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Printed on: Tuesday, June 1, 2010

**Written Document Analysis Worksheet**

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| 1.  | <p>TYPE OF DOCUMENT (Check one):</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="321 415 1235 541"> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Map</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Advertisement</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Letter</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Telegram</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Congressional record</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Patent</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Press release</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Census report</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Memorandum</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Report</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Other</td> </tr> </table> | <input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper              | <input type="checkbox"/> Map       | <input type="checkbox"/> Advertisement | <input type="checkbox"/> Letter           | <input type="checkbox"/> Telegram | <input type="checkbox"/> Congressional record | <input type="checkbox"/> Patent | <input type="checkbox"/> Press release | <input type="checkbox"/> Census report | <input type="checkbox"/> Memorandum | <input type="checkbox"/> Report | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper              | <input type="checkbox"/> Map  | <input type="checkbox"/> Advertisement          |                                    |  |   |                                   |   |                                 |  |  |                                     |                                 |                                |
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| <input type="checkbox"/> Patent                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Press release  | <input type="checkbox"/> Census report          |                                    |  |   |                                   |   |                                 |  |  |                                     |                                 |                                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Memorandum             | <input type="checkbox"/> Report   | <input type="checkbox"/> Other                  |                                    |  |   |                                   |   |                                 |  |  |                                     |                                 |                                |
| 2.  | <p>UNIQUE PHYSICAL QUALITIES OF THE DOCUMENT (Check one or more):</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="321 657 1019 783"> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Interesting letterhead</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Notations</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Handwritten</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> "RECEIVED" stamp</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Typed</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Other</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Seals</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>  | <input type="checkbox"/> Interesting letterhead | <input type="checkbox"/> Notations | <input type="checkbox"/> Handwritten   | <input type="checkbox"/> "RECEIVED" stamp | <input type="checkbox"/> Typed    | <input type="checkbox"/> Other                | <input type="checkbox"/> Seals  |  |  |                                     |                                 |                                |
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| 3.  | <p>DATE(S) OF DOCUMENT:</p> <hr/>   |   |                                    |  |   |                                   |   |                                 |  |  |                                     |                                 |                                |
| 4.  | <p>AUTHOR (OR CREATOR) OF THE DOCUMENT:</p> <hr/> <p>POSITION (TITLE):</p> <hr/>  |   |                                    |  |   |                                   |   |                                 |  |  |                                     |                                 |                                |
| 5.  | <p>FOR WHAT AUDIENCE WAS THE DOCUMENT WRITTEN?</p> <hr/>  |   |                                    |  |   |                                   |   |                                 |  |  |                                     |                                 |                                |
| 6.  | <p>DOCUMENT INFORMATION (There are many possible ways to answer A-E.)</p> <p>A. List three things the author said that you think are important:</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <p>B. Why do you think this document was written?</p> <hr/> <hr/> <p>C. What evidence in the document helps you know why it was written? Quote from the document.</p> <hr/> <hr/> <p>D. List two things the document tells you about life in the United States at the time it was written:</p> <hr/> <hr/> <p>E. Write a question to the author that is left unanswered by the document:</p> <hr/> <hr/>  |   |                                    |  |   |                                   |   |                                 |  |  |                                     |                                 |                                |

**Designed and developed by the  
Education Staff, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC 20408.**

JAMES K. POLK ON THE WAR WITH MEXICO (1846)

President Polk was determined that the United States should have the disputed area between Texas and Mexico--peacefully if possible, by war if necessary. When his diplomatic efforts failed, Polk ordered General Zachary Taylor to proceed with Mexican troops into the territory which both Mexico and the United States claimed. The ensuing bloodshed led Polk to request that Congress declare war against Mexico.

May 11, 1846

The existing state of the relations between the United States and Mexico renders it proper that I should bring the subject to the consideration of Congress. . . .

In my message at the commencement of the present session I informed you that upon the earnest appeal both of the Congress and convention of Texas I had ordered an efficient military force to take a position "between the Nueces and the Del Norte." This had become necessary to meet a threatened invasion of Texas by the Mexican forces, for which extensive military preparations had been made. The invasion was threatened solely because Texas had determined, in accordance with a solemn resolution of the Congress of the United States, to annex herself to our Union, and under these circumstances it was plainly our duty to extend our protection over her citizens and soil.

This force was concentrated at Corpus Christi, and remained there until after I had received such information from Mexico as rendered it probable, if not certain, that the Mexican Government would refuse to receive our envoy.

Meantime Texas, by the final action of our Congress, had become an integral part of our Union. The Congress of Texas, by its act of December 19, 1836, had declared the Rio del Norte to be the boundary of that Republic. Its jurisdiction had been extended and exercised beyond the Nueces. The country between that river and the Del Norte had been represented in the Congress and in the convention of Texas, had thus taken part in the act of annexation itself, and is now included within one of our Congressional districts. Our own Congress had, moreover, with great unanimity, by the act approved December 31, 1845, recognized the country beyond the Nueces as a part of our

James D. Richardson, ed., A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents (New York, 1897), VI, 2287-93.

territory by including it within our own revenue system, and a revenue officer to reside within that district has been appointed by and with the advice and consent of the Senate. It became, therefore, of urgent necessity to provide for the defense of that portion of our country. Accordingly, on the 13th of January last instructions were issued to the general in command of these troops to occupy the left bank of the Del Norte. This river, which is the southwestern boundary of the State of Texas, is an exposed frontier. From this quarter invasion was threatened; upon it and in its immediate vicinity, in the judgment of high military experience, are the proper stations for the protecting forces of the Government. In addition to this important consideration, several others occurred to induce this movement. Among these are the facilities afforded by the ports at Brazos Santiago and the mouth of the Del Norte for the reception of supplies by sea, the stronger and more healthful military positions, the convenience for obtaining a ready and a more abundant supply of provisions, water, fuel, and forage, and the advantages which are afforded by the Del Norte in forwarding supplies to such posts as may be established in the interior and upon the Indian frontier.

The movement of the troops to the Del Norte was made by the commanding general under positive instructions to abstain from all aggressive acts toward Mexico or Mexican citizens and to regard the relations between that Republic and the United States as peaceful unless she should declare war or commit acts of hostility indicative of a state of war. He was specially directed to protect private property and respect personal rights. . . .

The Mexican forces at Matamoras assumed a belligerent attitude, and on the 12th of April General [Pedro] Ampudia, then in command, notified General Taylor to break up his camp within twenty-four hours and to retire beyond the Nueces River, and in the event of his failure to comply with these demands announced that arms, and arms alone, must decide the question. But no open act of hostility was committed until the 24th of April. On that day General [Mariano] Arista, who had succeeded to the command of the Mexican forces, communicated to General Taylor that "he considered hostilities commenced and should prosecute them." A party of dragoons of 63 men and officers were on the same day dispatched from the American camp up the Rio del Norte, on its left bank, to ascertain whether the Mexican troops had crossed or were preparing to cross the river, "became engaged with a large body of these troops, and after a short affair, in which some 16 were killed and wounded, appear to have been surrounded and compelled to surrender" . . . .

Our commerce with Mexico has been almost annihilated. . . . Had we acted with vigor in repelling the insults and redressing the injuries inflicted by Mexico at the commencement, we should doubtless have escaped all the difficulties in which we are now involved. . . .

But now, after reiterated menaces, Mexico has passed the boundary of the United States, has invaded our territory and shed American blood upon the American soil. She has proclaimed that hostilities have commenced, and that the two nations are now at war.

As war exists, and, notwithstanding all our efforts to avoid it, exists by the act of Mexico herself, we are called upon by every consideration of duty and patriotism to vindicate with decision the honor, the rights, and the interests of our country.

Anticipating the possibility of a crisis like that which has arrived, instructions were given in August last, "as a precautionary measure" against invasion or threatened invasion, authorizing General Taylor, if the emergency required, to accept volunteers, not from Texas only, but from the States of Louisiana, Alabama, Mississippi, Tennessee, and Kentucky, and corresponding

letters were addressed to the respective governors of those States. These instructions were repeated, and in January last, soon after the incorporation of "Texas into our Union of States," General Taylor was further "authorized by the President to make a requisition upon the executive of that State for such of its militia force as may be needed to repel invasion or to secure the country against apprehended invasion." On the 2d day of March he was again reminded, "in the event of the approach of any considerable Mexican force, promptly and efficiently to use the authority with which he was clothed to call to him such auxiliary force as he might need". . . .

In further vindication of our rights and defense of our territory, I invoke the prompt action of Congress to recognize the existence of the war, and to place at the disposition of the Executive the means of prosecuting the war with vigor, and thus hastening the restoration of peace. To this end I recommend that authority should be given to call into the public service a large body of volunteers to serve for not less than six or twelve months unless sooner discharged. A volunteer force is beyond question more efficient than any other description of citizen soldiers, and it is not to be doubted that a number far beyond that required would readily rush to the field upon the call of their country. I further recommend that a liberal provision be made for sustaining our entire military force and furnishing it with supplies and munitions of war.



ABRAHAM LINCOLN ON THE MEXICAN WAR (1847)

Lincoln's major speech of his first term in Congress was a supremely partisan oration designed to fasten guilt for the war directly on President Polk. The speech took the form of lawyer's interrogatories, demanding that Polk reveal the exact "spot" where American blood had first been spilled. Unfortunately for Lincoln the war soon came to an end, and the Illinois Democratic papers ranted at him for his "treasonable assault" against the President. One paper dubbed him "spotty Lincoln" and predicted that he would die of the spotted fever. Even many of his own Whig Party were upset with him.

Whereas the President of the United States, in his message of May 11, 1846, has declared that "the Mexican Government not only refused to receive him, [the envoy of the United States,] or listen to his propositions, but, after a long-continued series of menaces, have at last invaded our territory and shed the blood of our fellow-citizens on our own soil:"

And again, in his message of December 8, 1846, that "we had ample cause of war against Mexico long before the breaking out of hostilities; but even then we forbore to take redress into our own hands until Mexico herself became the aggressor, by invading our soil in hostile array and shedding the blood of our citizens:"

The Congressional Globe, 30th Cong., 1st sess., December 22, 1847, p. 64.

And yet again, in his message of December 7, 1847, that the Mexican Government refused even to hear the terms of adjustment which he [our minister of peace] was authorized to propose, and finally, under wholly unjustifiable pretexts, involved the two countries in war, by invading the territory of the State of Texas, striking the first blow, and shedding the blood of our citizens on our own soil:"

And whereas this House is desirous to obtain a full knowledge of all the facts which go to establish whether the particular spot on which the blood of our citizens was so shed was or was not at that time our own soil; Therefore,

Resolved by the House of Representatives, That the President of the United States be respectfully requested to inform the House --

1st. Whether the spot on which the blood of our citizens was shed, as in his messages declared, was or was not within the territory of Spain, at least after the treaty of 1819, untill the Mexican revolution.

2nd. Whether the spot is or is not within the territory which was wrested from Spain by the revolutionary Government of Mexico.

3rd. Whether that spot is or is not within a settlement of people, which settlement has existed ever since long before the Texan revolution, and untill its inhabitants fled before the approach of the United States army.

4th. Whether that settlement is or is not isolated from any and all other settlements by the Gulf and the Rio Grande on the south and west, and by wide uninhabited regions on the north and east.

5th. Whether the people of that settlement, or a majority of them, or any of them, have ever submitted themselves to the government or laws of Texas or of the United States, by consent or by compulsion either by accepting office, or voting at elections, or paying tax, or serving on juries, or having process served upon them, or in any other way . . . .

8th. Whether the military force of the United States was or was not sent into that settlement after General Taylor had more than once intimated to the War Department that, in his opinion, no such movement was necessary to the defence of protection of Texas.