



Using the information you gather on the web site, answer the following questions about the unit.

1. Occasionally newspapers will publish "memorial" or commemorative editions of their newspapers to mark the anniversary of an important event. Often these editions will include reminiscences by people who either were involved in the event or had family members who were involved and passed the story down to them. As an historian, how can a commemorative edition be a useful source?

Commemorative editions like these can be useful sources because they can give us an indication of how important the event was to the community involved. They may also offer information based on further research and new technology (i.e. descriptions of the cause of the explosion could be more accurate after a few years of study and new technological advances).

How can a reminiscence of an event written years later be different from what someone might have written about an event immediately after it happened?

New information could change a person's perspective about the event. Reading what someone wrote immediately after an event happened might provide us with better information about how the person felt and reacted at the time of the event.

How can that affect the reliability of the source?

Sources created at the time of the event may be more reliable in describing the feelings and thoughts of the person at the time, but later sources might give us more accurate information about the causes of the event.

What other sources might help you support the statements in newspaper commemoratives?

Diaries, journals, and newspaper articles from the time of the event all could help us determine the accuracy of the statements in the commemorative edition of the newspaper.

2. Immediately after an event such as an explosion, many people theorize (make their best guesses) about the cause of the event. After the mill exploded, many people had different theories about why it happened. How can you as an historian evaluate these theories about an event?

Sometimes this can be difficult. It would be most helpful to study a number of sources, such as articles, books, speeches, editorials and scientific data to determine the accuracy or reliability of a theory.

Since modern technology and scientific thought may have already explained a past event completely, what can you do to get into the "mindset" of people at that time and use the resources they would have had to evaluate the event itself?

It is important to put yourself "in the time" of the people who experienced the event to understand why they may have developed their ideas about the causes of an event. To do this, you can study other sources such as newspaper articles, photographs, and personal letters or diaries to get a better understanding of what people were thinking at the time of the event and what their lives were like.

Beyond the Sources • A Mill Explosion

How can being able to do this help you get a better understanding of the people and events at that time?

By looking at a variety of sources, you may be able to get a better idea of what life was like at the time and how people perceived the events that occurred. You can gain an understanding of what forms of technology were available to them and how they may have reacted to the event when it happened.

3. Newspapers often published drawings or maps after events like this to give their readers a clearer picture of what happened and the impact an event may have had. How can these sources help us as historians today?

If there are no photographs available or the city has changed since the event, these maps and drawings can help us place the event in its geographic location and examine the impact of the event by seeing the extent of the damage it created.

What can we do to evaluate how reliable and accurate a map or diagram might have been?

If possible, we can compare it to current maps or diagrams to see if any mistakes were made in the location of the event. We can also compare the maps and diagrams with written accounts of the event to see what differences might exist.

In what ways can even an inaccurate map or diagram be of help to us?

An inaccurate map or diagram could help us understand how certain theories about the event were developed. If a theory was based on inaccurate information, it is likely that the theory itself will be flawed. It could also show us how people at the time gained information about events and how reliably that information was presented.

4. Tragedies often are portrayed in the media by showing photographs of the lives lost. During the Gulf War, many of the major news magazines published pages of photographs of those who died in the fighting. The Eventually News published photographs of those who died in the mill explosion. Aside from providing simple information, what can photographs like this do for the reader of the article?

These photographs can put a "human face" on the event or conflict and generate sympathy for the families involved.

How can the media influence our thinking about an issue by using our emotions?

By showing photographs of those killed in an event, the media can influence our thinking by encouraging us to feel sympathy for the families, anger about an event or conflict, or support for efforts to improve our working conditions or military situation.

How is this done in other ways today?

Television news stories, newspaper photographs, and advertising can all affect how we see an event or conflict today. How effective do you think this is? Answers will vary.

As a historian, how can you evaluate and use sources that bring out the reader's emotions?

You can choose sources such as diaries and letters that describe a person's feelings about an event and help the reader identify with that person. You can use statistics or data to convince a reader that an event has had a great impact (such as reading about the number of men killed in the mill explosion and seeing