

Reading Between the Lines ~ How to use a Primary Source

1. Select a document that fits the theme of your lessons or interest.
 - a. To use primary sources from World War II Flight Training Museum browse the History, Training, Cadets, and WWII Staff sections of the website (wwiiflighttraining.org) to find photographs, letters, and newspaper articles.
2. Skim the document and identify specific details that immediately stand out.
3. Use the questions below to dig into the details of the document. You can use this as a whole classroom discussion or divide your class into smaller working groups and assign each group a different primary source to investigate.

What is the date?

Who is the author?

What is the main idea or message? What is it telling me?

Are there any unfamiliar words, concepts, and places? Research to clarify terms or locations that may or may not be used or exist today.

What does this document reveal about this particular time in history?

How does this document make me feel?

Why is this document important?

Another way to look at it: What would be lost if we didn't have this document?

4. Go Further. For an add-on activity, encourage students to use the information they gained while examining this primary source as inspiration to create a short story, poem, opinion piece, drawing, or painting.

