Unpacking the Evidence of Official Authorless Documents

Guidance Document

<https://chnm.gmu.edu/worldhistorysources/unpacking/docsmain.html>

This introductory lesson is best used prior to reading government research or during a lesson on bias in news media, as it teachers students to unpack not only the evidence presented but the extraction of intent.

The lesson begins with an essay by historian, David Trask, which asks how readers of future generations should assess official documents without authors, official documents by governments, and other official documents that may include bias. As you progress through the table of contents, students are guided in answering the following questions:

* What kind of document is this?
* Who created this document?
* In what historical and organizational context was the document produced?
* Who was the primary audience for the document?
* How did the document affect the flow of events?

After careful explanation of how to answer these questions, you are guided to a sample analysis of an official document by professional historians and are given a link to the document as well as an annotated bibliography of resources used by the historians to make their analysis.

You are then provided with links to three different interactive exercises that allow students to practice the skills they learned, through the lesson, on official documents about historical events.