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basic education

Department:
Basic Education
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

HISTORY

SOURCE WORK

AND

EXTENDED WRITING

GUIDE

GRADES 10-12

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WORKING WITH SOURCES

The focus of history teaching in the National Curriculum Statement has shifted to working with sources. The aim is to enable learners to extract, analyse and interpret evidence from sources, just like historians do, and write their own piece of history. Emphasis is on history as a process rather than a product.

It is therefore imperative for learners to note that nearly all the assessment in history is based on sources and that this guide will help them go through those skills in a confident manner. The guide will handle issues such as usefulness, relevance, reliability and bias in sources.

What are sources?
Sources are the raw material of history. These include letters, documents, books, photographs, drawings and paintings, speeches, monuments, statues and buildings, tables and graphs, maps, poems, diaries, songs, etc. They can be written, oral, visual and any other material that is useful to the historian to find historical evidence. Remember that historians construct a view of the past by using what has survived from the past for gleaning of information/evidence.

Skills developed in working with sources
When learners work with sources in history, they go through an enquiry process which leads to acquiring the following key skills:

- Analysis
- Interpretation
- Evaluation
- Synthesis
- Communication

Important questions to ask about historical sources
When learners are working with a source, they need to ask the following questions:

- Who produced it? (provenance)
- When was it produced?
- For whom was it produced?
- Why was it produced?
- What does it say?/ What does it tell us about the past?
- Can we trust what it say?/ Was the person there?
- Is reliable? (is the information accurate)
- Is it biased? (whose point of view)
- Would it be useful if I were writing a history of the time?
- Is it a primary/ secondary source?

Let us look at some of the questions raised above.

Is it valid?
Learners need to be aware that some sources are not authentic or real; for instance, those made up by the teacher. Another example of a bogus source is that of Hitler's diary in the 1980s. This had been faked in order to make money. Sources can also be invalid if they are

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misapplied. For instance if a source on the French Revolution is presented as dealing with the Russian Revolution, it would be invalid.

Is it useful?
A source might be useful for some purposes but not so useful for others. It depends on the question you are asking. For instance, if a source is biased, it may not be useful if you are trying to find out about an event; however that same source might be useful to show how people felt at the time. Sources are not just useful for what they are about but also for incidental and background details. Furthermore, their very existence shows that they were regarded as important at the time.

Example:

The topic might be about the Rise of the Nazi Party. This photograph has nothing directly to do with the Nazi Party. It is a photograph taken in the early 1920s showing how business and professional men managed to get to work during a transport strike. Despite this having nothing to do with the Nazi Party, it might well be useful to a researcher trying to get a complete picture of the period as it shows the type of vehicles of the time, the everyday dress worn at the time. The fact that all the workers are male is also significant. More importantly it suggests the sort of class divides that the Nazi Party was later able to exploit.

Is it primary or secondary?
Primary source is either produced at the time of the event or produced after the event by a witness of the event. It comes from the time the historian is studying and provides learners with opportunities to have a more direct encounter with past events and people. It links learners to the human emotions, aspirations, and values that prevailed in another time. ***Secondary source*** is written after the event by someone who did not witness the event. It is based on other sources e.g. a book produced by a historian. Although knowing whether a source is primary or secondary is important, it is more important to explain whether a source is *useful* or *reliable*.

Perhaps the most important thing to know about these two types of sources is that we assess them differently when trying to decide such things as their usefulness and reliability. Most of what we will be saying about reliability refers to primary sources, so what should we be looking for when assessing a secondary source. The key features are the reputation of the author and/or publisher, evidence of extensive and balanced research (bibliography and

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footnotes) and, in the case of historians, some knowledge as to which historical school the historian belongs to (liberal, Marxist, Nationalist, annales, post-modern etc.)

Is it reliable?
Reliability refers to how credible or trustworthy material may be as a historical source of evidence. A source might be reliable for some purposes but unreliable for others. In order to test for reliability, these are some of the questions learner should ask.

- Who produced the source and when?
  - what are their ideas/ beliefs?
  - what is the extent of their knowledge of the subject?
  - are they well-informed or is much of their knowledge second-hand (hearsay) without evidence of any attempt to get a balanced and well-researched picture?

- Was the person who produced the source an eyewitness?
  - eyewitness may lack a global view, they may not be able to see/hear all that has happened.
  - however, they will be able to present a focused point of view.

- Why was the source produced?
  - was it for publication?
  -was it for private use?
  -was it for official use?
- Who was the intended audience?
  -was it written for the general public, e.g. newspaper?
  -was it written for experts or people who knew little about the subject?

- How was the language used?
  -choice of words may place bias on the material
  -is it emotive or factual?

- What about the selection of facts? (Bias)
  -does it seem to be a fair account, or is only one side presented?
  -what gaps exist in the information? (areas of silences)

- Are there errors in fact?
  -is the information in it accurate?
  -if there are errors, it may indicate an unreliable source.

Remember that different people see past events from different viewpoints and thus it will be difficult for any source to be completely reliable.

When sources do not agree, check the areas where they do not agree. Look further for what is called “corroborating evidence”. This is material which either confirms or denies your source.

Example:

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"You have to penetrate courts reeking with poisonous gases arising from the piles of sewage and refuse scattered in all directions; courts, many of them which the sun never reaches, which are never visited a breath of fresh air. You have to climb rotten staircases. You have to grope your way along dark and filthy passages swarming with vermin. Then you may gain admittance to the dens in which thousands of these beings … herd together."
From: The Bitter Cry of Outcast London published in 1883 by Rev Andrew Mearns.

This source about housing conditions in London in the 1880s is clearly very biased as can be detected from the extreme nature of the language used. However, it is not necessarily completely unreliable for someone studying this topic. A historian would need to cross-reference this source against a variety of other sources in order to gauge its degree of reliability.

Analysing visual sources

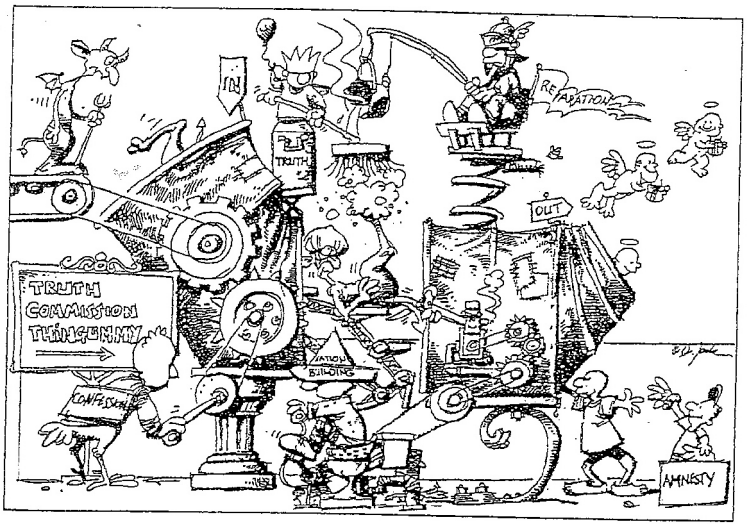
Cartoons, photographs, posters, graphs, and maps are all different types of visual sources.

Cartoons
Cartoons are an amusing primary source that gives us contemporary comment on historical events. Sometimes they are usually produced to convey a political message. The message in the pictures is usually satirical in nature; for instance, most cartoons that appear in our daily newspapers.

In order to understand what a cartoon is trying to say you need to look closely at all the visual clues in the cartoon such as facial expression, body language, style of dress, what each character is holding, what action each one is performing, relative position of the characters, speech bubbles, how each character is portrayed, the caption, the date, the publication in which the cartoon originally appeared, the persons and historical event represented. The more you know about the event or person the cartoonist is depicting the easier it is to make sense of their message.

Example:

Dr Jack's cartoon of the TRC Thingummy refers to the cleansing effect of the work done by the three committees of the TRC [Bottaro p. 213]



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The reason for choosing this cartoon as an example is that it was recently used in workshops, where teachers were required to set questions on it. Unfortunately the questions showed that most teachers have a poor grasp of cartoons as a genre. On more than one occasion the question set was to ask how accurate the cartoon was and the answer was along the lines of yes it is accurate because it shows the workings of the TRC committees. A question like this completely misses the satirical and in a literal sense, inaccurate, rendering of a cartoon. The answer is no it is not accurate – no such machine existed, the committees are not named, there was no literal process whereby devils were stripped naked, scrubbed and ejected the other side as angels.

It is almost invariably more appropriate to ask what the cartoonist's message is, because that is what a cartoon is a way of conveying a point of view on a current event or debate using an image which is often, but certainly not always humourous. In this case the cartoon is clearly a humourous view of the workings of the TRC. The very fact that it is called a Thingummy (a thing whose name one has forgotten, does not know or wish to mention) gives this away. It suggests that the cartoonist had a somewhat cynical view of the workings of the TRC. He seems to be saying can this ramshackle device really change the devils of apartheid into delicate little angels. It makes a further interesting comment in that the tube like structure is broken in the middle, so that only part of the process is seen by the public. Very tellingly the decision about whether to grant amnesty or not takes place outside public view as suggested by the handing in of amnesty certificates into the closed portion of the machine. **Cartoons should never be treated as the literal truth but as a symbolic or representational way of commenting on a matter of public concern.**

Photographs
Sometimes photos can be staged or altered to improve the appearance of people; parts of a photograph can be blocked out or a photograph can be even a fake. Such pictures do not tell the whole story. It is important that photographs be tested by providing corroborated evidence by using your own knowledge or by referring to other sources.

When analysing a photo, the learner needs to look into the following aspects:

- Describe the setting and time
- Identify people and objects
- What is happening in the photo?
- Was there a purpose for taking the picture?
- What would be a good caption for the photo?

Example:
Stalin's regime was notorious for altering pictures. Here is an example.

Original Picture – In this picture, Lenin is seen addressing the crowd. Standing immediately to the right of platform from which Lenin is speaking can be seen the figure of Trotsky, who, as the leader of the Red Army was an extremely important figure among the Bolsheviks.

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Altered Picture – By 1927, Stalin was supreme and Lenin, the advocate of World Revolution, had been forced to flee. He was later assassinated by Stalin's agents in Mexico. As a result when this photograph was published during the Stalinist era, Trotsky had been removed from the photograph.

Posters

Posters are usually produced for a particular reason. They tend to serve the purpose of the person who has paid for them to be made. These people have motives for presenting the poster in a particular way.

When analysing a poster, the learner needs to look into the following aspects:

- Note images, colours, dates, characters, references to places, etc.
- Describe the idea that the information seems to point to; compare it with ideas others may have.
- Write a sentence to give the central purpose of the poster.
- Do you think the poster would have been an effective one?

Example:

This poster with the words "Long Live Germany" on it uses the sort of imagery associated with Christ and the dove to portray its message. "Noble" Hitler with the eagle swooping above him has come to "save" Germany. In tapping into centuries of Christian imagery, the cartoon is typical of the highly effective propaganda machine the Nazis built up around the person of Hitler.

Graphs, maps and tables

Graphs, maps and tables are sometimes used to help learners understand information more easily than providing a written source. Learners need to carefully look at the information contained in these sources before answering questions. Graphs depict statistical data on the x-

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axis in relation to the y-axis, e.g. a bar graph showing the number of immigrants admitted to the USA in 1921.

Tables present statistical data in rays and columns, e.g. a table showing share prices of US companies before and after the Wall Street Crash.

Maps contain information that can be interpreted using a symbol legend or key, e.g. a map showing the direction the German army took to invade Austria.

More Examples Using the Source Matrix

Carefully study the Source Matrix developed on the next page. It is hoped that it will give you a systematic way of approaching sources. Basically it works like this:

- If you are asked about the usefulness of a source for a certain task, what should you look at? The matrix suggests that you should look at three factors: validity, relevance and reliability and it provides you with all the questions you should ask to evaluate these factors.
- If you are asked about the reliability of a source for a certain task what should you look at? Once again the matrix provides you with specific questions to ask about the source to reach a reasoned judgement. The same is true of bias, which is treated as a sub-section of reliability.

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Source Matrix

- How useful is the source? (usefulness)
  - Validity/Authenticity - This term refers to sources which are either fake or are misapplied e.g. using a source about the French Revolution for the Russian Revolution. Unless indicated otherwise, treat all sources in exams and tests as valid/authentic.
  - How relevant is the source to my investigation? (Relevance)
    - Does the source deal directly with the topic and if so how much detail and context does it provide? (Direct)
    - If it does not deal directly with the topic or is short on detail are there other ways in which it is useful? (Indirect)
  - How reliable is the source? (Reliability)
    - Is it accurate? Look for factual inaccuracies. To what extent was it based on firsthand knowledge and/or careful research or is it merely hearsay? (Accuracy)
    - Does it mean what it says? For instance someone who might be blamed for an incident may well try to find ways of covering it up as compared with someone who is disinterested (neutral). This is a common problem with most published sources. (Deceptiveness)
    - Is it typical? Can it be corroborated? Does what it is saying agree broadly with what other sources and your own knowledge about the subject are telling you? (Typicality)
    - Who produced the source and for what purpose? For example: If it was produced by a government for advocacy/propaganda purposes it is probably going to give everything it says a positive spin, while a private journal or letter might be much more frank. How reputable is the producer? (Provenance)
    - When was this source produced and by what means? e.g. If the source was produced long after the event, what about the effect of memory? Did the person who produced the source, produce it him- or herself or was it written down/recorded by someone else? (Recording)
    - How biased is the source? - You should look at the following:
      - Provenance (see above)
      - Lack of balance - one-sidedness
      - Language cues - phrases etc which tie into known ideological positions, e.g. vanguard party = Marxism-Leninism
      - Emotionalism - e.g. words like "evil", "ruthless" etc. used without clear evidence, or emotive images such as those sometimes found in cartoons and drawings.
      - Use of stereotypes and generalisations - such as frequent references to "they" and "us".
    - External factors:
      - Selection process: Is the source, which is often part of a larger document, being quoted out of context?
      - What about the effects of translation and/or editing on the source?

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1st Example: Cold War

The Key Question is: What factors led to the building of the Berlin Wall?

The source we are using was used in the November 2008 Paper 1. Background to the source:

The document comes from the National Security Archives at the George Washington University. This independent archives and research institution was set up in 1985 to make available and study declassified American documents relating to events such as the Cold War. The Wheeler Interview was part of a project to document the Cold War by means of oral history interviews with individuals who were involved in various ways. Wheeler was the BBC's German correspondent based in West Berlin in the early 1950s. The interview was made with Wheeler in May 1996. The main focus of the interview of which only a small part is reproduced in the source was the Berlin Riots of 1953. An important point that Wheeler makes in an earlier part of the interview is that, as a foreign correspondent, he was not allowed to visit East Berlin.

Having given you the background here is the source.

1. Conditions in East Berlin (in the 1960s) as viewed by Wheeler .

... East Berlin struggled to recover from the effects of the Second World War and was feeling the effects of Russia extracting reparations (payments) from East Germany. In fact very little rebuilding took place and despite a huge housing shortage, no building of houses took place, yet money was spent on building prestigious projects like the Communist Party headquarters.

The standard of living was poor compared to the West, wages were low, and there were no consumer goods in the shops, only endless jars of pickles. What production there was, was either going to the Soviet Union or being exported in the interests of the Soviet Union. Conditions here were desperate and people were indeed left destitute.

2. Conditions in West Berlin (in the 1960s) as viewed by Wheeler.

On the other hand West Berlin was a prosperous Western city that was rebuilt as a result of assistance from the Marshall Plan and assistance from other European states. The result of this was evident in a number of ways such as, many people I knew were employed, they enjoyed a good quality of life, most shops were well stocked with several goods and services and they bustled with shoppers. Moreover, there was freedom to travel and unemployment was really very low. Many people were happy with this state of affairs.

It was difficult to disentangle politics from economics. West Berlin thrived as a democracy and enjoyed the fruits of freedom, while East Berlin could not develop because of communist influence.

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The bracketed phrases appeared in the 2008 History paper.

Having studied the source as well as the contextualisation (the part which gives you all the background information such as Who produced the source? For what purpose? When was it produced? etc.) very carefully, let us use the **Source Matrix** to answer the following question:

How useful would this source be for a historian studying the factors which led to the building of the Berlin Wall?

Validity – As you will see from the matrix, the examiners are not likely to give you a bogus source, although it may be poorly contextualised. In this particular case, because Charlie Wheeler is describing the situation in the early 1950s, this source is invalid for the 1960s.

Relevance – This source would receive a fairly high score on this criterion because, although it does not deal directly with the Berlin Wall, it certainly gives insight into the factors which may have contributed to its building, which is the main focus of the question you have been asked.

However, it should be borne in mind that Wheeler is commenting on the situation in East and West Berlin in 1953 — there were almost certainly some changes between 1953 and the building of the Wall in 1961. One of the changes was that the Soviet Union was no longer directly involved in the running of its East German satellite. This is clearly shown by the fact that Stalin's Soviet Union was directly involved in imposing the blockade in 1948 but had no direct involvement in the building of the Berlin Wall in 1961, which was erected by the East German government of Walter Ulbricht. This was very convenient for Khrushchev as, even though the Wall broke several treaty terms, he could claim that the Soviet Union had nothing to do with it, although there is evidence that he suggested the idea to Ulbricht.

Reliability – The following factors should all be taken into account when judging reliability:

Accuracy: There is no evidence of any wrong facts and as the BBC correspondent in West Berlin Wheeler's business would have been finding out as much as he could about the situation.

However, we know from reading the contextualisation that Wheeler, as a foreign correspondent, was not allowed to enter East Berlin. This means that his information on conditions in that part of the city would have had to come mainly from Germans who either worked in West Berlin but lived in East Berlin or refugees who had fled from the Eastern sector. The likelihood would therefore be that most of his sources would view developments in East Berlin in a negative light.

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Deceptiveness: As this interview occurred after the conclusion of the Cold War, there would be no reason for Charlie Wheeler to be deceptive in any way. In other words the source means what it says.

Typicality: As learners, the only way we can test whether this source is typical is to compare it with the other sources we have been given in the exercise and with our own knowledge. Judged in this way, it appears to present a similar and therefore typical view of the situation in the two Berlins found in most other sources. In other words the other sources available to us appear to corroborate (agree with) what is being said in this source.

Provenance and Purpose: The main things we can say about provenance is that Charlie Wheeler was English; he was working for the BBC and was living in West Berlin. His access to East Berlin would therefore have been non-existent and he is likely to have approached the situation from the perspective of a supporter of the West. These are indeed factors which might affect the reliability of what he is saying. However, as this was not a propaganda piece, and was recorded after the Cold War had ended, there is no evidence that he has made any deliberate attempt to distort the information he provides. Furthermore, both the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and the George Washington University can be regarded as reputable sources with high standards of journalism in the case of the one and scholarship in the case of the latter.

Recording Constraints: In this case Wheeler is being interviewed about events which had taken place 44 years earlier. Unless he kept a journal to which he was referring, of which there is no evidence in the transcript of the interview, distortions may have crept in because of the long period involved. Memory even in the short term can be the cause of considerable distortion. Furthermore, this testimony was obtained using an oral history interview technique; this might further confound the reliability of the testimony. On the other hand as a seasoned journalist his job would probably have made him a more careful observer than someone in a different line of work.

Bias: Although this is certainly written from the perspective of a supporter of the West – a factor which needs to be kept in mind – it does not exhibit particularly strong signs of bias. Let's quickly look at the various bias indicators:

- Provenance and purpose – see above
- Lack of balance – Although he states that conditions in West Berlin were much better than those in East Berlin, he does provide the political context for these differing situations – Soviet Union extracting reparations vs the Marshall Plan and deliberate Western reconstruction.
- Language cues – some signs of anti-communism but not very strongly expressed.
- Emotionalism – language appears balanced and is not very emotional – look for lots of adjectives such as evil East German government, enlightened Western powers etc.

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- Use of stereotypes and generalisations – only to a limited degree – some attempt to qualify statements such as "Many people were happy with this state of affairs" rather than "Everybody was happy with this state of affairs."

As you can see from the foregoing, you could spend hundreds of words just deciding on the degree of usefulness of a source. So how would you go about answering the original question about the usefulness of this source for understanding factors leading to the building of the Berlin Wall? We suggest that your answer should contain the following points:

- source provides useful details about the different lifestyles in West and East Berlin (relevance)
- worth noting that Wheeler was talking about the situation in Berlin in 1953, while the focus in the question is on 1961 – much can change in eight years. (relevance)
- descriptions of lifestyles in the two Berlins are supported by other sources and by my own knowledge (accuracy, deceptiveness, typicality)
- a degree of bias needs to be taken into account as the author was a BBC correspondent living in West Berlin, who was not allowed access to East Berlin (provenance)
- However, as this was recorded after the Cold War, no ideological purpose would be served by giving a strongly biased account.
- further cautions are that this source is based on oral testimony taken 43 years after the event – memory lapses/distortions should be kept in mind.

If you are asked about how reliable you think this source is, you would leave out the first two bullets concerning relevance – all the others would apply, however.

2nd Example: Women's March 1956

Let us look at a source which contrasts very strongly with the first source:

The following source is the front page story which appeared in Die Vaderland (The Fatherland), a Johannesburg-based Afrikaans-language newspaper, the day after the Women's March on August 9, 1956. As was the case with virtually all mainstream Afrikaans-language papers, Die Vaderland was strongly in favour of the National Party government that had come to power in 1948.

Key Question: What happened during the Women's March of 1956?

The question is:

How useful would the following source be for someone trying to find out what happened during the Women's March of 1956?

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Translated out of the Afrikaans the main headline and front page article reads as follow:

Die Vaderland

UNIE UITGAWE

DIE VOORSANGEWENDE AFRIKAANSE DAGBLAD
JOHANNESBURG.

XXI. No. 6107. Vrydag, 10 Aug. 1956. Prys 3d.

Weet Hul Ouers Waar Hulle Is?

„ONS SOU KELLY NIE ALLEEN KON VANG NIE"

Inenting Teen Polio:

'N GESKENK WAT 'N LEEFTYD SAL HOU IS VERKRYGBAAR BY DIE INRUILDESKUNDIGES

Do their Parents know where they are?

It is very clear that these white children in the photos do not know what is happening.
Do their parents know that they were taken by their non-white maids to the demonstration at the Union Buildings?
When we took this photograph the little boy was very close to tears. The non-white on the right of the photo took off her shoe and gave it to him to comfort him as shown in the photograph.

(From Shuters History Grade 11 – Learner's book)

Validity – The source is valid.

Relevance – The source is almost entirely irrelevant for the question being asked. The report contains no details as to who was involved, how many were involved, what their demands were, what happened during the day. Therefore, for the particular question being asked it is almost entirely irrelevant.

Reliability

Accuracy – It is not an accurate account of what happened during the Women's March as it focuses on two small details to the complete exclusion of everything else. It therefore gives a distorted impression of the March.

Deceptiveness – This is slightly tricky in that the writer of this article definitely meant what he says. However, the article deceives the reader as to the true nature of the Women's March.

Typicality – This article is not at all typical of accounts of the Women's March. All the other accounts focus on who was there, how many were there, and what happened. Well-disposed mainstream papers like the Rand Daily Mail emphasised the impressive discipline shown by the women.

Provenance – This source is taken from a newspaper, which is a strong supporter of the apartheid government. The purpose of the writer would tend therefore to be to belittle any opposition to government policy and support government policy very strongly.

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Recording – This is a contemporary, primary source. It was produced by journalists sent to cover the Women's March for the paper. Consequently there are unlikely to be any problems related to memory distortions over time.

Bias – This is a very biased source. Let us look at why this is the case:

- Provenance – see above
- Lack of balance / one-sidedness – the reporter picks out one or two instances where white children were present at the March and tries to blow this up into a major feature of the March. Furthermore the evidence he or she advances for what he or she is saying is very weak. For instance, we do not know whether the maids had permission to take the children to the Union Buildings or not, and we have to rely on the journalist that the little boy was upset as this is not obvious from the photograph.
- Language cues – nothing much to comment on in the case of language.
- Emotionalism – this is very strong – the image of poor little white children being exposed to danger by the people who are looking after them. The emphasis on the idea that the little white boy was near to tears.
- Stereotypes and generalisation – Strong stereotyping of black women as ignorant, irresponsible servants. A degree of generalisation – as one is meant to assume that this sort of "irresponsible" behaviour was widespread.

External Factors – The fact that the article has been translated from the original Afrikaans may be a distorting factor. However, the original has been published alongside the translation.

So how might you answer a question about the usefulness of this source to someone trying to find out what happened during the Women's March. Here are some of the main points which should be in your answer:

- Relevance is very low as the source contains no details about the Women's March other than that there were a few white children there, apparently with their minders.
- The source gives such a narrow view of the event and can be described as inaccurate and not typical (in other words the information it gives is not supported by other sources and seems to focus on one detail of the gathering that was not typical of the March as a whole.)
- The source was produced by a journalist working for an Afrikaans-language, National party newspaper which strongly supported apartheid and white domination. (Provenance)
- Because of the provenance, the source is very biased. This is shown by such things as the emotional tone of the source and by the use of stereotypes.

A question asking about reliability would focus on the last three points.

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Note that if the question had been about the attitude of National Party supporters or the National Party press to the Women's March, this source would have been both more useful and more reliable. This shows that a lot of the characteristics of sources discussed in this guide depend on the particular question which is being asked (context).

The following points can be deduced from what has been said about answering these types of questions:

- Wherever possible use primary sources rather than secondary ones.
- If secondary sources are used, they must be thoroughly referenced giving such details as author, publisher, place of publication and date and, where relevant, specific details about the author. This will prevent the use of extracts from David Irving's book without reference to the extremely controversial nature of his views.
- Very careful consideration needs to be given to the language level in sources. Try to always choose sources which are written in accessible English with due consideration given to the fact that these sources are going to have to be translated.
- Thorough contextualisation is of enormous importance in the case of primary sources as is clearly demonstrated by the example used in this paper. Without this contextualisation it will be difficult, if not impossible for the candidate to make any meaningful comments about factors such as usefulness and reliability.
- The category usefulness was created largely because the usefulness of a source is not always readily apparent. Since the post-modern stress on textual analysis, there has been as much concentration on the unintended significance of sources as there has been on what the person who produced the source intended to say. Marc Bloch, one of the founders of the Annales school of History refers to this as "the evidence of witnesses in spite of themselves" and regards these unwitting revelations as being of great significance to the historian.
- Wherever possible, the question should be unambiguous in its phrasing and there should be a clear answer so that examiners are not forced to fall back on the "any other response" type of entry in the marking memorandum.
- It needs to be clearly acknowledged that full source analysis is beyond the scope and competence of the vast majority of learners. Furthermore, most teachers have not had the training to make them confident practitioners in this field. It is important therefore, that our ambitions are scaled down to accord with the reality of the situation. As teachers of History, we would like to get across to our learners the fact that sources can almost never be taken at face value. It is this critical stance towards information and opinions which makes History so valuable in creating the sort of critical thinkers which a modern democracy requires.

Extended Writing

It is useful to begin by considering why extended writing is a method of choice for assessment in history. The chief reason is that it provides an effective means of testing the learner's comprehension of a topic. The Learner must show that not only has he acquired knowledge of the topic but also that he has fully understood the topic and issues raised by it. Furthermore, extended writing helps the learner to progressively develop skills in research, analysing different forms of source material, using different kinds of evidence, and writing strong critical and clear arguments.

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Using sources as evidence in extended writing does not mean to copy sources as they are and put them in different paragraphs as your answer. It means you must extract evidence from the sources provided and use it as facts and opinions for your extended writing. Mere copying of sources is a clear indication that the learner does not understand the question or does not know enough about the topic asked.

There are various forms of extended writing, namely:

- Essay
- Paragraph
- article (newspaper/ magazine/ journal)
- Editorial piece
- Memo/ report
- Letter (formal & personal)
- Speech
- Diary

Essay Writing

An essay writing in history provides learners with an opportunity to explore a particular issue or theme in more depth. It should simply not be a list of facts, nor should it be a description of your opinions; but a clear line of argument substantiated by accurate and well explained factual evidence gathered from the sources provided and your own knowledge.

Essential steps in analysing the question:

Select a question; identify the subject of the question; what are you being asked to do- that is, what kind of information will you need to answer the question, and how will you treat it? Circling the key words in the question is sometimes a helpful first step in working out exactly what you need to do. In general, an essay has three parts:

Introduction:

The introduction identifies the central problem or issue and introduces the argument or contention the learner chooses to tackle (**state your case**). It should show how you intend to answer the question, by indicating a line of argument you intend to take, by giving an overview of the organisation of what follows (**set out the basic structure of your argument**), and by indicating the sort of material or evidence you will use.

Body:

The body is made up of paragraphs that develop and defend the argument or contention. Each paragraph must advance a new point relating to the argument or contention. It is here that the learner will discuss and analyze a range of appropriate evidence from sources provided and critically assess the interpretations of other historians while developing and advancing his own argument.

Conclusion:

In the conclusion, you restate your case strongly and clearly by summarising your main points from paragraphs to interrelate. The best way is to write your introduction in a different way, but without changing the argument. Do not include any new ideas in your conclusion.

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Remember, the best essay presents a thesis and has a clear line of argument. In other words, it states a position, defends that position, and arrives at a strong, clear conclusion. It has a well defined introduction which, a body which logically develops the argument point by point, and a conclusion which sums up the argument

It is useful to note that essay questions can take the following format:

‘Explain’ and ‘why’ questions demand a list of reasons or one big reason: each reason will have to be explained- that is, clarified, expounded, and illustrated.

‘Assess’ and ‘evaluate’ questions require judgements supported by reasons, explanation and evidence. You must show why your assessment is the best by considering its merits vis-à-vis alternative evaluations.

‘What-role-did-X-play-in-Y’ questions imply a functionalist approach- that is; they require that you identify the function of some phenomenon, group or institution within some specific system. The question requires a discussion of the system as a whole and the consideration of alternative explanations of how ‘X’ worked within it.

‘To-what-extent’ questions involve a judgement of measure.

‘Quote-and-discuss’ questions require you to identify the issue at stake and to produce a reasoned response. You may respond, for example, by agreeing with the quotation in which case you will need to explain why agreement is the best response, why it would be wrong to disagree. You should consider the merits of a variety of responses. It is always good to know where the quotation is coming from to understand what its author meant by it and how the author understood by the issues.

‘Compare-and-contrast’ demand the identification of similarities and differences.

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Acknowledgement

The contribution of Simon Haw (Former History Subject Advisor- KZN) in the development of this material acknowledged.

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