

Debating the
DOCUMENTS

Interpreting Alternative Viewpoints
in Primary Source Documents

The Impeachment of Andrew Johnson

*Was Andrew Johnson guilty, or was he the victim
of an unprincipled political witch hunt?*

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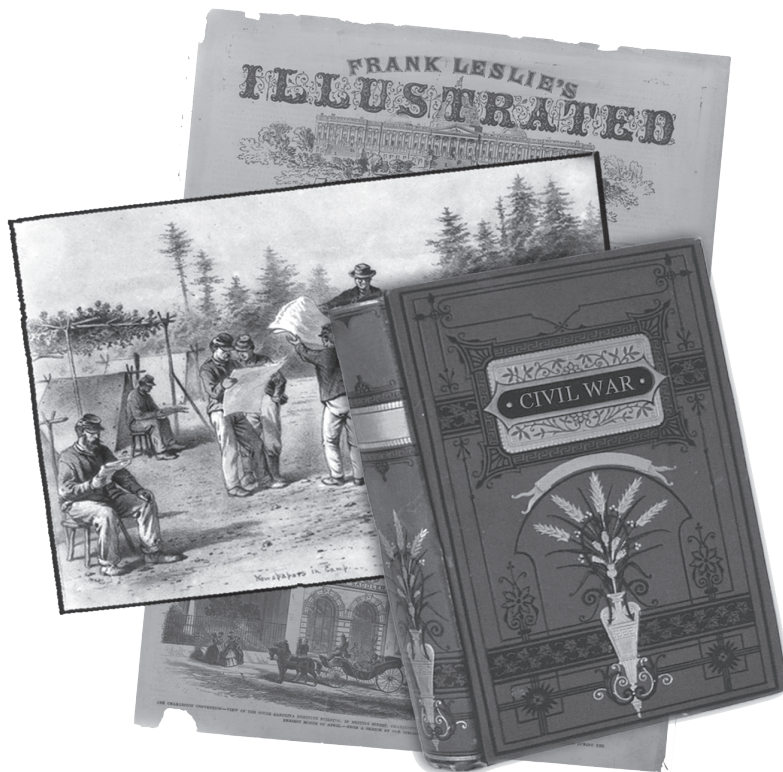
Teacher Introduction

★ Using Primary Sources

Primary sources are called “primary” because they are first-hand records of a past era or historical event. They are the raw materials, or the evidence, on which historians base their “secondary” accounts of the past.

A rapidly growing number of history teachers today are using primary sources. Why? Perhaps it’s because primary sources give students a better sense of what history is and what historians do. Such sources also help students see the past from a variety of viewpoints. Moreover, primary sources make history vivid and bring it to life.

However, primary sources are not easy to use. They can be confusing. They can be biased. They rarely all agree. Primary sources must be interpreted and set in context. To do this, students need historical background knowledge. *Debating the Documents* helps students handle such challenges by giving them a useful framework for analyzing sources that conflict with one another.



*“Multiple,
conflicting
perspectives are
among the truths
of history.
No single
objective or
universal account
could ever put an
end to this endless
creative dialogue
within and
between the past
and the present.”*

From the 2005 Statement on Standards of Professional Conduct of the Council of the American Historical Association.

★ *The Debating the Documents Series*

Each *Debating the Documents* booklet includes the same sequence of reproducible worksheets. If students use several booklets over time, they will get regular practice at interpreting and comparing conflicting sources. In this way, they can learn the skills and habits needed to get the most out of primary sources.

Each *Debating the Documents* Booklet Includes:

- **Suggestions for the Student and an Introductory Essay.** The student gets instructions and a one-page essay providing background on the booklet's topic. A time line on the topic is also included.
- **TWO Groups of Contrasting Primary Source Documents.** In most of the booklets, students get one pair of visual sources and one pair of written sources. In some cases, more than two are provided for each. Background is provided on each source. Within each group, the sources clash in a very clear way. (The sources are not always exact opposites, but they do always differ in some obvious way.)
- **Three Worksheets for Each Document Group.** Students use the first two worksheets to take notes on the sources. The third worksheet asks which source the student thinks would be most useful to a historian.
- **CD-ROM.** The ImageXaminer lets students view the primary sources as a class, in small groups, or individually. A folder containing all of the student handouts in pdf format, including a graphic organizer for use with the ImageXaminer's grid tool, allows for printing directly from the CD.
- **One DBQ.** On page 22, a document-based question (DBQ) asks students to write an effective essay using all of the booklet's primary sources.

★ *How to Use This Booklet*

All pages in this booklet may be photocopied for classroom use.

1. Have students read “Suggestions for the Student” and the Introductory Essay.

Give them copies of pages 7–9. Ask them to read the instructions and then read the introductory essay on the topic. The time line gives them additional information on that topic. This reading could be done in class or as a homework assignment.

2. Have students do the worksheets.

Make copies of the worksheets and the pages with the sources. Ask students to study the background information on each source and the source itself. Then have them take notes on the sources using the worksheets. If students have access to a computer, have them review the primary sources with the ImageXaminer. You may also ask them to use its magnifying tools to more clearly focus their analysis.

3. “Debate the documents” as a class.

Have students use their worksheet notes to debate the primary source documents as a class. Use the overheads to focus this discussion on each source in turn. Urge students to follow these ground rules:

- Use your worksheets as a guide for the discussion or debate.
- Try to reach agreement about the main ideas and the significance of each primary source document.
- Look for points of agreement as well as disagreement between the primary sources.
- Listen closely to all points of view about each primary source.
- Focus on the usefulness of each source to the historian, not merely on whether you agree or disagree with that source’s point of view.

4. Have students do the final DBQ.

A DBQ is an essay question about a set of primary source documents. To answer the DBQ, students write essays using evidence from the sources and their own background knowledge of the historical era. (See the next page for a DBQ scoring guide to use in evaluating these essays.)

The DBQ assignment on page 22 includes guidelines for writing a DBQ essay. Here are some additional points to make with students about preparing to write this kind of essay.

The DBQ for this Booklet (see page 22):

“Andrew Johnson’s impeachment trial was a political trial much more than it was a trial for any actual ‘crimes and misdemeanors’ by a president.” Assess the validity of this statement. That is, explain why you do or do not agree with it.

- Analyze the question carefully.
- Use your background knowledge to set sources in their historical context.
- Question and interpret sources actively. Do not accept them at face value.
- Use sources meaningfully to support your essay’s thesis.
- Pay attention to the overall organization of your essay.

★ *Complete DBQ Scoring Guide*

Use this guide in evaluating the DBQ for this booklet. Use this scoring guide with students who are already familiar with using primary sources and writing DBQ essays.

Excellent Essay

- Offers a clear answer or thesis explicitly addressing all aspects of the essay question.
- Does a careful job of interpreting many or most of the documents and relating them clearly to the thesis and the DBQ. Deals with conflicting documents effectively.
- Uses details and examples effectively to support the thesis and other main ideas. Explains the significance of those details and examples well.
- Uses background knowledge and the documents in a balanced way.
- Is well written; clear transitions make the essay easy to follow from point to point. Only a few minor writing errors or errors of fact.

Good Essay

- Offers a reasonable thesis addressing the essential points of the essay question.
- Adequately interprets at least some of the documents and relates them to the thesis and the DBQ.
- Usually relates details and examples meaningfully to the thesis or other main ideas.
- Includes some relevant background knowledge.
- May have some writing errors or errors of fact, as long as these do not invalidate the essay's overall argument or point of view.

Fair Essay

- Offers at least a partly developed thesis addressing the essay question.
- Adequately interprets at least a few of the documents.
- Relates only a few of the details and examples to the thesis or other main ideas.
- Includes some background knowledge.
- Has several writing errors or errors of fact that make it harder to understand the essay's overall argument or point of view.

Poor Essay

- Offers no clear thesis or answer addressing the DBQ.
- Uses few documents effectively other than referring to them in “laundry list” style, with no meaningful relationship to a thesis or any main point.
- Uses details and examples unrelated to the thesis or other main ideas. Does not explain the significance of these details and examples.
- Is not clearly written, with some major writing errors or errors of fact.

Suggestions to the Student

★ *Using Primary Sources*

A primary source is any record of evidence from the past. Many things are primary sources: letters, diary entries, official documents, photos, cartoons, wills, maps, charts, etc. They are called “primary” because they are first-hand records of a past event or time period. This *Debating the Documents* lesson is based on two groups of primary source documents. Within each group, the sources conflict with one another. That is, they express different or even opposed points of view. You need to decide which source is more reliable, more useful, or more typical of the time period. This is what historians do all the time. Usually, you will be able to learn something about the past from each source, even when the sources clash with one another in dramatic ways.

★ *How to Use This Booklet*

1. Read the one-page introductory essay.

This gives you background information that will help you analyze the primary source documents and do the exercises for this *Debating the Documents* lesson. The time line gives you additional information you will find helpful.



2. Study the primary source documents for this lesson.

For this lesson, you get two groups of sources. The sources within each group conflict with one another. Some of these sources are visuals; others are written sources. With visual sources, pay attention not only to the image’s “content” (its subject matter), but also to its artistic style, shading, composition, camera angle, symbols, and other features that add to the image’s meaning. With written sources, notice the writing style, bias, even what the source leaves out or does not talk about. Think about each source’s author, that author’s reasons for writing, and the likely audience for the source. These things give you clues as to the source’s historical value.

3. Use the worksheets to analyze each group of primary source documents.

For each group of sources, you get three worksheets. Use the “Study the Document” worksheets to take notes on each source. Use the “Comparing the Documents” worksheet to decide which of the sources would be most useful to a historian.

4. As a class, debate the documents.

Use your worksheet notes to help you take part in this debate.

5. Do the final DBQ.

“DBQ” means “document-based question.” A DBQ is a question along with several primary source documents. To answer the DBQ, write an essay using evidence from the documents and your own background history knowledge. The DBQ is on page 22.

• Impeaching Andrew Johnson •

In May, 1868, President Andrew Johnson nearly lost his job.

The House of Representatives had voted to impeach him. That means they charged him with “high crimes and misdemeanors,” part of the phrase in the Constitution defining the reasons for removing a president from office. The House votes to impeach, but the Senate holds the impeachment trial and makes the final decision. By one vote, the Senate decided not to remove Andrew Johnson.

How did this crisis come about? The official reason for impeaching Johnson was that he had violated a law, the Tenure of Office Act. However, this was only a tiny part of a far larger battle. Moreover, it was a political battle, and the trial was a political trial. That is, it was about a political issue that sharply divided the nation, not one fairly minor law.

At the heart of this battle was the question of what to do about the states defeated in the Civil War and what rights to grant the newly freed slaves.

At the start of the Civil War, Andrew Johnson was a slave owner and a Democratic senator from Tennessee. Yet he refused to join the South’s rebellion. In 1864, Abraham Lincoln chose Johnson as his vice president in order to win Democratic support in the election that year. When Lincoln was assassinated in 1865, Johnson became president.

As president, Johnson wanted to treat the defeated South mildly. He pardoned all but the top rebel leaders and allowed Southern states back into the union quickly. Moreover, he refused to demand that the new states give blacks the vote. Soon, these states were passing “black codes” that strictly limited the political and economic rights of blacks.

All this angered Republicans in Congress, especially the so-called “Radicals.” These

Radical Republicans had very different ideas about “Reconstruction,” the term for plans to change the South and readmit it to the union. These Republicans wanted a long period of military government in the South with strict rules for readmitting the Southern states. Most Radical Republicans also wanted to protect blacks and grant them equal civil rights, including the right to vote.

In 1866, the Republicans began to pass Reconstruction acts of their own. Johnson vetoed these acts and sent Congress angry messages about them. But Republicans were soon able to get the two-thirds votes needed to override the vetoes and make their acts the official laws of the land.

In 1867, they then passed the Tenure in Office Act. It said a president could not fire certain officials without the approval of Congress. This new law was specifically meant to keep Johnson from firing Secretary of War Edwin Stanton, who agreed with the Republicans in Congress. Johnson removed Stanton anyway. When Congress came back into session in early 1868, it refused to accept Stanton’s removal. However, Johnson would not back down. On February 21, he appointed Major General Lorenzo Thomas as the “interim” Secretary of War. He planned to take his case to the Supreme Court and have it declare the Tenure of Office Act unconstitutional. Instead, Congress acted first. On February 24, the House voted to impeach Andrew Johnson.

The impeachment trial lasted from April 22 to May 6. It centered on Johnson’s violation of the Tenure of Office Act and on some other angry remarks he had made about Congress. But as the documents for this booklet will show, Reconstruction itself was the issue. In the view of many historians, impeachment was not the way to win on Reconstruction, even if Johnson’s policies were unwise. In the end, the Senate agreed, though only by a single vote.

Andrew Johnson Time Line

1808

• • • Andrew Johnson is born in Raleigh, North Carolina.

1857

• • • Johnson becomes a U.S. Senator.

1861

• • • Johnson remains loyal to the Union at the outbreak of the Civil War and keeps his Senate seat when Tennessee secedes.

1862

• • • Lincoln appoints Johnson as military governor of Tennessee. Johnson then resigns from the Senate.

1864

• • • Andrew Johnson is elected vice president of the United States.

1865

The Civil War ends with the defeat of the South. President Lincoln is assassinated. Andrew Johnson is sworn in as president. He tries to deal leniently with the defeated South and seeks to restore it to the Union quickly. However, the Southern states begin to pass “Black Codes” limiting the freedom of former slaves. The Ku Klux Klan is formed to terrorize blacks. Led by Thaddeus Stevens, the House denies seats to new Southern members and calls for stricter punishment of the South.

1866

• • • Johnson vetoes a Freedmen’s Bureau bill and the 1866 Civil Rights Act. Congress passes a new Freedmen’s Bureau bill later, and it overrides Johnson’s veto of the Civil Rights Act. Congress also passes the Fourteenth Amendment granting full citizenship to blacks and protecting the equal rights of all citizens. To try to persuade the public to elect a Congress more in agreement with him, Johnson tours the Northeast and Midwest in his “Swing Around the Circle” campaign. Yet in the elections in the fall, Republicans increase their majorities in Congress.

1867

• • • The First Reconstruction Act passes over Johnson’s veto. It places the Southern states under military rule and sets strict rules for their readmittance. The Tenure of Office Act is passed over Johnson’s veto. It is designed to prevent him from removing his top appointed officials without Senate approval. Johnson then suspends Secretary of War Edwin Stanton.

1868

• • • Johnson seeks to remove Edwin Stanton permanently as Secretary of War. He is then impeached by the House of Representatives. He is acquitted by a single vote in the Senate.

1869

• • • Johnson and his family return to Tennessee.

1874

• • • The Tennessee legislature elects Johnson to the United States Senate.

1875

• • • Johnson attends a special session of the Senate. On July 31, he dies of a stroke while visiting his daughter in Tennessee.

Visual Primary Source Document 1



Currier & Ives, Library of Congress: Prints and Photographs Division, LC-USZ62-114830

Information on Document 1

This 1866 Thomas Nast cartoon from *Harper's Weekly* criticizes Andrew Johnson's approach to Reconstruction. It is titled "Andrew Johnson's Reconstruction and How it Works."

In the center, Johnson is the deceitful Iago from Shakespeare's play *Othello*. In that play, Iago betrays Othello. In this cartoon, Othello is shown as a black Union veteran of the Civil War. Some of Johnson's slogans are on the wall behind the two figures. An array of Johnson's pardons and vetoes are shown along the sides.

On top are scenes of a slave auction, and of whites attacking blacks in Memphis and New Orleans after the Civil War.

In the center at the bottom, Johnson charms a Southern snake wrapped around an African American man while his Cabinet officers look on. On the lower left side, a Union general is accepting the surrender of New Orleans in 1862. Yet by 1866, the Union commander on the lower right is shown bowing respectfully to a Louisiana official.

Visual Primary Source Document 2



Currier & Ives, Library of Congress: Prints and Photographs Division, LC USZ62-15341

Information on Document 2

In this 1868 cartoon, several key opponents of Johnson surround a dead horse labeled “impeachment.” They are (from left to right) John Logan, George Boutwell, Thomas Williams, Benjamin Butler, Thaddeus Stevens, and John Bingham. Boutwell pulls the horse’s tail, saying, “I fear we are getting mired, but I certainly smell corruption.” Wilson wonders, “Can it be possible that our hobby is decaying already.” Butler replies, pointing to a plant with the head of journalist Thurlow Weed, “No its this confounded old Weed called Thurlow that makes the bad

smell.” Radical Republican leader Thaddeus Stevens says, “If we could get another charge into him, he might pull through yet.” Bingham says, “Alas! Seven had proved a fatal number to him.” Johnson’s acquittal was made possible by the votes of seven Republican senators. At right stands Johnson with a ram “30,000.” “It’s no use,” he says, “your old nag is dead and you can’t ride it any more” my Woolley friend finished him.” This probably refers to Charles Woolley who some had accused of bribing lawmakers to win Johnson’s acquittal.

Study the Document: Visual Source 1

Instructions: Take notes on these questions. Use your notes to discuss the documents and answer the DBQ.

1 Main Idea or Topic

What overall opinion or view of Andrew Johnson does this editorial cartoon express?

2 Context

What do you need to know to better understand this document? In particular, what do you know of Johnson's Reconstruction policies? What do you know of conditions in the South in 1865 and 1866? How does this knowledge help make sense of the features shown in the cartoon?

3 Visual Features

How are the two key figures in the cartoon depicted? How does the use of two characters from a play by Shakespeare add to the cartoon's impact? What point do you think Nast makes by including the three scenes on the top, one of a slave auction and two of post-Civil War riots?

4 Bias

What is Nast's overall view of Johnson? Is this view unfairly biased against Andrew Johnson? Why or why not?

Study the Document: Visual Source 2

Instructions: Take notes on these questions. Use your notes to discuss the documents and answer the DBQ.

1 Main Idea or Topic

This cartoon comments on the impeachment trial of Andrew Johnson. Create an additional one-sentence caption to go with the cartoon's title, "The Smelling Committee." Use your caption to try to sum up the cartoon's main point.

2 Context

Read the information accompanying this cartoon. What do you know about any of the figures in the cartoon, in particular, Benjamin Butler, Thaddeus Stevens, John Bingham, and Thurlow Weed? List the things you know about these men that help explain this cartoon.

3 Compare and Contrast

Compare the view of Johnson you get from each of these cartoons (Visual Source Documents 1 and 2). In what ways, if any, do the two cartoons differ in their views of Andrew Johnson? Are there ways in which their views of him are similar? Explain your answers.

Comparing the Documents

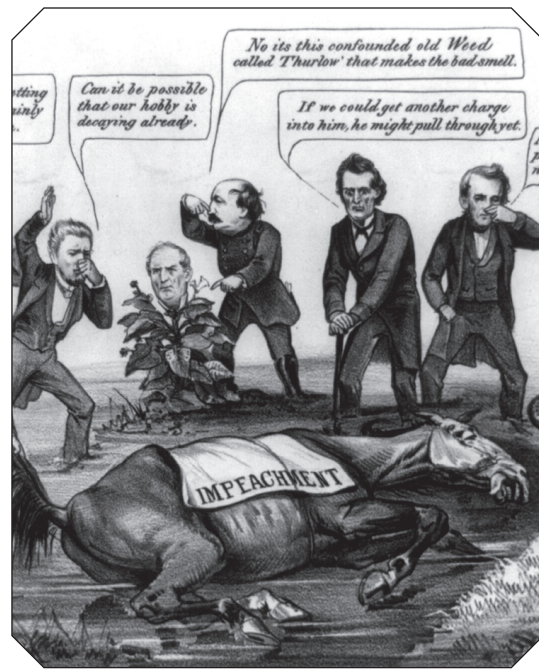
★ The Visual Sources

Answer the question by checking one box below. Then complete the statements on the Comparison Essay worksheet. Use all your notes to help you take part in an all-class debate about these documents—and to answer the final DBQ for the lesson.

Which of these two primary source documents would be most useful to a historian trying to understand the debates over the impeachment of Andrew Johnson?



Document 1

Document 2

--

Comparison Essay

I chose Document _____ because:

I did not choose Document _____.

However, a historian still might use the document in the following way:

KEEP THIS IN MIND: Some sources are very biased. A biased source is one that shows you only one side of an issue. That is, it takes a clear stand or expresses a very strong opinion about something. A biased source may be one-sided, but it can still help you to understand its time period. For example, a biased editorial cartoon may show how people felt about an issue at the time. The usefulness of a source depends most of all on what questions you ask about that time in the past.

Written Primary Source Document 1

Information on Document 1

These passages are from Massachusetts Senator Charles Sumner's opinion as presented at the impeachment trial of Andrew Johnson. Sumner was a long-time foe of slavery and one of the key Radical Republicans in Congress. He was so set against the president that even after the Senate acquitted Johnson, Sumner argued for impeaching him again.

• Document 1 •

This is one of the last great battles with slavery. Driven from these legislative Chambers; driven from the field of war, this monstrous power has found a refuge in the Executive Mansion, where, in utter disregard of the Constitution and laws, it seeks to exercise its ancient far-reaching sway. All this is very plain. Nobody can question it. Andrew Johnson is the impersonation of the tyrannical Slave Power. In him it lives again. He is the lineal ancestor of John C. Calhoun and Jefferson Davis. And he gathers about him the same supporters. Original partisans of slavery North and South; habitual compromisers of great principles; maligners of the Declaration of Independence; politicians without heart; lawyers, for whom a technicality is everything, and a promiscuous company who at every stage of the battle have set their faces against Equal Rights;—these are his allies. It is the old troop of slavery, with a few recruits, ready as of old for violence—cunning in device and heartless in quibble. With the President at their head, they are now entrenched in the Executive Mansion.

Not to dislodge them is to leave this country a prey to one of the most hateful tyrannies of history. Especially is it to surrender the Unionists of the rebel States to violence and bloodshed. Not a month, not a week, not a day should be lost. The safety of the Republic requires action at once. The lives of innocent men must be rescued from sacrifice.

I would not in this judgment depart from that moderation which belongs to the occasion; but God forbid that, when called to deal with so great an offender, I should affect a coldness which I cannot feel. Slavery has been our worst enemy, murdering our children, filling our homes with mourning, and darkening the land with tragedy; and now it rears its crest anew with Andrew Johnson as its representative. Through him it assumes once more to rule the Republic and to impose its cruel law. The enormity of his conduct is aggravated by his barefaced treachery. He once declared himself the Moses of the colored race. Behold him now the Pharaoh. With such treachery in such a cause there can be no parley. Every sentiment, every conviction, every vow against slavery must now be directed against him. Pharaoh is at the bar of the Senate for judgment.

The formal accusation is founded on certain recent transgressions, enumerated in articles of impeachment, but it is wrong to suppose that this is the whole case. It is very wrong to try this impeachment merely on these articles. It is unpardonable to hiddle over words and phrases when for more than two years the tyrannical pretensions of this offender, now in evidence before the Senate, as I shall show, have been manifest in their terrible, heartrending consequences.

Written Primary Source Document 2

Information on Document 2

In disobeying the Tenure of Office Act, Johnson made an “ad interim” appointment of Major General Lorenzo Thomas as Secretary of War. That is, he appointed him temporarily, hoping in the meantime to have the courts rule on whether the Tenure of Office Act was constitutional. William Groesbeck here defends Johnson’s intentions in doing this. He then goes on to offer the Senate a spirited defense of Johnson himself and of Johnson’s overall view of Reconstruction. Groesbeck was Johnson’s lawyer during the trial.

· Document 2 ·

What is his crime in its moral aspects, to merit such a judgment? Let us look to it ... He made an ad interim appointment to last for a single day. You could have terminated it whenever you saw fit. You had only to take up the nomination which he had sent to you, which was a good nomination, and act upon it and the ad interim vanished like smoke. He had no idea of fastening it upon the department. He had no intention of doing anything of that kind. He merely proposed that for the purpose, if the opportunity should occur, of subjecting this law to a constitutional test ...

What else did he do? He talked with an officer about the law. That is the Emory Article. He made intemperate speeches, though full of honest, patriotic sentiments; when reviled, he should not revile again; when smitten upon one cheek he should turn the other.

“But,” [said] the gentleman who spoke last on the part of the managers, “he tried to defeat pacification and restoration.” I deny it in the sense in which he presented it—that is, as a criminal act. Here, too, he followed precedent and trod the path in which were the footsteps of Lincoln, and which was bright with the radiance of his divine utterance, “charity for all, malice toward none.” He was eager for pacification.

He thought that the war was ended. The drums were all silent—the arsenals were all shut; the roar of the canon had died away to the last reverberation; the armies were disbanded; not a single army confronted us in the field. Ah, he was too eager, too forgiving, too kind. The hand of conciliation was stretched out to him and he took it? It may be he should have put it away; but was it a crime to take it? Kindness, forgiveness a crime! Kindness a crime! Kindness is omnipotent for good, more powerful than gunpowder or canon. Kindness is statesmanship. Kindness is the highest statesmanship of heaven itself. The thunders of Sinai do but terrify and distract; alone they accomplish little; it is the kindness of Calvary that subdues and pacifies ...

His courage and patriotism are not without illustration. My colleague (Mr. Nelson) referred the other day to the scenes which occurred in this Chamber when he alone of twenty-two Senators remained; even his State seceded, but he remained. That was a trial of his patriotism, of which many of you, by reason of your locality and of your life-long associations, know nothing. How his voice rang out in this hall in the hour of alarm for the good cause, and in denunciation of the rebellion!

Study the Document: Written Source 1

Instructions: Take notes on these questions. Use your notes to discuss the documents and answer the DBQ.

1 Main Idea or Topic

At the end of this passage, Sumner says it would be wrong to try Johnson only for the deeds listed in the formal articles of impeachment. Based on the entire passage, explain what his real reason is for wanting Johnson tried.

2 Author, Audience, Purpose

What do you know about Charles Sumner, about the audience he was addressing here and about his purpose in giving this speech? How does knowing these things add to your understanding of this document?

3 Context

Sumner says that because of Johnson's actions, slavery "assumes once more to rule the Republic and impose its cruel law." What actions by Johnson as president help explain what Sumner means here?

4 Bias

Sumner says that to let Johnson remain as president would be "to leave this country a prey to one of the most hateful tyrannies of history." Do you agree with this view, or do you think it is unfairly biased against Johnson? Explain your answer.

Study the Document: Written Source 2

Instructions: Take notes on these questions. Use your notes to discuss the documents and answer the DBQ.

1 Main Idea or Topic

What is the key point Groesbeck makes in this defense of Andrew Johnson? Find one or two sentences in this passage that you think best sum up his main point.

2 Author, Audience, Purpose

Groesbeck was a lawyer for Andrew Johnson in the impeachment trial. How does knowing this help you better understand this document?

3 Context

In his first paragraph, Groesbeck talks of Johnson's "ad interim" appointment. Can you explain what he is talking about here? In his last paragraph, Groesbeck talks of Johnson's "courage and patriotism." Based on what you know about Johnson's life, can you explain what specifically he has in mind here?

4 Bias

Choose one or two sentences from this speech that you think best express Groesbeck's feelings about Andrew Johnson. Explain your choices in class. Do you agree or disagree with Groesbeck's views? Why or why not?

Comparing the Documents

★ *The Written Sources*

Answer the question by checking one box below. Then complete the statements on the Comparison Essay worksheet. Use all your notes to help you take part in an all-class debate about these documents—and to answer the final DBQ for the lesson.

Which of these two primary source documents would be most useful to a historian trying to understand the debates over the impeachment of Andrew Johnson?

*Passages from
Massachusetts
Senator Charles
Sumner's opinion against
President Andrew Johnson
as presented at his
impeachment trial.*

Document 1 ☐

*Part of William
Groesbeck's spirited
defense of Andrew
Johnson and of
Johnson's overall view
of Reconstruction.*

Document 2 ☐

Comparison Essay

I chose Document _____ because:

I did not choose Document _____.

However, a historian still might use the document in the following way:

KEEP THIS IN MIND: Some sources are very biased. A biased source is one that shows you only one side of an issue. That is, it takes a clear stand or expresses a very strong opinion about something. A biased source may be one-sided, but it can still help you to understand its time period. For example, a biased editorial cartoon may show how people felt about an issue at the time. The usefulness of a source depends most of all on what questions you ask about that time in the past.

Document-Based Question

Your task is to answer a document-based question (DBQ) on the impeachment trial of Andrew Johnson. In a DBQ, you use your analysis of primary source documents and your knowledge of history to write a brief essay answering the question. Using all four documents, answer this question.

Document-Based Question

“Andrew Johnson’s impeachment trial was a political trial much more than it was a trial for any actual ‘crimes and misdemeanors’ by a president.” Assess the validity of this statement. That is, explain why you do or do not agree with it.

Below is a checklist of key suggestions for writing a DBQ essay. Next to each item, jot down a few notes to guide you in writing the DBQ. Use extra sheets to write a four- or five-paragraph essay.

- *Introductory Paragraph*

Does the paragraph clarify the DBQ itself? Does it present a clear thesis, or overall answer, to that DBQ?

- *The Internal Paragraphs — 1*

Are these paragraphs organized around main points with details supporting those main ideas? Do all these main ideas support the thesis in the introductory paragraph?

- *The Internal Paragraphs — 2*

Are all of your main ideas and key points linked in a logical way? That is, does each idea follow clearly from those that went before? Does it add something new and helpful in clarifying your thesis?

- *Use of Primary Source Documents*

Are they simply mentioned in a “laundry list” fashion? Or are they used thoughtfully to support main ideas and the thesis?

- *Concluding Paragraph*

Does it restate the DBQ and thesis in a way that sums up the main ideas without repeating old information or going into new details?