

# ANALYZING A SECONDARY SOURCE



## 1. Identify the source and author.

- Who is the author and what are his/her credentials?
- Who is the audience?
- Give the full citation:

## 2. Check it Out!

### A. Check out the Table of Contents:

- Are there chapters that might relate to your topic?

### B. Check out the index:

- Who are the key people?
- What are the key events?
- What are the key subjects?

### C. Check out the citations:

- Are they based on primary sources or mostly other secondary sources?
- Name one primary source collection the historian uses:
- Name one primary source and one secondary source used that might help your research:

### 3. Figure out the Argument

- Read the introduction and conclusion. Find the sentence(s) in which the author states her/his thesis and note page number—then restate in your own words.
- How does the writer build her/his argument?
- If the author discusses others' interpretations of the topic, who are the key scholars included?
- How does the author place her/his book in the “big picture”—what is the big historical question the work is addressing?

### D. Use it!

- How might this book/article help your own research? State three specific ideas:
- What new questions about your topic did your source raise?