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Primary Source Transcription Worksheet

Made available through the Rhode Island State Archives

A **primary source** provides direct or firsthand evidence about an event. Primary sources can offer a lot of information beyond the written words. Use **O-R-C-A** to help you remember the steps to take when using primary sources.

O – Observe the document. What can you learn from how it looks, before you even begin to read it.

R – Read the document. Go slowly and take informed guesses for words you don't recognize.

C – Comprehend the document. What does it mean?

A – Apply the document. How does this document fit in to the history you know?

O – OBSERVE

1. What kind of document is this? (letter, petition, report, General Assembly act, something else?)

2. What does it look like? What kind of paper was it written on and with what kind of writing instrument?

3. Are there any symbols or other unusual marks?

4. Is there anything else unusual about this document?

R - READ

1. Who wrote it?

2. Who is the intended reader/recipient?

3. When was it written?

4. Where was it written?

C - COMPREHEND

1. Why did the author write this document? What is its main purpose?

2. What's the big idea? Summarize it in 1-3 sentences.

3. Choose a sentence from the document that references the big idea and write it below.

A - APPLY

1. Where does this document fit in to Rhode Island or United States history?

2. What did you learn from this document that you can't learn anywhere else?

3. What other primary source documents could help you learn about this topic?
