

The
**HISTORIAN'S
APPRENTICE**

Was the Reformation a Revolution?

**Sourcing
Contextualizing
Finding Bias
Corroborating
Interpreting**

*Students learn the historian's craft by
analyzing primary and secondary sources*

MindSparks
CHALLENGING STUDENTS TO THINK HISTORICALLY

D. MARTIN LUTHER

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Was the Reformation a Revolution?

by Jonathan Burack

Each unit in *The Historian's Apprentice* series deals with an important historical topic. It introduces students to a five-step set of practices designed to simulate the experience of a historian and make explicit all key phases of the historian's craft.

The Historian's Apprentice: A Five-Step Process

1. Reflect on Your Prior Knowledge of the Topic.

Students discuss what they already know and how their prior knowledge may shape or distort the way they view the topic.

2. Apply Habits of Historical Thinking to the Topic.

Students build background knowledge on the basis of five habits of thinking that historians use in constructing accounts of the past.

3. Interpret the Relevant Primary Sources.

Students apply a set of rules for interpreting sources and assessing their relevance and usefulness.

4. Assess the Interpretations of Other Historians.

Students learn to read secondary sources actively, with the goal of deciding among competing interpretations based on evidence in the sources.

5. Interpret, Debate and Write About the Topic Yourself.

Students apply what they have learned by constructing evidence-based interpretations of their own in a variety of ways.



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Teacher Introduction

★ *Teaching the Historian's Craft*

The goal of *The Historian's Apprentice* units is to expose students in a manageable way to the complex processes by which historians practice their craft. By modeling what historians do, students will practice the full range of skills that make history the unique and uniquely valuable challenge that it is.

Modeling the historian's craft is not the same as being a historian—something few students will become. Therefore, a scaffolding is provided here to help students master historical content in a way that will be manageable and useful to them.

Historical thinking is not a simple matter of reciting one fact after another, or even of mastering a single, authoritative account. It is disciplined by evidence, and it is a quest for truth; yet, historians usually try to

clarify complex realities and make tentative judgments, not to draw final conclusions. In doing so, they wrestle with imperfect sets of evidence (the primary sources), detect multiple meanings embedded in those sources, and take into account varying interpretations by other historians. They also recognize how wide a divide separates the present from earlier times. Hence, they work hard to avoid present-mindedness and to achieve empathy with people who were vastly different from us.

In their actual practice, historians are masters of the cautious, qualified conclusion. Yet they engage, use their imaginations, and debate with vigor. It is this spirit and these habits of craft that *The Historian's Apprentice* seeks to instill in students.

★ *The Historian's Apprentice: Five-Steps in Four Parts*

The Historian's Apprentice is a five-step process. However, the materials presented here are organized into four parts. Part I deals with the first two of the five steps of the process. Each of the other three parts then deals with one step in the process. Here is a summary of the four parts into which the materials are organized:

Teacher Introduction. Includes suggested day-by-day sequences for using these materials, including options for using the PowerPoint presentations. One sequence is designed for younger students and supplies a page of vocabulary definitions.

Part 1. A student warm-up activity, an introductory essay, a handout detailing a set of habits of historical thinking, and two PowerPoint presentations (*Five Habits of Historical Thinking* and *Was the Reformation a Revolution?*). Part 1 (including the PowerPoints) deals with *The Historian's Apprentice* Steps 1 and 2.

Part 2. A checklist for analyzing primary sources, several primary sources, and worksheets for analyzing them. Part 2 deals with *The Historian's Apprentice* Step 3.

Part 3. Two secondary source passages and two student activities analyzing those passages. Part 3 deals with *The Historian's Apprentice* Step 4.

Part 4. Two optional follow-up activities enabling students to write about and/or debate their own interpretations of the topic. Part 4 deals with *The Historian's Apprentice* Step 5.

★ Suggested Five-Day Sequence

Below is one possible way to use this *Historian's Apprentice* unit. Tasks are listed day by day in a sequence taking five class periods, with some homework and some optional follow-up activities.

PowerPoint Presentation: *Five Habits of Historical Thinking*. This presentation comes with each *Historian's Apprentice* unit. If you have used it before with other units, you need not do so again. If you decide to use it, incorporate it into the **Day 1** activities. In either case, give students the “Five Habits of Historical Thinking” handout for future reference. Those Five Habits are as follows:

- History Is Not the Past Itself
- The Detective Model: Problem, Evidence, Interpretation
- Time, Change, and Continuity
- Cause and Effect
- As They Saw It: Grasping Past Points of View

Warm-Up Activity: **Homework assignment:** Students do the “Warm-Up Activity.” This activity explores student memories and personal experiences shaping their understanding of the topic.

Day 1: Discuss the “Warm-Up Activity.” Then either have students read or review the “Five Habits of Historical Thinking” handout, or use the *Five Habits* PowerPoint presentation.

Homework assignment: Students read the background essay “The Protestant Upheaval.”

Day 2: Use the second PowerPoint presentation, *Was the Reformation a Revolution?*, to overview the topic for this lesson. The presentation applies the Five Habits of Historical Thinking to this topic. Do the two activities embedded in the presentation.

Homework assignment: Students read the “Interpreting Primary Sources Checklist.” The checklist teaches a systematic way to handle sources:

- Sourcing
- Contextualizing
- Interpreting meanings
- Point of view
- Corroborating sources

Day 3: In class, students study some of the ten primary source documents and complete “Source Analysis” worksheets on them. They use their notes to discuss these sources. (Worksheet questions are all based on the concepts on the “Interpreting Primary Sources Checklist.”)

Day 4: In class, students complete the remaining “Source Analysis” worksheets and use their notes to discuss these sources. Take some time to discuss briefly the two secondary source passages students will analyze next.

Homework assignment: Students read these two secondary source passages.

Day 5: In class, students do the two “Secondary Sources” activities and discuss them. These activities ask them to analyze the two secondary source passages using four criteria:

- Clear focus on a problem or question
- Position or point of view
- Use of evidence or sources
- Awareness of alternative explanations

Follow-Up Activities (optional, at teacher discretion):

Do as preferred: the DBQ Essay Assignment and/or the Structured Debate.

★ Suggested Three-Day Sequence

If you have less time to devote to this lesson, here is a suggested shorter sequence. The sequence does not include the PowerPoint presentation *Five Habits of Historical Thinking*. This presentation is included with each *Historian's Apprentice* unit. If you have never used it with your class, you may want to do so before following this three-day sequence.

The three-day sequence leaves out a few activities from the five-day sequence. It also suggests that you use only six key primary sources. Yet it still walks students through the steps in the *Historian's Apprentice* approach: Clarifying background knowledge, analyzing primary sources, comparing secondary sources, and debating or writing about the topic.

Warm-Up Activity. Homework assignment: Ask students to read or review the “Five Habits of Historical Thinking” handout and read the background essay “The Protestant Upheaval.”

Day 1: Use the PowerPoint presentation *Was the Reformation a Revolution?* It overviews the topic for this lesson by applying the Five Habits of Historical Thinking to it. Do the two activities embedded in the presentation.

Homework assignment: Students read or review the “Interpreting Primary Sources Checklist.” The checklist teaches a systematic way to handle sources.

Day 2: In class, students study some of the ten primary source documents and complete “Source Analysis” worksheets on them. They use their notes to discuss these sources. We suggest using Documents 2, 4, 6, 7, 8, and 10.

You may wish to make your own choices of primary sources. Use your judgment in deciding how many of them your students can effectively analyze in a single class period.

Homework assignment: Students read the two secondary source passages.

Day 3: In class, students do the two “Secondary Sources” activities and discuss them. These activities ask them to analyze the two secondary source passages using four criteria.

Follow-Up Activities (optional, at teacher discretion):

Do as preferred: the DBQ Essay Assignment and/or the Structured Debate.

★ *Suggestions for Use with Younger Students*

For younger students, parts of this lesson may prove challenging. If you feel your students need a somewhat more manageable path through the material, see the suggested sequence below.

If you want to use the *Five Habits of Historical Thinking* PowerPoint presentation, this sequence takes four class periods. If you do not use this PowerPoint, you can combine **Day 1** and **Day 2** and keep the sequence to just three days. We suggest using six primary sources only. The ones listed for **Day 3** are less demanding in terms of vocabulary and conceptual complexity. For **Day 4**, we provide some simpler DBQs for the follow-up activities.

Vocabulary: A list of vocabulary terms in the sources and the introductory essay is provided on page 7 of this booklet. You may wish to hand this sheet out as a reading reference, you could make flashcards out of some of the terms, or you might ask each of several small groups to use the vocabulary sheet to explain terms in one source to the rest of the class.

SUGGESTED FOUR-DAY SEQUENCE

Warm-Up Activity. Homework assignment: Students do the “Warm-Up Activity.” This activity explores student memories and personal experiences shaping their understanding of the topic.

Day 1: Discuss the “Warm-Up Activity.” Show the *Five Habits of Historical Thinking* PowerPoint presentation (unless you have used it before and/or you do not think it is needed now). If you do not use this PowerPoint presentation, give students the “Five Habits of Historical Thinking” handout and discuss it with them.

Homework assignment: Ask students to read the background essay “The Protestant Upheaval.”

Day 2: Use the PowerPoint presentation *Was the Reformation a Revolution?* This introduces the topic for the lesson by applying the Five Habits of Historical Thinking to it. Do the two activities embedded in the presentation.

Homework assignment: Students read or review the “Interpreting Primary Sources Checklist.” The checklist teaches a systematic way to handle sources.

Day 3: Discuss the “Interpreting Primary Sources Checklist” and talk through one primary source document in order to illustrate the meaning of the concepts on the checklist. Then have students complete “Source Analysis” worksheets after studying primary source documents 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, and 8.

Homework assignment: Students read the two secondary source passages.

Day 4: Students do *only* “Secondary Sources: Activity 2” and discuss it. This activity asks them to choose from among the sources the two that best back up each secondary source passage.

Follow-Up Activities (optional, at teacher discretion):

Do as preferred: the DBQ Essay Assignment and/or the Structured Debate.

Here are some alternate DBQs tailored to the six primary sources recommended here:

What does the word “revolution” mean? Given your definition of this word, do you think the Reformation was a revolution? Why or why not?

Luther’s key idea was that a person is “justified by faith alone.” What did he mean, and why did his views about this cause such an upheaval?

Vocabulary: The Introductory Essay

- **doctrine:** In this case, a body of teachings for a religion
- **heretic:** Someone seen as holding beliefs that go against a religion's doctrines or practices
- **humanist:** A Renaissance-era scholar studying ancient Rome and Greece, stressing individual human will and reason
- **liturgy:** The rituals or formulas for public religious ceremonies
- **pagans:** In this case, people who Christian authorities see as irreligious or as worshipping false gods
- **purgatory:** Catholic belief in a time after death when souls are temporarily punished for certain sins
- **secular:** Describes all matters not regarded as religious or sacred
- **theses:** Statements or propositions to be proved or maintained by argument

Vocabulary: The Primary Sources

- **abomination:** Something considered shameful and horrible
- **admonish:** To warn
- **anathema:** A curse, or someone who has been condemned, accursed, shunned
- **avarice:** Greed
- **conflagration:** A great fire or catastrophe
- **conscience:** A person's sense of being compelled or guided by a set of moral principles
- **excommunication:** A formal censure or condemnation that prevents someone from belonging to a church
- **heathen:** Someone seen as irreligious or worshipping false gods
- **infringe:** Interfere with or encroach upon
- **perdition:** The damnation or ruin of the soul of a wicked person
- **pretences:** Things pretended, or false showings made about something
- **recant:** To take back previously held beliefs
- **sacrilegious:** Violating what is sacred

Vocabulary: The Secondary Sources

- **precedent:** An act that serves as a guide for justifying future actions
- **autonomy:** Independence or freedom of will
- **infidelity:** Unfaithfulness or disloyalty
- **skepticism:** Doubtfulness about something or its explanations

Part 1: The Reformation—Providing the Context

Note to the teacher: The next pages provide materials meant to help students better understand and evaluate this topic. The materials also seek to teach students the Five Habits of Historical Thinking.

This section includes the following:

- **PowerPoint presentation: *The Five Habits of Historical Thinking***

This presentation illustrates five habits of thought or modes of analysis that guide historians as they construct their secondary accounts of a topic. These five habits are not about skills used in analyzing primary sources (those are dealt with more explicitly in another handout in the next section). The Five Habits are meant to help students see history as a way of thinking, not as the memorizing of disparate facts and predigested conclusions. The PowerPoint uses several historical episodes as examples to illustrate the Five Habits. In two places, it pauses to ask students to do a simple activity applying one of the habits to some of their own life experiences.

If you have used this PowerPoint with other *Historian's Apprentice* units, you may not need to use it again here.

- **Handout: “The Five Habits of Historical Thinking”**

This handout supplements the PowerPoint presentation. It is meant as a reference for students to use as needed. If you have used other *Historian's Apprentice* units, your students may only need to review this handout quickly.

- **Warm-Up Activity**

A simple exercise designed to help you see what students know about the topic, what confuses them, or what ideas they may have absorbed about it from popular culture, friends and family, etc. The goal is to alert them to their need to gain a clearer idea of the past and be critical of what they think they already know.

- **Introductory essay: “The Protestant Upheaval”**

The essay provides enough basic background information on the topic to enable students to assess primary sources and conflicting secondary source interpretations. At the end of the essay, students get some points to keep in mind about the nature of the sources they will examine and the conflicting secondary source interpretations they will debate.

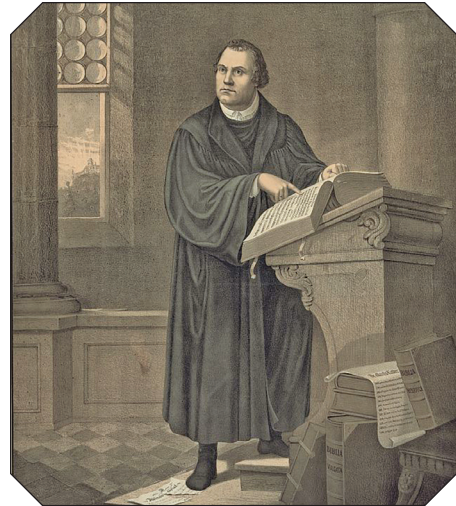
- **PowerPoint presentation: *Was the Reformation a Revolution?***

This PowerPoint presentation reviews the topic for the lesson and shows how the Five Habits of Historical Thinking can be applied to a clearer understanding of it. At two points, the presentation calls for a pause and students are prompted to discuss some aspects of their prior knowledge of the topic. Our proposed sequences suggest using this PowerPoint presentation after assigning the introductory essay, but you may prefer to reverse this order.

Warm-Up Activity

What Do You Know About the Reformation?

This lesson deals with the Reformation of the 16th century and its impact on Europe. Whenever you start to learn something about a time in history, it helps to think first of what you already know about it, or think you know. You probably have impressions, or you may have read or heard things about it already. Some of what you know may be accurate. You need to be ready to alter your fixed ideas about this time as you learn more about it. This is what any historian would do. To do this, study this illustration and take a few notes in response to the questions below it.



This is an 1882 illustration of Martin Luther. What do you know about Luther and his role in the Protestant Reformation?

From this illustration, what impression do you get about Luther and the nature of the movement called the Reformation? For instance, notice the way Luther is dressed, what he is doing, etc. What sense of his character do you get from the illustration? Given the date of the illustration, how reliable do you think its view of Luther is? Why?

From what other sources of information have you learned about the Reformation—such as from books, illustrations, film, family and church? Based on all these sources what is your overall sense of what were the key purpose and central ideas of the Reformation. Take some notes here and discuss your ideas with others.

The Protestant Upheaval: Reformation or Revolution?

The Protestant Reformation shook European society to its roots. It divided a seemingly united Christian population into Protestants and Catholics. It split communities, turned prince against prince, and sparked a century of bitter religious warfare.

Exactly what sort of upheaval was the Protestant Reformation? Was it simply a disruptive effort to reform Christian teaching, liturgy, and church organization—or was it more? Was it truly revolutionary in its impact on thought and society?

Martin Luther, the man who started it, probably had no intention of sparking revolutionary change. In 1517 he nailed his famous *95 Theses* to the church door at Wittenberg, in Germany. The theses attacked certain practices of the Catholic Church. (Some historians doubt that Luther actually nailed the theses to that door.) In any case, all he hoped for was to end certain practices he felt were at odds with basic Christian doctrine. He was not rejecting entirely the authority of the Catholic Church. He wanted to reform the Church, not do away with it.

He was disturbed at the Church's growing secular power and wealth. The lavish ways of the Popes in Rome disgusted him when he was there in 1510. Italy was then the center of the Renaissance, with its humanist focus on pagan writers of ancient Greece and Rome. To a simple monk from northern Germany such as Luther, Rome and all its wonderful art and pomp seemed mired in sin and corruption.

Luther was appalled at the Popes for buying and selling church offices, and he objected to several other practices, in particular the sale of indulgences to raise funds for the Church. In selling an indulgence, the Church claimed the Pope could reduce or cancel the purchaser's punishment in purgatory for sins committed in this life. A person could even buy an indulgence for a dead relative. Luther was horrified that the Pope claimed to do something that he felt only God could do.

As minor an issue as indulgences may seem, they were an example of an error Luther came to regard as central to all that was wrong with the Catholic Church. In Luther's view, a sinner seeking an indulgence was trying to bargain with God for

salvation. Luther felt that all forms of such bargaining were great evils. They were examples of the idea that good "works"—what a person does in this life—can win salvation in the next. By "works," Luther meant any sort of human effort, from doing charitable acts to performing Church sacraments and rituals. In his view, no matter how worthy these were, they could never buy God's favor. To think they could was to insult God; it was to suggest God was not in control, man was.

Instead, Luther said a firm faith in Jesus Christ was all that was needed for salvation. As he put it, "Man is justified by faith alone." ("Justified" here means made "just" by an act of God and thereby freed from guilt for sin.) Luther did not mean that good works were unimportant, or that a person with faith could just be selfish and do no good. Instead, he said a firm faith, granted by God alone, would lead a person to do good works gladly, not to win salvation but because the person was already saved.

The Pope and other top Catholic leaders saw Luther as a dangerous heretic. His views seemed to say that following Church rituals, doing good, even behaving lawfully, did not matter. If all that mattered was personal faith, they feared the Church itself might not be needed.

In 1520, Pope Leo X threatened to excommunicate Luther. Luther defiantly burned the papal bull, or letter, condemning him. However, Luther was protected by the Elector of Saxony, a powerful German prince. As a result, he could disobey the Pope and still promote his ideas. With the help of the recently invented printing press, Luther's supporters spread his ideas rapidly throughout Europe.

These ideas appealed to many different groups for many different reasons. German princes and other rulers often backed them as a way to oppose the Catholic Emperor Charles V and to work against the Catholic Church's vast land holdings, monastic orders, or its power to appoint bishops and other Church officials within each prince's territory. Luther himself came to rely on the backing of the many of these princes who were turning against the Church at this time.

Meanwhile, poor peasants had other reasons for liking Luther's concept of a "priesthood of all believers." They saw in this idea support for ordinary people whose protests against the powerful landed nobles, bishops, and princes were on the rise. Therefore, when German peasants rose up in revolt in 1524, many of them looked to Luther for support. However, Luther saw no connection between the religious changes he favored and a violent struggle by poor people for radical social and economic change. Instead, he called on political rulers to put down the Peasant's Revolt ruthlessly, which they certainly did.

Meanwhile, other Reformation thinkers emerged to dispute Luther's ideas about theology, church government, or politics. Luther's stress on the inner faith and conscience of each individual believer opened the way for all sorts of attacks on external authority. Christianity split into many fragments as various Reformation sects arose—such as the

radical Anabaptists, the followers of John Calvin, or the various dissenters in England who opposed King Henry VIII's moderate version of the Reformation.

In time, the Reformation gave greater power to secular princes and kings over that of the Catholic Church. A new order of more fiercely independent nation-states emerged from the century and a half of religious conflict and warfare the Reformation triggered.

Did Luther's spark ignite a Europe-wide social and intellectual revolution? Did this revolution soon outpace his own ideas and those of other, even more radical Reformation thinkers? Did a whole new social and political order emerge from these fires? These are only some of the questions historians ask about the Reformation. The sources for this lesson should help you to think through and start to answer them for yourself.

Points to Keep in Mind

Historians' Questions

Debates about the Reformation have divided historians in many ways over the years. Within these debates, one question that often arises has to do with whether or not the word "reform" in Reformation sums up the movement, or whether the Reformation was truly revolutionary in its impact.

Some view the Reformation's stress on individual conscience as triggering a series of upheavals that called all authority and systems of belief into question. In other words, they see the Reformation as a revolutionary event that changed European civilization in a fundamental way.

Others view the Reformation as little more than a squabble among Christian sects. Instead of one system of dogmatic religious beliefs and practices, they say several systems competed for control. In the meantime, princes and kings, wealthy nobles, and rich merchants continued as before to dominate the social order. In the view of this side of the debate, the Reformation did not free up the European mind or social order nearly as much as the Renaissance had promised to do or as the Enlightenment of the 18th century actually did.

The Primary Source Evidence

(Note: *The spelling, punctuation, and capitalization in some of these primary sources have been simplified and modernized.*)

For this lesson, you will study ten primary source documents on the Reformation. Many of them focus on the ideas of Martin Luther and reactions to him. Clearly, there was more to the Reformation than these documents alone show. However, these sources should give you plenty of evidence to help you better assess how revolutionary the ideas behind this religious upheaval were. The sources will also help you make informed judgments of your own as to what two historians say about the topic.

Secondary Source Interpretations

After studying and discussing the primary sources, you will read two short passages by two different historians. The historians who wrote these passages agree about most of the facts, but make quite different overall judgments about the Protestant Reformation. You will use your own background knowledge and your ideas about the primary sources as you think about and answer some questions about the views of these historians.

Five Habits of Historical Thinking

History is not just a chronicle of one fact after another. It is a meaningful story, or an account of what happened and why. It is written to address questions or problems historians pose. This checklist describes key habits of thinking that historians adopt as they interpret primary sources and create their own accounts of the past.

History Is Not the Past Itself

When we learn history, we learn a story about the past, not the past itself. No matter how certain an account of the past seems, it is only one account, not the entire story. The “entire story” is gone; that is, the past itself no longer exists. Only some records of events remain, and they are never complete. Therefore it is important to see all judgments and conclusions about the past as tentative or uncertain. Avoid looking for hard-and-fast “lessons” from the past. The value of history is in a way the opposite of such a search for quick answers; that is, its value is in teaching us to live with uncertainty and see even our present as complex, unfinished, open-ended.

The Detective Model: Problem, Evidence, Interpretation

Historians can’t observe the past directly. They must use evidence, just as a detective tries to reconstruct a crime based on clues left behind. In the historian’s case, primary sources are the evidence—letters, official documents, maps, photos, newspaper articles, artifacts, and all other traces from past times. Like a detective, a historian defines a very specific problem to solve, one for which evidence does exist. Asking clear, meaningful questions is a key to writing good history. Evidence is always incomplete. It’s not always easy to separate fact from opinion in it, or tell what is important from what is not. Historians try to do this, but they must stay cautious about their conclusions and open to other interpretations of the same evidence.

Time, Change, and Continuity

History is about the flow of events over time, yet is not just one fact after another. It seeks to understand this flow of events as a pattern. In that pattern, some things change while others hold steady over time. You need to see history as a dynamic interplay of both change and continuity together. Only by doing this can you see how the past has evolved into the present—and why the present carries with it many traces of or links to the past.

Cause and Effect

Along with seeing patterns of change and continuity over time, historians seek to explain that change. In doing this, they know that no single factor causes change. Many factors interact. Unique, remarkable, and creative individual actions and plans are one factor, but individual plans have unintended outcomes, and these shape events in unexpected ways. Moreover, individuals do not always act rationally or with full knowledge of what they are doing. Finally, geography, technology, economics, cultural traditions, and ideas all affect what groups and individuals do.

As They Saw It: Grasping Past Points of View

Above all, thinking like a historian means trying hard to see how people in the past thought and felt. This is not easy. As one historian put it, the past is “another country,” in which people felt and thought differently, often very differently, from the way we do now. Avoiding “present-mindedness” is therefore a key task for historians. Also, since the past includes various groups in conflict, historians must learn to empathize with many diverse cultures and subgroups to see how they differ and what they share in common.

Part 2: Analyzing the Primary Sources

Note to the teacher: The next pages provide the primary sources for this lesson. We suggest you give these to students after they read the background essay, after they review the *Five Habits of Historical Thinking* handout, and after they watch and discuss the PowerPoint presentation for the lesson.

This section includes the following:

- **Handout: “Interpreting Primary Sources Checklist”**

Give copies of this handout to students and ask them to refer to it when analyzing any primary source.

- **Ten Primary Source Documents**

The Documents are as follows:

- Document 1. A photo of St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome
- Document 2. Martin Luther’s “Definition of Faith” (1522)
- Document 3. A part of *Exurge Domine* condemning Luther
- Document 4. Luther’s reply to Sylvester Prierias
- Document 5. Illustration: Luther burns the Papal bull
- Document 6. Luther speaking to the Diet of Worms (1521)
- Document 7. Summary of the *Twelve Articles* of the Swabian Peasants (1525)
- Document 8. Luther’s reply to the Swabian Peasants (1525)
- Document 9. A passage from the Anabaptist *Schleitheim Confession* of 1527
- Document 10. Part of a letter by Erasmus about Luther (1519)

- **Ten “Source Analysis” Worksheets for Analyzing the Primary Sources**

Each worksheet asks student to take notes on one source. The prompts along the side match the five categories in the “Interpreting Primary Sources Checklist.” Not every category is used in each worksheet, only those that seem most relevant to a full analysis of that source.

You may want students to analyze all of the sources. However, if time does not allow this, use those that seem most useful for your own instructional purposes.

Students can use the notes on the “Source Analysis” worksheets in discussions, as help in analyzing the two secondary sources in the next part of this lesson, and in follow-up debates, DBQs, and other activities.

Interpreting Primary Sources Checklist

Primary sources are the evidence historians use to reach conclusions and write their accounts of the past. Sources rarely have one obvious, easily grasped meaning. To interpret them fully, historians use several strategies. This checklist describes some of the most important of those strategies. Read the checklist through and use it to guide you whenever you need to analyze and interpret a primary source.

Sourcing

Think about a primary source's author or creator, how and why the primary source document was created, and where it appeared. Also think about the audience it was intended for and what its purpose was. You may not always find much information about these things, but whatever you can learn will help you better understand the source. In particular, it may suggest the source's point of view or bias, since the author's background and intended audience often shape his or her ideas and way of expressing them.

Contextualizing

"Context" refers to the time and place of which the primary source is a part. In history, facts do not exist separately from one another. They get their meaning from the way they fit into a broader pattern. The more you know about that broader pattern, or context, the more you will be able to understand about the source and its significance.

Interpreting Meanings

It is rare for a source's full meaning to be completely obvious. You must read a written source closely, paying attention to its language and tone, as well as to what it implies or merely hints at. With a visual source, all kinds of meaning may be suggested by the way it is designed, by such things as shading, camera angle, use of emotional symbols or scenes, etc. The more you pay attention to all the details, the more you can learn from a source.

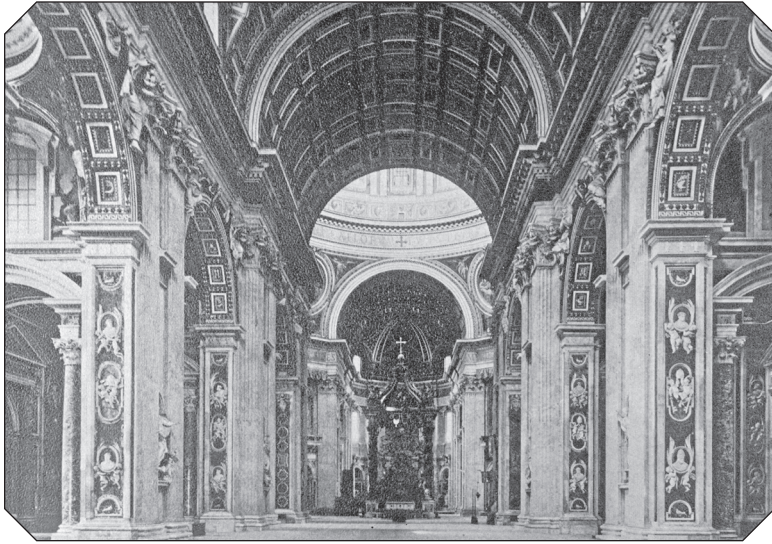
Point of View

Every source is written or created by someone with a purpose, an intended audience, and a point of view or bias. Even a dry table of numbers was created for some reason, to stress some things and not others, to make a point of some sort. At times, you can tell a point of view simply by sourcing the document. Knowing an author was a Democrat or a Republican, for example, will alert you to a likely point of view. In the end, however, only a close reading of the text will make you aware of point of view. Keep in mind, even a heavily biased source can still give you useful evidence of what some people in a past time thought. But you need to take the bias into account in judging how reliable the source's own claims really are.

Corroborating Sources

No one source tells the whole story. Moreover, no one source is completely reliable. To make reasonable judgments about an event in the past, you must compare sources to find points of agreement and disagreement. Even when there are big differences, both sources may be useful. However, the differences will also tell you something, and they may be important in helping you understand each source.

The Primary Sources for the Lesson



Document 1

Information on the source: This is a photo of the interior of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. Its magnificent architecture reflects the artistic styles and values of the powerful and wealthy Renaissance merchants, princes, and top Catholic officials who controlled the papacy in Rome. However, this luxury also offended many Christians, including Luther, who visited Rome in 1510. The need for funds to build St. Peter's led Church officials to step up the sale of the indulgences that so angered Luther.

Document 2

Information on the source: The core belief inspiring Luther was that individual salvation depended on a true and complete faith alone—not on “works.” In these passages, Luther explains this idea more fully. The passages are his “Definition of Faith” from the *Preface* to Luther's German Bible of 1522. The text of the *Preface* was translated by Rev. Robert E. Smith for the Internet resource *Project Wittenberg* and is in the public domain. *Project Wittenberg* can be accessed at: <http://www.iclnet.org/pub/resources/text/wittenberg/wittenberg-home.html>.

Faith is not what some people think it is. Their human dream is a delusion. Because they observe that faith is not followed by good works or a better life, they fall into error, even though they speak and hear much about faith. “Faith is not enough,” they say, “You must do good works, you must be pious to be saved.” They think that, when you hear the gospel, you start working, creating by your own strength a thankful heart which says, “I believe.” That is what they think true faith is. But, because this is a human idea, a dream, the heart never learns anything from it, so it does nothing and reform doesn't come from this “faith,” either.

Instead, faith is God's work in us, that changes us and gives new birth from God (John 1:13). It kills the Old Adam and makes us completely different people. It changes our hearts, our spirits, our thoughts and all our powers. It brings the Holy Spirit with it. Yes, it is a living, creative, active and powerful thing, this faith. Faith cannot help doing good works constantly. It doesn't stop to ask if good works ought to be done, but before anyone asks, it already has done them and continues to do them without ceasing. Anyone

who does not do good works in this manner is an unbeliever. He stumbles around and looks for faith and good works, even though he does not know what faith or good works are. Yet he gossips and chatters about faith and good works with many words.

Faith is a living, bold trust in God's grace, so certain of God's favor that it would risk death a thousand times trusting in it. Such confidence and knowledge of God's grace makes you happy, joyful and bold in your relationship to God and all creatures. The Holy Spirit makes this happen through faith. Because of it, you freely, willingly and joyfully do good to everyone, serve everyone, suffer all kinds of things, love and praise the God who has shown you such grace. Thus, it is just as impossible to separate faith and works as it is to separate heat and light from fire! Therefore, watch out for your own false ideas and guard against good-for-nothing gossips, who think they're smart enough to define faith and works, but really are the greatest of fools. Ask God to work faith in you, or you will remain forever without faith, no matter what you wish, say or can do.

Document 3

Information on the source: This is part of the preface written by Pope Leo X, on June 15, 1520, in the short version of the papal bull *Exurge Domine*, condemning 41 of Luther's views and threatening him with excommunication if he did not recant, or take them back. He refused to recant and was excommunicated on January 3, 1521. Based on *Documents Illustrative of the Continental Reformation*, B.J. Kidd, ed., (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1911), pp. 75–79.

Arise, O Lord, and judge thy cause. A wild boar has invaded thy vineyard . . . We can no longer suffer the serpent to creep through the field of the Lord. The books of Martin Luther which contain these errors are to be examined and burned. As for Martin himself, good God, what office of paternal love have we omitted in order to recall him from his errors . . . Anyone who presumes to infringe our excommunication and anathema will stand under the wrath of Almighty God and the apostles Peter and Paul.

Document 4

Information on the source: This passage is part of a reply by Martin Luther in the spring of 1520 to the Dominican theologian Sylvester Mazzolini Prierias. Prierias, a harsh critic of Luther, strongly defended the supreme authority of the Pope. From *The Political Theories of Martin Luther*, by Luther Hess Warring, (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1910), p. 140.

If the fury of the Romanists continue, there seems to me to be no remedy left but that the emperor, kings, and princes, girding on their armour, attack these pests of the earth, and decide the matter, not by words but with the sword. If we punish thieves with the axe, heretics with fire, why do we not rather attack these masters of perdition, these cardinals, these popes, and the whole rabble of the Roman Sodom, and wash our hands in their blood, and thus free ourselves from the common and most dangerous conflagration of all?

Document 5

Information on the source: On December 10, 1520, Luther burned a book of church law, some books by his enemies, and Pope Leo X's papal bull threatening his excommunication. The Pope then excommunicated him on January 3, 1521. This illustration of Luther burning the papal bull was published in Stuttgart, Germany, in the 1830s.



Document 6

Information on the source: After Luther was excommunicated, the German emperor wanted him to recant. However, the emperor also felt he had to leave Luther alone. He even granted him safety as he traveled to the Imperial Diet of Worms, an assembly of the Holy Roman Empire. At that assembly, many expected Luther to take back his views. On April 17, 1521, he refused—as this passage makes clear. This passage is adapted from a translation in H. C. Bettenson, *Documents of the Christian Church* (1903).

Your Imperial Majesty and Your Lordships demand a simple answer. Here it is, plain and unvarnished. Unless I am convinced of error by the testimony of Scripture or (since I put no trust in the unsupported authority of Pope or councils, since it is plain that they have often erred and often contradicted themselves) by manifest reasoning, I stand convinced by the Scriptures to which I have appealed, and my conscience is taken captive by God's word, I cannot and will not recant anything, for to act against our conscience is neither safe for us, nor open to us.

Document 7

Information on the source: Though not itself a primary source, this source consists of brief summaries of the “Twelve Articles of the Swabian Peasants.” The “Twelve Articles” were published in March 1525, during the Peasant’s Revolt in Germany. The statements are adapted from the translation in Michael G. Baylor, ed. and trans., *The Radical Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 231–245.

1. *Each community should choose a pastor to teach the Gospel, and should have the right to remove him if he conducts himself improperly.*
2. *We are willing to pay a just tithe [tax] to support the services of a pastor. Whatever is left over should be given to the poor.*
3. *It has been customary for men to hold us as their property [as serfs]. But since Christ redeemed us all, it accords with Scripture that we should be free.*
4. *The custom that forbids a poor man from catching game is wrong and does not fit with the word of God, who gave man power over animals, birds and fish.*
5. *It is unjust that the nobles have taken over woods once controlled by the community. These should be available to all to use as timber and firewood.*
6. *Excessive and increasing labor services are required of us. We demand these be investigated so that we only have to perform what accords with the Word of God.*
7. *As to holdings, we will do only what is required by any agreement between the lord and the peasant. Lords cannot ask for more services or dues without proper payment.*
8. *Many holdings cannot support the rent demanded. Honorable men should fix fair rents.*
9. *Punishment for crimes should be according to old written penalties, not altered by new laws or for arbitrary reasons.*
10. *We demand back communally held meadows and fields that have been unfairly appropriated by individuals.*
11. *The “Todfall” [an inheritance tax] shall be abolished, and widows and orphans no longer be robbed against God’s will.*
12. *If it can be proved by a clear explanation of Scripture that any of these articles is not in agreement with the word of God, we will give it up.*

Document 8

Information on the source: Luther at first expressed some sympathy for the German peasants and their “Twelve Articles.” However, in May 1525, as violence spread, he attacked them in his tract “Against the Murderous and Robbing Hordes of the Peasants.” This part of that tract is from James Harvey Robinson, *Readings in European History*, Vol. 2 (Boston: Ginn & Company, 1906), pp. 106–108.

[The peasants] cause uproar and sacrilegiously rob and pillage monasteries and castles that do not belong to them, for which, like public highwaymen and murderers, they deserve the twofold death of body and soul. It is right and lawful to slay at the first opportunity a rebellious person, who is known as such, for he is already under God’s and the emperor’s ban. Every man is at once judge and executioner of a public rebel; just as, when a fire starts, he who can extinguish it first is the best fellow. Rebellion is not simply vile murder, but is like a great fire that kindles and devastates a country; it fills the land with murder and bloodshed, makes widows and orphans, and destroys everything, like the greatest calamity. Therefore, whosoever can, should smite, strangle, and stab, secretly or publicly, and should remember that there is nothing more poisonous, pernicious, and devilish than a rebellious man. Just as one must slay a mad dog, so, if you do not fight the rebels, they will fight you, and the whole country with you.

Document 9

Information on the source:

Catholics, Lutherans, and Calvinists alike saw the various Anabaptist sects as dangerous. “Anabaptist” means “re-baptizer.” Anabaptists believed baptism was only valid when given to an adult who understood what it meant. However, it was the Anabaptists’ “radical” views about political authority that made them most threatening to Catholics and other Protestants. This passage is from Article IV of the “Schleitheim Confession” of 1527, a statement by the Swiss Brethern, one group of Anabaptists. Presented by bibleviews.com, an Anabaptist-Mennonite site, as scanned in from *Glimpses of Mennonite History and Doctrine* by J. C. Wenger (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Mennonite Publishing House, 1940), pp. 206–213.

From this we should learn that everything which is not united with our God and Christ cannot be other than an abomination which we should shun and flee from. By this is meant all popish and anti-popish works and church services, meetings and church attendance, drinking houses, civic affairs, the commitments [made in] unbelief and other things of that kind, which are highly regarded by the world and yet are carried on in flat contradiction to the command of God, in accordance with all the unrighteousness which is in the world. From all these things we shall be separated and have no part with them for they are nothing but an abomination, and they are the cause of our being hated before our Christ Jesus, Who has set us free from the slavery of the flesh and fitted us for the service of God through the Spirit Whom He has given us.

Therefore there will also unquestionably fall from us the unchristian, devilish weapons of force—such as sword, armor and the like, and all their use for friends or against one’s enemies—by virtue of the word of Christ, Resist not [him that is] evil.

Document 10

Information on the source:

Humanist scholar Desiderius Erasmus, if not Luther, was perhaps the most famous thinker of this time in Europe. He agreed with many of Luther’s complaints about the Catholic Church. Yet unlike Luther, he never broke with the Church, and he came to reject key Lutheran theological ideas. More importantly, he disagreed with Luther’s often rigid, angry manner and his certainty about his own ideas. At first, Erasmus kept his criticism restrained. The passage here expresses respect for Luther’s piety, but its own tolerant approach might already reflect Erasmus’s concerns about Luther and Lutheranism. The letter was to the Elector Frederick of Saxony and is dated April 14, 1519. From Preserved Smith, *Luther’s Correspondence and Other Contemporary Letters*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: The Lutheran Publication Society, 1913–1918), Vol. 1, pp. 179–181.

As Luther is absolutely unknown to me, no one will suspect me of favoring him as a friend. It is not mine to defend his works, nor to disapprove them, for I have not read them, save a bit here and there. No one who knows the man does not approve his life, since he is as far as possible from suspicion of avarice or ambition, and blameless morals even among heathen find favor. It is not becoming to the gentle character of theologians, immediately without reading a book, to rage so savagely against the name and fame of a good man, and that in the presence of the unlearned multitude, especially as he only proposes his opinions for debate and submits them to the judgment of all, whether fitted to judge or not. No one has admonished him, no one has taught him, no one has refuted him; yet they bawl out that he is a heretic, and with tumultuous clamors incite the people to stone him. You would say that they thirsted for human blood rather than for the salvation of souls. The more hateful to Christian ears is the name of heresy, the less rashly ought we to charge anyone with it. Every error is not heresy, nor is he forthwith a heretic who may displease this man or that. Nor are those who make such splendid pretences always acting in the interest of the faith. Rather the greater number are acting in their own interests, and for their own gain or power, when with a hasty wish to wound they condemn in another what they condone in themselves.

Source Analysis: Primary Source Document 1

A photo of the interior of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, Italy

Contextualizing

Some have called St. Peter's Basilica the "mother church" of the Catholic Church. From its location, its name, and its role, can you explain why it is seen this way?

Construction of the current basilica began in 1506. The Pope's effort to finance this construction actually led directly to the clash between the Church and Luther. Can you explain how?

Interpreting meanings

From what you know about the European Renaissance, can you explain how this building illustrates Renaissance architecture and values?

Point of view

Can a photo express a point of view? Notice the camera angle, the way the photo is composed, etc.: What overall feeling or impression do you get about this building from the photo?

Source Analysis: Primary Source Document 2

Martin Luther's "Definition of Faith," from the *Preface* to his German Bible (1522)

Contextualizing

Luther speaks of faith as killing the "Old Adam" in us and making us into completely different people. Explain what he means by the "Old Adam" here and how this view of human beings is a central one in Christian teachings.

Interpreting meanings

Some critics of Luther feared his emphasis on faith alone could lead people to act selfishly; that is, if they were sure they had faith, they could ignore doing good works. Briefly explain how Luther tries to show here that these critics are wrong. Choose one or two sentences that make his point and discuss them.

What parts of this passage do you think might most bother these critics? If so, take notes on them and discuss them.

Corroborating sources

The sources for this lesson include others by Luther. Do any of the sources add to or alter your understanding of Luther's basic beliefs as he expresses them here? If so, list them here and discuss them with others.

Source Analysis: Primary Source Document 3

A part of the preface to Pope Leo X's *Exurge Domine* of 1520 condemning Luther

Contextualizing

What do you know about the concept of excommunication in the Catholic Church? Why would most people in the 1500s regard the threat of excommunication with great fear?

Interpreting meanings

The Pope uses several images in condemning Luther—vineyards, creeping serpents, and wild boars. How might these images add to the impact of the Pope's message?

The Pope wants his pronouncement to be seen as coming from God himself, through him as Pope. How does his language help him to make this impression?

Corroborating sources

Does Luther speak of his opponents in a way that is radically different from the way the Pope speaks here about Luther? Explain your answer with phrases you find in some of the other sources.

Source Analysis: Primary Source Document 4

Luther's 1520 reply to the Dominican theologian Sylvester Prierias

Interpreting meanings

What does this document suggest about Luther's view of the proper role of political rulers in relation to the Church?

What does it suggest about the way Luther viewed his opponents in this struggle?
What does it suggest about how he viewed his own role as the key leader of that struggle?

Sourcing

Luther directed these remarks to a key spokesman and defender of the Pope and the Church. Does that add to or alter its value as a primary source in any way? Why or why not?

Corroborating sources

Compare Luther's language here to the Pope's in Primary Source Document 3. To what degree do they share similar views about their faith and its place in society? In what ways are their views very different?

Source Analysis: Primary Source Document 5

An illustration of Luther burning Pope Leo X's papal bull on December 10, 1520

Contextualizing

This scene is one of the most dramatic moments in the entire history of the Reformation. Can you explain why?

Point of view

Do you think this illustration takes a favorable view of Luther's defiant act? What features in it help it to convey a certain point of view about Luther? (For instance, notice the way Luther is depicted, the way the crowd is arranged, the lighting, etc.)

Sourcing

This illustration was actually published in Germany in the 1830s, at a time when German nationalism was a growing force in the region. Do you think these facts help in understanding the illustration, or do you think the illustration is only about Luther's time? Explain your answer.

Source Analysis: Primary Source Document 6

Part of Luther's speech to the Diet of Worms, April 17, 1521

Contextualizing

Can you explain why the German emperor felt he had to give Luther safe passage to the diet and go easy on him in other ways at this time?

Interpreting meanings

In this brief passage, Luther's explains his attitude both toward Church authority and the authority of the written word of scripture. How would you sum up his attitude about both sources of authority?

Luther here says he relies on the authority of scripture instead of "the unsupported authority of Pope or councils." Some historians see in this Luther taking a truly revolutionary step. Why do you think they see it this way? Do you agree or disagree? Why?

Source Analysis: Primary Source Document 7

Summary statements of the “Twelve Articles of the Swabian Peasants” (1525)

Contextualizing

At several points, these articles suggest that conditions were worsening for the peasants of Germany at this time. What do you know of changing economic conditions for the peasants in Europe in the 15th and 16th centuries?

Interpreting meanings

Would you describe these articles as basically a religious statement or a social and political statement? Explain your answer.

Do you think the authors of the “Twelve Articles” would accept the idea that religious, social, and political issues could even be thought of as separate? Why or why not?

Source Analysis: Primary Source Document 8

Luther's reply to the Swabian Peasants (1525)

Interpreting meanings

Notice that Luther says “there is nothing more poisonous, pernicious, and devilish than a rebellious man.” Why do you think he reacts so strongly to the idea of a “rebellious man”?

Might not Catholic authorities call Luther himself a “rebellious man”? If so, how do you think Luther would distinguish between his rebelliousness and that of the peasants?

Contextualizing

At the time Luther wrote this tract, both the peasants and their opponents were carrying out horrible atrocities. Does this help explain Luther's language in this passage? Why or why not?

Corroborating sources

What can you conclude about Luther's views by comparing this passage with his comments about faith in Primary Source Document 2?

Source Analysis: Primary Source Document 9

A passage from the “Schleitheim Confession” of 1527, a statement by a group of “radical” Anabaptists

Interpreting meanings

What view of the social, political, and religious world around them do these Anabaptists express in this statement? Choose several phrases that best sum up their view of their contemporary world.

Corroborating sources

In what ways do the Anabaptists here reflect views similar to those of Luther in Primary Source Documents 2?

In what ways do their views differ from Luther's, either in Primary Source Document 2, or also in Primary Source Documents 4 and 8?

Source Analysis: Primary Source Document 10

Part of a letter by Desiderius Erasmus to the Elector Frederick of Saxony, dated April 14, 1519

Interpreting meanings

Erasmus seems to say Luther is an admirable person. Based on this passage, are there any specific ideas of Luther's he agrees with, or is it only Luther's character he sees as admirable?

What does Erasmus most dislike about Luther's critics?

Contextualizing

Erasmus is considered a great Renaissance humanist. What do you know about the Renaissance and the scholars called humanists? From what you know, do you think Erasmus's tone and thinking in this passage express the spirit of Renaissance humanism? Why or why not?

Some might say Erasmus's tone here fits with the spirit of the Renaissance, and that Luther's fits with the spirit of the Reformation—and that these two spirits are very different. Do you agree or disagree? Why? Which of the two would say is most “revolutionary”?

Part 3: Analyzing the Secondary Sources

Note to the teacher: This next section includes passages from two secondary source accounts on the Reformation along with two activities on these sources. We suggest you first discuss the brief comment “Analyzing Secondary Sources” just above the first of the two secondary sources. Discuss the four criteria the first activity asks students to use in analyzing each secondary source. These criteria focus students on the nature of historical accounts as 1) problem-centered, 2) based on evidence, 3) influenced by point of view and not purely neutral, and 4) tentative or aware of alternative explanations.

Specifically, this section includes the following:

- **Two secondary source passages**

Give copies of these passages to students to read, either in class or as homework. The two passages are from *The Two Reformations of the 16th Century*, by H. A. E. Van Gelder (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, N.V. Publishers of the Hague, 1961), pp. 6–7, and from *The Age of the Reformation*, by Preserved Smith (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1920), p. 749.

- **Two student activities**

Activity 1

Students analyze the two passage taking notes on the following questions:

- How clearly does the account focus on a problem or question?
- Does it reveal a position or express a point of view?
- How well does it base its case on primary source evidence?
- How aware is it of alternative explanations or points of view?

Activity 2

In pairs, students select two of the primary sources for the lesson that best support each author’s claims in the secondary source passages. Students discuss their choices with the class.

The Secondary Sources for the Lesson

Analyzing Secondary Sources

Historians write secondary source accounts of the past after studying primary source documents like the ones you have studied on the Protestant Reformation. However, they normally select documents from among a great many others, and they stress some aspects of the story but not others. In doing this, historians are guided by the questions they ask about the topic. Their selection of sources and their focus are also influenced by their own aims, bias, or point of view. No account of the past is perfectly neutral. In reading a secondary source, you should pay to what it includes, what it leaves out, what conclusions it reaches, and how aware it is of alternative interpretations.

* * * *

Secondary Source 1

Information on the source: The passage in the box below is an excerpt from *The Two Reformations of the 16th Century*, by H. A. E. Van Gelder (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, N.V. Publishers of The Hague, 1961), pp. 6–7.

At the time of the Renaissance, i.e, between 1450 and 1560, there took place, I wish to show, together with the many new things that the Renaissance brought in other fields of spiritual life, a religious reformation which went considerably further than what is usually termed the Reformation. In the sixteenth century (and in the succeeding centuries) we have to distinguish side by side with Catholicism and Protestantism a third religious movement, parallel to both but not between them, and having a more modern aspect. It is a well-defined religious opinion, even if it is not laid down in any confession of faith. I shall call it humanistic religion because it was principally held by those whom we have long been

accustomed to call “Humanists,” and because by shifting attention from God to man, it signifies the beginning of the evolution which, via the Enlightenment, finds its most consistent continuation in what in recent years has been called “Humanism” . . . Since it is more radical than the Reformation of Luther and Calvin, and since it was of far reaching influence on the whole of cultural life, while the influence of the Protestant Reformation, apart from a modified view of the relationship of man to God, was limited to interrelations of church, state, and the individual, I call the one the major and the other the minor Reformation, aware that by this I am also expressing a personal appraisal, and not only an objective historical one.

The Secondary Sources for the Lesson

Secondary Source 2

Information on the source: The passage in the box below is an excerpt from *The Age of the Reformation*, by Preserved Smith (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1920), p. 749.

In its relation to the Renaissance and to modern thought the Reformation solved, in its way, two problems, or one problem, that of authority, in two forms. [The Reformation's] innovating leaders did assert, at least for themselves, the right of private judgment. Appealing from indulgence-seller to pope, from pope to council, from council to the Bible, and (in Luther's own words) from the Bible to Christ, the Reformers finally came to their own conscience as the supreme court. Trying to deny to others the very rights they had fought to secure

for themselves, yet their example operated more powerfully than their arguments, even when these were made of ropes and thumb-screws. The delicate balance of faith was overthrown and . . . the avalanche, started by ever so gentle a push, swept onward until it buried the men who tried to stop it half way. Dogma slowly narrowing down from precedent to precedent had its logical, though unintended, outcome in complete religious autonomy, yes, in infidelity and skepticism.

The Secondary Sources: Activity 1

In this exercise, you read two short passages from much longer secondary sources dealing with the Protestant Reformation. For each secondary source, take notes on the following four questions (you may want to underline phrases or sentences in the passages that you think back up your notes):

1. How clearly does this account focus on a problem or question. What do you think that problem or question is? Sum it up in your own words here.

The Two Reformations, Van Gelder

The Age of the Reformation, Smith

2. Does the secondary source take a position or express a point of view about the Reformation? If so, briefly state that point of view or quote an example of it.

The Two Reformations, Van Gelder

The Age of the Reformation, Smith

3. How well does the secondary source seem to base its case on primary source evidence? Take notes about any specific examples, if you can identify them.

The Two Reformations, Van Gelder

The Age of the Reformation, Smith

4. Does the secondary source seem aware of alternative explanations or points of view about this topic? Underline points in the passage where you see this.

The Two Reformations, Van Gelder

The Age of the Reformation, Smith

In pairs, discuss your notes for this activity.

The Secondary Sources: Activity 2

This activity is based on the passages from *The Two Reformations of the 16th Century*, by H. A. E. Van Gelder, and from *The Age of the Reformation*, by Preserved Smith. From the primary sources for this lesson, choose two that you think best support each author's point of view about the Protestant Reformation. With the rest of the class, discuss the two secondary source passages and defend the choice of sources you have made.

1. From this lesson, choose two primary sources that best back up Van Gelder's interpretation of the Protestant Reformation. List those sources here and briefly explain why you chose them.
2. From this lesson, choose two primary sources that best back up Smith's interpretation of the Protestant Reformation. List those sources here and briefly explain why you chose them.
3. Does your textbook include a passage describing or summing up the meaning of the Protestant Reformation? If so, with which of the two secondary sources (Van Gelder or Smith) does it seem to agree most? What one or two primary sources from this lesson would you add to this textbook passage to improve it?

Discuss your choices with the rest of the class.

Part 4: Follow-Up Options

Note to the teacher: At this point, students have completed the key tasks of *The Historian's Apprentice* program. They have examined their own prior understandings and acquired background knowledge on the topic. They have analyzed and debated a set of primary sources. They have considered secondary source accounts of the topic. This section includes two suggested follow-up activities. Neither of these is a required part of the lesson. They do not have to be undertaken right away. However, we do strongly recommend that you find some way to do what these options provide for. They give students a way to write or debate in order to express their ideas and arrive at their own interpretations of the topic.

Two suggested follow-up activities are included here:

- **Document-Based Questions**

Four Document-Based Questions are provided. Choose one and follow the guidelines provided for writing a typical DBQ essay.

- **A Structured Debate**

The aim of this debate format is not so much to teach students to win a debate, but to learn to listen and learn, as well as speak up and defend a position. A more interactive and more civil debating process is the goal.

Document-Based Questions

Document-Based Questions (DBQs) are essay questions you must answer by using your own background knowledge and a set of primary sources on that topic. Below are four DBQs on the nature of the Protestant Reformation. Use the sources for this lesson and everything you have learned from it to write a short essay answer to one of these questions.

Suggested DBQs

“Luther’s insistence on ‘justification by faith alone’ started a revolution that even he never imagined and could not control.” Assess the validity of this statement (that is, explain why you do or do not agree with it).

Compare and contrast the attitudes of Luther, Erasmus, and Pope Leo X as to the real meaning of human conscience and its place in religious life.

“Between Luther, the Pope, and extremists like the Anabaptists, the Reformation era was only a continuation of an age of dogmatic religion in new forms.” Assess the validity of this statement (that is, explain why you do or do not agree with it).

Explain whether the Reformation was a purely religious upheaval or whether it was also a social, political, and economic upheaval.

Suggested Guidelines for Writing a DBQ Essay

- **Planning and thinking through the essay**

Consider the question carefully. Think about how to answer it so as to address each part of it. Do not ignore any detail in the question. Pay attention to the question’s form (cause-and-effect, compare-and-contrast, assess the validity, etc.). This form will often give you clues as to how best to organize each part of your essay.

- **Thesis statement and introductory paragraph**

The thesis statement is a clear statement of what you hope to prove in your essay. It must address *all* parts of the DBQ, it must make a claim you can back up with the sources, and it should be specific enough to help you organize the rest of your essay.

- **Using evidence effectively**

Use the notes on your “Source Analysis” activity sheets to organize your thoughts about these primary sources. In citing a source, use it to support key points or illustrate major themes. Do not simply list a source in order to get it into the essay somehow. If any sources do *not* support your thesis, you should still try to use them. Your essay may be more convincing if you qualify your thesis so as to account for these other sources.

- **Linking ideas explicitly**

After your introduction, your internal paragraphs should make your argument in a logical or clear way. Each paragraph should be built around one key supporting idea and details that back up that idea. Use transition phrase such as “before,” “next,” “then,” or “on the one hand . . . , but on the other hand” to help readers follow the thread of your argument.

- **Wrapping it up**

Don’t add new details about sources in your final paragraph. State a conclusion that refers back to your thesis statement by showing how the evidence has backed it up. If possible, look for nice turns of phrase to end on a dramatic note.

A Structured Debate

Small-group activity: Using a version of the Structured Academic Controversy model, debate alternate interpretations of this lesson's topic. The goal of this method is not so much to win a debate as to learn to collaborate in clarifying your interpretations to one another. In doing this, your goal should be to see that it is possibly for reasonable people to hold differing views, even when finding the "one right answer" is not possible.

Use all their notes from previous activities in this lesson. Here are the rules for this debate.

1. Organize a team of four or six students. Choose a debate topic based on the lesson *Was the Reformation a Revolution?*

(You may wish to use one of the DBQs suggested for the Document-Based Questions activity for this lesson. Or you may want to define the debate topic in a different way.)

2. Split your team into two subgroups. Each subgroup should study the materials for this lesson and rehearse its case. One subgroup then present its case to the other. That other subgroup must repeat the case back to the first subgroup's satisfaction.
3. Then the two subgroups switch roles and repeat step 2.
4. Your team either reaches a consensus which it explains to the entire class, or it explains where the key differences between the subgroups lie.

Answers to “Source Analysis” Activities

Source Analysis: Document 1

Contextualizing: It is named after the Apostle Peter, regarded as the first Bishop of Rome and founder of the Papacy; it is the largest of the basilicas in the Vatican City where the Popes reside; etc.

Indulgences were sold to raise funds for it, and it was this that sparked Luther’s initial protest.

Interpreting meanings: The enormous size, high arched roof, walls and piers richly decorated with elaborate sculptures, elements imitating ancient Roman architecture, etc.

Point of view: Answers may vary, but the photo stresses the symmetry, the awesome size, etc.

Source Analysis: Document 2

Contextualizing: In Christian teachings, Adam, the first man, was also the first to give in to sin. All humans are sinful as a result and must seek forgiveness for sins through faith in God and Jesus Christ.

Interpreting meanings: Various phrases or sentences could be chosen. Luther’s main point in all this was that if a person has been granted true faith, he will then naturally want to do good works and will do them.

Answers will vary. Luther put a lot of trust in a person’s inner sense of faith. Some might think he gave individuals too sweeping a right to judge on their own and act as they wish, as long as they are sure they have been given God’s grace.

Point of view: Answers will vary and should be discussed.

Source Analysis: Document 3

Contextualizing: Excommunication is taking away someone’s membership in a religious community. In the Catholic Church, it meant not being able to receive certain sacraments regarded as essential to salvation. It also could mean being shunned and punished in other ways as well.

Interpreting meanings: The images emphasize the idea of Luther as a near-inhuman monster. They also refer to Biblical stories and images that add to the idea of Luther as defying God directly.

The above answer touches on this, also the last sentence here makes it very explicit.

Corroborating sources: Answers will vary. Students should back up their views with specific passages from the other Luther documents.

Source Analysis: Document 4

Interpreting meanings: He clearly sees a key role for secular powers in enforcing religious orthodoxy.

He sees opponents as immoral, not merely mistaken; as for Luther’s own sense of his role, student could infer he sees himself as a powerful advocate but not directly in charge, as he is urging action on the princes, etc.

Sourcing: Answers will vary, but this does show his boldness in confronting opponents directly.

Corroborating sources: Answers will vary and should be discussed.

Source Analysis: Document 5

Contextualizing: This act of dramatic defiance caused a final break with Rome. Only a few days later, the Pope excommunicated Luther.

Point of view: Most will probably see a favorable image produced by the dramatic lighting, Luther’s calm dignified look, his placement at the center with admiring people at a respectful distance, etc.

Sourcing: Students may lack sufficient background knowledge to fully assess this, but a discussion about this could add to their readiness to see sources as purposeful documents of their times, not merely records of the basic facts of “what happened.”

Source Analysis: Document 6

Contextualizing: Many powerful German princes in the emperor's lands backed Luther, in part out of a desire to set limits to the power of both the emperor and the Catholic Church.

Interpreting meanings: Answers will vary, but all should see that Luther clearly puts the words of scripture ahead of the authority of the Church, and some may insist he entirely replaces the Church's authority when he says he "puts no trust" in the Church's views unless supported by scripture.

This follows from the previous question. Answers will vary and should be discussed.

Source Analysis: Document 7

Contextualizing: The articles make reference to some traditional customary rights peasants then found nobles taking away. In fact, the lesser nobility felt squeezed by higher prices, rising merchant groups, and the greater military power of kings and princes. As they did, they often imposed new restrictions on their peasants, more taxes and fees, the enclosing of some former commonly held lands, etc.

Interpreting meanings: Answers to both of these questions will vary, but students should see that the "Twelve Articles" do tend to view issues of social and economic inequality as well as church matters as all basically religious in nature, to be decided by following the word of God.

Source Analysis: Document 8

Interpreting meanings: Answers to this question and the next will vary and should be discussed. The questions are designed to focus on the conflict some see in Luther's great stress on individual conscience in interpreting the word of God etc. Thus, he rejects rebelliousness here in harsh terms even though he is himself a rebel against the Church, and even though he also says here that each individual should be "judge and executioner" of the rebels.

Contextualizing: Answers may vary and should be discussed. Students may need more specific information on the Peasants Revolt to assess this carefully.

Corroborating sources: Answers may vary and should be discussed.

Source Analysis: Document 9

Interpreting meanings: Answers will vary, but should probably focus on the extreme separation the Anabaptists sought from all aspects of the current "corrupt" society.

Corroborating sources: Answers may vary and should be discussed, but both of these documents directly claim or imply a much greater role for each individual conscience, and both question the moral and spiritual value of much traditional social behavior and institutional authority.

Many specific answers here are possible and should be discussed, but Luther clearly relied on current, established secular authority and institutions far more than the Anabaptists did.

Source Analysis: Document 10

Interpreting meanings: Erasmus avoids discussing Luther's actual ideas, and even claims he is not familiar with his writings all that much. He mainly defends Luther's character.

Erasmus singles out their harsh rhetoric, their hatred, their hypocrisy, and their lack of mercy. In fact, these are traits he would come to condemn in Luther and his followers as well.

Contextualizing: The humanists admired the restrained, dignified tone of classical literature; its emphasis on the freedom of human reason and will; etc. In this passage, Erasmus demonstrates these values by stressing tolerance and a readiness to hear others out before condemning them.

Answers here will vary and should be discussed.

Evaluating Secondary Sources: Activity 1

These are not definitive answers to the questions. They are suggested points to look for in student responses.

1. How clearly does this account focus on a problem or question. What do you think that problem or question is? Sum it up in your own words here?

Van Gelder focuses on Renaissance humanism (of the kind illustrated by Erasmus) and only indirectly on the Reformation. The problem he poses is whether the Renaissance or the Reformation was more radical in its impact on the long run of European and world history.

Smith also wants to understand the long-term impact of the Reformation on European society and culture, but he looks for it in certain ideas promoted by Reformation thinkers, not the Renaissance.

2. Does the secondary source take a position or express a point of view about the meaning of the Protestant Reformation? If so, briefly state that point of view or quote an example of it.

Van Gelder writes about Renaissance humanism, but his point is about the Reformation. He claims the Reformation was limited in its effects while the real cultural and intellectual revolution was one that Renaissance humanists started and that the Enlightenment of the 18th century brought to fulfillment.

Smith sees the Reformation itself as bringing about truly radical change, which its own key leaders did not themselves seek but that their ideas led to anyway. In comparison to the Renaissance, he claims that the Reformation was more revolutionary. That was so because it asserted a “right of private judgment” that it could not limit and that kept finding new dogmas and forms of authority to challenge, including those promoted by the Reformation leaders themselves.

3. How well does the secondary source seem to base its case on primary source evidence? Take notes about any specific examples, if you can identify them.

Neither *Van Gelder* nor *Smith* makes specific reference to primary sources in these brief passages. The passages are only summaries of the point of view each author holds regarding the Reformation (and/or the Renaissance).

4. Does the secondary source seem aware of alternative explanations or points of view about this topic? Underline points in the passage where you see this.

Van Gelder at several points stresses that he is, as he puts it at one point, “expressing a personal appraisal.” This lets his audience know he is aware of other possible appraisals. *Smith* in this passage does not deal directly or indirectly with the interpretations of the Reformation by other historians.

