
World History Primary Source Analysis Bundle

20 Ready-to-Use Primary Source Analysis Activities
Spanning Ancient to Modern World History

Grades 8–12

HAPP Analysis Framework

H — Historical Context **A** — Audience **P** — Purpose **P** — Point of View

Each source includes a scaffolded HAPP analysis frame, a tiered version for ELL/SPED students, teacher answer guide, and discussion extension prompts.

What's Included:

- ✓ 20 primary source packets (source text + student analysis page)
- ✓ 20 tiered HAPP analysis pages for ELL/SPED students
- ✓ Comprehensive HAPP Analysis Guide with step-by-step instructions
- ✓ Complete teacher answer guide for all 20 sources
- ✓ Discussion extension prompts for every source

UM Printables

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HAPP Analysis Guide

The HAPP framework is a structured method for analyzing primary sources. By examining four key dimensions — Historical Context, Audience, Purpose, and Point of View — you can move beyond surface-level reading to develop a deeper, more nuanced understanding of historical documents.

Why Use HAPP Analysis?

Primary sources are the raw materials of history — the original documents, images, or artifacts created during the period under study. Unlike secondary sources, which interpret and summarize, primary sources give us direct access to the voices and perspectives of people who lived through historical events. However, no source is completely objective. Every source reflects the time, place, position, and motivations of its creator. The HAPP framework gives you the tools to evaluate sources critically and draw well-supported conclusions.

H — Historical Context

Historical context refers to the circumstances, events, and conditions that existed at the time a source was created. Understanding context helps you interpret the source as people of the time would have understood it, rather than imposing modern assumptions.

Key Questions to Ask:

- When and where was this source created?
- What major events were happening at the time?
- What social, political, or economic conditions shaped this era?
- How might the events of the time have influenced the author?
- What was the state of technology, warfare, religion, or governance?

Example: When analyzing Hammurabi's Code, knowing that Mesopotamia was a stratified society with distinct social classes in approximately 1754 BCE helps you understand why laws prescribed different punishments for different classes.

A — Audience

Audience refers to the people the author intended to reach with the source. A source created for a king will differ significantly from one created for the general public. Understanding the audience reveals the author's assumptions, tone, and the effect the source was designed to produce.

Key Questions to Ask:

- Who was the intended audience for this source?
- Was the source public or private? Formal or informal?
- How might the intended audience have shaped the language or content?
- Would different audiences interpret this source differently?
- Is there evidence the author is adjusting the message for the audience?

Example: Columbus's 1493 letter was addressed to the Spanish court — his patrons. Understanding this audience helps explain why he emphasized the wealth and potential of the New World while minimizing difficulties.

HAPP Analysis Guide (continued)

P — Purpose

Purpose refers to the reason the source was created. Authors create sources for many reasons: to inform, persuade, justify, warn, celebrate, condemn, or record. Identifying purpose helps you understand what the author hoped to achieve and whether the source might present information selectively to advance that goal.

Key Questions to Ask:

- Why was this source created? What was the author trying to accomplish?
- Was the purpose to inform, persuade, justify, record, or something else?
- What action or belief did the author want the audience to adopt?
- Does the source selectively present facts to support its purpose?
- How might the purpose have influenced what was included or omitted?

Example: *The Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen (1789) was created to establish principles for a new French government. Its purpose — to define universal rights — explains its sweeping, philosophical language and its omission of specific practical details.*

P — Point of View

Point of view refers to the perspective, background, and biases of the author. Every source is filtered through its creator's experiences, beliefs, social position, and interests. Recognizing point of view allows you to identify what might be distorted, exaggerated, or omitted — and what valuable insights the author's particular perspective provides.

Key Questions to Ask:

- Who is the author? What is their social position, nationality, or role?
- What beliefs, values, or experiences might shape their perspective?
- What biases might the author hold? What might they exaggerate or minimize?
- Whose voices are absent from this source? Whose perspectives are left out?
- How might a different author describe the same event differently?

Example: *Olaudah Equiano's narrative of the Middle Passage is shaped by his experience as an enslaved African. His perspective provides invaluable insight into the horrors of the slave trade, but it also reflects his later role as an abolitionist advocate seeking to sway public opinion.*

How to Use This Resource

This resource contains 20 primary source analysis activities covering world history from ancient Mesopotamia to the 21st century. Each source includes three pages designed for different levels of student readiness:

1. **Source Page:** Presents the primary source excerpt with background context and source information. Students read this page first to build foundational understanding.
2. **Student HAPP Analysis Page:** A scaffolded analysis frame with guiding prompts for each HAPP component. This page is designed for on-level and advanced students in Grades 8–12.
3. **Tiered HAPP Analysis Page (ELL/SPED):** A modified version with simplified guiding questions, sentence starters, and word banks. This page provides additional scaffolding for English Language Learners, students with learning disabilities, or any student who needs extra support.

Suggested Implementation Strategies

- **Whole-Class Model:** Complete the first source together as a class, modeling each HAPP component. Then assign subsequent sources for independent or small-group work.
- **Jigsaw Activity:** Assign different sources to different groups. Each group analyzes their source and presents findings to the class. This exposes students to multiple primary sources in a single class period.
- **Differentiated Instruction:** Distribute the standard student page to on-level learners and the tiered page to students who need additional support. Both pages address the same HAPP components, ensuring all students engage with the same historical content.
- **Socratic Seminar:** After students complete their analysis individually, use the discussion extension prompts to facilitate a class discussion. Encourage students to reference specific evidence from the source to support their arguments.
- **Document-Based Question (DBQ) Practice:** Use these sources as building blocks for DBQ-style essays. Students can practice using HAPP analysis to evaluate source reliability and integrate primary source evidence into argumentative writing.

Tips for ELL/SPED Students

- Read the source excerpt aloud or provide an audio recording to support comprehension.
- Allow students to discuss their ideas with a partner before writing (Think-Pair-Share).
- Use the sentence starters on the tiered page as a springboard, not a constraint.
- Encourage students to underline key phrases in the source text before answering.
- Provide bilingual dictionaries or glossaries for domain-specific vocabulary.
- Break the analysis into smaller chunks — complete one HAPP component per session.

Hammurabi's Code

c. 1754 BCE • Babylon, Mesopotamia • King Hammurabi

Historical Context: Hammurabi ruled the Babylonian Empire in Mesopotamia from approximately 1792 to 1750 BCE. His legal code, inscribed on a black diorite stele, is one of the earliest and most complete written legal codes from the ancient world. The code contains 282 laws covering commerce, property, family, labor, and criminal behavior. It reflects a highly stratified society with three social classes: free persons (avilum), commoners (mushkenum), and enslaved persons (wardum). The principle of proportional retribution — often summarized as 'an eye for an eye' — is central to the code, though punishments varied by social class.

Primary Source Excerpt:

Law 195: If a son strikes his father, they shall cut off his hand.

Law 196: If a man destroys the eye of another free man, they shall destroy his eye.

Law 197: If he breaks the bone of another free man, they shall break his bone.

Law 198: If he destroys the eye of a commoner or breaks the bone of a commoner, he shall pay one mina of silver.

Law 199: If he destroys the eye of a slave of another man or breaks the bone of a slave of another man, he shall pay one-half of his value.

Law 209: If a man strikes a free woman and causes her to lose her unborn child, he shall pay ten shekels of silver for her loss.

Law 213: If he strikes a slave woman and causes her to lose her unborn child, he shall pay two shekels of silver.

Law 215: If a surgeon operates on a free man with a bronze lancet and saves the man's life, he shall receive ten shekels of silver.

Law 218: If a surgeon operates on a free man with a bronze lancet and causes the man's death, they shall cut off his hand.

Source Note: Translated from the Akkadian original. The stele was discovered in Susa (modern Iran) in 1901 and is now housed in the Louvre Museum, Paris.

SOURCE 1: HAPP ANALYSIS

Hammurabi's Code (c. 1754 BCE) — King Hammurabi

Name: _____ Date: _____ Period: _____

H — Historical Context

- When and where was Hammurabi's Code created?
- What was happening in Mesopotamia during this period?
- How does the code reflect the social structure of Babylonian society?

A — Audience

- Who was the intended audience for these laws?
- How would the public display of the stele affect the audience's understanding?
- Would different social classes interpret these laws differently?

P — Purpose

- What was the primary purpose of creating and displaying this code?
- Was the code meant to establish new laws or record existing practices?
- How does the code serve to legitimize Hammurabi's rule?

P — Point of View

- What is Hammurabi's point of view as the author of these laws?
- What biases are revealed by the different punishments for different social classes?
- Whose perspective is missing from this source?

SOURCE 1: HAPP ANALYSIS — TIERED (ELL/SPED)

Hammurabi's Code (c. 1754 BCE) — King Hammurabi

Name: _____ Date: _____

H — Historical Context

Guiding Question: When and where was Hammurabi's Code created, and what does it tell us about Babylonian society?

Sentence Starters:

- Hammurabi's Code was created in _____ around _____.
- This code shows that Babylonian society was divided into _____.

Word Bank: Babylon | Mesopotamia | 1754 BCE | social classes | laws

A — Audience

Guiding Question: Who was meant to see and follow these laws?

Sentence Starters:

- The audience for these laws was _____.
- The stele was displayed in public so that _____.

Word Bank: citizens | judges | Babylonians | public

P — Purpose

Guiding Question: Why did Hammurabi create this code of laws?

Sentence Starters:

- Hammurabi created this code to _____.
- By writing down the laws, Hammurabi wanted to _____.

Word Bank: establish order | protect | punish | justice | control

P — Point of View

Guiding Question: How does King Hammurabi's perspective shape these laws?

Sentence Starters:

- As a king, Hammurabi believed that _____.
- The laws show bias because _____.

Word Bank: power | authority | social class | unequal | divine right

Funeral Oration of Pericles

431 BCE • Athens, Greece • Thucydides (recording Pericles)

Historical Context: In 431 BCE, at the end of the first year of the Peloponnesian War between Athens and Sparta, the Athenian statesman Pericles delivered a public funeral oration honoring fallen soldiers. The speech was recorded by the historian Thucydides in his History of the Peloponnesian War. Athens was at the height of its democratic experiment, having developed a system of direct democracy in which male citizens participated directly in legislation and governance. However, Athenian democracy excluded women, enslaved people, and foreign residents (metics). The speech is considered one of the earliest and most influential defenses of democratic governance.

Primary Source Excerpt:

Our constitution does not copy the laws of neighboring states; we are rather a pattern to others than imitators ourselves. Its administration favors the many instead of the few; this is why it is called a democracy. If we look to the laws, they afford equal justice to all in their private differences; if to social standing, advancement in public life falls to reputation for capacity, class considerations not being allowed to interfere with merit; nor again does poverty bar the way, if a man is able to serve the state, he is not hindered by the obscurity of his condition.

The freedom which we enjoy in our government extends also to our ordinary life. There, far from exercising a jealous surveillance over each other, we do not feel called upon to be angry with our neighbor for doing what he likes, or even to indulge in those injurious looks which cannot fail to be offensive, although they inflict no positive penalty.

But all this ease in our private relations does not make us lawless as citizens. Against this fear is our chief safeguard, teaching us to obey the magistrates and the laws, particularly such as regard the protection of the injured, whether they are actually on the statute book, or belong to that code which, although unwritten, yet cannot be broken without acknowledged disgrace.

Source Note: From Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, Book II, translated by Richard Crawley. Note that Thucydides acknowledged he could not recall the exact words and reconstructed the speeches to reflect the general sense of what was said.

SOURCE 2: HAPP ANALYSIS

Funeral Oration of Pericles (431 BCE) — Thucydides (recording Pericles)

Name: _____ Date: _____ Period: _____

H — Historical Context

- What was the Peloponnesian War, and how did it affect Athens at this time?
- What was the purpose of the public funeral where this speech was delivered?
- How does the wartime context shape the content and tone of Pericles' speech?

A — Audience

- Who was the immediate audience for this oration?
- How might the setting (a public funeral) influence how the audience received the speech?
- How does Pericles tailor his message to inspire the Athenian citizens?

P — Purpose

- What was Pericles trying to accomplish with this speech?
- How does the speech serve both as a eulogy and as political rhetoric?
- What ideals is Pericles trying to reinforce in his audience?

P — Point of View

- What is Pericles' perspective as a leading statesman and general?
- How does his account of Athenian democracy differ from the reality for women, enslaved people, and metics?
- What biases might Thucydides have introduced in his reconstruction of the speech?

SOURCE 6: HAPP ANALYSIS — TIERED (ELL/SPED)

Magna Carta (1215) — King John and the English Barons

Name: _____ Date: _____

H — Historical Context

Guiding Question: Why did the English barons force King John to sign the Magna Carta?

Sentence Starters:

- *The barons were angry because King John _____.*
- *The Magna Carta was written to _____ the king's power.*

Word Bank: taxes | limited | failed wars | rights | abused power

A — Audience

Guiding Question: Who was supposed to follow the rules in the Magna Carta?

Sentence Starters:

- *The rules were mainly for _____ and his officials.*
- *It was read publicly so that _____.*

Word Bank: King John | barons | everyone | England

P — Purpose

Guiding Question: What were the barons trying to achieve with this document?

Sentence Starters:

- *The barons wanted to make sure the king could not _____.*
- *Clause 39 means that a person cannot be jailed without _____.*

Word Bank: tax unfairly | arrest | fair trial | law | protect

P — Point of View

Guiding Question: Who actually benefited from the Magna Carta in 1215?

Sentence Starters:

- *In 1215, the Magna Carta mainly protected the rights of _____.*
- *It did not protect peasants because it only mentions '_____ men.'*

Word Bank: barons | nobles | free | rich | king

The Travels of Marco Polo

c. 1300 • Genoa / Venice • Marco Polo (dictated to Rustichello da Pisa)

Historical Context: Marco Polo was a Venetian merchant who spent approximately 17 years in the service of Kublai Khan, the Mongol ruler of the Yuan Dynasty in China, during the late 13th century. Upon returning to Venice, Marco was captured and imprisoned during a conflict with Genoa. While imprisoned, he dictated the story of his travels to his cellmate, Rustichello, a writer of romance novels. The resulting book introduced Europeans to the vast wealth, advanced technologies, and sophisticated cities of East Asia, radically expanding the European worldview and later inspiring explorers like Christopher Columbus.

Primary Source Excerpt:

The walls of the palace are all covered with gold and silver. They are also adorned with representations of dragons, beasts, and birds, knights and idols, and other subjects of war. In the hall there are likewise columns of gold and silver, and the ceiling is constructed in such a manner that nothing in the world could exceed its beauty...

In this city of Kambalu [Beijing] is the mint of the Grand Khan, who may truly be said to possess the secret of the alchemists, as he has the art of producing paper money... The bark of the mulberry tree is pounded and made into paper, which is cut into pieces of money of different values... With this currency, all purchases of goods are made... and it is held more precious than gold or silver.

Source Note: Translated from the original Old French and Italian manuscripts. Rustichello's influence as a romance writer likely led to some exaggeration, and Marco Polo omitted several major Chinese inventions (like the Great Wall and tea), leading some historians to debate the extent of his actual travels.

SOURCE 7: HAPP ANALYSIS

The Travels of Marco Polo (c. 1300) — Marco Polo (dictated to Rustichello da Pisa)

Name: _____ Date: _____ Period: _____

H — Historical Context

- What was the Pax Mongolica, and how did it enable Marco Polo's travels?
- How did 13th-century European technology compare to that of China?
- Why was the concept of paper money so shocking to a European?

A — Audience

- Who was the intended audience for this book in Europe?
- How does the author adjust the descriptions to appeal to this audience?
- How might a European merchant's reading of this differ from a noble's?

P — Purpose

- What was Marco Polo's purpose in dictating this story?
- How does Rustichello's role as a romance writer influence the text's purpose?
- Why might Polo emphasize the Khan's wealth and the use of paper money?

P — Point of View

- How does Marco Polo's perspective as a Venetian merchant shape what he notices?
- What biases or European assumptions are evident in his descriptions?
- Why does Polo compare the Khan to an alchemist?

Olaudah Equiano's Narrative

1789 • London, England • Olaudah Equiano (Gustavus Vassa)

Historical Context: Olaudah Equiano was an Igbo man born in what is now Nigeria. He was kidnapped and sold into slavery as a child in the 1750s, enduring the horrors of the Middle Passage. He purchased his freedom in 1766 and became a prominent abolitionist in England. His autobiography, published in 1789, was instrumental in turning British public opinion against the transatlantic slave trade. Written during the height of the British abolition movement, Equiano's narrative provided an authoritative, firsthand account that directly countered pro-slavery arguments that Africans were subhuman or content with their condition.

Primary Source Excerpt:

The first object which saluted my eyes when I arrived on the coast was the sea, and a slave ship, which was then riding at anchor, and waiting for its cargo. These filled me with astonishment, which was soon converted into terror when I was carried on board... I was now persuaded that I had gotten into a world of bad spirits, and that they were going to kill me.

The closeness of the place, and the heat of the climate, added to the number in the ship, which was so crowded that each had scarcely room to turn himself, almost suffocated us. This produced copious perspirations, so that the air soon became unfit for respiration... The shrieks of the women, and the groans of the dying, rendered the whole a scene of horror almost inconceivable.

Source Note: Recent historical scholarship has debated whether Equiano was born in Africa or South Carolina, but his description of the Middle Passage remains one of the most important and widely cited firsthand accounts of the transatlantic slave trade, whether based on direct experience or compiled from other enslaved people's testimonies.

SOURCE 11: HAPP ANALYSIS

Olaudah Equiano's Narrative (1789) — Olaudah Equiano (Gustavus Vassa)

Name: _____ Date: _____ Period: _____

H — Historical Context

- What was the Middle Passage, and how did it function in the triangular trade?
- Why was the transatlantic slave trade being debated in Britain in 1789?
- How did Equiano's status as a free man influence his ability to write this narrative?

A — Audience

- Who was Equiano's intended audience in Britain?
- How does Equiano tailor his language to appeal to Christian and Enlightenment values?
- How might a pro-slavery advocate have tried to discredit this narrative?

P — Purpose

- What was Equiano's primary purpose in publishing this narrative?
- How does the graphic description of the ship serve his abolitionist goals?
- Does the narrative function as a memoir, a political tract, or both?

P — Point of View

- What is Equiano's point of view as a formerly enslaved person?
- How does his description of the ship crew as 'spirits' reflect his cultural perspective?
- How does his later education and Christian faith shape the way he tells this story?

SOURCE 11: HAPP ANALYSIS — TIERED (ELL/SPED)

Olaudah Equiano's Narrative (1789) — Olaudah Equiano (Gustavus Vassa)

Name: _____ Date: _____

H — Historical Context

Guiding Question: What was the Middle Passage, and what was it like for enslaved Africans?

Sentence Starters:

→ *The Middle Passage was the voyage* _____.

→ *The conditions on the ship were* _____.

Word Bank: across the ocean | slaves | terrible | crowded | hot

A — Audience

Guiding Question: Who did Equiano want to read his story, and why?

Sentence Starters:

→ *Equiano wrote this for the* _____ *people.*

→ *He wanted them to feel* _____ *about slavery.*

Word Bank: British | Christian | horror | end slavery

P — Purpose

Guiding Question: Why did Equiano describe the horrible conditions on the ship in such detail?

Sentence Starters:

→ *Equiano described the terrible smells and sounds to* _____.

→ *He wanted people to* _____ *the slave trade.*

Word Bank: show the truth | stop | abolish | shock

P — Point of View

Guiding Question: How does Equiano's perspective as a kidnapped child shape the story?

Sentence Starters:

→ *Equiano was terrified because he thought the sailors were* _____.

→ *His perspective is powerful because he actually* _____.

Word Bank: spirits | monsters | experienced it | lived through it

SOURCE 20: HAPP ANALYSIS — TIERED (ELL/SPED)

Malala Yousafzai's UN Speech (2013) — Malala Yousafzai

Name: _____ Date: _____

H — Historical Context

Guiding Question: Why was Malala attacked by the Taliban, and where did she give this speech?

Sentence Starters:

→ *Malala was attacked because she* _____.

→ *She gave this speech at the* _____.

Word Bank: wanted girls to go to school | United Nations | education | Taliban

A — Audience

Guiding Question: Who is Malala talking to in this speech?

Sentence Starters:

→ *She is talking to* _____.

→ *She is also sending a message to the* _____.

Word Bank: world leaders | youth | terrorists | everyone

P — Purpose

Guiding Question: What does Malala want the world to do?

Sentence Starters:

→ *Malala wants every child to have* _____.

→ *She says books and pens are* _____.

Word Bank: an education | weapons | powerful | schools

P — Point of View

Guiding Question: How does Malala view the Taliban's attempt to silence her?

Sentence Starters:

→ *She says the attack made her* _____, *not afraid.*

→ *She thinks the Taliban are afraid of* _____.

Word Bank: stronger | books | education | women

Teacher Answer Guide & Discussion Prompts

The following pages contain suggested answers for the HAPP analysis components and discussion extension prompts for all 20 primary sources. Student responses will vary; these answers provide a baseline of key historical and analytical points that should be included in a rigorous response.

SOURCE 1: HAMMURABI'S CODE

H — Historical Context

Hammurabi's Code was created around 1754 BCE in Babylon, the capital of the Babylonian Empire in Mesopotamia (modern-day Iraq). During this period, Babylon was a dominant power in the region, and Hammurabi sought to unify his diverse empire under a consistent legal system. The code reflects a society with rigid social stratification, where a person's class — free person, commoner, or enslaved person — determined the legal protections and punishments they received. Agriculture, trade, and temple-centered religion defined daily life.

A — Audience

The primary audience was the people of Babylon — including citizens, judges, and local officials — who were expected to follow and enforce these laws. The stele was placed in a public temple, making the laws accessible (to those who could read) and demonstrating the king's authority. Different social classes would have experienced these laws very differently: free persons saw their privileges protected, while enslaved persons and commoners may have viewed the code as reinforcing their lower status.

P — Purpose

The code served multiple purposes: to establish uniform laws across the empire, to prevent arbitrary judgments by local officials, to publicly demonstrate Hammurabi's commitment to justice, and to legitimize his rule by claiming divine authority. The prologue of the code explicitly states that the gods Anu and Marduk commanded Hammurabi to 'promote the welfare of the people.' The code both recorded existing legal customs and established new standards, serving as a tool of governance and imperial unification.

P — Point of View

Hammurabi's point of view is that of an absolute monarch claiming divine authority. He presents himself as a just ruler chosen by the gods, yet the laws reveal clear bias in favor of the upper class. Punishments are harsher when the victim is of higher status and lighter when the victim is of lower status, demonstrating that the code was designed to maintain the existing social hierarchy. The perspectives of enslaved persons, women, and commoners are absent — they are subjects of the law, not its authors.

Discussion Extension Prompts

1. How do the punishments in Hammurabi's Code reflect the social hierarchy of ancient Babylon? What does it mean that the 'value' of a person determined the consequences for harming them?
2. Compare the concept of proportional retribution ('an eye for an eye') in Hammurabi's Code to modern legal principles. What has changed, and what has remained similar?
3. Hammurabi claimed divine authority for his laws. How do rulers today use similar strategies to legitimize their authority? Give specific examples.

SOURCE 2: FUNERAL ORATION OF PERICLES

H — Historical Context

The Funeral Oration was delivered in 431 BCE, at the end of the first year of the Peloponnesian War (431–404 BCE), a protracted conflict between Athens and its Delian League allies and Sparta and its Peloponnesian League allies. Athens was at the height of its cultural and political influence but was about to face devastating plague and military setbacks. The public funeral was an Athenian tradition to honor those who died in battle, and the wartime context made Pericles' defense of Athenian values especially urgent, as morale and unity were critical.

A — Audience

The immediate audience was the Athenian citizen body, including families of the fallen soldiers, gathered at a public ceremony. The funerary setting created an emotional atmosphere that Pericles leveraged to inspire patriotism and resilience. By praising the dead as heroes who died for democratic ideals, he sought to motivate the living to continue the fight. The speech would have been less persuasive if delivered in a different context.

P — Purpose

Pericles' purpose was to honor the fallen, boost Athenian morale, and defend the democratic system against Spartan oligarchy. He used the occasion to argue that the sacrifices were worthwhile because Athens was worth dying for. He reinforced the ideals of equality before the law, meritocracy, and civic participation, presenting Athens as a model for all of Greece.

P — Point of View

Pericles was a leading statesman and general deeply invested in the Athenian system. His perspective is highly favorable toward Athens, presenting an idealized version of democracy. He omits that Athenian democracy excluded women, enslaved people, and metics. Additionally, Thucydides reconstructed the speech from memory, potentially introducing his own biases or making the speech more coherent and eloquent than the original delivery.

Discussion Extension Prompts

1. How does Pericles define democracy in this speech? To what extent does his definition match our modern understanding of democracy?
2. Why might Pericles emphasize that 'poverty bar[s] the way' for no one in Athens? How does this claim serve his rhetorical purpose?
3. Consider the groups excluded from Athenian democracy. How does their absence from Pericles' account shape our understanding of this source as a historical record?

SOURCE 3: EDICTS OF ASHOKA

H — Historical Context

The Edicts were issued around 260 BCE following the Kalinga War (c. 261 BCE), a devastating conflict that resulted in over 100,000 deaths and massive displacement. This horror caused Ashoka to renounce violence and embrace Buddhism. The edicts reflect a society transitioning from military conquest to moral governance, promoting peace, tolerance, and welfare across the diverse Maurya Empire.

A — Audience

The audience was the general population of the Maurya Empire, including farmers, merchants, and officials. The inscriptions were placed at borders and along trade routes to reach both subjects and neighboring kingdoms. By using local dialects and publicly displaying the edicts, Ashoka ensured accessibility. Different groups might view the edicts as genuine moral guidance, political propaganda, or practical instructions.

P — Purpose

Ashoka's purpose was to establish a unified moral code (Dhamma) across his empire, promote social harmony, legitimize his post-war rule as benevolent rather than tyrannical, and encourage ethical behavior. The purpose is both political (maintaining order) and religious (spreading Buddhist principles), blending them into a civic ethic.

P — Point of View

As emperor, Ashoka views himself as a paternal figure ('All men are my children') with a divine or moral mandate to guide his subjects. His perspective is top-down and absolutist, though framed in compassion. He idealizes his reign and may omit the continued existence of the Mauryan military, enforcement mechanisms, and practical realities of maintaining such a vast state.

Discussion Extension Prompts

1. Ashoka calls his subjects his 'children.' What does this reveal about his view of the relationship between a ruler and the ruled?
2. How do the Edicts of Ashoka compare to Hammurabi's Code in terms of their purpose and approach to justice?
3. Can a ruler who achieved power through violent conquest genuinely transform into a promoter of peace? Does Ashoka's case support or challenge this idea?

SOURCE 4: TACITUS ON NERO'S PERSECUTION OF CHRISTIANS

H — Historical Context

In 64 CE, a massive fire destroyed much of Rome. Rumors spread that Nero had started the fire to rebuild the city to his liking. To deflect these rumors, Nero scapegoated the Christians, who were already disliked for their refusal to worship Roman gods and their secretive meetings. Tacitus wrote about this around 109 CE, during the reign of Trajan, as part of a broader history of the Roman emperors, aiming to preserve the memory of imperial abuses.

A — Audience

Tacitus wrote for an audience of Roman senators and educated elites. This audience shared his disdain for Christianity, which they viewed as a strange, foreign cult that threatened Roman social order. A Christian reader would interpret this source as evidence of their persecution and martyrdom, while a Roman elite would likely focus on Tacitus's critique of Nero's abuse of power rather than sympathy for the victims.

P — Purpose

Tacitus's primary purpose was to document the abuses of the emperors and critique tyranny, not to defend Christianity. He includes the passage to show that Nero's actions were unjust and cruel, even against a despised group. Tacitus uses the persecution as evidence of Nero's moral failure: Nero exploited a vulnerable minority to save his own reputation.

P — Point of View

Tacitus is a Roman senator and historian who despises both Nero's tyranny and Christianity. He calls Christianity a 'pernicious superstition' and an 'abomination,' revealing deep cultural bias. However, his commitment to truth-telling leads him to condemn Nero's persecution as unjust, showing that he values Roman legal principles over religious prejudice. His perspective is that of an aristocrat who respects law and order but despises this particular group of outsiders.

Discussion Extension Prompts

1. Why is Tacitus's account considered historically significant, even though he was biased against Christians?
2. How does Tacitus's description of the Christians' punishment reveal more about Nero than about the Christians themselves?
3. What does this source reveal about the relationship between the Roman state and minority religious groups?

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