student Handout 7: Historical Reading and Thinking Skills

Historical Reading Skills	Questions	Students Should Be Able To:	Student Prompts
Sourcing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What kind of artifact is it? • Who created/published this? • When was it created/published? • Where was it created/published? • What is the author's perspective? • Why was it created/published? • Is it reliable? Why? Why not? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify the author's position on the historical event • Identify and evaluate the author's purpose in producing the artifact • Hypothesize what the author will say before reading the document • Evaluate the source's trustworthiness by considering genre, audience, and purpose 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The author probably believes . . . • I think the audience is . . . • Based on the source information, I think the author might . . . • I do/don't trust this document because . . .
Contextualizing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When was the artifact/document created? • Where was the artifact/document created/published? • What was different then? • What was the same? • How might the circumstances in which the artifact/document was created/published affect its content? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand how the context/background information influences the content of the document • Recognize that documents are products of the environment in which they were created 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Based on the background information, I understand this document differently because.... • The author might have been influenced by _____(historical context) • The document might not give me the whole picture because....
Close Reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What claims does the author make? • What evidence does the author use? • What language (words, phrases, images, symbols) does the author use to persuade the document's audience? • How does the document's language indicate the author's perspective? • For pictures/photographs – consider what is observable in the image and what message it is sending. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify the author's claims about an event • Evaluate the evidence and reasoning the author uses to support claims • Evaluate the author's word choice; understand that language is used deliberately 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I think the author chose these words in order to ... • The author is trying to convince me.... • The author claims.... • The evidence used to support the author's claims is
Corroborating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the document consistent with itself? To what extent does the source contradict itself (internal consistency) • What do other documents/sources say? • Do the other sources agree? If not, why? (external consistency) • What are other possible sources? • What sources are most reliable? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish what is probable by comparing sources to each other • Recognize disparities between accounts/sources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The author contradicts himself/herself when... • The author agrees/disagrees with ... • These sources all agree/all disagree about... • Another document or source to consider might be....

Adapted from the Stanford History Education Group