

Read around the document I

identify clues around the “edges” of a historical document to learn about its author, audience, origin, purpose and type

Learning outcomes

- understand historical documents prior to analyzing their contents
- learn about a book before reading it
- increase my ability to acquire background information

When to use the strategy

- working with historical documents
- examining a textbook chapter or article
- selecting documents for research resources
- reading about scientific topics

How to use the strategy

Prior knowledge

- knowledge of the time period of the document
- understand the difference between observations and inferences
- ability to draw inferences

Ideas to emphasize

- Historical documents are a rich source of information.
- A statement has different meanings in different contexts (e.g., “I am going to catch you” has several meanings). Context is also important in understanding historical documents.
- Significant information can be drawn from the “edges” of the document without reading the actual document.
- Inferences are often tentative but must be supported by evidence.

Instructional suggestions

- Model the strategy, using a contemporary document example such as an email memo to a group of students.
- Cover the body of the document to help students focus on the clues around the edges.
- Guide students in focusing on the details in the clues.
- If students require support in understanding the concept of inferences, consider using *Inference* (Lesson #32), available to subscribers to the **Tools for Thought** collection online and in print in *The Competencies Toolkit*.
- Confirm inferences by reading the body of the document.
- Discuss with students the usefulness of reading around a document.

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Purpose

This strategy helps me identify important information about a document, without reading the entire document.

Instructions

- Look carefully “around the edges” of the document.
- Identify the parts of the document that contain clues about the content and context of the document.
- Circle the clues found around the edges of the document.
- Use the data sheet to record observations from the “edges” of the document that provide clues about the author of the document, the intended audience, the context, the type of document and the purpose of the document.
- Be sure that your observations are accurate and relevant.
- Draw a conclusion or inference from each observation.
- Be sure your inferences are plausible and imaginative.
- Generate possible questions and research information about the document.
- Read the entire document to verify the plausibility of your inference.

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Activity Sheet

Observations (what you see around the edges)	Inferences (what you conclude)	Criteria

Criteria
Observations: observations accurately describe obvious and less obvious clues around the document.
Inferences: inferences go beyond very obvious conclusions and are supported by clues.

Criteria

Accurate, relevant observations: observations accurately describe obvious and less obvious clues around the document.

Plausible, imaginative inferences: inferences go beyond very obvious conclusions and are supported by clues.

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	Observations (Clues from the document)	Inferences (What you conclude)
Author: Report everything you can about the author of the document.		
Audience: Report everything you can about the intended audience for the document.		
Context: Report everything you can about where and when the document was created.		
Type of document: Report on the kind of document it is; e.g., diary, personal letter, legal document.		
Purpose: Report everything you can about the likely reason for creating the document.		

Criteria

Accurate, relevant observations: observations accurately describe obvious and less obvious clues around the document.

Plausible, imaginative inferences: inferences go beyond very obvious conclusions and are supported by clues.

Assessing read around the document

Accurate relevant observations

Excellent	Very Good	Competent	Basic	Not Yet Able
Identifies many relevant and accurate details from the document, including several less obvious details.	Identifies many relevant and accurate details from the document, and occasionally recognizes less obvious details.	Identifies a number of relevant and accurate, but obvious, details from the document.	Identifies only a few of the most obvious details from the document, but not all are relevant or accurate.	

Evidence:

Plausible, imaginative inferences

Excellent	Very Good	Competent	Basic	Not Yet Able
Provides many varied and imaginative inferences that are highly plausible.	Provides many plausible and sometimes imaginative inferences.	Provides a number of inferences that are generally plausible, but are rather obvious.	Provides a few plausible but obvious inferences.	

Evidence: