Using Sources Checklist

1. What can you learn from the form of the source? (Was it written on fancy paper in elegant handwriting, or on scrap-paper, scribbled in pencil?) What does this tell you?

2. Think about the purpose of the source. What was the author's message or argument? What was he/she trying to get across? Is the message explicit, or are there implicit messages as well?

3. How does the author try to get the message across? What methods does he/she use?

4. What do you know about the author? Race, gender, class, occupation, religion, age, region, political beliefs? Does any of this matter? If so, how/why does it matter?

5. Who was the intended audience? Was this source meant for one person's eyes, or for the public? How does that affect the source?

6. What can a careful reading of the text (even if it is an image) tell you? How does the language work? What are the important metaphors or symbols? What can the author's choice of words tell you? What about the silences--what does the author choose NOT to talk about?

**Now you can evaluate the source.**

1. Is it prescriptive--telling you what people thought should happen--or descriptive--telling you what people thought did happen?

2. Does it tell you about the beliefs/actions of the elite, or of "ordinary" people? Whose perspective is being represented?

3. What historical questions can you answer using this source? What are the benefits of using this kind of source?

4. What questions can this source NOT help you answer? What are the limitations of this type of source?

**Remember, you cannot address each and every one of these questions in your exam answers, and the exam board wouldn’t want you to. Be selective, what is the most interesting thing to talk about?**