

# SOURCING—THE INOCULATION DEBATE

## Purpose

In this activity, you'll continue to develop your sourcing skills by analyzing primary source documents, written from different perspectives, about the practice of inoculation. As you analyze the documents, you'll focus on the Historical Context, Purpose, and Importance rows of the Sourcing Tool. In doing so, you'll also learn how using multiple sources from different perspectives can give you a better understanding of a historical event.

## Practices

### *Claim testing*

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 purpose for writing.

## Process

Since this activity is your full introduction to using the Sourcing Tool, your teacher will guide you through the process. In this activity, you'll read primary source excerpts, complete the Sourcing Tool focusing on **historical context** and **purpose**, and craft a response to a prompt. You'll also answer questions for **importance** to turn in as an exit ticket. Note that the Sourcing Tool and the source excerpts are included with the Sourcing—The Inoculation Debate worksheet.

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 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 recognizing those viewpoints can help us better understand the point someone is trying to convey through their writing. In history, this can help us construct a clearer account of the past. Also, remember that it is almost impossible to discern with certainty what a particular author intended (that is, what their purpose was). It is speculation guided by the evidence we have and only needs to be reasonable given what we know.

In this case, you're going to read a primary source document as a class so you can answer the question, *What factors may have influenced how each author wrote about inoculation?*

The idea here is to figure out the context and purpose of those writing about the same historical event and to see how that shapes the sources. Your teacher will either hand out or have you download the Sourcing—Inoculation Debate worksheet. You'll review the documents 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. Now, take out the Sourcing Tool and really focus on the Historical Context and Purpose rows. Go through the worksheet with your class, and then revisit the question:

*What factors may have influenced how each author wrote about inoculation?*



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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 these texts without knowing the historical context in which it was written? How does knowing about the purpose for these texts give you a fuller picture of their significance?

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 to turn in as an exit ticket. Your teacher will collect your worksheets to evaluate your sourcing skills.

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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: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Historical Context</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. 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)?</li><li>2. What was happening at the time that might have influenced the document's creation?</li><li>3. What information that you've learned in this unit helps you understand this document?</li></ol>
<b>Audience</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Who was this created for (that is, was this written for anyone to read or was it private, for one specific person or group)?</li><li>2. What were the readers of this source supposed to do or think once they read it?</li></ol>

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Name: Date: 

<b>Purpose</b>	What was the author's goal, and what evidence supports your answer?
<b>POV (Point of View)</b>	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?
<b>Why (Importance)</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. What is the main idea of the source?</li><li>2. What parts of this document are most valuable and why?</li><li>3. What are the limitations of this document? In other words, where does it fall short?</li></ol>

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## SOURCING EXCERPTS – THE INOCULATION DEBATE

### Source 1: Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, 1717

#### Introduction

Inoculation was a relatively new discovery in the West but had been practiced in China from about the tenth century. Inoculation methods were being used in various parts of both Asia and Africa by the time Europeans learned of the procedure in the early eighteenth century. These methods had been introduced to European circles through the writings of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (1689–1762), the wife of the British ambassador to Turkey. Lady Montagu had contracted smallpox in London in 1715. She also had lost a brother to the disease two years prior to her own illness. In her travels in the Ottoman Empire, she witnessed the inoculation process in the homes of Ottoman women. These women protected themselves and their children from the disease by using pus from someone who had a mild case of smallpox. They infected themselves with the pus and allowed their bodies to develop antibodies or immunity to the disease. The practice was controversial, mainly because it was thought that those who had been infected through inoculation would pass the disease on to healthy people.

**Source:** Montagu, Lady Mary Wortley. *Letters of the Right Honourable Lady M—y W—y M—e: Written During her Travels in Europe, Asia and Africa*. Aix: Anthony Henricy, 1796. From the Internet Modern History Sourcebook, Fordham University, 1998. Accessed July 10, 2019. <https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/mod/montagu-smallpox.asp>

Letter from Lady Montagu to Mrs. S.C., Adrianople, April 1, 1717.

*The small-pox, so fatal, and so general amongst us, is here entirely harmless by the invention of engrafting, which is the term they give it. There is a set of old women who make it their business to perform the operation every autumn, in the month of September, when the great heat is abated [declined]. People send to one another to know if any of their family has a mind to have the small-pox; they make parties for this purpose, and when they are met (commonly fifteen or sixteen altogether) the old woman comes with a nut-shell full of the matter of the best sort of small-pox, and asks what vein you please to have opened. She immediately rips open that you offer to her with a large needle (which gives you no more pain than a common scratch), and puts into the vein as much matter as can lye upon the head of her needle, and after that binds up the little wound with a hollow bit of shell, and in this manner opens four or five veins. ... The children or young patients play together all the rest of the day, and are in perfect health to the eighth. Then the fever begins to seize them, and they keep their beds two days, very seldom three. They have very rarely above twenty or thirty [smallpox marks] in their faces, which never mark, and in eight days time they are as well as before their illness. ... Every year, thousands undergo this operation, and the French Ambassador says pleasantly, that they take the small-pox here by way of diversion, as they take the waters in other countries. There is no example of any one that has died in it, and you may believe I am well satisfied of the safety of this experiment, since I intend to try it on my dear little son. I am patriot enough to take the pains to bring this useful invention into fashion in England ...*

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## Source 2: The Inoculation Debate, Boston, 1721

### Introduction

In 1721, the town of Boston, Massachusetts, suffered from a smallpox outbreak. About half of the city's population became infected with the disease, with about 850 dying as a result. Cotton Mather (1663–1728), a Puritan minister, had learned about the benefits of inoculation from Onesimus, an enslaved African. Mather wrote, "Onesimus, who is a pretty intelligent fellow ... told me that he had undergone the operation which had given something of the smallpox and would forever preserve him from it; adding that was often used among the Guramantese" (Saharan community from present-day Sudan and Libya). There had already been riots in the town of Boston when inoculation was introduced there in 1721. In response to these efforts, those from both the pro- and anti-inoculation sides wrote pamphlets to persuade others. Dr. William Douglass (c. 1689–1752), a Boston physician, presented the anti-inoculation side.

Source: "Becoming American: The British Atlantic Colonies, 1690–1763." National Humanities Center Resource Toolbox. Accessed July 10, 2019. <http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/becomingamer/ideas/text5/smallpoxvaccination.pdf>

Sir,

*The Inoculation ingrafting or Transplantation of the Smallpox, having lately so much amused this Country [colony], it may be agreeable to some of your Readers to know the History of this affair from its Origins ...*

*Its Origin was in Thessaly in Greece, from thence spreading to Constantinople [Turkey], began to be practiced there by Old Greek Women on Turks and others above 50 Years ago. By private Letter, commerce, and information of Travelers, this Method has been, among the Learned, Universally known in England above 20 Years, but being deemed Wicked and Felonious, was never practiced there ...*

Excerpts from a pro-inoculation letter whose author is unknown but which has been attributed to Cotton Mather and published in *The Boston Gazette*, October 23–20, 1721.

*A Faithful Account of what has occurred under the late Experiments of the Small-Pox managed and governed in the way of Inoculation. Published partly to put a stop unto that unaccountable way of Lying, which fills the Town & Country on this occasion ...*

*The Operation within these four Months past has been undergone by more than Threescore [60] Persons, Among which there have been Old & Young, Strong and Weak, Male and Female, White & Black, Many Serious and virtuous People, some the Children of Eminent Persons among us. ...*

*Of all the number that have passed under the Operation, there has Not so much as One miscarried [died]. It has done well in all, and even beyond Expectation in the most of them. ...*

*Some few have had a considerable Number of Pustules ... The Reasons of this can be as yet no more than Conjectured at. But these have undergone so little Sickness that they declare, They would much rather come under the Operation many times over than suffer the Small-Pox as they see it suffered in the Common way. ...*

*The Patients return to the perfect Health Immediately, and suppose themselves rather better than they were before the Operation. ...*