

Letter or Telegram

Five steps with guiding questions to help you understand and analyze the primary source

1 Identify the Source	Who wrote this letter?
	Who received this letter? Was there one recipient or multiple recipients?
	When was this letter sent and received?
	Where was this letter written?
	How was this letter sent? Did it go to the correct recipient?
2 Place the Source in Context	What's the historical context of this letter? What is the background or reason for it?
	Why was this message conveyed by a letter?
	Was this a formal or informal letter? Personal, political, administrative?
	Was this letter something unusual, or something sent regularly?
3 Analyze the Source Content	What is the subject of the letter?
	What is the letter's central message?
	Is the author making an inquiry? Does the author expect a reply?
4 Assess the Source Perspective	How does the author convey information and make a point?
	What is the tone of the letter?
	Is the author advocating a certain action (or inaction)?
	Does the author have a particular bias or perspective?
	Does the author try to motivate or convince the recipient? If so, how?
	How do you think the recipient or recipients reacted to the letter?
5 Evaluate the Source	Do you think this letter is an effective one?
	Why was this letter important to the people who wrote and received it, and why is important now for what it can tell us?
	What connections can you make from this letter to politics, issues, culture and society, faith and religion, historical change over time, etc.?
	Does comparing this letter with other sources, past or present, provide valuable insight?
How can you tie this letter into key themes, questions, controversies, and debates?	