

## Historians analyze the VALUES and LIMITATIONS of each source they use

### Values:

Based on who wrote it (origin), *when/where* it came from, *why* it was created (purpose) and *what* the source says (content)...what value does this document have as a piece of information? This is where you show your expertise and put the source in context. Bring in your outside information here.

- What can we tell about the author and/or time period from the piece?
- Under what circumstances was the piece created and how does the piece reflect those circumstances?
- What can we tell about any controversies from the piece?
- What can we tell about the author's perspectives from the piece?
- What was going on in history at the time the piece was created and how does this piece accurately reflect it? (Put the document in historical context!)

### Limitation:

The task here is not to point out weaknesses of the source, but rather to say: at what point does this source cease to be of value to us as historians? With a primary source document, having an incomplete picture of the whole is a given because the source was created by one person and naturally they will not have given every detail of the context. Do not say that the author left out information unless you have concrete proof (from another source) that they *chose* to leave information out. Also, it is obvious that the author did not have prior knowledge of events that came after the creation of the document. Do not state that the document "does not explain X" (if X happened later).

- What part of the story can we NOT tell from this document?
- Does the author represent a particular 'side' of a controversy or event?
- Does this piece inaccurately reflect anything about the time period?
- What does the author leave out and why does he/she leave it out (if you know)?
- What is purposely not addressed?