

DOCUMENTS

Interpreting Alternative Viewpoints
in Primary Source Documents

Arrival The Immigrant and the City

The “new immigration” of the late 1800s helped build the cities and alter the nature of America during its great industrial age.



Samples are provided for evaluation purposes. Copying of the product or its parts for resale is prohibited. Additional restrictions may be set by the publisher.

Contents

Teacher Introduction	1
Suggestions to the Student	5
Introductory Essay	6
Arrival Time Line	7
First Group of Documents	8
Study the Documents	10
Comparing the Documents	12
Comparison Essay	13
Second Group of Documents	14
Study the Documents	16
Comparing the Documents	18
Comparison Essay	19
Document-Based Question	20
Visual Primary Sources	21

Teacher Introduction

★ *Using Primary Sources*

Primary sources are called “primary” because they are first-hand records of a past era or historical event. They are the raw materials, or the evidence, on which historians base their “secondary” accounts of the past.

A rapidly growing number of history teachers today are using primary sources. Why? Perhaps it's because primary sources give students a better sense of what history is and what historians do. Such sources also help students see the past from a variety of viewpoints. Moreover, primary sources make history vivid and bring it to life.

However, primary sources are not easy to use. They can be confusing. They can be biased. They rarely all agree. Primary sources must be interpreted and set in context. To do this, students need historical background knowledge. *Debating the Documents* helps students handle such challenges by giving them a useful framework for analyzing sources that conflict with one another.



*“Multiple,
conflicting
perspectives are
among the truths
of history.
No single
objective or
universal account
could ever put an
end to this endless
creative dialogue
within and
between the past
and the present.”*

From the 2011 Statement on Standards of Professional Conduct of the Council of the American Historical Association.

INTRODUCTION

★ *The Debating the Documents Series*

Each *Debating the Documents* booklet includes the same sequence of reproducible worksheets. If students use several booklets over time, they will get regular practice at interpreting and comparing conflicting sources. In this way, they can learn the skills and habits needed to get the most out of primary sources.

Each *Debating the Documents* Booklet Includes

- **Suggestions for the Student and an Introductory Essay.** The student gets instructions and a one-page essay providing background on the booklet's topic. A time line on the topic is also included.
- **Two Groups of Contrasting Primary Source Documents.** In most of the booklets, students get one pair of visual sources and one pair of written sources. In some cases, more than two are provided for each. Background is provided on each source. *Within each group, the sources clash in a very clear way.* (The sources are not always exact opposites, but they do always differ in some obvious way.)
- **Three Worksheets for Each Document Group.** Students use the first two worksheets to take notes on the sources. The third worksheet asks which source the student thinks would be most useful to a historian.
- **One DBQ.** On page 20, a document-based question (DBQ) asks students to write an effective essay using all of the booklet's primary sources.

★ *How to Use This Booklet*

1. Have students read “Suggestions for the Student” and the Introductory Essay.

Give them copies of pages 5–7. Ask them to read the instructions and then read the introductory essay on the topic. The time line gives them additional information on that topic. This reading could be done in class or as a homework assignment.

2. Have students do the worksheets.

Make copies of the worksheets and the pages with the sources. Ask students to study the background information on each source and the source itself. Then have them take notes on the sources using the worksheets. If students have access to a computer, have them review the primary sources digitally.

3. “Debate the documents” as a class.

Have students use their worksheet notes to debate the primary source documents as a class. Urge students to follow these ground rules:

- Use your worksheets as a guide for the discussion or debate.
- Try to reach agreement about the main ideas and the significance of each primary source document.
- Look for points of agreement as well as disagreement between the primary sources.
- Listen closely to all points of view about each primary source.
- Focus on the usefulness of each source to the historian, not merely on whether you agree or disagree with that source’s point of view.

4. Have students do the final DBQ.

A DBQ is an essay question about a set of primary source documents. To answer the DBQ, students write essays using evidence from the sources and their own background knowledge of the historical era. (See the next page for a DBQ scoring guide to use in evaluating these essays.)

The DBQ assignment on page 20 includes guidelines for writing a DBQ essay. Here are some additional points to make with students about preparing to write this kind of essay.

The DBQ for this Booklet (see page 20):

“Despite a sometimes unfriendly welcome, immigrants in the late 1800s were lucky to have America’s cities as their new home.”

Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Why?

- Analyze the question carefully.
- Use your background knowledge to set sources in their historical context.
- Question and interpret sources actively. Do not accept them at face value.
- Use sources meaningfully to support your essay’s thesis.
- Pay attention to the overall organization of your essay.

INTRODUCTION

★ *Complete DBQ Scoring Guide*

Use this guide in evaluating the DBQ for this booklet. Use this scoring guide with students who are already familiar with using primary sources and writing DBQ essays.

Excellent Essay

- Offers a clear answer or thesis explicitly addressing all aspects of the essay question.
- Does a careful job of interpreting many or most of the documents and relating them clearly to the thesis and the DBQ. Deals with conflicting documents effectively.
- Uses details and examples effectively to support the thesis and other main ideas. Explains the significance of those details and examples well.
- Uses background knowledge and the documents in a balanced way.
- Is well written; clear transitions make the essay easy to follow from point to point. Only a few minor writing errors or errors of fact.

Good Essay

- Offers a reasonable thesis addressing the essential points of the essay question.
- Adequately interprets at least some of the documents and relates them to the thesis and the DBQ.
- Usually relates details and examples meaningfully to the thesis or other main ideas.
- Includes some relevant background knowledge.
- May have some writing errors or errors of fact, as long as these do not invalidate the essay's overall argument or point of view.

Fair Essay

- Offers at least a partly developed thesis addressing the essay question.
- Adequately interprets at least a few of the documents.
- Relates only a few of the details and examples to the thesis or other main ideas.
- Includes some background knowledge.
- Has several writing errors or errors of fact that make it harder to understand the essay's overall argument or point of view.

Poor Essay

- Offers no clear thesis or answer addressing the DBQ.
- Uses few documents effectively other than referring to them in “laundry list” style, with no meaningful relationship to a thesis or any main point.
- Uses details and examples unrelated to the thesis or other main ideas. Does not explain the significance of these details and examples.
- Is not clearly written, with some major writing errors or errors of fact.

Suggestions to the Student

★ *Using Primary Sources*

A primary source is any record of evidence from the past. Many things are primary sources: letters, diary entries, official documents, photos, cartoons, wills, maps, charts, etc. They are called “primary” because they are first-hand records of a past event or time period. This *Debating the Documents* lesson is based on two groups of primary source documents. Within each group, the sources conflict with one another. That is, they express different or even opposed points of view. You need to decide which source is more reliable, more useful, or more typical of the time period. This is what historians do all the time. Usually, you will be able to learn something about the past from each source, even when the sources clash with one another in dramatic ways.

★ *How to Use This Booklet*

1. **Read the one-page introductory essay.**

This gives you background information that will help you analyze the primary source documents and do the exercises for this *Debating the Documents* lesson. The time line gives you additional information you will find helpful.



2. **Study the primary source documents for this lesson.**

For this lesson, you get two groups of sources. The sources within each group conflict with one another. Some of these sources are visuals, others are written sources. With visual sources, pay attention not only to the image’s “content” (its subject matter) but also to its artistic style, shading, composition, camera angle, symbols, and other features that add to the image’s meaning. With written sources, notice the writing style, bias, even what the source leaves out or does not talk about. Think about each source’s author, that author’s reasons for writing, and the likely audience for the source. These considerations give you clues as to the source’s historical value.

3. **Use the worksheets to analyze each group of primary source documents.**

For each group of sources, you get three worksheets. Use the “Study the Document” worksheets to take notes on each source. Use the “Comparing the Documents” worksheet to decide which of the sources would be most useful to a historian.

4. **As a class, debate the documents.**

Use your worksheet notes to help you take part in this debate.

5. **Do the final DBQ.**

“DBQ” means “document-based question.” A DBQ is a question along with several primary source documents. To answer the DBQ, write an essay using evidence from the documents and your own background history knowledge.

Arrival: The Immigrant and the City

Native-born Americans have often expressed two very different opinions about immigrants. One view is summed up by these words by Emma Lazarus at the base of the Statue of Liberty:

*Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to
breathe free.*

The other view was expressed by Josiah Strong in 1891, when he said:

*[The] typical immigrant is a European peasant,
whose horizon has been narrow, whose moral
and religious training has been meager or
false, and whose ideas of life are low.*

These attitudes—one welcoming, the other fearful—have long been at the heart of the nation's debates about immigration. From around 1880 to 1920, these views clashed perhaps more sharply than at any other time in our past. Why?

One part of the answer has to do with the size and nature of the huge wave of immigrants that came to America in these years. In the 75 years from 1815 to 1890, about 15 million immigrants arrived here, mainly from northwestern Europe (England, Ireland, Germany, etc.) Then in just 24 years (1890–1914), another 15 million came. Furthermore, this wave of newcomers was largely from southeastern Europe. They were Russians, Poles, Italians, Greeks. They were mainly Catholics, Jews, or Eastern Orthodox Christians. Their languages and customs were strange to most native-born Protestant Americans. Could the nation absorb such large numbers of them? No one was sure.

The city was a second factor explaining the intensity of the immigration debate in these years. This latest immigrant wave swept ashore as the nation was building its huge urban-industrial centers. These immigrants largely settled in the cities and helped build them. Americans reacted

to the city and its problems with great anxiety, and these concerns often fed their fears about the new immigration.

Urban life was not easy for the immigrants. Many lived in dingy, overcrowded tenement houses and unsanitary neighborhoods. Often lacking indoor plumbing, residents were all too prone to cholera, typhus, tuberculosis, and other diseases. In many cases, a whole family lived, ate, and slept in a single room. During the day, family members might use that room to do work paid by the piece, such as sewing or assembling.

Many new immigrants were from rural settings where they knew only traditional forms of farm work. Most could only do the least skilled and most dangerous kinds of industrial labor—working on construction projects, digging ditches, sewers, or roads, selling goods out of vendor carts on the city streets, or working in unhealthy factories called sweatshops.

Some immigrants did migrate west and take up farming. Yet a large number sought work in factories in the cities. This meant they often competed with native-born workers for the lowest paying jobs. Those workers saw immigrants as willing to work for less, and this further fueled the resentment directed at these newcomers.

Immigrants may have taken up the bottom rungs of the ladder. They may have faced prejudice and harsh treatment from some already here—though certainly not from all. Yet vast numbers of them still preferred America over their home countries. Many continued to call the nation, despite its flaws, the land of the “golden door,” as that Emma Lazarus poem put it. Were they right to do so? The primary source documents for this lesson will help you debate and decide this question for yourself.

Arrival Time Line

1862

- • • The Homestead Act encourages immigration by granting 160 acres to adult male citizens who will live on and improve these acres.

1880

- • • Crop failures and political turmoil in Italy lead millions of Italians to leave for the United States over the next few decades.

1881–1890

- • • About five million immigrants enter the country.

1881–1882

- • • In the wake of the 1881 assassination of the Czar, pogroms against Jews and other troubles disrupt life in Russia. Several million Russians and Poles leave for the U. S. over the next three decades.

1882

- • • The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 suspends immigration of Chinese laborers due to native-born workers' fears that the Chinese are taking their jobs. The federal government also excludes ex-convicts, the insane, and others unable to take care of themselves. A tax is levied on newly arriving immigrants.

1891–1900

- • • A little less than four million immigrants enter the country.

1892

- • • Ellis Island replaces Castle Garden as the key immigration processing center in New York City.

1901–1910

- • • Nearly nine million immigrants enter the country.

1907

- • • Informal "gentleman's agreement" between the U.S. and Japan restricts Japanese immigration to the United States. Also, the tax on new immigrants is increased.

1910–1911

- • • The U.S. Senate's Dillingham Commission blames the new pattern of supposedly "inferior" immigrants from southeastern Europe for the nation's deep social and economic problems. It recommends using literary tests to keep out poor and uneducated immigrants.

1911–1920

- • • About five million immigrants enter the country.

1914–1918

- • • World War I reduces immigration. After the U.S. enters the war in 1917, anti-immigrant feelings rise, especially against German Americans.

1917

- • • Literacy tests introduced for immigrants 16 years of age or older. Also, virtually all Asian immigrants are banned.

1921

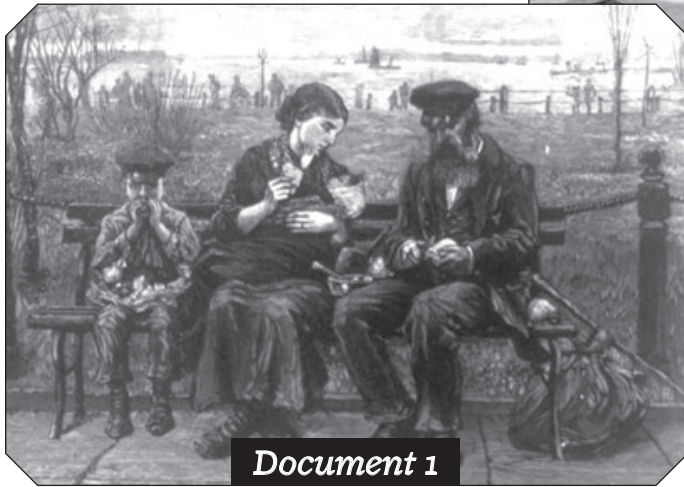
- • • The Quota Act sets an annual immigration ceiling of 350,000 and introduces nationality quotas. These limit admissions to 3 percent of each nationality group's share in the 1910 census. The aim is to restrict southeastern European immigration.

1924

- • • National Origins Act reduces the annual immigration ceiling to 165,000 and lowers quotas to 2 percent of each nationality group's share in the 1890 census.

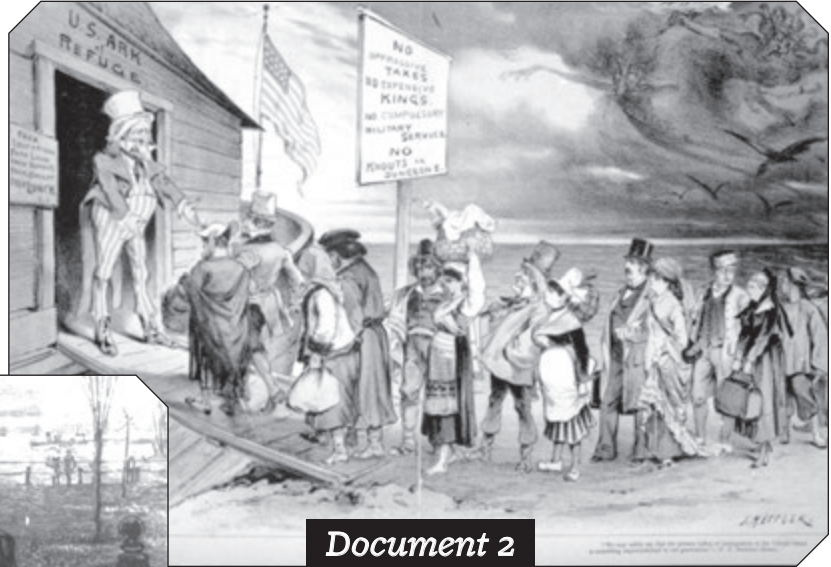
DOCUMENTS 1 & 2

Visual Primary Source Documents 1 & 2



Document 1

Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, LC-USZ62-99401



Document 2

Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, LC-USZC4-954

Information on Documents 1 & 2

Document 1 is a wood engraving by William St. John. It appeared in *Harper's Weekly* on November 29, 1884. It shows an immigrant family eating on a picnic bench in New York City. The title of the engraving is "Castle Garden—Their First Thanksgiving Dinner." From 1855 to 1890, Castle Garden was New York City's official immigration center where immigrants were processed. In 1892, Ellis Island took over that task.

Document 2. This lithograph by J. Keppler appeared in the magazine *Puck* on April 28, 1880. In it, Uncle Sam stands on a "U.S. Ark of Refuge," welcoming immigrants. These immigrants are fleeing Europe over which war clouds hang. A sign next to the ark reads: "No oppressive taxes. No expensive kings. No compulsory military service. No knouts or dungeons."