

## ANNALS OF AMERICAN HISTORY ACTIVITY STUDYING HISTORY THROUGH WRITING



You are about to study and analyze a piece of historical literature. You will experience, firsthand, important events in American history by reading original words from history-makers.

In this three-part activity, you will first analyze the work by answering questions about the author's writing. You will then write a review of this document, and finally, interpret the message with a current day perspective.

Complete this activity using a document from Encyclopædia Britannica's *Annals of American History* as assigned by your teacher.

### **About *Annals of American History***

As an online resource, *Annals of American History* illuminates U.S. history from 1493 to modern times in over 2,000 primary documents—the original words of history-makers. History, society, and everyday life come into focus through a variety of documents and media. Access this resource through an Internet browser at <http://america.eb.com>.

Discovering history in the *Annals* is easy. Start by choosing one of the options on the Home page.

- Select a time period from the Timeline.
- Select a letter to Browse by Author.
- Select a subject area to start browsing Topics in American History.
- Enter a keyword in the search box to Search the *Annals of American History*.

Each document begins with an Introduction, which appears in italics. The Introduction explains the document's historical context and provides some background about the author. The original source information is also provided here.

**Quick-Click Dictionary:** To find spellings, meanings, and word choices for writing, use the *Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary*. It's easy! **Double-click** any word on any page to look it up in the dictionary.

**Multimedia:** To find the pictures or video clips in *Annals of American History*, select an option from the Timeline or Topics in American History, or run a search. On the following page, use the **Show Only** menu at the top of the page to select "Multimedia" and then click the "Go" button.

## PRE-READING VOCABULARY CHECK



Before you begin reading and analyzing this document, you must have an understanding of key terms. This matching exercise helps you review the key terms you need to complete the activity.

Match the following terms with the correct definition. Write the letter of the correct definition next to the term.

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|-----------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. _____ Form of text | <b>A.</b> The style that follows established forms, customs, or rules.                                                                                                                                                          |
| 2. _____ Purpose      | <b>B.</b> The person or persons who are the intended readers.                                                                                                                                                                   |
| 3. _____ Style        | <b>C.</b> The shape of the text you need to produce such as: article, diary entry, essay, letter, note, poem, and short story.                                                                                                  |
| 4. _____ Audience     | <b>D.</b> The reason or intention for a piece of writing.                                                                                                                                                                       |
| 5. _____ Informal     | <b>E.</b> Any piece of writing, ranging from a single word to a complete book.                                                                                                                                                  |
| 6. _____ Text         | <b>F.</b> The style that is casual or familiar.                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| 7. _____ Formal       | <b>G.</b> The characteristic features of a piece of writing, according to the writer's purpose and target audience (for example, the choice of formal or informal vocabulary; whether or not the writer uses the first person). |

## PART ONE: DOCUMENT ANALYSIS



Analyzing documents involves reading with an eye toward evaluating, as opposed to reading to learn facts or just for the fun of it. Literary analysis includes: identifying the message, purpose, intended audience, writing style, emotional appeal, and examining the author's arguments.

Analyzing a historical document may be challenging and may require you to reread the document a few times before beginning this activity. You may refer to the document at any time. Please also read the document's Introduction, which appears in italics. The Introduction explains the document's historical context and provides some background about the author.

Based on your teacher's instructions, read the assigned document either aloud, in groups, or by yourself. Get into small groups of four or five to discuss the assigned document and answer the following questions.

Author(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_

Year Written \_\_\_\_\_

1. What is the purpose of this historical document? Is the author trying to entertain, persuade, or inform the audience? (There may be more than one purpose.)

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2. Who is the intended audience? Was this writing meant for friends, officials, opponents, supporters, or someone else?

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3. Would you consider the style of writing formal or informal? Give an example of words or phrases used by the writer to help create either a formal or a friendly, casual tone.

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4. Has the author used examples to support his or her argument? If so, are they clear and do they relate to the purpose or message?

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5. What form of text is used? (For example, is it a brief written note, poem, an essay, or a letter?) In your opinion, does the form of the text fit its purpose? If not, what form would you recommend and why?

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**PART THREE: WRITING FOR TODAY**



1. Using today's language, write at least two sentences summarizing the message of this document. What ideas or thoughts was the author trying to get across?

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2. Does this message still have importance today? Why or why not?

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