

READING INFORMATIONAL TEXTS: HISTORICAL DOCUMENTS

Unit Key Vocabulary:

historical text
speech
diction
government document
rhetoric
parallelism
repetition
primary resource
secondary resource
historical context
run-on sentence

Overview

In this unit, you will learn about historical documents and the related questions that might appear on the AIR Assessment. At the end of the unit, you will review run-on sentences. Above you will find a list of key vocabulary for this unit.



*Download the attached pdf to take notes during the lesson.

Historical texts are informational texts that tell about people and events from the past. They can inform, persuade, or both. In addition to letters and newspaper stories, they also include speeches and government documents.

A **speech** is a formal address that offers information from the speaker's particular point of view. Speeches often try to persuade the listener to think or act in a certain way, inform the listener of pertinent information, and/or provide reassurance (comfort).

- Speeches rely on good **diction**. Proper **diction**, or word choice, is all about choosing the right words in a speech. A writer's word choice should be accurate, appropriate, and understandable.
- A **government document** is informational material created by a government agency. These types of documents include forms, reports, court rulings, the Constitution of the United States, the Declaration of Independence, laws, treaties, and speeches by leaders.

Rhetoric

Speeches also employ the use of **rhetoric**. **Rhetoric** is a technique of using language effectively and

persuasively in spoken or written form. It is an art of speech, which studies and uses various methods to convince, influence, or please an audience.

Rhetorical figures or devices are employed to achieve particular emphasis and effect.

EXAMPLES:

- **Parallelism:** Parallelism is the use of components in a sentence that are grammatically the same; or similar in their construction, sound, meaning, or meter. This method adds balance and rhythm to sentences, giving ideas a smoother flow and thus persuasiveness, because of the repetition it employs. For example, “Alice ran into the room, into the garden, and into our hearts.” We see the repetition of a phrase that not only gives the sentence a balance, but rhythm and flow as well.
 - For more on practice on [Parallelism](#), click on the link.
- **Repetition:** Repetition is a rhetorical device that repeats the same words or phrases a few times to make an idea clearer and more memorable.

Sources

Historical texts can be categorized as **primary** or **secondary sources**. A **primary source** is a record, artifacts, or object that was written or created by someone who saw or took part in an event. These sources are usually created soon after the experience and are firsthand accounts, so they offer an inside view of what happened.

A **secondary source** gives information about a person or event from history but was likely written well after the events occurred. The author of a secondary source may study the events but did not witness them firsthand.

For more on practice on [Primary & Secondary Sources](#), click on the link below.



Context

Historical context is essentially the details that surround an occurrence. In more technical terms, historical context refers to the social, religious, economic, and political conditions that existed during a certain time and place. It is all the details of the time and place in which a situation occurs, and those details are what enable the reader to interpret and analyze works or events of the past rather than merely judge them by contemporary standards.


To gain historical context, a reader should ask him or herself the following questions:

1. *When was it published?*
2. *Where was it published?*
3. *For whom was it written?*
4. *Why was it written?*

The rest of this unit will be based around the “Day of Infamy” speech by President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

“Day of Infamy” Speech

To gain **historical context**, begin by closely reading the text introduction.



Name: _____ Class: _____

'Day of Infamy' Speech

By President Franklin D. Roosevelt
From Records Of The United States Senate; Record Group 46 • 1941


Historical Context

On December 7, 1941 the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor, a United States naval base in Hawaii. This attack drew America into World War II. Franklin D. Roosevelt or “FDR” delivered this speech to a Joint Session of Congress on December 8, 1941, a day after the attack. As you read, consider the rhetorical methods FDR employs to convey his message to Congress and the American people.

[1] Mr. Vice President, Mr. Speaker, Members of the Senate, and of the House of Representatives:

Yesterday, December 7th, 1941 — a date which will live in infamy¹ — the United States of America was suddenly and deliberately attacked by naval and air forces of the Empire of Japan.

The United States was at peace with that nation and, at the solicitation² of Japan, was still in conversation with its government and its emperor looking toward the maintenance of peace in the Pacific.



FDR Delivers Speech is licensed under .

Indeed, one hour after Japanese air squadrons had commenced bombing in the American island of Oahu³, the Japanese ambassador to the United States and his colleague delivered to our Secretary of State a formal reply to a recent American message. And while this reply stated that it seemed useless to continue the existing diplomatic negotiations, it contained no threat or hint of war or of armed attack.

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This speech was delivered after the bombing of Pearl Harbor.

Now read the rest of the speech and/or follow along with the video as it is read aloud.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt Declares War on Japan (Ful...



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- [5] It will be recorded that the distance of Hawaii from Japan makes it obvious that the attack was deliberately planned many days or even weeks ago. During the intervening time, the Japanese government has deliberately sought to deceive the United States by false statements and expressions of hope for continued peace.

The attack yesterday on the Hawaiian islands has caused severe damage to American naval and military forces. I regret to tell you that very many American lives have been lost. In addition, American ships have been reported torpedoed on the high seas between San Francisco and Honolulu.

Yesterday, the Japanese government also launched an attack against Malaya⁴.

Last night, Japanese forces attacked Hong Kong.

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1. **Infamy (noun):** the state of being well known for some bad quality or act
 2. **Solicitation (noun):** a request; the act or process of asking for something
 3. One of the Hawaiian islands.
 4. A set of states on the Malay Peninsula and the island of Singapore under British control

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Last night, Japanese forces attacked Guam⁵.

[10] Last night, Japanese forces attacked the Philippine Islands.

Last night, the Japanese attacked Wake Island.⁶

And this morning, the Japanese attacked Midway Island.⁷

Japan has, therefore, undertaken a surprise offensive extending throughout the Pacific area. The facts of yesterday and today speak for themselves. The people of the United States have already formed their opinions and well understand the implications to the very life and safety of our nation.

As Commander in Chief of the Army and Navy, I have directed that all measures be taken for our defense. But always will our whole nation remember the character of the onslaught against us.

[15] No matter how long it may take us to overcome this premeditated invasion, the American people in their righteous might will win through to absolute victory.

I believe that I interpret the will of the Congress and of the people when I assert that we will not only defend ourselves to the uttermost, but will make it very certain that this form of treachery shall never again endanger us.

Hostilities exist. There is no blinking at the fact that our people, our territory, and our interests are in grave danger.

With confidence in our armed forces, with the unbounding determination of our people, we will gain the inevitable triumph — so help us God.

I ask that the Congress declare that since the unprovoked and dastardly attack by Japan on Sunday, December 7th, 1941, a state of war has existed between the United States and the Japanese empire.

'Day of Infamy' Speech by President Franklin D. Roosevelt is in the public domain.

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5. A U.S. island territory in Micronesia, in the Western Pacific
 6. A U.S. island territory located in the Western Pacific
 7. Also known as "Midway Atoll," a U.S. territory located in the North Pacific Ocean

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['Day of Infamy' Speech PDF](#)

Answering the Questions: Tips & Tricks

The reader is to identify the central idea. Remember, a **central idea** is a main idea or an underlying meaning of a literary work.

Remember: **Rhetoric** is a technique of using language effectively and persuasively in spoken or written form. Rhetorical figures or devices are employed to achieve particular *emphasis* and *effect*.

EXAMPLES:

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Grammar Lesson 14: RUN-ON SENTENCES

A *run-on sentence* occurs when two or more independent clauses (also known as complete sentences) are connected improperly.

Example: I love to write papers I would write one every day if I had the time.
There are two complete sentences in the above example:

Sentence 1: I love to write papers.

Sentence 2: I would write one every day if I had the time.

One common type of run-on sentence is a *comma splice*. A comma splice occurs when two independent clauses are joined with just a comma.

Example of a comma splice: Participants could leave the study at any time, they needed to indicate their preference.

Sentence 1: Participants could leave the study at any time.

Sentence 2: They needed to indicate their preference.

Some comma splices occur when a writer attempts to use a transitional expression in the middle of a sentence.

Example of a comma splice: The results of the study were inconclusive, therefore more research needs to be done on the topic.

Sentence 1: The results of the study were inconclusive

Transitional expression (conjunctive adverb): therefore

Sentence 2: More research needs to be done on the topic

To fix this type of comma splice, use a semicolon before the transitional expression and add a comma after it.

Revision: The results of the study were inconclusive; **therefore**, more research needs to be done on the topic.

Click on the following link for a video further explaining run-on sentences.



Let's Practice!

1. Is the following **correct** or a **run-on sentence**?

Movie theaters opened in the early 1900s. They played short films.



Move the mouse cursor over the sentence to check the answer.

2. Is the following **correct** or a **run-on sentence**?

Many films take years to make they require the skills of hundreds of workers.



Move the mouse cursor over the sentence to check the answer.

3. Is the following **correct** or a **run-on sentence**?

Thomas Edison worked with George Eastman, another inventor, to make roll film Eastman is now remembered for his contributions to filmmaking.



Move the mouse cursor over the sentence to check the answer.



Below are additional educational resources and activities for this unit.

[Correcting Run-on Sentences](#)