

Historical Thinking Skill 3: Analyze arguments in primary and secondary sources

Because historians rely on primary and secondary sources to serve as evidence to support their claims, they need to closely analyze these sources. This analysis includes investigating what the source does and does not communicate, determining the argument established by a source, and identifying the evidence the author uses to support that argument.

Skill	Tasks/Questions	Sample Activity	Instructional Strategies
3.A: <i>Identify and describe a claim and/or argument in a text-based or non-text-based source.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is the author trying to prove in the source? 	Ask students to identify Adam Smith's argument in an excerpt from the <i>Wealth of Nations</i> .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Close Reading
3.B: <i>Identify the evidence used in a source to support an argument.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is the source's argument? What specific examples does the author use to support the argument? 	Ask students to identify the justifications for revolution that Karl Marx presents in <i>The Communist Manifesto</i> .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Think-Pair-Share
3.C: <i>Compare the arguments or main ideas of two sources.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify the argument or main idea in each source. What are the similarities between the arguments or main ideas in each source? What are the differences between the arguments or main ideas in each source? 	Have students compare newspaper editorials from a supporter of fair trade and a supporter for free trade to identify and discuss similarities and differences in their arguments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fishbowl
3.D: <i>Explain how claims or evidence support, modify, or refute a source's argument.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explain the source's claim. Explain the evidence presented in the source. Explain how the outside evidence supports the claims in the source. Explain how the outside evidence contradicts the source's claim. 	Ask students to explain the arguments made in the Declaration of Independence. What outside evidence supports and refutes the claims made?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Critique Reasoning