

ANALYSING DOCUMENTS IN THE VHEC'S ARCHIVES

NOTE TO TEACHER: The following questions are designed to support students' independent inquiry into primary source documents in the VHEC's Archives. These guiding questions will assist students to place an original document in its historical context and make inferences to deepen their understanding of historic events.

DIRECTION TO STUDENT: Study the digitized document in the VHEC's online database (collections.vhec.org). Read the information in the catalogue record about the document and then respond to the following questions as best you can.

DOCUMENT:

DATE OF CREATION:

OBSERVE THE DOCUMENT

- Describe the physical appearance of the document. For example:
 - Is it typed or handwritten?
 - Does it contain any stamps, seals, photographs, signatures or special markings?
 - What is the physical condition of the document?
- What type of document is it (eg. letter, diary, government-issued document, identification paper, report, map, newspaper, telegram etc.)?

ANALYSING DOCUMENTS IN THE VHEC'S ARCHIVES

ESTABLISH THE CONTEXT

- Who wrote, created or issued the document?
- Who was the recipient of the document or to whom was it issued?
- Where was the document created? Where is it from?
- When was the document created?
- What is the document about? Summarize its content.
- Why was the document created? What was the intended purpose?
- What was happening at the time in history when the document was created?
- What do you know (or can you speculate) about the perspective or bias of the author/creator?
Was the author/creator an impartial observer or a participant in events (eg. victim, perpetrator, refugee, liberator, collaborator, rescuer, bystander, resister, etc.)?

DRAW INFERENCES

- What can you infer (guess) from this document about life before, during or after the Holocaust?
What story does it tell you? Provide evidence from the document and your own knowledge of Holocaust history to support your inferences.
- What do you think was the significance of the document for the author, recipient or owner of the document?
- Why do you think that the owner donated the document to the VHEC?
- What does this document tell you that you might not learn elsewhere?
Does it reveal a unique perspective on events?
- How does this document compare to other sources of history that you have examined?
- What questions do you have about this document that you cannot answer?
How could you find answers to these questions?