



# Analyzing Sources and Points of View in Social Studies

# Learning Objectives

By the end of this lesson, you will be able to:

- Evaluate an author's point of view
- Recognize bias and propaganda
- Make judgments about an author's credibility in historical and modern-day documents
- Identify points of agreement and disagreement between two texts

# Primary and Secondary Sources

**Primary sources** are first person accounts, documents, and physical artifacts.

*Primary sources may include uninterpreted scientific data.*

**Secondary sources** are documents, texts, images, and objects about an event (often created by someone who references primary sources).

*Secondary sources that include scientific data will often also include an interpretation of that data.*

Secondary sources often contain information that is not firsthand knowledge and could be based on inferences. They usually include the author's point of view and biases in addition to the facts.

# Central Claims and Supporting Details

Social Studies passages contain **central claims** and **supporting details**. Sometimes, the author's central claim—or main idea—will be explicitly connected to a call to action. In other cases, the author's point of view is more subtle.

*Social Studies documents are persuasive when the authors write in order to influence people's ideas and actions.*

Whether you are reading a primary or secondary source text, ask yourself:

- Who is the **audience** the author is writing for?
- Which **side of the issue** does the author support?
- What **words** or **evidence** does the author use to reinforce desired beliefs or challenge accepted beliefs?

# Mixed Practice

In the Emancipation Proclamation, issued in 1863, President Lincoln freed all people enslaved in the states that had seceded from the Union. This proclamation was explicitly not to be put into effect in slave states that had remained in the Union. The proclamation went on to say:

“I hereby enjoin upon the people so declared to be free to abstain from all violence . . . And make known that such persons of suitable condition will be received into the armed services of the United States to garrison forts, positions, stations, and other places, and to man vessels of all sorts.”

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1. Based on the text, which of the following was a major reason Lincoln issued the proclamation?
  - A. to weaken the South by enlisting former slaves in the Union army
  - B. to encourage states to secede from the Union
  - C. to punish slaveholders throughout the South
  - D. to weaken the North by enlisting former slaves in the Confederate army

# Author's Point of View

The author's **point of view** describes the opinions and feelings of the author.

*To more easily determine the author's point of view, think about what side the author would take in a debate on the topic in the passage.*

Social Studies authors support their **point of view** in three ways:

- **Facts:** information that can be proven to be true
- **Opinions:** beliefs about a concept or situation
- **Judgments:** conclusions that are supported by reasons and evidence

*Some clues in the passage that will help you identify the author's point of view include loaded language that shows bias and inclusion or avoidance of particular facts.*

# Author's Point of View

As you read each Social Studies passage, ask:

- Is the author's **tone** positive, negative, or neutral?
- Does the author want things to **change** or **stay the same**?
- Is the author **addressing supporters** or **opponents**?
- **Why** did the author write the passage?

As you answer point of view questions, ask:

- Which answers are **within the scope** of the author's point of view?
- Does the tone of the answer **match** the tone of the author during the passage?
- Is the answer you chose **supported** by something said in the passage?



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government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of those who suffer from it to refuse allegiance to it, and to insist upon the institution of a new government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness. . . .

Such has been the patient sufferance of the women under this government, and such is now the necessity which constrains them to demand the equal station to which they are entitled. . . .  
[B]ecause women do feel themselves aggrieved,

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oppressed, and fraudulently deprived of their most sacred rights, we insist that they have immediate admission to all the rights and privileges which belong to them as citizens of the United States.

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2. Which concept shaped Stanton’s point of view?
  - A. Nationalism
  - B. Natural rights
  - C. Imperialism
  - D. Majority rule

# Bias and Credibility

An author's discussion of a topic is rarely neutral; it contains **opinion** and **bias**.

*A person's opinions and beliefs can influence their perspective on an issue or event, both knowingly and unknowingly. Although bias means favor, an author may show either a favorable or an unfavorable bias.*

**Credibility** is the quality of being trustworthy or believable.

*It is important to determine how believable the author is when evaluating the claims, opinions, evidence, and other parts of a passage.*

# Bias and Credibility

As you read, consider both bias and credibility by asking:

- What **experience** does the author have with the event, people, or topic?
- How does the author **feel** about the event, people, or topic?
- Does the author's **background** reveal a preference for a particular outcome or group?
- What **positive or negative language** does the author use to describe people, events, or issues?
- What **evidence**, if any, does the author provide to support the central idea?

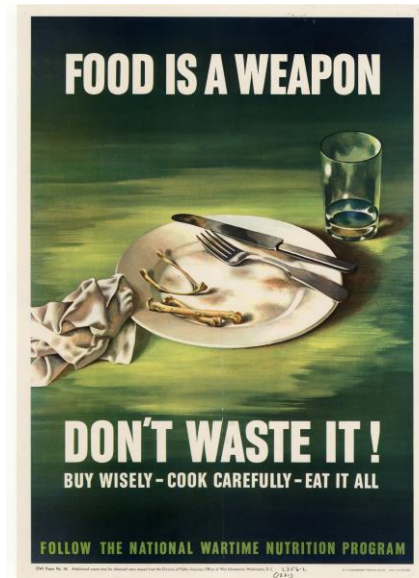
# Propaganda

**Propaganda** is an extreme form of bias that is designed to convince others to act and think as the author wants them to think.

*Propaganda intentionally focuses on certain facts and ignores others.*

Some forms of propaganda use emotionally charged language—language that is designed to evoke an emotional reaction.

*When analyzing propaganda, pay close attention to the source.*



# Mixed Practice

The women's rights movement in the United States gained strength with the 1848 Seneca Falls Convention. The defining document of this gathering was the Declaration of Sentiments, which was patterned after the Declaration of Independence but focused on the fact that women lacked basic freedoms that men enjoyed. The revolutionary nature of the Seneca Falls Convention was apparent in the public's response to the event. One newspaper described Seneca Falls as "the most shocking and unnatural event ever recorded in the history of womanity."



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3. Which of the following states the main idea of the passage?
  - A. The Seneca Falls Convention was important in the fight for women's rights.
  - B. Women lacked basic freedoms that men had, and they were angry.
  - C. The Seneca Falls Convention was open to both men and women.
  - D. The women's rights movement was stronger in Seneca Falls than in the rest of the United States.

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4. Which of the following statements based on the passage is an opinion, not a fact?
- A. The Seneca Falls Convention helped the women's rights movement gain strength.
  - B. The Seneca Falls Convention was a shocking and unnatural event that undermined the nature of women.
  - C. The Declaration of Sentiments was modeled on the Declaration of Independence.
  - D. The Declaration of Sentiments described how women's rights were limited.

# Multiple Sources

Primary and secondary source documents sometimes comment on the **same historical events**.

When you see multiple related sources on the GED Social Studies test, ask yourself:

- What ideas, facts, and author's perspective do the documents **agree** upon?
- What do they **disagree** upon?
- What is mentioned in one document but **omitted** from the other?

*When answering questions about multiple sources, avoid answers that switch the point of view of the two authors, discuss topics outside the scope of the passages, or match only one author's position.*

# Multiple Sources

Take a three-step approach to questions with multiple source texts:

- 1) Read the first passage and note the author's purpose and main idea.
- 2) Read the second passage and note the author's purpose and main idea.
- 3) Note any similarities and differences in tone, focus, or point of view.

*Sometimes referred to as "divide and conquer," this approach helps you keep track of each source when answering questions that relate to more than one.*

# Mixed Practice

The chart below describes the four methods used to amend the U.S. Constitution.

Four Methods of Amending the U.S. Constitution		
	Step 1	Step 2
1.	A two-thirds vote in both houses of the U.S. Congress	Ratified by three-fourths of the state legislatures
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# Mixed Practice

## The 17<sup>th</sup> Amendment

In 1787, delegates to the Constitutional Convention decided to give state legislatures the power to select U.S. senators. The purpose was to ensure that the interests of the states were represented in the national legislature. However, some argued that the people should directly elect their senators. They thought the interests of the states would be preserved because the people were the source of all government power.

The first of nearly 300 congressional resolutions calling for direct election of senators came in 1826. Over the next 85 years, an amendment to directly elect U.S. senators was debated extensively. Finally, in 1913, the 17<sup>th</sup> Amendment, which allowed for the direct election of senators, was ratified.

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**This excerpt is from an article published in the *Washington Times* in 1908.**

[The] Senator ... said [t]he reasons for this reform are thoroughly well understood. ... [I]t will prevent the corruption of the legislatures. ... [I]t will prevent men buying a seat in the Senate ... [and] make the Senate more responsive to the will of the people. ... [I]t will ... [also make] candidates ... campaign before the people.

## Mixed Practice

5. Which statement correctly describes an important way that the process of amending the U.S. Constitution is different from the process of creating federal laws?
- A. Only one government branch is involved in the amendment process.
  - B. Only one legislative body can conclude the amendment process.
  - C. Only state legislatures are involved in the amendment process.
  - D. Only state governments can start the amendment process.



## Mixed Practice

6. Which concern about the original method of selecting senators is implied in the excerpt?
- A. It failed to limit the influences of the wealthy.
  - B. It did not help to organize debates effectively.
  - C. It neglected to limit the influence of the majority.
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7. What does the word **convention** mean in both the chart and *The 17<sup>th</sup> Amendment* passage?
- A. cultural tradition
  - B. formal assembly
  - C. agreed-up contract
  - D. preferred writing style

# Learning Objectives

Now that you have completed this lesson, you should be able to:

- Evaluate an author's point of view
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# Questions?

Effort and practice are the keys to Test Day Success. Now that you have completed this lesson, you should reinforce these topics by completing practice questions.

If you have questions between live sessions, email your GED experts at [GEDHelp@kaplan.com](mailto:GEDHelp@kaplan.com).

Happy studying!



# Answer Key

# Answer Key

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P1  
1863 Emancipation  
Proc. by Lincoln for  
seceded states

P2  
freed people welcome  
in US armed services

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p1  
men and women  
have rights



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P2  
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more

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P2  
Stanton's claim

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1848 Seneca Falls  
Convention

Dec. of Sentiments

public opposition

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17<sup>th</sup> Amend.  
Debate how senators  
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Wash. Times  
Will of people important

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