

How to Approach a Historical Text

A Guide for Human Sciences Students

What is a Historical Text?

- A historical text is a document or record that provides information about past events. It can include:
 - - Written accounts (e.g., letters, diaries, official documents)
 - - Visual sources (e.g., paintings, maps)
 - - Oral histories (e.g., interviews, legends)

Steps to Approach a Historical Text

- 1. Contextualize:
 - - Identify the author, time, and place.
- 2. Analyze Content:
 - - Understand the main ideas and purpose.
- 3. Interpret:
 - - Assess the bias, perspective, and reliability.
- 4. Correlate:
 - - Compare with other sources and historical knowledge.

Key Questions to Ask

- - Who wrote the text, and why?
- - What events or ideas are described?
- - When and where was it created?
- - How reliable is this source?
- - What does it reveal about the society or time period?

Types of Historical Texts

- - Primary Sources:
 - Direct evidence from the past (e.g., letters, treaties).
- - Secondary Sources:
 - Interpretations or analyses of primary sources (e.g., books, articles).
- - Tertiary Sources:
 - Summaries or collections of information (e.g., encyclopedias).

Example: Analyzing a Letter

1. Author: Who wrote the letter? (e.g., a soldier during WWI)
2. Purpose: Why was it written? (e.g., to inform or persuade)
3. Audience: Who was it addressed to? (e.g., family, government)
4. Context: What events surround the text?