

# ANALYZING PRIMARY SOURCES

You are encouraged to go back and forth between the four **actions**; there is no correct order.

## OBSERVE

**Students: identify and note details.**

What do you notice first? • What type of source is this? • When was it created? •

What do you see that you didn't expect or can't explain? • What ideas are expressed?

## REFLECT

**Students: generate and test hypotheses about the source.**

What was happening during this time? • What was the creator's purpose in making this? • Who was the intended audience? • What biases or gaps do you see? • If this was made today, what would be different?

## QUESTION

**Students: ask questions that lead to more observations and reflections.**

What do you wonder about...  
who? • what? • when? • where? • why? • how?

## IMAGINE/EMPATHIZE

**Students: imagine you are a person connected to the source.**

How would you have felt if you were the person who made this source? •  
How would you have felt seeing this source during the time period it was made? • If the source depicts an event or place, what would have felt like to be there? • Can you imagine agreeing or disagreeing with the person, people, event in the source? •

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## FURTHER INVESTIGATION

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**Students: identify questions appropriate for further investigation, and develop a research strategy for finding answers.** What more do you want to know, and how can you find out? What research topic(s) might this item be useful for? What other sources might offer a different perspective on this topic?

**What collection did you use, so that you can cite it or return to view it later (Item details? Collection name? Call number?)?**