

Teaching notes

Students tend to use sources for information, not for utility. This activity is designed to help students develop good habits when faced with sources. It encourages a step-by-step approach to exploring *all* the information that can be squeezed from any source, plus a requirement to think carefully about the context of any given source, and what they already know about this.

Starter:

Have a discussion with your students when it might be appropriate to use sources for each of the reasons on the list provided. Which do they think is most important? Why?

Key Question: What are we using sources for?

for information	to analyse	to challenge perceptions
for opinion	to change our opinion	to create a narrative
for an 'angle'	to pose a problem	for utility
to be critical of	to compare	

Two contrasting sources are used in this activity, focusing on events surrounding the Peasants' Revolt:

Source A is King Richard II speaking to rebels in Chelmsford after the rebels have largely dispersed.

Source B is a speech by John Ball, made to the rebels at Blackheath as they waited for Richard II to respond to their demands.

The students are asked to examine each source, step by step, focusing on all they can possibly extract from it, and then to think about its utility for a variety of tasks. Helpful checklists, like this one, are often issued to students to help them interrogate sources, and they can be really useful:

This activity involves the students in actively investigating a source. One very vital stage in the activity is asking the students to speculate exactly what the **content** of the source might say - from the ridiculous to the accurate - **before** they actually read it. This helps them to understand more clearly the options available to the speaker and that the actual speech is only one of the options available at the time.

The concluding activity asking students to decide which of the sources is more useful for several different aspects of the question further reinforces the need to think carefully about what any given source can be used for.

Carrying out a sequence like this a few times helps develop 'good habits' in source analysis and it soon becomes second nature to really 'squeeze' all the information one can from a source, as well as clearly placing it in the context, both of what students already know and what they still need to find out to be able to answer what is asked of them.

Task 1: in-depth analysis

- Think very carefully about the following:
 - a. What the **overview** of source tells you ('a speech to a meeting of rebels at Chelmsford').
 - b. **Who** the source is by.
 - c. The **context**: what is happening on 1 July 1381?Write your answers in the boxes below.
- When you have thought about these three elements, in the central box write your prediction of what the source might say based on your understanding of its provenance.

a. **Overview:** How does this help you?

Source A: Speech to a meeting of rebels at Chelmsford

Richard II, 1 July 1381

b. **Who** is Richard II?

c. **Context:** What is happening on 1 July 1381?

Now think about Source B:

- Think very carefully about the following:
 - a. What the **overview** of source tells you.
 - b. **Who** the source is by.
 - c. The **context**: what is happening on 1 July 1381?Write your answers in the boxes below.
- When you have thought about these three elements, in the central box write your prediction of what the source might say based on your understanding of its provenance

a. **Overview:** How does this help you?

Source B: Speech to a meeting of rebels at Blackheath

John Ball. 13 June 1381

b. **Who** is John Ball?

c. **Context:** What is happening 13 June 1381?

Task 2: Source questions on the Peasants' Revolt

Source A: Speech to a meeting of rebels at Chelmsford

'You wretched men ... who seek equality with lords are not worthy to live ... Rustics you were and rustics you are still; you will remain in bondage, not as before but incomparably harsher. For as long as we live and, by God's grace, rule over this realm, we will strive with mind, strength and goods to suppress you so that the rigour of your servitude will be an example to posterity.'

Richard II, 1 July 1381

[quoted in D. Horspool: *The English Rebel* (2009) p.135]

Source B: Speech to a meeting of rebels at Blackheath

When Adam delved and Eve span, who was then the gentleman? From the beginning all men by nature were created alike, and our bondage or servitude came in by the unjust oppression of naughty men. For if God would have had any bondmen from the beginning, he would have appointed who should be bond, and who free. And therefore I exhort you to consider that now the time is come, appointed to us by God, in which ye may (if ye will) cast off the yoke of bondage, and recover liberty...

John Ball, speech, made 13th June 1381

[quoted in S. McIntire and W.E. Burns *Speeches in World History* (2010) p.104]

1. Study Source A

- How useful is this source in helping you to understand the way Richard II viewed the rebels?
- How does it help you to understand the *causes* of the Peasants' Revolt?
- How does it help you to understand the *consequences* of the Peasants' Revolt?
- What do you still need to know?

2. Study Source B

- How useful is this source in helping you to understand the way Richard II viewed the rebels?
- How does it help you to understand the *causes* of the Peasants' Revolt?
- How does it help you to understand the *consequences* of the Peasants' Revolt?
- What do you still need to know?

3. Which of these two sources is most useful for you to understand:

- the causes of the Peasants' Revolt?
- the events of the Peasants' Revolt?
- the consequences of the Peasants' Revolt?