

Historical Thinking & Skills

Evaluating Sources Activity

20pts

Name: _____

Period: _____

Introduction & Directions

Different people often have different accounts of what happened in the past. One question that historians face all the time is who to believe? What makes one account more trustworthy than another? Ultimately they have to evaluate multiple sources in order to come to strong rational conclusions. In this activity you will be given an historical question and two sources that speak to that question. Your job is to evaluate the two sources and then decide which one is considered to be the most reliable in answering the question.

3 1. Historical Question: Who was present at the signing of the Declaration of Independence?

- **Source 1:** Hollywood movie about the American Revolution made 2001.
- **Source 2:** Book written by a historian who is an expert on the American Revolution, published in 1999.

Which do you consider to be most reliable? Why?

3 2. Historical Question: What was slavery like in South Carolina?

- **Source 1:** Interview with former slave in 1936. The interviewer is a black man collecting oral histories for the Federal Writers' Project.
- **Source 2:** Interview with former slave in 1936. The interviewer is a white woman collecting oral histories for the Federal Writers' Project.

Which do you consider to be most reliable? Why?

3 3. Historical Question: What was the layout of the Nazi concentration camp Auschwitz?

- **Source 1:** Interview with 80 year-old Holocaust survivor in 1985.
- **Source 2:** Map of concentration camp found in Nazi files.

Which do you consider to be most reliable? Why?

3 4. Historical Question: Why were Japanese Americans put in internment camps during WWII?

- *Source 1:* Government film explaining internment from 1942.
- *Source 2:* Government report on Japanese Internment from 1983 based on declassified government documents.

Which do you consider to be most reliable? Why?

3 5. Historical Question: Did American soldiers commit atrocities during the Vietnam War in 1969?

- *Source 1:* Sworn testimony by American Sergeant in Congressional hearings in 1969.
- *Source 2:* Speech by American General touring the United States in 1969.

Which do you consider to be most reliable? Why?

3 6. Historical Question: What happened at the Battle of Little Bighorn?

- *Source 1:* High school history textbook from 1985.
- *Source 2:* Newspaper account from the day after the battle in June 1876.

Which do you consider to be most reliable? Why?