Career Exploration Extension
Grades 7-8
Mission to Mars Unit
Career: Historian

Videos

Tiya Miles, Historian http://ow.ly/NPch50CF7xQ

History as Narrative | Treasures of New York: "Museum of the City of New York" http://ow.ly/N7sT50CF7Dq

Navajo Rug | History Detectives http://ow.ly/w5NB50CF7LT

Printable Resources & Evidence Piece

Read some personal accounts (attached) and answer the questions below.

- World History Sources | Personal Accounts | Beverly Mack | University of Kansas https://chnm.gmu.edu/worldhistorysources/unpacking/acctsmain.html

Discussion Questions

1. What does a historian do?
2. After reading through the articles, has your idea of a historian changed? How so?
3. What kind of skills do you think a historian needs to have?
4. How are historians and detectives similar? How are they different?
5. What kind of sources does a historian reference? Where are some places they would go?

Optional Activity

- Explore more at chnm.gmu.edu/worldhistorysources/whmunpacking.html
- Do It Yourself Investigation pbs.org/opb/historydetectives/educators/technique-guide/document-this/

Personal Accounts

Beverly Mack

University of Kansas

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Resources

Sample Analysis: Fatima Mernissi, *Dreams of Trespass*

Sample Analysis: Marjorie Shostak, *Nisa, a !Kung Woman*

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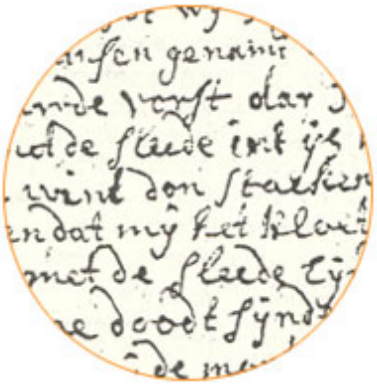
Personal Accounts Online

About the Author

Download Essay

Personal accounts, including memoirs, journals, diaries, autobiographies, and life histories, are important historical sources that help us understand the human condition. Everybody has a personal history; every life has its share of joy and sorrow, victory and tragedy. These are the stories we tell about our lives that usually portray a larger picture of a life in historical context. In reading a personal account of someone far removed from your own culture and historical period, it is possible to learn about the foreign within the familiar framework of an unfolding life. The comparisons and contrasts between the lives of the reader and the subject inevitably spring to mind.



All personal accounts imply motivation on the part of the subject. A written document implies a certain level of literacy and an attitude of self-reflection. Orally recorded accounts require a vehicle of transmission, perhaps a scholar who records interviews with an individual. Sometimes oral interviews are recorded among family members or among people who share a particular cultural value, such as Appalachian mountain musicians. Sometimes an individual makes his or her own recordings or videotaped personal accounts.

Personal accounts can focus on particular events or may cover a life more completely. They sometimes involve recollections focused on extraordinary events such as participation in wars or catastrophic events, or explanations of unusual experiences. More recently, historians have begun to note everyday experiences as a measure of social order, so personal accounts can provide information on a particular "slice of life," explaining the circumstances of coming of age experiences or the way of life in a specific region. Personal accounts have also been an integral part of oral history studies in regions that lack a legacy of written history. Many recent African histories rely on personal accounts to trace family and community connections.

In every case, the personal account is highly subjective which is the basis of both its value and limitation. Personal accounts will not always be chronological; they are more likely to jump around, as our minds do, reflecting images of a certain experience from a variety of perspectives, even within one person's own recollections. An eyewitness account of an event or time and place is invaluable, but it is also limited to one point of view. A personal account reveals only what an individual wishes to reveal and usually presents just one side of any story. Any personal account is but one of many stories that could be told about an individual yet it is an important one that allows us access to a range of voices and perspectives.

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Anthropology and other cross-cultural approaches have begun to influence the ways in which history is interpreted and various perspectives are valued. The voices of minorities have long been silent, or marginalized at best. They can often provide personal perspectives on historical events and offer insight into the past beyond official or formal sources.

What we know about the past is what certain individuals have decided should be preserved. In ancient historical periods, court praise singers preserved in oral poetic form the preferred version of succession as a hedge against usurpers. More recently, as scholars write their interpretations of history and biographies of significant players, the nature of history itself is shaped by their choices. It is important to know what facts they consider significant and which individuals they choose to study.

From the Diary of Anne Frank

Sometimes political considerations silence certain voices. In Morocco, for example, the government has banned a book that recounts the long imprisonment of a family whose head opposed the reigning king in a coup 20 years ago. Depending on the political and socio-economic views of the person asked, the account, published as *Stolen Lives: Twenty Years in a Desert Jail*, is described as “brutally honest” or “full of lies.”

Personal accounts and oral histories allow scholars to delve more deeply into the complexities of human experience. These kinds of sources can bring forth the voices of people whose personal stories have long been ignored. Personal accounts can also offer comparative views on issues like public transfers of power between high profile individuals as effected in battles and political pacts, or provide an ordinary perception of a period in history, as experienced by the majority of people in the culture. Sometimes the quietest life is more insightful than the most visible.

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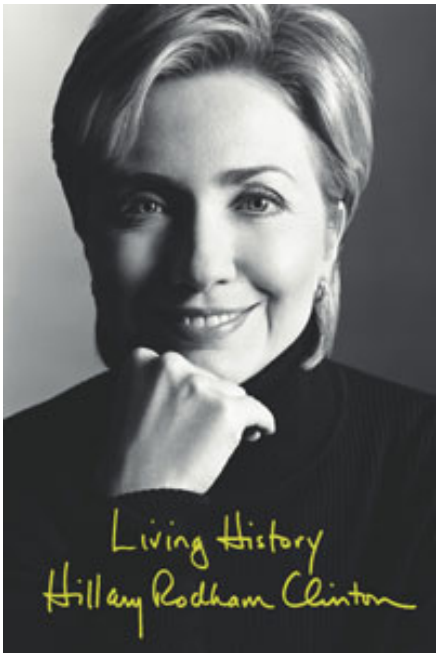
The subject is the person about whom the account is composed. The personal accounts of famous individuals often seem familiar—celebrities or politicians defending their reputations or confessing secrets. They tell the story of a life lived publicly.



For example, readers of the autobiography by Hillary Rodham Clinton, *Living History*, probably do not need many clues about its historical context or Clinton's role in American political life. Readers of the late Althea Gibson's autobiography, *I Always Wanted to Be Somebody*, might not know that she was the first African American woman tennis champion. Clinton is well known in contemporary times to a broad range of people, regardless of their political or professional interests. Gibson, however, would be a familiar figure only to a more select group of individuals whose interests include sports history and civil rights issues in American history.

But what about accounts of people who are less well known? The first thing to ask when reading this sort of account is, "Who is this person?" How do they fit into a larger historical context? How do they identify themselves in relation to citizenship, age, gender, ethnicity, and education level? Think about the time and place in which the individual exists, his or her socio-economic context. What living conditions might affect the individual's worldview?

Next consider the individual's particular role in his or her community. Does the individual speak from a position of power or authority? Why or why not? What is the accepted view of this individual's place in society? Does the account suggest dissatisfaction with a perceived role? Or conflict in a personal situation? Or a celebration of the status quo? Why is this person offering an account of his or her life?

Hillary Rodham Clinton and Althea Gibson would explain their lives in different ways. While Clinton might take care to protect and defend her own influence and her husband's political record, Gibson might be freer to talk about influences that shaped her rise to success in a world of sports long tainted by racism.

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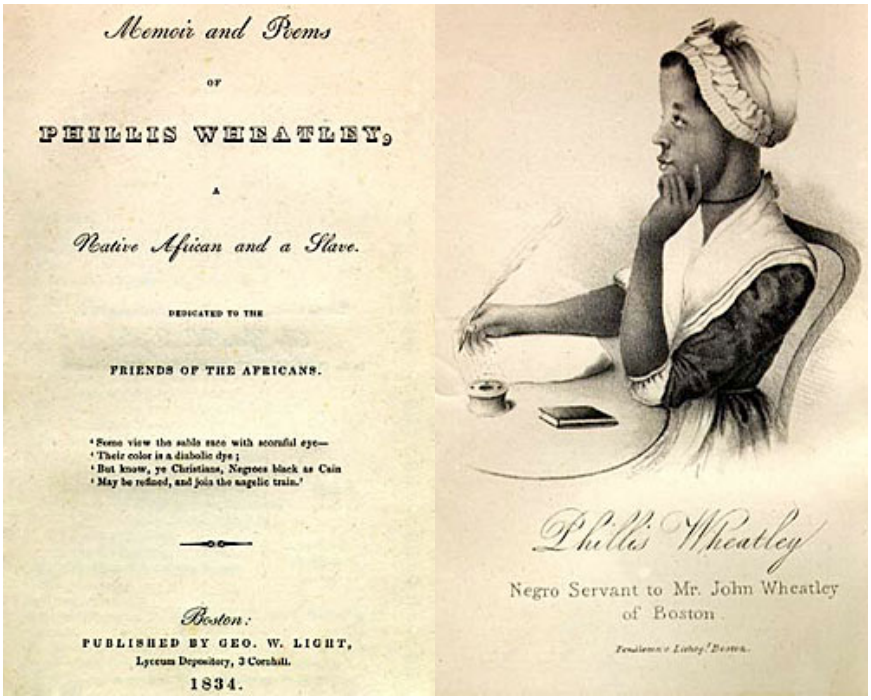
The form of a personal account influences its meaning and our understanding. Was this record of a person's life experience written formally and for public consumption? Or does it come from a secret cache of private musings that the subject never intended for public display? Is the account handwritten or typed? Will this affect its length or breadth of detail? Was the account part of a larger work with broader perspectives, or is it a consideration of a particular moment in time?

How will women's narrations differ from those of men? How do their views and roles in life affect their sense of freedom to write? Do men have a greater sense of obligation to record their life stories for posterity? Do they have greater access to education, writing materials, and publishing sources? Will the answers to these gender-related questions differ depending on the historical period? Socioeconomic status?

If the account was written directly by the subject, what was the format? What was the influence of the format on content? For many, literacy will determine the form of the account. For example, a personal account by a slave during the early American colonial period would have been written painstakingly, perhaps with a quill pen, on paper that was expensive and not readily available. In addition, there would have been precious little leisure time in which to write—assuming that the individual had experienced the luxury of having learned to write in the first place. What would such an individual write about? The issues that drove such a personal account would likely have been serious and pressing matters relating to social history or the impact of politics on personal welfare.



Personal Account of Phyllis Wheatley, Ex-Slave

By contrast, the e-accounts of a 21st-century college student dealing with life away from home, also historically relevant, would reflect many years of education and self-reflection, a presumption of access to resources for the recording of personal accounts, and could more easily be limited to internal reflections rather than a struggle with political and social constraints. Thus the form of a personal account can tell us a great deal about the circumstances of the writer and his or her historical context.

The account's voice reflects a choice that suits a particular audience and indicates motivation on the part of the narrator. The author is always speaking to a particular audience. Sometimes that audience is the self because some accounts are never meant for other people's eyes. When other audiences are in mind, it may be readily evident in the language itself. Colloquial language indicates a desire to connect with a common audience, while formal language demonstrates the need to lend credibility to an account for public consumption.

In Islamic contexts, the personal account is a specific style called the *tarjama*, which dates to the 10th century. Although written by the subject, it uses the third person to evoke a sense of objectivity. Furthermore, the *tarjama* includes specific features and leaves out others. A person's *tarjama* includes a genealogy, a description of formal education and Qur'anic memorization, the names of teachers, books and subjects studied, examples of the student's poetry, and dates to verify and set in context the life story. The *tarjama* clearly is an account of all that matters: education in a spiritual context and place in the learned community.

This kind of writing, taking account of one's life, reflects an individual's character and piety rather than consisting of an internal monologue. In addition to the limiting nature of the *tarjama* itself is the gender bias found in some Islamic contexts. In Iran, for example, it has been rare to find a personal account by a woman because the nature of gender roles requires a woman to remain veiled, both physically and metaphorically. The personal accounts that do exist from this culture are, by virtue of their public nature, reflective of women less respectable than those whose stories remain hidden in the privacy of the domestic domain. While this is not true in every Muslim community, it can serve as a warning that what is written and told publicly is not necessarily representative of the whole community.[1]

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[1] Dale F. Eickelman, "Traditional Islamic Learning and Ideas of the Person in the Twentieth Century" in Martin Kramer, ed., *Middle Eastern Lives: The Practice of Biography and Self-Account* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1991), p. 39

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A personal account rarely is written without particular motivation—every account has some agenda. Always consider why the subject feels it is important to share his or her life either privately or with an anonymous public. The narrator's motivation will account for what parts of a life are discussed and what details are filtered out.

What motivated the author of the personal account? A mode of address, details of place and time of writing, and the structure of the account itself may all offer clues. Whether written or oral, a personal account is a subjective, selective account of a life recorded for a specific purpose, ranging from personal catharsis to revisionist history.

Was the account solicited or freely given? Is the motivation coming from the narrator or the recorder? If the account is written privately, the information contained in it is likely to be more personal, detailed, and indicative of private thoughts and emotions. If the account is gathered in an interview format with a scholar who is not well known to the subject, it is likely to be more formal and general.

If the subject writes an autobiographical account intended for publication, he or she has consciously selected particular incidents for public consumption. Although some private thoughts may be included, this kind of account will not be as intimate as the diary form. If a scholar solicited the story, rather than finding the account, the scholar's reason for seeking the personal account will probably color the nature of the questions asked. In this case, the personal account will likely reflect the scholar's interests more than those of the subject.

There are many motivations for the creation of personal accounts, including a focus on the self, on others, or on posterity. A narrator can offer perspectives on what he or she did, saw, or thought.[2] These motives function to rationalize behavior, educate, and historicize. But these motives may not be immediately clear, and the reader may need to examine both the nature of the account and its contents to speculate about the reasons for its existence. A subject's role in society is often a good indication of his or her motivations for composing a personal account. Does this subject have an agenda to defend or promote, such as a political position, social standing, or a place in the culture's intellectual community?

An oral interview will be shaped by its format, context, and the particular circumstances of the session. Why is the interviewer interested in recording a particular personal account? That too will influence what is included or omitted. When the individual being studied is not living, the scholar must draw on historical sources for corroborative material to uncover conditions of the subject's life that might not immediately be evident.

The existence of a personal account indicates a need on the part of the subject to preserve his or her life story. Consider both the stated and implied reasons for the creation of such an account, and the value of the account as a representative voice in the culture. Was the account easy to write or did the writer take a risk? Simone de Beauvoir's memoirs reflect a great deal about women's roles in Europe around the period of World War II, but de Beauvoir was an intellectual who expected to speak and be heard, to have her works published and debated. Contrast her situation with that of Anne Frank, whose diaries were written in secret while her life was in danger during the Holocaust. The two women experienced a comparable historical period in very different ways and their accounts reflect such differences. One had time, access to materials, and an audience, while the other had none of those. Yet each personal account is valid, representing as it does an individual experience of the era.

Simone de Beauvoir

Anne Frank

_____

[2] Bernard Lewis, "First-Person Account in the Middle East" in Martin Kramer, ed. *Middle Eastern Lives: The Practice of Biography and Self-Account* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1991), p. 34

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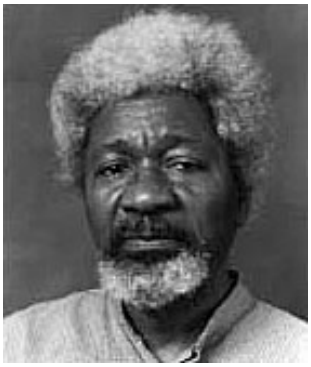
Personal accounts can come to us directly from the subject or second-hand, collected by intermediaries. How the account reaches us will shape it in the process. If an individual writes his or her own story, the incidents in and nature of that life are pre-selected by the writer in response to his or her particular agendas, drives, and motivations. Certain factors will enhance or limit the narrator's capacity to convey information: is the narrator barely literate (at one extreme) or influenced by a desire to imitate a certain style (at the other extreme)?



Wole Soyinka

Does the narrator enjoy the luxury of unlimited time and funding to contemplate a philosophy of life? For example, Bill Clinton's memoirs have been funded generously by a publisher's advance. Or is he hiding notes written under duress, as with Wole Soyinka's prison diaries, published as *The Man Died: Prison Notes of Wole Soyinka?* Soyinka was imprisoned by the Nigerian government for his activisim in the Civil War of the 1960s. A consummate author and intellectual, he felt compelled to write during eighteen months of solitary confinement. Lacking writing materials, he managed to scribble fragments of plays, poems, and political commentary in the blank spaces between the line of books smuggled into his cell. While compiling these for publication years later, he indicated the continued need for secrecy about who helped get the books to him, and even their titles, fearing for the safety of those who aided him. His prison writings gave him focus and purpose, and kept at bay the "daily humiliation of fear".[3]

If an intermediary records the account, he or she often influences the narrator by intervening or asking questions. The intermediary shapes the discussion, even unintentionally, simply by being present. There are many perspectives on a life that one would write down in private, but would not necessarily share with someone else.

For an oral history, the transcription of an interview can change its nature. A summation of the account would render a very different portrait than a verbatim transcript, complete with hesitations and false starts that can convey important perspectives on issues that may be difficult for the subject to discuss. These reflect how people actually speak, while a summation expresses only what the collector felt was important. In addition, language and colloquial phrases are important in conveying the subject's attitude toward issues or comfort level with various topics.

The Sample Analyses offer perspectives on personal accounts; one is written by the subject and the other results from oral interviews interpreted by a scholar. In each case, think carefully about the source. Was the author trying to argue a case on her own behalf? Was the subject a close friend of the interviewer? Is each person fluent in the language used? Was the interview summarized or are the subject's words clearly stated? The last point is an important one, because a summary becomes an historical analysis rather than existing as a primary source.

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[3] Wole Soyinka, *The Man Died: Prison Notes of Wole Soyinka* (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), p. 16

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Consider whose personal accounts are most often sought and published and why. It is usually public figures whose personal accounts are most popular. In the West, these are political figures, celebrities, athletes, and people whose accomplishments afford them power, and they are usually men. Women's stories in the West are increasingly considered valid testimonies, along with accounts by people of color and those outside the highest strata of socio-political influence.

What does the subject of the personal account represent in the larger historical framework? How does this personal account expand the dimensions of history? How does this person's life fit into the social order? What role does he or she play in the historical context? To what extent has she influenced the lives of those around her, whether in public, noted ways, or subtly, through private, personal support or instruction of others. As you learn about this person's influence on those around her, does it change your perspective on the larger historical picture?

The perspective of ordinary individuals offers a deeper understanding of the culture in which they exist. This approach requires attention to the wider cultural context in which the individual develops his or her perspective. To gain this, the student of history must endeavor to understand the ethical foundation of the culture being studied, never assuming that it is identical to his or her own. Cultural "filters" color one's view of the world, including gender, nationalistic perspectives, or religious preferences.

Hajiya Maidaki, Nigeria

Consider other sources that can offer insight, such as official documents (marriage, divorce, and birth records, public notices), archived newspapers (human interest stories, political coverage), and glossy magazines (regional and national views reflecting social trends of the time, setting a context). It is impossible to view history from a wholly objective position, but it is helpful to be aware of such biases. White ethnocentricity has been the basis of North American historical views. The predominant focus on men in history has been acknowledged only recently, and has begun to be redressed. There is nothing inherently wrong with this approach, except that it tells only a fragment of the whole picture. What were the women and children doing while the men were on the battlefield or publicly arguing politics? Personal accounts can help fill in the gaps and reveal for us greater depth of field, filling in the historical record to complete the picture.

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Sample Analysis: Fatima Mernissi's Childhood Memoir, "Dreams of Trespass"

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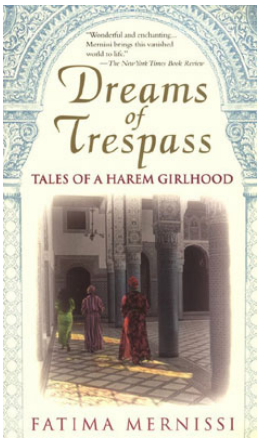

Fatima Mernissi is a professor of sociology at Mohamed V University in Rabat, Morocco and an internationally recognized authority on feminism and Islam. This engaging account of her childhood includes descriptions of the secluded harem life she lived in the city as well as of the freer, happier time spent at her father's country house where several of his wives lived. She depicts the calm garden and fountain in the heart of the city house, escape to the roof on hot nights, the view from the roof of the "outside," forbidden to her in her adolescence, and a yearning to be free to go out into the world as her brothers could.

At the country house, by contrast, she hears stories about the wild wife who rode in on a horse and was "tamed" by her father, the wife who used to climb and sit in trees reading a book, and the picnic during which women swam in the river as they washed pots. It all sounds lyrical and pleasant. The city life confirms the Western stereotype of Muslim women being kept in seclusion against their will while the country life allows them license to control their actions.

Students at a Moroccan university described the book as autobiography, but many Moroccans call the story fiction. Other Moroccans simply dismiss the concern, saying that Mernissi writes for the West. Indeed, Western critics consistently have welcomed her works, especially this one. They applaud her ability to describe clearly a little-known culture that has long held fascination for the West. The notion that the book is fiction is based on the testimony of individuals who knew Mernissi as she was growing up and her own response to challenges in which she attests that the book serves to provide an accurate image of an amalgam of women's situations.

The reader is left wondering what is true, yet the question of truth may have many answers. As a sociologist, Mernissi favors the case study approach to analysis, which can offer valuable insights. On closer examination, it is evident that her autobiography is not narrative, but a series of stories told to her by women of varied ages, classes, and backgrounds. Mernissi has used such storytelling technique effectively in several other nonfiction works. As a respected professor, an internationally known scholar, and an accomplished author and critic of Islamic law and custom with regard to women's rights, Mernissi knows that her "Scheherazade" approach to communication, being a compelling storyteller, is an effective way to control and educate an audience without overt demonstrations of power. Ignoring criticism, she stands by her portrayal of life as it was for Moroccan women, confident that the picture she paints is accurate and informative.

As a teacher, I welcome the opportunity to draw all these contradictions into a conversation on the issues of truth and perception, especially in relation to the telling of a personal account. Mernissi's views of growing up female in a traditional

Islamic culture offer insight into stereotypes that she, a Muslim woman intimately associated with Moroccan culture, can offer. While everything she describes may not have happened exactly as portrayed, it nevertheless is representative of a Moroccan woman's experience growing up in the twentieth century. Mernissi paints a picture of life that is useful in offering insight into another culture, and more specifically, a woman's particular place in that setting.

Furthermore, to some extent her portrayal of this as her life is indeed accurate in her own mind. After all, memory is selective: people's responses to experiences vary and people's memories of experiences change with time and influence. Events that happen in a person's life between lived experiences and recording those events can shape their telling. Mernissi's account is valuable because it reflects her own internalization of the Moroccan Muslim culture in which she grew up.

It would be useful to compare Mernissi's account with that of someone like a Daisy Dwyer's 1978 study *Images and Self-Images: Male and Female in Morocco* or Susan Davis's *Patience and Power: Women's Lives in a Moroccan Village* (1983). Davis's Western, anthropologically-oriented views offer good counterpoints. Mernissi's description of growing up in urban and rural Muslim homes, with varying degrees of freedom, is true to the anthropological accounts of the region. Whether her personal account is literally accurate for her own personal experience or merely representative, it is nevertheless a valuable portrayal of one kind of life in a particular place and time.


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Sample Analysis: Marjorie Shostak's Account of Nisa, a !Kung Woman

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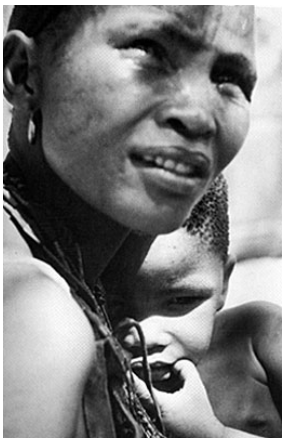
Nisa's story begins with author Marjorie Shostak's introduction addressing the context for her conversations with Nisa, a woman of the !Kung ethnic group in southeast Africa. Shostak's acquaintance with Nisa was not immediate, but evolved over a long period of field work residence in the area. Shostak also had extensive contact with many other women whose testimonies confirmed the veracity of Nisa's. Ultimately, Shostak decided that Nisa was the right informant on women's roles among the ! Kung because Nisa "understood the requirements of the interviews, she summaraized her life in loosely chronological order; then, following [Shostak's] lead, she discussed each major phase in depth."[4]



Nisa, a !Kung Woman

The relationship that developed between Nisa and Shostak was that of teacher and student. And although Nisa and her family were fed and housed by Shostak during the period of their work together, it was understood that Nisa's task was to teach Shostak about !Kung womanhood, educating her in a dispassionate way, as a caring, but objective instructor. Shostak conducted fifteen long interviews over a two-week period, and six more four years later. Nisa's stories constitute only eight percent of all the interviews Shostak conducted with !Kung women, so she amassed a great deal of comparative data. Shostak rearranged the stories into chronological order for her book, but she tried to remain true to the nuances of ! Kung forms of expression throughout the material.

One of the most important issues Shostak discusses in the introduction is her need to become capable in the !Kung language so that she could speak directly to the women among whom she did research. All cultures have different modes of communication within cultural sub-groups that depend on slang, symbolic language, and non-verbal modes of communication. Even with the help of language tutors and hearing the language spoken all around her everyday, Shostak was unable to communicate in even a rudimentary way until she had been there six months, and the first real communication she had with !Kung women was in her tenth month of field work. This is the first level of "common language" necessary to the communication of personal accounts.

For Shostak and many other field workers, an important level of common language had to do with gender. Women are freer to talk with other women of foreign cultures than to mix with men. This also accounts for the relative dearth of material on women's lives until very recently in the history of scholarship: most scholars in the field have until the twentieth century been men who had little access to or focus on women's lives. Interestingly, Shostak's conversations with Nisa make for compelling reading because they are so ordinary: any young woman will be able to relate to Nisa's own life, despite the cultural and geographic distance between them.

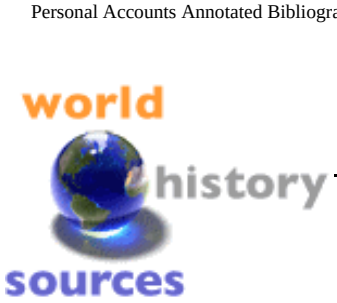
Section titles indicate a chronology from birth and first impressions through the discovery of sexuality, marriage, childbirth, maturity and old age. In addition, Nisa considers the universal questions of gender relations, health and healing, and dealing with loss in old age. Shostak considers that Nisa's early memories may be more exaggerated than those of her more mature years, and cautions against a reader's making Nisa's story representative. It is but one of many such life histories that, because of their personal nature, will be different for each individual.

As young women reading Nisa's life learn, there is as much about Nisa for them to compare as to contrast with their own experiences of being young and female in the world. Ultimately, no amount of common spoken language or shared gender identity will allow a field worker to know another's perspective completely, but the investment of time devoted to language learning and familiarity with the subject's place in society will lead to the acquisition of a deeper understanding.

_____

[4] Marjorie Shostak, *Nisa: The Life and Words of a !Kung Woman* (New York: First Vintage Books, 1983), p. 39

A project of the Center for History and New Media, George Mason University,
with support from the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Gladys Krieble Delmas Foundation



Personal Accounts
Resources
Annotated Bibliography

Resources

Baisnee, Valerie. *Gendered Resistance: The Autobiographies of Simone de Beauvoir, Maya Angelou, Janet Frame, and Marguerite Duras* (Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 1997). The author investigates the autobiographical works of four prolific women writers to examine the ways in which they choose to portray their own lives in their writings.

Beauvoir, Simone de. *Memoirs of a dutiful daughter*, translated by James Kirkup (Cleveland: World Pub. Co., 1959).

Bjorkland, Diane. *Interpreting the Self: Two Hundred Years of American Autobiography* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998). This study sets out four models of self-understanding as they are revealed in American autobiography. Bjorkland analyzes these models as "dialogues with history," and sources for data in the social and behavioral sciences.

Caplan, Pat. *African Voices, African Lives: Personal Accounts from a Swahili Village* (London: Routledge, 1997). This is an ethnography of a Swahili family in Tanzania with whom the author has been friends for thirty years. It explores the changes in their lives over that period of time.

Clinton, Hillary Rodham. *Living History* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2003).

Crapanzano, Vincent. *Tuhami: Portrait of a Moroccan* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980). This ethnography of a Moroccan man focuses on his psycho-social perceptions in response to his society.

Davis, Susan. *Patience and Power: Women's Lives in a Moroccan Village*. Cambridge: Schenkman, 1983.

Denizin, Norman K. *Interpretive Biography* (London: Sage Publications, 1989). Denizen discusses how biographical texts are written and read, focusing on the gathering and interpretation of lives and the discovery of epiphanous moments in a life.

Dwyer, Daisy. *Images and Self-Images: Male and Female in Morocco*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1978.

Eickelman, Dale F. "Traditional Islamic Learning and Ideas of the Person in the Twentieth Century" in Kramer, Martin, ed., *Middle Eastern Lives: The Practice of Biography and Self-Account* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1991): 35-59. Eickelman explores examples of self-images of Muslim men of learning to distinguish between the individual and the person (the individual is the mortal human being, while the person reflects cultural influence). He discusses the concept of tarjama, an autobiography that includes genealogy and qualifications of the writer and is written in the third person to indicate credibility.

Frank, Anne. *The Diary of a Young Girl: The Definitive Edition,* edited by Otto H. Frank and Mirjam Pressler; translated by Susan Massotty (New York: Doubleday, 1995).
Goodson, Ivor F. and Sikes, Pat. Life History Research in Educational Settings: Learning from Lives (Philadelphia: Open University Press, 2001).
This study considers the process of developing life stories and techniques, epistemology, social context, ethics, and dilemmas in the process of producing life stories. In the chapter on epistemology, consideration of life history from the perspectives of the life storyteller and the life historian are of particular interest.

Gibson, Althea. I Always Wanted to Be Somebody, (New York: Harper, 1958).
Griaule, Marcel. Conversations with Ogotemmeli: An Introduction to Dogon Religious Ideas (London: Oxford University Press, 1965).
This classic anthropological study began with the search for a personal account and resulted in the full-blown philosophy of the West African Dogon people, narrated by a Dogon elder, Ogotemmeli. Ogotemmeli felt the people's philosophy of life was more important for a foreigner to hear than his own, small life story.

Kadar, Marlene, ed. Essays on Life Writing: From Genre to Critical Practice (Buffalo, NY: University of Toronto Press, 1992).
This collection of essays deals with the wide range of genres that constitute life writings: autobiography, journals, memoirs, letters, testimonials (including court testimony), oral accounts, fiction and poetics. Many of these are unintentional testimonies that are interpreted by scholars as personal accounts.

Kenyon, Gary M. and Randall, William L. Restorying Our Lives: Personal Growth Through Autobiographical Reflection (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1997).
This study is premised on the idea that every individual not only has a story to tell, but is a living story. Using story as the metaphor for life, the authors discuss the process of telling and retelling about our lives. They note that stories change in the act of preserving them in written form and that stories vary depending on what historical moment in that person's life is reflected in the story. More importantly, they emphasize the fact that at any given moment each individual contains many stories; the one you are hearing is but one portion of that person's experience.

Kramer, Martin, ed. *Middle Eastern Lives: The Practice of Biography and Self-Account* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1991). This volume includes eight studies by scholars of the Muslim and Jewish Middle East. They discuss the idea of self-awareness and its documentation in these cultural contexts, the enduring legacy of personal account in this world region (dating back to Assyria and early Persia), and the relationship of personal account to political history.

Lejeune, Phillippe. "Teaching People to Write Their Life Story," in *On Autobiography* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1989): 216-231.
Lejeune explores the question of why and how one goes about selecting aspects of a life to recount.

Lewis, Bernard. "First-Person Account in the Middle East" in Kramer, Martin, ed. *Middle Eastern Lives: The Practice of Biography and Self-Account* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1991): 20-34.
Bernard Lewis notes that the genre of first-person account in the Middle East dates back at least as far as 1991 B.C. (Amenemhat of Egypt) and 1275 B.C. (Hittite king Hatusilis) who recorded their accomplishments for posterity. Lewis discusses the impetus for autobiographies by men of learning, royalty, and religious figures. They sought to record their lives in the categories of "what I did,"

Milani, Farzaneh. "Veiled Voices: Women's Autobiographies in Iran" in Afsaneh Najmabadi, ed. *Women's Autobiographies in Contemporary* "what I saw," and
Iran (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard Middle Eastern Mongraphs XXV, 1990): 1-16.
"what I thought." Milani explains the irony of Muslim womens' autobiographies, which require revealing what is concealed. The ideal in Islam involves Mernissi, Fatima. Dreams of Trespass: Tales of a Harem Childhoodconcealing what is revered (the body, the privacy of the home), so to write a personal account is to diminish by expression what should. Reading: Addison Wesley, 1994. remain private: thoughts, feelings, and experiences.

Munson, Jr., Henry, Rec., Trans., ed. *The House of Si Abd Allah: The Oral History of a Moroccan Family* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1984).
Munson has recorded interviews with members of this Moroccan family who recount their perceptions of twentieth-century history and talk about family members from the late nineteenth century to the present. His discussion of methodology in recording oral history is especially useful.

Najmabadi, Afsaneh, ed. *Women's Autobiographies in Contemporary Iran*
(Cambridge, MA.: Harvard Middle Eastern Mongraphs XXV, 1990).
This Harvard monograph consists of four studies of Muslim women's autobiographies, with a focus on Iranian culture and the limitations there for women's free expression of the self.

Ostle, Robin, de Moor, Ed and Wild, Stefan, eds. *Writing the Self: Autobiographical Writing in Modern Arabic Literature* (London: Saqi Books, 1998).
The 24 essays in this collection address the genre of autobiography in the context of Arab culture. Three of the essays deal specifically with women's works.

Oufkir, Malika. *Stolen Lives: Twenty Years in a Desert Jail* (New York: Hyperion, 1999).

Romero, Patricia, ed. *Life Histories of African Women* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Ashfield Press, 1991).
This collection of seven brief life histories of African women spans the continent and several centuries of history. Some of these essays are based on interviews focused on women's life stories while others are life histories reconstructed from archival materials.

Shostak, Marjorie. *Nisa: The Life and Words of a !Kung Woman*. New York: First Vintage Books, 1983.

Smith, Mary. *Baba of Karo, a Woman of the Moslem Hausa* (New York: Praeger, 1964).
While Smith's husband was interviewing traditional Hausa men in northern Nigeria in the late 1950s, she sat down to talk with an old Hausa woman named Baba who had lived through the British colonial occupation of Nigeria. This is the account of Baba's experience living in rural Nigeria and seeing her traditional way of life affected by the arrival of the British. Her responses to Mary Smith's questions frame the discussion, which is focused on domestic and political issues in a particular time and place.

Soyinka, Wole. *The Man Died: Prison Notes of Wole Soyinka* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972).

Thomson, Alistair. "Life Histories, Adult Learning and Identity" and Mary Lea West, and Linden, "Life Histories, Adult Learning and Identity" in *The Uses of Autobiography*, Julia Swindells, ed., (Bristol, PA.: Taylor and Francis, 1995): 163-176, 177-186.
This two-part essay investigates perceptions about education from the points of view expressed in life histories, with a focus on adult learning, motivation, and decision-making in the pursuit of education.

Vansina, Jan. *Oral Tradition: A Study in Historical Methodology* (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1965).
This classic text on field methodology in African history is wholly applicable to the assessment of personal accounts anywhere in the world. It addresses the varieties of testimonies a researcher encounters, such as: intentional, unintentional, hearsay, symbolic, stereotypical, idealized, fixed, and free. Vansina discusses the distortions that commonly occur as human beings struggle with the confluence of memory and historical context, endeavoring to reconstruct their lives and make sense of their times.

Personal Accounts

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3. What is the motivation for the personal account?

4. How did the account reach the reader?

5. How do personal accounts function in a larger context?

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Sample Analysis: Marjorie Shostak, *Nisa, a !Kung Woman*

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About the Author

Download Essay

Beverly Mack is an Associate Professor of African and African-American Studies at the University of Kansas. She holds a Ph.D. in African Languages and Literature from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and her training includes specialization in oral traditions in history and literature in Africa. She has done fieldwork in Nigeria and Morocco, and has also worked in Sierra-Leone, the Ivory Coast, and Guinea-Conakry. Much of her research focuses on the relationship between women and power in Africa, and her book, *Muslim Women Sing: Hausa Women's Scholarship and Song in Contemporary Northern Nigeria*, is forthcoming from Indiana University Press.

A project of the Center for History and New Media, George Mason University,
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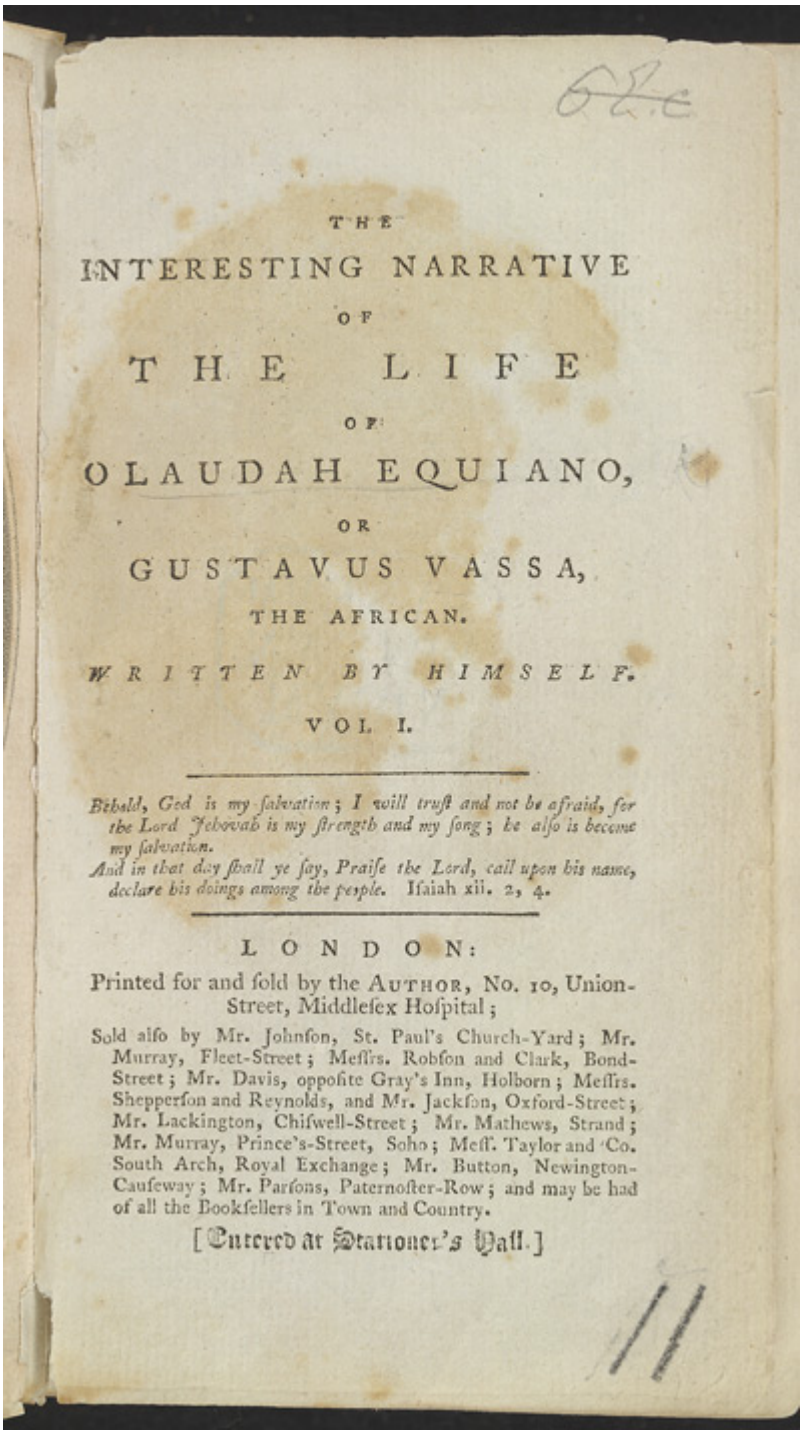
Be the Historian!

How did the account reach the reader?

One of the first things that historians do when they encounter a text, such as a personal account, is to read the title page closely if it is available. The information on a title page can provide important clues about the origin of the account and how it reached the reader.

The Task:
In this exercise, examine the title page from Olaudah Equiano's 1789 slave narrative. Then, select the phrase that you think provides the most important information about the author, the audience, and how the account reached the reader. Finally, compare your answers to others and read a historian's commentary.



THE
INTERESTING NARRATIVE
OF
THE LIFE
OF
OLAUDAH EQUIANO,
OR
GUSTAVUS VASSA,
THE AFRICAN.
WRITTEN BY HIMSELF.
VOL I.

Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid, for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation.
And in that day shall ye say, Praise the Lord, call upon his name, declare his doings among the people. Isaiah xii. 2, 4.

LONDON:
Printed for and sold by the AUTHOR, No. 10, Union-Street, Middlesex Hospital;
Sold also by Mr. Johnson, St. Paul's Church-Yard; Mr. Murray, Fleet-Street; Messrs. Robson and Clark, Bond-Street; Mr. Davis, opposite Gray's Inn, Holborn; Messrs. Shepperson and Reynolds, and Mr. Jackson, Oxford-Street; Mr. Lackington, Chiswell-Street; Mr. Mathews, Strand; Mr. Murray, Prince's-Street, Soho; Mess. Taylor and Co. South Arch, Royal Exchange; Mr. Button, Newington-Causeway; Mr. Parsons, Paternoster-Row; and may be had of all the Booksellers in Town and Country.
[Entered at Stationer's Hall.]

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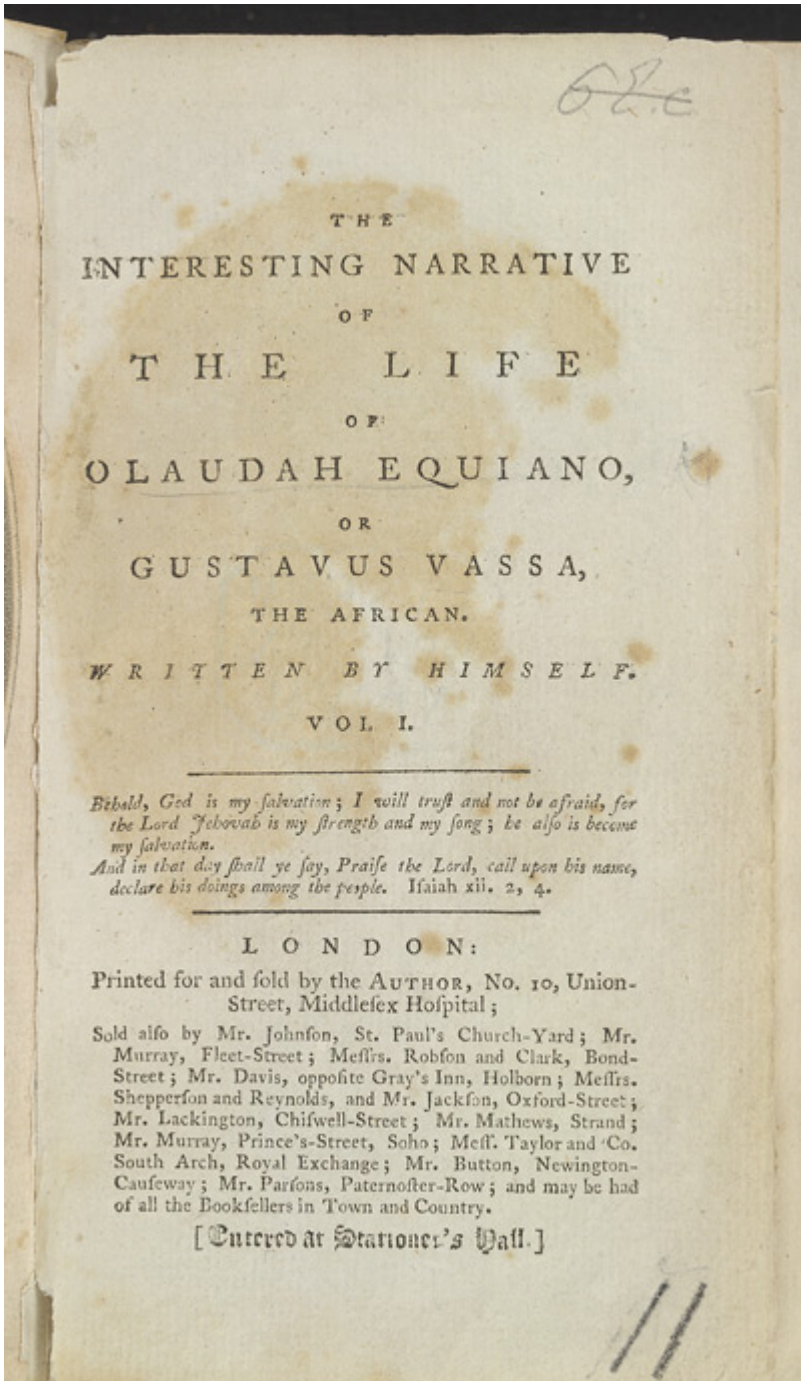
Choose the phrase that you think provides the most important information about the author, the audience, and how the account reached the reader:

- ○ Interesting Narrative
- ○ Olaudah Equanio, or Gustavus Vassa, the African
- ○ Written by Himself
- ○ Behold, God is my salvation
- ○ London
- ○ Printed for and sold by the Author
- ○ Sold also by ....
- ○ Entered at Stationer's Hall

Be the Historian!

How did the account reach the reader?

Although it is tempting to skip over the title page, it is often a rich and revealing document by itself. While historians might differ about which phrase is the most significant, all of these phrases provide clues about the origin of the account, the intentions of the author, and the ways that the text was transmitted to the wider public. Below, we show how a historian unpacks the meaning in this single page.



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[Entered at Stationer's Hall.]

Interesting Narrative
Modeled on the adventure stories common to the English world when the account was published in 1789, Equiano's text presented his life as a travel adventure story. Thus, he managed to achieve a remarkably wide readership, especially for a black writer in the 19th century.

Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African
Using a construction that lists his African name—Olaudah Equiano—first and his more commonly used European name—Gustavus Vassa—second, allows Equiano to present himself, first and foremost as an African.

Written by Himself
By alluding to his liter acy on the title page, Equiano positions himself as educated in a way that most former slaves were not. Additionally, he suggests that his readers can trust his tale as that of an authentic slave experience.

Behold, God is my salvation
By quoting from the Book of Isaiah in the Bible, Equiano indicates to his readers that he is a Christian who shares their values. This would be important in appealing to a target audience that might support the abolition of slavery based on religious reasons.

London
The place of publication indicates the point at which a historian should begin research on a text. From there, she could look for the printer or any institutional records about the physical creation of the text. The location of publication can also provide clues about the historical conditions under which the text was created. In this case, London was the heart of the campaign to abolish the slavery, beginning in the 1780s.

Printed for and sold by the Author
This phrase indicates that Equiano handled the production of this text himself, rather than using an established publishing house. He financed the publication by soliciting subscriptions from buyers who paid for the text in advance of its production. These subscribers provided the money necessary to produce the narrative. Among the 311 subscribers, there were prominent abolitionists, theologians, intellectuals, and politicians.

Sold also by...
Equiano strategically selected booksellers around the city to carry his narrative. Additionally, he managed to promote the book through major outlets around Britain. Due to his entrepreneurial efforts, the text went through nine editions between its initial publication in 1789 and 1794.

Entered at Stationers' Hall
Prior to 1924, authors registered their texts with the Stationers' Company in London. This served as a type of copyright for British publications. Thus, when he completed the text, Equiano deposited the requisite nine copies of the book at Stationers' Hall to protect his work.

Be the Historian!

How does the form of the personal account influence content?

Often we have several accounts of a historical event told by different people in different ways. The form—such as a letter, a diary entry, or a telegram—of the story often shapes the content and style, limiting what we can learn from one person's perspective. The form of the account also influences what can and cannot be said.

On March 15, 1939, military forces of Nazi Germany occupied Czechoslovakia, taking over the state and creating a brutal regime that lasted until the final days of World War II. In this exercise, read two accounts of these events written by Americans who were in the Czechoslovak capital, Prague, on the day the German forces entered. Read each account carefully and ask yourself how the *form* encouraged the author to focus on specific details while leaving out others. When you finish, look at a modified version and compare your own reading to comments by a historian.

Read the following two texts and then look at the commentary.

Letter
Telegrams

Letter from Mark Kistler to his cousin, Aleta Kistler Dresden, March 20, 1939

Dear Aleta,

Another American and I left Frankfurt on the 5th of March. We went as far as Bayreuth by train, and then we started to bike. The weather was not particularly favorable, but nevertheless we managed to get somewhere. We spent two interesting evenings in Eger and Karlsbad. In Eger we saw Wallenstein's (of Schiller fame) home. Karlsbad is world-famous for its natural baths. From Karlsbad we went through some more Sudeten backwoods until we came to Czech territory and Prague.

On the first day in the Czech capital all was calm and peaceful, but the next day things began to happen. In the evening we saw many street riots between Czechs and German students. Some were all bloody and several were knocked unconscious. The next morning we went to see the old Town Hall and while there we heard a lot of noise, looked out of the windows, and there were the Nazi troops in trucks, tanks, motorcycles, wagons, etc. At first the Czechs got sore, blocked the streets, shook their fists at the troops, sang their national anthem, but when they saw more and more German troops pouring in, they saw their cause was hopeless and went back to their work. On the following day there was a large military parade.

Prague is a beautiful city with close to one million inhabitants. The Czechs treated us fine and envied us being Americans. Prague has a touch of America—you see American cars, gasoline, radios, machinery, and movies. We saw two American movies in the English language here. It seemed like home. After six days in the fair city our money got dangerously low, so we decided to scram. However, all train service was cut off and we were also told that the frontier was closed. We hopped on our bikes and all went fine until we came to the border. The officials did not want to allow us to go farther, but finally, after seeing our American passports and being convinced that we had no Czech money on which to live, they let us pass.

From the border to Dresden we had to cross the Sudeten mountains. At one stage we had to push our bikes uphill for 10 kilometers. I felt like giving up the ship, but finally we reached the top and coasted downhill again. By the way, we rode on the left hand side of the street going to Prague, and returning we obeyed the signs which said "Rechts fahren." In Bohemia we saw many wandering gypsies. They live in wagons-on-wheels drawn by an old shaky horse.

I hope you are fully recovered from your illness by now. In Prague I caught the sniffles although I am in running order again. On the fifth I met Betty by accident in the Wuerzburg Bahnhof. She was on her way to Italy with two other Americans. Seydlitz wrote me a card yesterday. He is vacationing in Austria.

That would be great if you would come to Switzerland this summer. I'll hang around till late July or beginning August. Don't worry about war. America wouldn't be involved right away at any rate and with an American passport you are always safe. My love to Dickinson.

Your cousin, Mark

Three American Diplomatic Dispatches

860F.00/691: Telegram
The Minister in Czechoslovakia (Carr) to the Secretary of State
PRAHA, March 17, 1939-11 p. m.
[Received March 17; 11:40 a. m.]

51. In recapitulation of my several telegrams of the last few days permit me to review as follows the present situation in this area.

Bohemia and Moravia have been occupied by German military forces. They have been declared by the Reichs Chancellor to be a protectorate of the Reich and to constitute a part of greater Germany. According to this same declaration their head of state must enjoy the confidence of the Reichs Chancellor, and their foreign affairs and military protection are taken over by the Reich. German military and civil authorities have assumed administrative power in the provinces. The Czechoslovak Foreign Office has been closed.

The Reichs Chancellor is reported to have accepted the request of the Slovak President that he take Slovakia under his protection.

Indirect reports from Ruthenia, which is now completely cut off from Praha indicate that that province is partially occupied by Hungarian troops and that there are no authorities left who could be considered as representing the power of the Czechoslovak State.

There are consequently no officials of the Czechoslovak Government to which I am accredited with whom I can maintain relations for the protection of the interests of the United States and its citizens.

In these circumstances I respectfully request instructions in regard to my future course.

860F.00/690a: Telegram
The Acting Secretary of State (Welles) to the Minister in Czechoslovakia (Carr) WASHINGTON, March 17, 1939- 6 p. m.

15. At the press conference today I issued the following statement of the position of this Government toward recent developments in Czechoslovakia: The Government of the United States has on frequent occasions stated its conviction that only through international support of a program of order based upon law can world peace be assured.

This Government, founded upon and dedicated to the principles of human liberty and of democracy, cannot refrain from making known this country's condemnation of the acts which have resulted in the temporary extinguishment of the liberties of a free and independent people with whom, from the day when the Republic of Czechoslovakia attained its independence, the people of the United States have maintained specially close and friendly relations.

The position of the Government of the United States has been made consistently clear. It has emphasized the need for respect for the sanctity of treaties and of the pledged word, and for non-intervention by any nation in the domestic affairs of other nations; and it has on repeated occasions expressed its condemnation of a policy of military aggression.
It is manifest that acts of wanton lawlessness and of arbitrary force are threatening world peace and the very structure of modern civilization. The imperative need for the observance of the principles advocated by this Government has been clearly demonstrated by the developments which have taken place during the past three days.

We hope that you may be able to make this available to the Czechoslovak press and that the latter may find a way to give it publicity.

Welles

860F.00/692: Telegram
The Minister in Czechoslovakia (Carr) to the Secretary of State
PRAHA, March 18, 1939- 6 p.m.
[Received March 18- 2:55 p.m.]

52. our No.15, March 17. The entire press here is under strict German control, the Gestapo is everywhere and it would be virtual suicide for anyone to publish the statement unless indeed it first appeared in Berlin press.

Carr

Now read these documents with commentary in the boxes on the right of the orange text.

Be the Historian!

How does the form of the personal account influence content?

Here are the same texts you just examined, but with commentary by a historian on the relationship between form and content. Compare your own reading with the historian's. Did you ask some of the same questions? Did you notice some of the same things? This commentary can help you gain new insights into the ways that experienced readers analyze a text, learning information you might not have noticed on a first reading.

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Somehow they managed to miss the German Army massed on the border, preparing to invade Czechoslovakia. This raises questions about Kistler's powers of observation and his reliability as an observer.

On the first day in the Czech capital all was calm and peaceful, but the next day things began to happen. In the evening we saw many street riots between Czechs and German students. Some were all bloody and several were knocked unconscious. The next morning we went to see the old Town Hall and while there we heard a lot of noise, looked out of the windows, and there were the Nazi troops in trucks, tanks, motorcycles, wagons, etc. **At first the Czechs got sore, blocked the streets, shook their fists at the troops, sang their national anthem, but when they saw more and more German troops pouring in, they saw their cause was hopeless and went back to their work.** On the following day there was a large military parade.

Historians are very interested in the supposed lack of resistance to the Nazis by Czech citizens. Kistler's account provides some verification of the common view that most Czechs simply did not resist. This is not news to specialists, but does provide further validation of one version of what happened in Prague.

Prague is a beautiful city with close to one million inhabitants. The Czechs treated us fine and envied us being Americans. **Prague has a touch of America—you see American cars, gasoline, radios, machinery, and movies. We saw two American movies in the English language here. It seemed like home.**

Like many tourists, American or otherwise, Kistler is looking for examples of what he already knows well, what he is comfortable with. One has to ask, therefore, how much he notices that is foreign to him.

After six days in the fair city our money got dangerously low, so we decided to scram. However, all train service was cut off and we were also told that the frontier was closed. We hopped on our bikes and all went fine until we came to the border. The officials did not want to allow us to go farther, but finally, after seeing our American passports and being convinced that we had no Czech money on which to live, they let us pass.

Never mind that the Nazis had just occupied the country! This light-hearted explanation of their reasons for leaving seems to indicate that in its early days, the Nazi regime sat lightly on the city.

From the border to Dresden we had to cross the Sudeten mountains. At one stage we had to push our bikes uphill for 10 kilometers. I felt like giving up the ship, but finally we reached the top and coasted downhill again. **By the way, we rode on the left hand side of the street going to Prague, and returning we obeyed the signs which said "Rechts fahren [drive on the right]."** In Bohemia we saw many wandering gypsies. They live in wagons-on-wheels drawn

Small details like this one are often very important to historians, because they show the degree to which daily life is often transformed significantly by events such as a regime change. Imagine what what would happen in America if, overnight, everyone had to drive on the left side of the road.

by an old shaky horse.

I hope you are fully recovered from your illness by now. In Prague I caught the sniffles although I am in running order again. On the fifth I met Betty by accident in the Wuerzburg Bahnhof. She was on her way to Italy with two other Americans. Seydlitz wrote me a card yesterday. He is vacationing in Austria.

That would be great if you would come to Switzerland this summer. I'll hang around till late July or beginning August. Don't worry about war. America wouldn't be involved right away at any rate and with an American passport you are always safe. My love to Dickinson.

The chatty tone of this letter makes it seem silly in retrospect. After all, World War II was about to start. This reminds us that great events like war often seem far off to those right in the middle of them.

Your cousin, Mark

Three American Diplomatic Dispatches

860F.00/691: Telegram
The Minister in Czechoslovakia (Carr) to the Secretary of State
PRAHA, March 17, 1939-11 p. m.
[Received March 17; 11:40 a. m.]

51. In recapitulation of my several telegrams of the last few days permit me to review as follows the present situation in this area.

Bohemia and Moravia have been occupied by German military forces. They have been declared by the Reichs Chancellor to be a protectorate of the Reich and to constitute a part of greater Germany. According to this same declaration their head of state must enjoy the confidence of the Reichs Chancellor, and their foreign affairs and military protection are taken over by the Reich. German military and civil authorities have assumed administrative power in the provinces. The Czechoslovak Foreign Office has been closed.

Notice that, in contrast to Kistler's letter home, Carr is providing only details of what is happening at the highest levels of government. It is useful to contrast his depiction of events from the governmental perspective with those of Kistler's from the street level.

The Reichs Chancellor is reported to have accepted the request of the Slovak President that he take Slovakia under his protection.

We now know that Nazi "protection" meant control. Historians have been very interested to know how well the Slovak leadership understood the implications of their new relationship with Nazi Germany.

Indirect reports from Ruthenia, which is now completely cut off from Praha indicate that that province is partially occupied by Hungarian troops and that there are no authorities left who could be considered as representing the power of the Czechoslovak State.

There are consequently no officials of the Czechoslovak Government to which I am accredited with whom I can maintain relations for the protection of the interests of the United States and its citizens.

In these circumstances I respectfully request instructions in regard to my future course.

This is diplomat-speak. Carr is asking for permission to close down the American embassy in Prague, but cannot say so directly, because that would imply a break in diplomatic relations—a significant step Washington might not be ready to take.

860F.00/690a: Telegram
The Acting Secretary of State (Welles) to the Minister in Czechoslovakia (Carr)
WASHINGTON, March 17, 1939- 6 p. m.

15. At the press conference today I issued the following statement of the position of this Government toward recent developments in Czechoslovakia:

Because this statement was issued at a press conference in Washington, the audience was the American press, not the Czechoslovak people.

> *The Government of the United States has on frequent occasions stated its conviction that only through international support of a program of order based upon*

law can world peace be assured.

This Government, founded upon and dedicated to the principles of human liberty and of democracy, cannot refrain from making known this country's condemnation of the acts which have resulted in the temporary extinguishment of the liberties of a free and independent people with whom, from the day when the Republic of Czechoslovakia attained its independence, the people of the United States have maintained specially close and friendly relations.

By categorizing the Nazi occupation as "temporary," Welles is implying a challenge. The Nazis certainly did not see this change of regime as temporary. But, notice in the subsequent paragraphs that Welles does not actually make any demands of the Nazis. The United States was still bound by the Neutrality Acts that prevented Washington from taking a more forceful position.

The position of the Government of the United States has been made consistently clear. It has emphasized the need for respect for the sanctity of treaties and of the pledged word, and for non-intervention by any nation in the domestic affairs of other nations; and it has on repeated occasions expressed its condemnation of a policy of military aggression.

It is manifest that acts of wanton lawlessness and of arbitrary force are threatening world peace and the very structure of modern civilization. The imperative need for the observance of the principles advocated by this Government has been clearly demonstrated by the developments which have taken place during the past three days.

We hope that you may be able to make this available to the Czechoslovak press and that the latter may find a way to give it publicity.

Welles

860F.00/692: Telegram
The Minister in Czechoslovakia (Carr) to the Secretary of State
PRAHA, March 18, 1939- 6 p.m.
[Received March 18- 2:55 p.m.]

52. Your No.15, March 17. **The entire press here is under strict German control, the Gestapo is everywhere and it would be virtual suicide for anyone to publish the statement unless indeed it first appeared in Berlin press.**

Carr is making it clear to the home office that the situation is much more dire than the State Department or the White House may understand. There is an implied rebuke of his superiors here. In other words, stop asking me to take steps that would be suicidal for Czechs I am in contact with.

Carr