

Document Analysis Paper  
Guidelines and Suggestions

Occasionally, when studying primary source documents distributed in class or in *For the Record*, you will be directed to develop a Document Analysis Paper. The paper should be structured and written as follows:

**Part One:**

Provide (in paragraph form) a PHIA analysis of this document.

Discuss, in detail three important points in the document that you feel best explain the point the author is trying to get across. Also, considering the period in which the piece was written, explain **why** you feel these points to be important. Hint: this would require that you provide a brief statement about the time period (As is always emphasized in AP, it is important to explain this using detail to back up your answer.) “Why” and “How” are important questions to be answered for all assignments in APUSH. (Aligns to APUSH HTS A1.)

**Part Two:**

Contextualize the document, which requires you to “situate historical events, developments, or processes [or, in this case, documents] within the broader regional, national, or global context in which they occurred in order to draw conclusions about their relative significance.” In other words, what is happening at the time that was written? This is important for the next requirement of part two: concluding why the document was written. In some cases, there will be a stated reason why a document was written; the fun thing to do here is to list that reason, but then critically assess whether that was the “true” reason for the document, or whether there were alternative motives *when considering the historical context in which the document was written*. Alternately, you may not have that information and may have to speculate about why a document was written by considering the *context* in which the document was written. Provide detailed evidence that helps the reader understand how you arrived at these conclusions (or, make sure you explain your reasons with “how” and “why”).

- A helpful place to consult for this information is the internet. Run a search on the document; you’re likely to come up with many college websites with discussions. Also, be sure to read the introduction of the document, if it’s provided; it often reveals this important information.
- Still at a loss? Consult your textbook for some background on the topic or the writing. The textbook often contains this information. (Aligns to APUSH HTS C3)

**Part Three:**

Finally, address these points:

What does this document tell you about life in the United States (or a given region of the United States) at the time it was written (or, in the colonies if the document is before the Revolution)? Explain your response using examples from the reading. (This is a “thinking” exercise. This is not just a literal explanation about what the document says. If the document says something, then I can read it and see that for myself. I want to know what you **THINK** the document reveals about life in the nation. Finally, explain what in the reading leads you to this conclusion (the HOW and WHY). (Aligns to HTS C1, C3, E2)

**Structure:**

When completed, your paper should resemble the following format:

Name
Class Period
Date
Name of Document (Year of Document)
Author’s Name
PART ONE:
PART TWO:
PART THREE:

<p><b>Important:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ No personal pronouns should appear in the writing. (I, you...)</li><li>▪ The writing should be objective: avoid words like “we” and “our” and refer to the U.S. as “the United States”</li><li>▪ Avoid the use of contractions. Formal grammar rules apply.</li><li>▪ Use one-inch margins in the writing.</li><li>▪ Do not do a cruddy job, unless you want a cruddy grade.</li><li>▪ Remember: you always want to make sure an assignment explains “HOW” and “WHY.” The reader must know, without question, exactly what you are saying.</li></ul>
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