

## HIST 260 Primary Document Analysis

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### Assignment:

As part of your grade in HIST 260 you must write a 1200 word documentary analysis using one of two primary source packets selected by the instructor and posted to [www.medieval-tech.com](http://www.medieval-tech.com). This term the two possible packets are:

Usmah Ibn Munqidh (1095-1188): Autobiography, excerpts on the Franks  
or  
Three Sources on the Ravages of the Northmen in Frankland, c. 843 – 912

The primary learning objective of this assignment is to demonstrate an awareness of the nature, origin, significance, and historical role of primary sources. The secondary objective is to learn to interpret edited and translated medieval documents.

The general goals of a documentary analysis require you first to answer basic questions about the source:

- What is it?
- Who created it and how?
- When was it created?
- Why was it created?
- Where was it created?

Beyond that, however, you must demonstrate an ability to analyze your source. This means placing it within some sort of context: cultural, intellectual, historical, etc. Higher scores are awarded to students who demonstrate an ability to relate the source to broader problems.

There are several ways to approach your sources. You may, for example, choose to provide an overview of the entire text and then focus in on a particular section. If you do focus most of your attention on a given section (or sections), make certain that it is an important passage and that it has sufficient interest to sustain your analysis. Similarly, you may opt to provide an overview and then to compare and contrast the information contained in two important sections. Although, therefore, there are many different ways to study longer sources, you should be guided by the principle that you are not *summarizing* a text but *analyzing* its historical importance.

**Parameters:**

You must type the analysis using Times New Roman (or something comparable) at a character pitch of 12. Margins must be 1" on all sides and the assignment must not have a cover page. Students must use footnotes as opposed to endnotes or parenthetical references. They should consult the *Chicago Manual of Style* for further formatting details.

Style counts when writing! The instructor awards points for smooth prose and deducts them for awkward, or incorrect, use of the English language. Students at every level are encouraged to make use of the University of Waterloo's Writing Centre (<http://elpp.uwaterloo.ca/writingcentre.html> ).

In order to contextualize your document(s), you will need to do some basic research. You must, therefore, include a bibliography of at least four scholarly secondary sources. These may include encyclopedia articles, journal articles, books, etc. When you cite them in your essay you must use footnotes. When, however, you refer to the primary document, you can simply do so with quotation marks and do not need to provide a footnote.

**Grading:**

You will be graded based on the following marking rubrics:

**Format:**

- Line spacing, margins, font style and size
- Correctly formatted page numbers
- Footnote citations (see *Chicago Manual of Style*)
- Bibliographic citations (see *Chicago Manual of Style*)
- First page headers (in lieu of cover page)
- Length (1200 words)

**Style:**

- Syntax and grammar
- Spelling
- Style

**Research:**

- Use of secondary sources?
- Adequate bibliographic content?

**Analysis:**

- What is this document?
- Who created it and how?
- When was it created?
- Why was it created?
- Where was it created?
- Contextualization (cultural, intellectual, historical, etc.)

Format, Style, and Research count for about half of the overall grade and Analysis counts for the remaining half.