

POV: HOLD IT DOWN

A Comprehensive Guide to Explaining Documents on AP History Exams

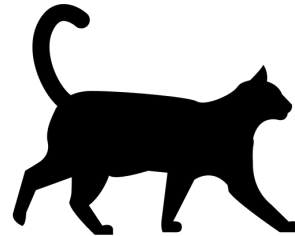


DEMOGRAPHICS

Occupation / Educational Background
Social Class / Status
Politics / Philosophy
Nationality
Religious Affiliation
Age
Gender*
Race

* If a woman is the author of a document, you should ALWAYS **consider** gender as an option for POV. **This does not mean that gender is necessarily the best option** - often, there's another consideration (e.g., political philosophy) that takes precedence. **Never try to "make" a gender POV where it does not exist.**

There's more than one way to skin a cat.



Some sources offer 3-4 choices for POV.
CHOOSE THE BEST OPTION.

Cat Icon by Marco Hernandez from [The Noun Project](#)

RELIABILITY

On the AP history exams, there are three things that can also be considered when explaining the Point of View for a historical document:

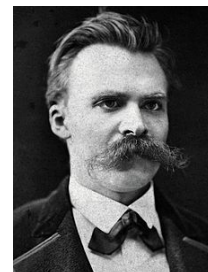
1. **Situation**
What's going on in the background?
2. **Audience**
*Who is supposed to hear or read this?
Is this for public or private consumption?*
3. **Purpose**
What does this person or group seek to accomplish?

THREE QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF:

1. BEFORE READING: *What do you expect this person to say?*
2. WHILE READING: *Is this person saying what you expected?*
3. AFTER READING: *Does this person benefit from what was said?*

THE WILL TO POWER

Nietzsche - People naturally want to say and do things that will help them advance in life or gain something. Figure out what someone has to gain and you'll be able to figure out POV.





“All I know is my side of the story. I can’t tell no other story.”

-- [Donna Goudeau](#)

(POP Hold It Down)

People usually say **EXACTLY** what you expect them to say. They advocate for themselves, their beliefs, and for their friends (usually). POV is usually predictable. When considering reliability, people are especially reliable when they don’t benefit and when they say something *other* than what you expect them to say.

TONE

If you were to *hear* this document being read, what would it sound like?

Hostile? Friendly? Neutral? #sarcasm?

Sometimes, the tone can make all the difference in a document’s message.

SPECIAL CASES (these cases offer easy POV analysis):

Eyewitness - They can be seen as more reliable because they had a direct experience with the situation.

Retrospective - If it’s written way after the event, maybe they have **1)** forgotten some details, **2)** romanticized the memory out of nostalgia, or **3)** altered some details (e.g., exaggeration, omission) for self-promotional purposes.

Anonymous - If the author is not identified, why not? For one, the person is not responsible for what they say, and on another note, they may be more honest because they don’t have to be held responsible.

Foreign Observer - These people may have a more objective and disinterested perspective due to their detachment from the situation **OR** may have an ethnocentric bias.

Audience Considerations

Private Letter to Friend - People often confide in their friends and are more likely to be honest than they would be in public.

Diary or Journal - The person is writing with no audience - there will be more sincerity here

Posthumously Published - The person is trying to state an honest opinion but avoid having to take responsibility for it

Public Speech, Open Letter, etc. - If someone is performing for an audience, then they could be telling people what they want to hear, perhaps trying to reassure them or address doubts.

Official Government Document - Can either be seen as very reliable **OR** heavily biased toward the government’s POV (e.g., party line propaganda) depending on the situation.

POV PITFALLS

Understanding the author's POV is only the first step. In order to get credit for POV, you must also communicate your understanding of the author's POV to your AP Reader.



Icon by Laurent Canivet
for the Noun Project

Attribution is NOT POV.

Simply identifying the author and whatever information you have about them does not mean you have done POV. You must take POV a step further.

“He’s BIAS!”

Okay... First off, it's BIASED, and secondly, this is NOT enough! Strictly speaking, everyone is “bias” in some form or another. You need to explain how the POV relates to what is being said and how that POV makes the content of a document more or less reliable. Ask yourself, and then explain, “Why does this bias matter?” “What does this bias mean for the credibility of the source?”

“Of course she’d say that since she’s a woman!”

Odds are, your AP Reader is a very smart individual, but s/he is NOT a mind reader. You must **PRESS THE CHARGE** and **explain** why it is obvious that the person would say this.

A BETTER EXAMPLE: “As a woman, she would be inclined to support equal pay because it would result in her making more money.”

POV is NOT a substitute for describing the document’s content.

POV/CAP should follow - NOT REPLACE - your description of the document's content and use of the document to make an argument. You must demonstrate that you understand what is being said before you can explain the motivations behind what is said.

Don’t assume that visuals (art, charts, etc.) are necessarily neutral.

What has motivated the person to produce this work? Art often has some kind of point and sometimes data can be manipulated. Remember the maxim, “There are three kinds of lies: lies, da[r]ned lies, and statistics.”

EXAMPLES OF POV



AP EURO

As a priest, he may have been criticizing Peter the Great because he was upset about the tsar's reforms that reduced the power of the Russian Orthodox Church.

It is no surprise that Adolf Hitler mentions the amount of people he is able to call to the streets on a whim, as he wants to make the Nazi Party look as powerful as possible.

Since the workers posted their demands anonymously, they were able to express themselves more candidly without fear of reprisals against individuals by the communist regime.

Being part of the second estate, Cardinal Richelieu would clearly prefer to set expectations for the poor within towns and cities as he would want to please fellow second estate members in order to keep order for the monarchy.

It should be no surprise that the photographer took a picture of a river surrounded by polluting factories, as the magazine the picture can be found in is focused on dealing with social issues.

APUSH

The testimony from a supposed witch should be taken with caution as those accused of witchcraft often had to make a decision of confessing with hopes of being forgiven, or not confessing which would likely lead to individuals not believing them.

Since this pamphlet was distributed by the Sons of Liberty, it likely exaggerated British abuses of power in order to promote their cause.

Jefferson's argument against the bank's constitutionality was at least partially rooted in his opposition to central banking and any government involvement in the economy.

As a Republican, the congressman may be defending the president primarily because he is a member of the same party.

JFK spoke of a missile gap in 1958 in order to undermine the Republican administration in preparation for his upcoming presidential run.

THAT is POV. Hold It Down.