# *Sourcing Explained with SOAPA* Example

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| **SOAPA** | **What it means** | **Tips for how to find it** |
| ***First, make sure you read and understand the question or prompt that is driving your analysis!*** | | |
| **Subject** | What is the main point of the document?  What is it the central subject of the document?  A summary. | Read the document, looking for the main central point, and not sub-points or tangents.  What would you put in your 1 sentence summary? |
| **Occasion** | Where and when was this written or said. What were the main events in American history around that time? Especially those that most relate to the main idea of the document. | **Sourcing row (often in *italics)*** Look at date and location. Then, think about what had just happened or was currently happening, in that place and time, related to that main idea |
| **Author** | Who is the author, in relation to the main idea of the document? How does the author’s identity matter to understanding the document? What is the author’s “positionality” toward this subject? | Who the author is should always be noted in the **sourcing row.** But it’s not enough to just figure out the author, you need to consider all you know about their identity, their life experience, their beliefs and values. And then how does that relate to the subject of the document? |
| **Purpose** | Why was this document written or spoken? What is the intended goal or outcome? Identifying the Tone can help understand the purpose. The main idea, historical situation, intended audience, and point of view all inform the purpose. | You need to first find answers to the rows above - main idea, historical situation, intended audience, and point of view - before you consider purpose.  Occasionally the purpose is stated right in the document.  But usually it requires you to infer. In fact, sometimes the author’s stated purpose is not their “real” purpose.  The **tone** of the document is a big clue as to the purpose. |
| **Audience** | From the author’s perspective, who is supposed to read this? who is supposed to hear it? | Sometimes obvious, it is stated in the title or in the document.  Often takes an inference. Sometimes there’s an official audience but you have to infer the real audience.  There are times when there’s no way to figure this out and you should leave it blank. |
| **Final Analysis: Significance** | Why does this matter? What does this analysis tell us that relates to the prompt or question driving this analysis? | This requires you to keep the question or prompt in mind before you do any of the analysis, and to keep returning to it as you go. All the above analysis isn’t worth much if you can’t figure out why it matters. Of all the above categories, the purpose is usually most helpful in identifying significance. |

## ***EXAMPLE:***

## Document: Ben Franklin’s Petition from the Pennsylvania Society for the Abolition of Slavery

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| ***EQ: How does Ben Franklin use America’s ideals to argue for the banning of slavery?*** | |
| **SOAPA** | **Sample analysis** |
| Subject | Franklin says slavery is brutal and unfair, that it violates Judeo-Christian morality and America’s ideals of equality and liberty and justice for all. He says that black people in America are being left out of America’s promise. |
| Occasion | This is written in 1790, which is soon after the American Revolution, the Declaration of Independence, and the Constitution. The American Patriots said they were fighting to create a free country with liberty and justice for all.  But, slavery had existed in America since 1619. Slavery still legal in all the states, but primarily in South. |
| Author | Franklin was one of the most famous, influential, and popular men in America. He was one of the writers of the Declaration of Independence and helped lead the Constitutional Convention. He had once owned slaves, but then freed them and became an abolitionist. |
| Purpose | Franklin wants to hold the U.S. Congress to live up to its proclaimed ideals. He wants to make the U.S. Congress feel like they are hypocrites for saying one thing (Christian and American ideals) but doing another (allowing slavery). His tone is not angry or denouncing, but calm and measured and expecting his ideas to be followed by many people who look up to him- which makes sense since he is such an influential figure. |
| Audience | The U.S. Congress, who are powerful people who can pass a law to ban slavery. They are also all white. Many are slaveowners themselves. But they had also pledged allegiance to the Declaration and to the Constitution. |
| Final Analysis: Significance | Franklin’s approach is to show how poorly Black slaves are being treated, contrast this treatment with the Christian and American ideals of liberty and equality for all, and provide the solution: banning slavery. He uses his influential position and very positive reputation as one of the creators of America’s ideals to deliver this message to many people who look up to him. |

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