

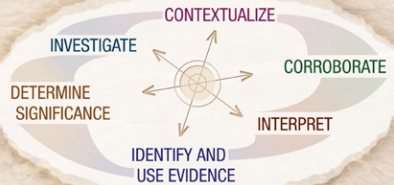
Thinking as a Historian

# WHAT DO HISTORIANS DO?

## WHY SHOULD I CARE?

Thinking as a historian can help you:

- Learn how to analyze information
- See the relationship between causes and effects
- Make sense of the past and connect it to the present
- Learn how to communicate by making coherent arguments
- Gain a deeper understanding of the world and of people



Thinking as a Historian

# INVESTIGATE

## FIND OUT THE BACKGROUND

Examine the origins of a primary source before analyzing it

- What type of source is it?
- When was it created?
- Who created the source?
- What biases might the author have had?



- Who was the intended audience for this source?
- Why might the source have been created?
- How does knowing the origins of the source influence your understanding of it?

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# CONTEXTUALIZE

## IMAGINE THE SETTING

Think about the past on its own terms



- What was happening at that time (specifically and generally)?



- What was the occasion and location?

- Did people at that time hold different values?
- What social and political forces were at work at the time?
- Are you looking at the past through a present-day lens?
- How does the context shape your understanding?



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# CORROBORATE

## CROSS-CHECK

Assess the reliability of sources

- Do other sources exist?
- What do other sources say?
  - Can the claims be confirmed?
  - How credible is this source?



- Are you using multiple sources to back up your claims?
- How are you addressing competing sources?
- How are you addressing ambiguities or gaps in information?

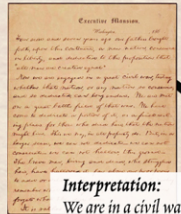
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# INTERPRET

## WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Create an explanation or argument based upon the historical record

- What conclusions can you draw?
- What is your thesis?
- How do you plan to prove your argument?



**Interpretation:**  
We are in a civil war that is testing the very existence of our nation

- Are there other possible interpretations?
- Are you respecting the evidence yet being original?
- Are you transforming the documents or merely summarizing them?

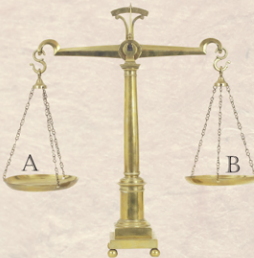
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# IDENTIFY AND USE EVIDENCE

## WHAT IS YOUR PROOF?

The sources that provide the basis for historical conclusions and judgments

- How do you know?
- What clues do the sources provide?
- How do you plan to use those clues to make your case?



- What specifically have you selected to support your claim?
- What are your strongest and weakest pieces of evidence?
- How will you organize and integrate your evidence?

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# DETERMINE SIGNIFICANCE

## SO WHAT? WHY DOES THIS MATTER?

Connect the source, topic, or event to the larger context of history and/or current events

- How did this event/issue influence people's lives?
- To what extent did this event/issue affect different aspects of society?
- What was unique about this event/issue?
- What were some of the immediate and/or long-term effects of this event/issue?
- Why is this event/issue important?

