

Sensational sources

What does it tell us?

Once you have read and made sense of a document, you still need to work out what it tells us. This is not the same thing as what it says.

<p>What it says</p> <p>This is what the document gives us in terms of information.</p>	<p>What it tells us</p> <p>This is what we can figure out from the document, often using other knowledge as well.</p>
<p>For example ...</p> <p>A document says that a Royalist commander has collected a certain amount of tax from an area.</p>	<p>For example ...</p> <p>The document about tax gives us an idea of how well supplied the Royalists were in that area. It can also help us understand why the Royalists were weak or strong in that particular area.</p>

Look at this document. Study it carefully. What does this source tell us?



To the Kings moste. Excellency. Ma^{tie}.

The humble petition of John Ruffey a sorrowfull pore. prisoner in yo^r Ma^{ties} gaol of White Lion, in Southwarke. /

Moste humbly Sheweth

That, after that yo^r Highnesses petitioner, was committed, by due order of yo^r Ma^{ties} Court, at the assise last holden in Southwarke, for yo^r Ma^{ties} Countie of Surrey, for the felonie of stealing in yo^r Countie of 3 horses, His: upon humble supplication, unto yo^r Ma^{ty} by yo^r Highnesses yratione, and Royall favour, was respited, and soe spared from execution, and deferred death. for which sake yo^r Ma^{ty} penitent suppliant hath not beene unmyndfull, to praye for God, and praye for yo^r yratione Ma^{ty}.

His yo^r Highnesses petitioner, in all hartly contrition for his heinous offence, was the first that ever he committed, in case of felonie, doth moste humbly (with bended knee, at yo^r Ma^{ties} feete) supplicate yo^r moste sacred Ma^{ty} to vouchsafe yo^r yratione pardon unto him, for his said offence. And that hee maye bee sent to serve in yo^r Ma^{ties} warre, be mye ready & willing to expose that deservable life, as forfeited and to him restored in the moste dangerous service, for yo^r Royall Ma^{ty}, and his Country.

And hee, with his pore wife and children shall ever praye for yo^r yratione Highnesses long and prosperous raigne over us. Or.

At the Court at Whitehall: 26: March: 1639:

Mr Attorney Generall is forthwith to give you a Pardon for the Pet^r aforesaid. for wch this shall be his warrant.

John: Widdowes





Learning Curve
Civil War



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How well did you do?

What does it say? (simplified transcript)	What does it tell us?
<p>To the King's most Excellent Majesty, This humble request of John Ruffey, a sad poor prisoner in your Majesty's jail of White Lion in Southwark,</p>	<p>The king's officials saw this letter, not the king himself, but the writer clearly wanted to be on the king's good side and was very polite and humble.</p>
<p>most humbly shows that Ruffey was convicted by order of your Majesty's laws, at this court held in Southwark for the county of Surrey, for stealing 3 horses. He, upon begging to your Majesty, was spared from execution and the death he deserved by Your Highness's kindness. For this he has been careful to praise God and pray for Your Gracious Majesty.</p>	<p>The man stole horses and that was clearly seen as a serious crime because the punishment was very tough – death. The sentence was not carried out and he was sent to jail instead.</p>
<p>He (very sorry for his awful crime, which was the first serious crime that he ever committed) does most humbly (with bended knee at your Majesty's feet) beg your most sacred Majesty to grant your gracious pardon to him for his crime. And let him be sent to serve in your Majesty's war. He is ready and willing to expose his worthless life, lost [sentenced to death] and then restored to him [spared from execution], in the most dangerous service for your Royal Majesty and his country.</p> <p>And he with his poor wife and children shall always pray for your gracious Highness's long and successful reign etc</p>	<p>Rather than stay in jail, the man wanted to be let out. In return, he would serve on the king's side in the war, doing any kind of dangerous service. At this time the king was facing a rebellion in Scotland and was trying to raise troops to fight the Scots. The thief would have known this, and so offered to join up and serve his country.</p>
<p>[Note] At this court at Whitehall, 26 March</p>	<p>His request was approved on 26 March 1639. He was to be given a pa don and sent to fight This</p>



1639, Mr Attorney Grath is ordered to prepare a pardon for this man.

[Signed]

Francis Windbanke

pardon and sent to fight. This suggests that the king was having trouble getting enough men to be in his army, if he was willing to let criminals out of jail to fight for him. Were there lots of criminals in the king's armies or was this an unusual case? We would have to read more documents to find out.