



**Beyond the Sources • John Pillsbury**

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

1. Pillsbury was involved in a number of different businesses and fields of government during his life in Minnesota. The sources presented in this section are a sampling of Pillsbury's business and government interactions. What advantages can you list to viewing sources from a variety of a person's activities?

**Seeing a variety of sources from a person's life can give us a better idea of what that person did outside of work or in their family life.**

How can seeing a number of different sources from a person's life sometimes make our research more complicated?

**If a person was involved in a number of organizations, it might be difficult to gather enough information to provide a complete picture of the person's life. Sometimes information for a person is provided in great detail for some parts of their life, but not for others. Knowing a great deal about a person's different jobs or organization memberships does not always tell us anything about their family or other aspects of their life.**

2. Many farmers and others in need wrote to Pillsbury asking for help. What does that tell us about the impression people had of Pillsbury as a governor?

**Minnesota farmers seemed to think that Pillsbury was approachable and had the power to help them on an individual basis.**

Do you think people today would write to the governor in similar situations?

**Answers will vary. Students may suggest that the governor might encourage legislation to help them, or might publicize their situation in the media to encourage charity organizations to help. What do you think people today might expect the governor to do if they asked for help?**

What other organizations that we have today are designed to help people in need?

**Students may mention local charities, shelters, and food shelves, the Salvation Army, the Peace Corps, the Red Cross, among others.**

3. The letter to Governor Pillsbury from the farmer and pastor in Windom, MN, includes many misspellings and mistakes in grammar and punctuation. This is one of the hazards in primary source research. What can these mistakes tell you about the author of the letter?

**These mistakes might suggest to us that the person writing the letter was not highly educated or wrote the letter in a hurry.**

What might they tell you about the time in which the letter was written?

**Some words that we would consider misspelled today were actually spelled correctly for the**

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*time period. This show us some ways in which language has changed over time.*

How can using a source like this possibly cause problems for us in our research?

***If the mistakes in spelling happen to occur in names of people or locations, it may be more difficult to determine which things are mistakes and which are correct. If a name is misspelled, we may not know it unless we know about that particular person. This would make it difficult to research records or information about the person accurately.***

4. The article about Pillsbury's inauguration gives us an example of how Pillsbury was viewed by the press. Do you think we would see an article in the paper today that would describe a governor as having "good sense and sound practical judgment"?

***We might, but it would be more likely that such an article would appear in the editorial section of the newspaper, instead of in a "new article."***

What role do you think the media can play in how the public views their elected officials?

***Answers will vary. Students may suggest that the amount of "press" a candidate or official receives can affect their view of the person.***

What effect can it have on a politician if the media portrays them in a negative way?

***Answers will vary, but students may offer that a negative media portrayal can be very damaging to a politician.***