**Source work – Value and Limitations**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Type of source | Audience | Value | Limitations | Purpose |
| Historians | Depends on the text  Students or people with an interest in the topic  Tend to be academics  Other historians | To inform  Expert knowledge  Referenced/evidenced  Good coverage of the topic  Hindsight | Biased/opinionated  Hindsight???  Non-contemporary  Can be outdated  Selected bias – by selection | To inform  To gain academic superiority  To make money |
| Biographers | People interested in the topic/person. | Well-researched  Detailed knowledge of the topic.  Can be close to subject if contemporary. | Can be biased (positive or negative way)  Can be limited in content  An interpretation – may just focus on one aspect of their life.  Can be to involved/emotional | To inform  Make money  Justification for events/roles/decisions. |
| Autobiography | Yourself?  People interested in the topic/person. | Perspective – one persons view of events.  Interesting  Gives insider information  Not open to bias | Fallibility of memory.  Limited perspective | To justify/glorify/exaggerate etc  To inform????? |
| Private letters | The recipient | Personal  Gives information/perspective  Contemporary response to events  Emotional response  Can sometimes express motive/points of view of the time. | Personal view rather than political  Opinions can change  Can be limited due to tone, quality of language and expression.  Can be open to interpretation - not aware of context. | To inform  To communicate |
| Diaries | Personal  Can be kept to publish | Personal  Can give opinions/emotions/  Perspectives.  Contemporary | Personal opinion  Contemporary  Offers one perspective | To reflect  $$$ |
| Memoirs (to be published) | Public (depending on topic)  Formal and Informal | Personal opinion/views  Published in hindsight | Adapted in hindsight?  Might not show public opinion  Glorification of an event or individual | To inform; to persuade  $$$ |
| Newspapers, TV and radio reports | General Public; educated and uneducated | Contemporary  Offers expert views?  Reflects public opinion | Influenced by other factors- politics  Brief overview- not much detail  Typically one-sided  Biased/ Opinionated  Tries to appeal to specific audience | To inform a large number of people about events/ key things  To sell |
| Novels/poems | Someone interested in the 'topic' | Offers insight into emotional responses  Personal opinion  Can be Contemporary | Personal Opinion  Politically influenced  Can no the written in Contemporary climate | To entertain  To offer a different perspective  $$$ |
| Statistics | Government departments.  Educated public with a keen interest in the relevant topic.  Historians looking to write a book/article etc. | Facilitates comparisons.  Offers insight into continuity and change over time.  Provides insight into correlations between factors/indicators.  Offers insight into aspects of a nation such as growth and decline.  Objective facts, not up to interpretation. | Focuses on a specific location or time period  Could suggest an incorrect correlation as there can be other factors not included in some sets of statistics  Could be purposely altered in order to appeal to a specific purpose  Data collection limitations | Inform audience of relevant aspects of a topic, such as population growth.  Allows statistics measuring similar things to be compared between different countries, cities, etc.  Persuade audience to your point of view (propoganda) |
| Photographs | General public, almost anyone | Offers insight to first hand situations on a particular place, or people's immediate response  May offer information on a specific environment | Might leave out or ignore the bigger picture (quite literally in this case).  Might be staged.  Might reflect the purpose of the photographer rather than the reality of the situation. | Make $$.  Convey a propaganda message.  To preserve a memory |
| Cartoons | The general public,  Readers of a specific magazine or cartoon | Can inform public opinion, artists often respond to popular views.  Can portray government's line when there is censorship  Gives a visual representation | Over-exaggerated  Ambiguous  Misinterpreted | To entertain; Can be a form of protest |
| Paintings | Art enthusiasts,  Décor for the masses | Can reflect culture /societal views at the time  Gives a particular perspective | Only gives one opinion and can be confusing/misleading  Completely bias/individualistic interpretation  Often commissioned | Can be used to express an idea.  To make a political/ethical point  To commemorate/ glorify/raise awareness  To shock |
| Speeches | General Public (at the time)  People interested in the topic | May reveal motives of speech giver  Says what the public knew at the time | Context of words are missing (how they are said, gestures)  One sided, used to promote what the speech giver wants  ^May ignore the topic they are talking (dodging questions)  May reveal the motives of the speech giver that the speech giver wants to reveal | Revels motives that they want to reveal  To inform public of information that the speech giver wants to give  To persuade/justify  Propaganda purposes |
| Government records and documents | Educated/interested people  People working internally People working externally | Can reveal the motives  Can reveal the situation of a country | Can be skewed, altered for the benefit of the government  Files that are too sensitive can be destroyed  Might not show public opinion | Communication internally  Diplomatic Communication  Provide statistics  Justify actions  Explain actions |