

SOAPS-TONE: Analysis of Documents

Historians recommend that students analyze documents through the use of acronyms. An acronym of analysis is *SOAPPS*. This stands for Subject (S), Occasion (O), Audience (A), Purpose (P), Point of View (P), Speaker (S), and TONE. Typically historical primary sources will identify the author, the date, and the occasion for the comments. These introductory facts are followed by the document itself. After reading any document, you should be able to summarize the questions asked below in one line.

1. SUBJECT/SUMMARY

When reading a document, determine the subject. Answer these questions – what is it about and why is the document important or significant? Summarize actions.

2. OCCASION

The occasion of the document involves its time frame (not a specific date) and the historical context behind the document. Answer such questions – when in time the document was created, what was the specific event, what is happening in history, and where did it geographically originate.

3. AUDIENCE

All documents have an intended audience, which you must identify. Speakers say or write different things to different audiences. Analysis of audience partially answers the question of *point of view* and *perspective*. For whom was the document written in that time? Sometimes, there can be multiple audiences or hidden audiences.

4. PURPOSE

Critical to the analysis of a document is understanding the purpose behind the document. Purpose or motivation answers the question as to why the speaker said or wrote what (s)he did. What goal did the speaker want to achieve?

5. POINT OF VIEW or PERSPECTIVE

The second “P” is point of view or bias that colors or influences a person’s outlook. All documents and primary source materials contain point of views. In order to interpret documents, students must learn to recognize the speaker’s perspective.

6. SPEAKER

When students analyze a document, the process begins with an attribution, or who wrote or spoke the words. Analyze the speaker’s gender, social background, economic status, political persuasion, ethnicity, nationality, religion, and race. Who the speaker is affects his or her reliability.

7. TONE

Students need to be able to identify the manner of expression or mood created by the language of the written document. What is the tone of the speaker?

After analyzing the document, what inference or generalization about the civilization and culture can you make (if you have not read about the culture, this could be a predication)? Additionally, what conclusion can you reach about the importance or significance of this document to world history? Justify your answers. The question you must determine after analyzing any document is “how reliable is the document”? Do you believe it? Why or why not? That is the job of a good historian and this is the major process by which history is written.

SOAPPS-Tone

Primary Document Analysis

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|-----------------------------|---|
| SUBJECT (Summary) | <i>What is the main topic or idea of the document? Be able to summarize the main idea in one sentence and no more.</i> |
| OCCASION | <i>Where and when was the document produced? What was happening during the time the document was written? This is often called historical context. How might this have influenced the writer?</i> |
| AUDIENCE | <i>For whom was the document written/produced? How might an audience have received this document and why?</i> |
| PURPOSE | <i>Why was the document produced? What did the producer hope to accomplish through his words?</i> |
| POINT OF VIEW | <i>What does the writer or producer believe? Interpret his writing and tell me why he holds these views.</i> |
| SPEAKER | <i>Who is the speaker or producer? What can you tell me about his background? How might his personal background have influenced his work?</i> |
| TONE | <i>What feeling or attitude does this document express? Use descriptive adjectives and adverbs.</i> |

Name _____ Date _____ Period _____

SOAPS-Tone Document Analysis Form

Directions: Using the document provided, analyze each part of the SOAPS-Tone acronym. Write your conclusions below. Then determine if the document is reliable.

1. Subject/Summary:

2. Occasion:

3. Audience:

4. Purpose:

5. Point of View or Perspective:

6. Speaker:

Generalization, Inference, and Conclusion

Reliability? Why or why not?

Time: _____