

DUE: FRI. DEC. 18!

8th graders only = Mob Violence Against Mormons"

Read over the guide below!

Interpreting Written Documents—

1. **Context:** Each document has an introduction. You should read it as well as review notes from your instructor's lecture. These will provide some background about events, people, and ideas of the time period in which the document was created.
 - What major political, social, economic, and/or cultural trends may have affected the author of the document?
 - How does this document fit into the historical context?
 - How does this document better our understanding of the event?
 - Does the document help to explain the cause-and-effect relationship of this event?
2. **Thesis:** Most documents have a central point that is being conveyed. This is known as the thesis. It is critical for any reader to understand the core argument—the thesis—of a document. Identifying the thesis is the important first step in making sense of a document's overall impact.
 - Can you summarize the document in three or four sentences?
 - What is the thesis? Can you express it in a sentence or two?
 - What does the author emphasize?
 - What are the key words that define the argument?

Keep in mind that the meaning of words changes over time, so try to understand the use of language in the historical time period of the document. For example, students in the 21st century might refer to *icon* as a clickable symbol on their computer's desktop; but before the widespread use of computers, *icon* would refer to a sacred, religious image.

3. **Perspective:** The author's point of view, including his or her prejudices and beliefs, can affect dramatically the content of a document. It is essential to consider the author of a document when reading. Biographical information can be helpful in deciding the author's point of view. For example, a slave owner would have a different view of slavery than a slave did. Factory workers would certainly have a different perception of life in America than would the owner of the factory where they worked.
 - Who is the author of the document?
 - What is his or her background?
 - When was the document created? How does historical context affect the author at the time the document was created?
 - Was it prepared during the event, immediately afterward, within a short time period, or years later? Such timing is important, as memo-

An individual's life experience often shapes perspective or views about events in his or her time. Seek to determine the author's gender, class, and ethnicity (where appropriate); regional background; and political, economic, or social position.

- Do you detect any prejudices or preferences?
- What evidence indicates the bias of the author?
- Can you determine the author's motive in producing the document?
- What did he or she hope to accomplish?

4. **Audience:** Knowing the intended audience of an account can be useful in better understanding why the document was created.

- Was the document prepared for a specific audience—for example, women, members of Congress, African Americans, wealthy businessmen, immigrants, a friend?
- Was the document prepared for public distribution?
- Was it a speech, a newspaper or a magazine article or editorial, an official government report, or a published memoir or autobiography, to name a few possibilities?
- Was it produced for personal and private reflection, such as a diary, journal entry, or an exchange of letters between friends?

Public consumption documents tend to be carefully worded, often guarded in presentation, while private ones tend to be less cautious and more honest. Classifying or identifying the document can be helpful in understanding its contents.

5. **Significance:** Finally, the reader should determine why a document is important.

- Why is the document important or significant?
- How has it shaped our understanding of the event?
- How has it shaped our understanding of historical change or continuity over time?
- What does it tell us about the historical time period?



Introduction
to the
DOCUMENT:

Mob Violence against Mormons (1846)

While many Americans joined reform movements during the turbulent 1830s, others sought refuge in new religions. One of the most prominent of these new faiths was the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Founded by Joseph Smith in the Burned-Over District of New York, the faith followed the teaching found in the Book of Mormon. The Mormons, as they came to be known, established a tight-knit community structure that emphasized hard work and loyalty to the faith. While the Mormons prospered, their sense of exclusiveness alienated many of their contemporaries. Driven from Ohio and then Missouri, in 1839 they established a model religious community along the Mississippi River in Nauvoo, Illinois. William Clayton, a British immigrant, was serving as personal secretary to founder Joseph Smith when the Mormons began to practice polygamy in 1843. This action increased tensions with surrounding neighbors. The following selection from William Clayton's Journal discusses the violence directed against the Mormons at Nauvoo. Clayton and the rest of the Saints ultimately fled to the present-day state of Utah.

*Answer these questions

Questions to Consider

on this handout

after you've read
the journal
entry

1. What is William Clayton's perspective in this document?
2. How would you describe the Mormons' relations with their neighbors?
3. What can you deduce about mid-nineteenth-century American views toward alternative religious practices?
4. How tolerant is mainstream society toward religious, ethnic, and racial minorities during this period?

*Underline/highlight places that show
what happened

... THURSDAY, 24th. Very cold all day. I did not feel so well. I have been told that Daniel H. Wells and William Cutler have arrived in camp and brought a report that there has been a battle fought in Nauvoo and some of the brethren killed.

FRIDAY, 25th. I learned today that the mob had made it known that they were coming to drive out the "Mormons." The Governor sent an officer to raise volunteers to disperse the mob, but the mob learning this they came sooner than they had calculated. The brethren being apprised of the intentions of the mob prepared to meet them as well as their circumstances would permit. Some of the new citizens also made preparations to join the brethren. They made five cannon shot of an old steam boat shaft. They also filled some barrels with powder, old iron, etc., which were buried in the pass to the city which could be fired by slow match but this was of no avail as some traitors informed the mob of it, hence they did not come into the settled part of the city. On Saturday the 12 inst., the mob made their appearance being about twelve hundred in number. The brethren and some of the new citizens in the whole about one hundred and sixty went to give them battle, but many of the new citizens and some of the brethren when they saw the numbers of the mob fled and left about one hundred, nearly all brethren to fight the enemy. The mob had pieces of cannon. They met near Boscow's store on Winchester street. The cannon of the mob fired a number of times into Barlow's old barn expecting many of the brethren were concealed there but in this they were disappointed, the brethren chiefly lying down on the ground behind some shelter and fired in that position. They fought one hour and twenty minutes when the mob offered terms of compromise which were these, that all the "Mormons" should leave the city within five days leaving ten families to finish the unsettled business. The brethren consented to this inasmuch as they had been well informed that 1500 more were coming to join the mob and they had nothing to expect from the authorities of the state. Lyman Johnson, one of the twelve, headed a party of the mob from Keokuk, Iowa territory. Three of the brethren were killed, viz. William Anderson, his son, and Norris, a blacksmith. Three others wounded. The mob would not own to any of their party being killed but one person saw them put sixteen men into one wagon and handled them more like dead persons than wounded. The ground where they stood was pretty much covered with blood, so that there is no doubt they had many slain or wounded. They had 150 baggage wagons. Esquire Wells took command of the brethren and rode to and fro during the whole battle without receiving injury, although the balls whistled by him on every side. Amos Davis fought bravely. While running across a plowed field he stumbled and fell on his left arm which formed a triangle with his head. As he fell a cannon ball passed through the angle of his arm between that and his head. Hiram Kimball received a slight wound with a

musket ball on the forehead. The mob fired sixty-two shots with the cannon and ten rounds with the muskets making 12,000 musket balls only killing three and wounding three. The brethren did not fire so much in proportion but did much more execution. Truly, the Lord fights the battles of his saints. The cannon of the brethren was not of much service, they would not carry more than a quarter of a mile, whereas those of the mob would hold well a half a mile. They shot nine balls through a small smith shop, one through Wells' barn and one at his house but the ball struck the ground in front of his house and glanced through the well curb. The mayor of Quincy watched the battle from the tower of the temple and owned that history never afforded a parallel. The brethren then began to get their families and effects over the river where they remain in a suffering and destitute condition until wagons and means are sent from the saints to their relief. On the Thursday following, the mob 1200 strong, entered the city. 'Tis said from good authority that such is the distress and sufferings of the saints as actually to draw tears from this mob. . . .