

### Four Reads

#### Reading #1: Reading for Origins and Context

Students should only read the top of the document (where usually title, author, place, and date are provided) and the bottom of the document (where there may be additional information, in bibliographic notes, about the title, author, place, and date). Mark up the sourcing information on the document. Circle it. Do not read the main body of the document at this point.

#### Reading #2: Reading for meaning

Students should read through the main body of the primary document. The purpose here is to get the main idea. If there are difficult or confusing sections, skip over them. Underline the sentence or phrase that best captures the author's main idea.

#### Reading #3: Reading for Argument

Students should read through the main body of the primary document again. Students should underline any support (assertions, evidence, or examples) for the argument. As well, students should write in the margins next to the underlined support. Students should note whether they consider the support to be strong. Is it logical and believable? Does it contradict other evidence that the students have read?

#### Reading #4: Reading Like a Historian

In this final reading, students should look back at the sourcing information (reading #1) and then read through the main body of the primary document one last time. In this reading, students should write in the margins as they read to answer key questions. Given the author of the document, what bias or perspective might be expressed? How does that shape our understanding of the argument? Given the date of the document, what is the document responding to or in dialogue with? Given the place and audience of the document, how is the argument shaped to be effective? Students should further write in the margins about the larger meaning of the document. Would the argument in the document have convinced its audience? Who might have disagreed or had a different perspective? What facts did the author leave out and why? What questions are unanswered by the document?