## Purpose

In this activity, you’ll continue to develop your sourcing skills by analyzing two primary source documents. You will be assessing the historical context, purpose, and importance of the sources. Historians source documents to determine how to use—or whether they should consider not using—the document to help them tell the story of a particular historical period.

## Practices

### Claim testing, comparison

Claim testing is an integral part of sourcing. In order to evaluate a source, we must use intuition, logic, authority, and evidence to analyze the document in order to understand the source’s point of view and reason for writing. In addition, you will be answering a comparison prompt about the governments of Rome and Han China.

## Process

1. Since this activity is your introduction to using the Sourcing Tool for historical documents, your teacher will guide you through the process. In this activity, you’ll read two primary source excerpts, complete the Sourcing Tool focusing on ***historical context*** and ***purpose***, and craft a response to a prompt.
2. Before you get started, think about why you should even bother with sourcing. Sourcing helps us understand the past by analyzing the evidence that people or societies left behind. Sometimes, this evidence is limited and as a result, we have to draw conclusions by carefully evaluating sources and artifacts. Other times, there is a lot of evidence or there are sources to help us explain a historical event or process. But even if we have lots of source material, we still have to analyze the sources to understand their different points of view and perspectives. Sometimes people refer to different points of view as author bias. But we should remember that all primary source material has some bias—we all have lenses through which we view the world, and those viewpoints can help us better understand the point someone is trying to convey. In history, this can help us construct a clearer account of the past.
3. In this case, you’re going to read two primary source documents as a class so you can answer the question, *How were Rome and Han Dynasty’s governments similar and different?*
4. Take out the texts (excerpts from “A Record of the Debate on Salt and Iron” and “The Deeds of the Divine Augustus”), review them as a class, and then see if you can come up with an answer to the question based on what you’ve read. This may be hard to do—and that’s OK! You’re going to answer the same question again later, but only after you’ve sourced the document like a historian would.
5. Now, take out the Sourcing Tool (which is incorporated into the Sourcing—Rome and Han Dynasty China worksheet) and really focus on the Historical Context and Purpose rows.
6. Go through the worksheet with your class, and then revisit the question: *How were Rome and Han Dynasty’s governments similar and different?*
7. Think about how you might have read this text differently, or had a different perspective, after your first reading. Then, discuss the following questions with your class: Would you have a different perspective if you hadn’t gone through this sourcing process? Would you have fully understood this text without knowing the historical context in which it was written? How does knowing about the purpose for the text give you a fuller picture of this text’s significance?
8. Finally, your teacher will break the class up into small groups of three to four students. Work with your group to answer the questions in the Why? (Importance) row of the tool.
9. Your teacher will collect your worksheets to evaluate your sourcing skills.

## SOURCING EXCERPTS—“A RECORD OF THE DEBATE ON SALT AND IRON”

During the reign of Emperor Zhao (r. 87–47 BCE), a debate occurred between the emperor’s advisors, with varying opinions expressed by government officials and Confucian scholars. The debate concerned the economic policies of Emperor Zhao’s predecessor, Emperor Wu (r. 141–87 BCE), with one side arguing that the trade of salt, iron, and liquor should continue as it benefitted the empire while the other side believed that this trade made people greedy and immoral.

Source: de Bary, William Theodore and Irene Bloom, eds. *Sources of Chinese Tradition, vol. 1*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1999. <https://afe.easia.columbia.edu/main_pop/ps/ps_china.htm>

The literati [intellectuals/Confucian scholars] responded: We have heard that the way to govern men is to prevent evil and error at their source, to broaden the beginnings of morality, to discourage secondary occupations, and open the way for the exercise of humaneness and rightness. Never should material profit appear as a motive of government. Only then can moral instruction succeed and the customs of the people be reformed. But now in the provinces the salt, iron, and liquor monopolies, and the system of equitable marketing have been established to complete with the people for profit, dispelling rustic generosity and teaching the people greed. Therefore those who pursue primary occupations [as farmers] have grown few and those following secondary occupations [as merchants and traders] numerous. … When the secondary is practiced the people grow decadent, but when the primary is practiced they are simple and sincere. When the people are sincere then there will be sufficient wealth and goods, but when they become extravagant then famine and cold will follow. We recommend that the salt, iron, and liquor monopolies and the system of equitable marketing be abolished so that primary pursuits may be advanced and secondary ones suppressed.

## SOURCING EXCERPTS—“THE DEEDS OF THE DIVINE AUGUSTUS”

Gaius Julius Caesar Octavianus (63 BCE–14 CE) is better known today by the title Augustus. The Roman Senate gave him this religious title, meaning venerable (honored), in 27 BCE. Augustus was the nephew of Julius Caesar and was adopted by him before Caesar’s assassination in 44 BCE. Augustus helped hunt down the assassins of Caesar and then ruled the Roman world along with two of Caesar’s allies—Marc Antony and Lepidus. Eventually, Augustus forced Lepidus into retirement and waged war with Marc Antony and the pharaoh Cleopatra over control of Egypt. Augustus defeated Antony and Cleopatra’s forces in 31 BCE. Four years later, he became emperor of the Roman Empire, a position he would hold for 40 years. Augustus had many accomplishments, including expanding the empire’s territory, establishing the Pax Romana (Roman Peace), strengthening networks of trade and exchange, and uniting the empire after years of wars and civil unrest. The text was included in his will, along with instructions to inscribe his words on funerary monuments across the empire.

**Source**: *The Deeds of the Divine Augustus*. Translated by Thomas Bushnell. The Internet Classics Archive MIT, 1998. Accessed June 10, 2019. <http://classics.mit.edu/Augustus/deeds.html>

8. When I was consul the fifth time [29 BCE] … By new laws passed with my sponsorship, I restored many traditions of the ancestors, which were falling into disuse in our age, and myself I handed on precedents [models] of many things to be imitated in later generations.

18. From that year when Gnaeus and Publius Lentulus were consuls [18 BCE], when the taxes fell short, I gave out contributions of grain and money from my granary and patrimony [inheritance], sometimes to 100,000 men, sometimes to many more.

20. I rebuilt the Capitol and the theater of Pompey, each work at enormous cost, without any inscription of my name. I rebuilt aqueducts in many places that had decayed with age … I rebuilt eighty-two temples of the gods in the city by the authority of the senate, omitting nothing which ought to have been rebuilt at that time…

22. Three times I gave shows of gladiators under my name and five times under the name of my sons and grandsons; in these shows about 10,000 men fought. Twice I furnished under my name spectacles of athletes gathered from everywhere … Twenty-six times, under my name or that of my sons and grandsons, I gave the people hunts of African beasts in the circus, in the open, or in the amphitheater; in them about 3,500 beasts were killed…

25. I restored peace to the sea from pirates. In that slave war I handed over to their masters for the infliction [serving out] of punishments about 30,000 captured, who had fled their masters and taken up arms against the state. All Italy swore allegiance [loyalty] to me voluntarily, and demanded me as a leader of the war which I won at Actium…

26. I extended the borders of all the provinces of the Roman people which neighbored nations not subject to our rule. I restored peace to the provinces of Gaul and Spain, likewise Germany … I sailed my ships on the ocean from the mouth of the Rhine to the east region … where no Roman had gone before that time by land or sea…

31. Emissaries [representatives] from the Indian kings were often sent to me, which had not been seen before that time by any Roman leader …

35. When I … wrote this I was seventy-six years old.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Name: |  | Date: |  |

## Sourcing Tool

**Directions:** Answer each of the questions below. If you are sourcing more than one document, provide responses for each.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Name of document and/or source: |  |
| Author’s name: |  |
| Location and date source was written: |  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Historical Context | What was happening in the author’s location that might have influenced the document’s creation (for example, the location’s geography, demography, or the region’s political situation, religious influences, or industry)? |
|  |
| What was happening at the time that might have influenced the document’s creation? |
|  |
| What information that you’ve learned in this unit helps you understand this document? |
|  |
| Audience | Who was this created for (that is, was this written for anyone to read or was it private, for one specific person or group)? |
|  |
| What were the readers of this source supposed to do or think once they read it? |
|  |
| Purpose | What was the author’s goal, and what evidence supports your answer? |
|  |
| POV (Point of View) | Can you identify anything about the author that might explain why they wrote this? For example, their economic class, occupation, religion, nationality, political group, ethnic group, or gender? |
|  |
| WhY (Importance) | What is the main idea of the source? |
|  |
| What parts of this document are most valuable and why? |
|  |
| What are the limitations of this document? In other words, where does it fall short ? |
|  |