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A good practice when analyzing a primary source is to carry out the following steps:

1. Meet the document
2. Observe its parts.
3. Try to make sense of it.
4. Use it as historical evidence.

This worksheet is designed to help you do this. This worksheet was inspired by the “Written Document Analysis Worksheet” produced by the National Archives.

## **Meet the document**

1. Check all boxes that describe interesting physical characteristics of the document:

- Handwritten
- Typed
- Includes mathematical notation
- Includes diagrams
- Other (explain)

2. What do you notice first? Describe the document as if you were explaining it to someone who can't see it.

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## Observe its parts

3. Who created the document? Was it written by one person? A group?
4. When was the document created?
5. What information is included about the person or people who created the document? How could you find more information about them?
6. For what audience was the document written? What can you say about their mathematical training? How could you do more research on the them?

7. If the document was translated from a foreign language, who did the translation? What can you say about her/his mathematical training? How could you do more research on the translator?

### **Try to make sense of it**

8. List three things that the author wrote that you think are important.

9. Why do you think this document was written?

10. What evidence in the document helps you know why it was written? Quote from the document.

## **Use it as historical evidence**

11. List two things the document tells you about mathematics at the time it was written.
12. This document is one piece of a larger story. What questions do you have that this primary source does not answer?
13. What evidence does the creator(s) present that you should verify as true?
14. This source only shows one perspective on the topic. What other perspectives should you get?