

PERALTA

HACIENDA HISTORICAL PARK

Primary Sources

Tell the students: “We use lots of different clues to tell us about the past. Historical Documents are one of the most important types.”

Ask: “Does anyone know what a Historical Document is? Do you have any guesses?” Take responses. “We know that Historical means that it comes from a time before our own. Document means something written.”

Ask: “Can you name some kinds of documents?” Letter, book, poster, diary, invitation, announcement, advertisement, map, label, report, government, records, report cards, IDs...

Tell the students: “Today we are going to look over two historic documents from Hispanic California.”

- Form the class into 4 - 8 groups.
 - Give half of the groups the Peralta letter, the other half the Sola document.
- Tell them they have 8 minutes to make a list of everything they can learn from their document.
- Ask each group how many items are on their lists.
- Alternating between Peralta groups, ask them to read their lists one at a time.
- Ask them for evidence as you record it on the board and discuss it.

- Repeat with the Sola groups.
- Using the students' observations as well as your own, ask them to tell you the story that they see in the two documents.

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- Record their conclusions.
- Give the students 5 minutes to discuss their points of view within their groups. They should be working to build an outline of their story. Then give them 10 – 15 minutes to write their story in paragraph form; one per group.
- Ask each group to read their paragraph.
- After everyone has heard all of the stories, discuss any differences and similarities that arise.
- Remember to ask for evidence from the documents or other research during your discussion.

OR

- Assign students to write a 1 – 3 paragraph story based on the in-class discussion.

Other Research

Often you need outside information to understand a document. Here are three important pieces of data that will help with these documents.

- The Peralta letter uses the term league. A Spanish league was 2.6 miles then.
- Governor Sola instructs his officer to summon “the Reverend Fathers Ministers of the Mission” because as Peralta’s neighbors

they must be aware of the new property line so they can prevent or minimize the mixing of their herds.

- The Sola document is a government record that has two separate entries. The first orders the Captain of the Presidio de San Francisco to give Peralta the land. The second confirms that all procedures were followed and that all documents, including a map, were on file. The final step is to build a house on the property which accounts for the length of time between the dates.

Historical Documents

The following is a list of questions we ask when examining a historical document.

- What is it? Is it a letter, government record, ad, book, poster, invitation, map, diary, announcement...
- Where did it come from? Did you get it from government archives, a library, a private collector, museum archives, a book, a dissertation, a magazine, a newspaper... This helps establish validity.
- Is this the original or a copy?
- Is this a translation?
- Is it dated? Are there clues to a date? i.e. historical references or age of paper, type of pen or ink...
- Is it formal (records, proclamation, invitation) or personal (letter, diary, note) or somewhere in between (ad, book, poster)?
- Is it a one way communication? Does it need or have reply?
- How does the document fit into our understanding of its time and place? Does it confirm expectations, or offer new information?
- What is the purpose of the document?
- Are there words or phrases you need to research so that you can understand it?

The previous questions dealt with the document itself. The following are about the person(s) that produced it.

- Is the author known?
- Can we see or infer their gender, age, or social rank?
- Who are they addressing and can we know about their name(s), gender(s), rank(s), or age(s)?
- What does it tell you about what happened?
- What does it tell you about the beliefs, opinions, or behaviors of the author?