



Analyzing Primary Sources

Social Studies School Service

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Primary & Secondary Sources

Primary sources are historical documents, written accounts by first-hand witnesses, or objects that have survived from the past. Examples include letters, personal papers, government documents, oral accounts, diaries, maps, photographs, articles of clothing, artifacts (including art objects and architecture), coins, or stamps.



Primary & Secondary Sources

Secondary sources are accounts of past events created by people some time after those events happened.



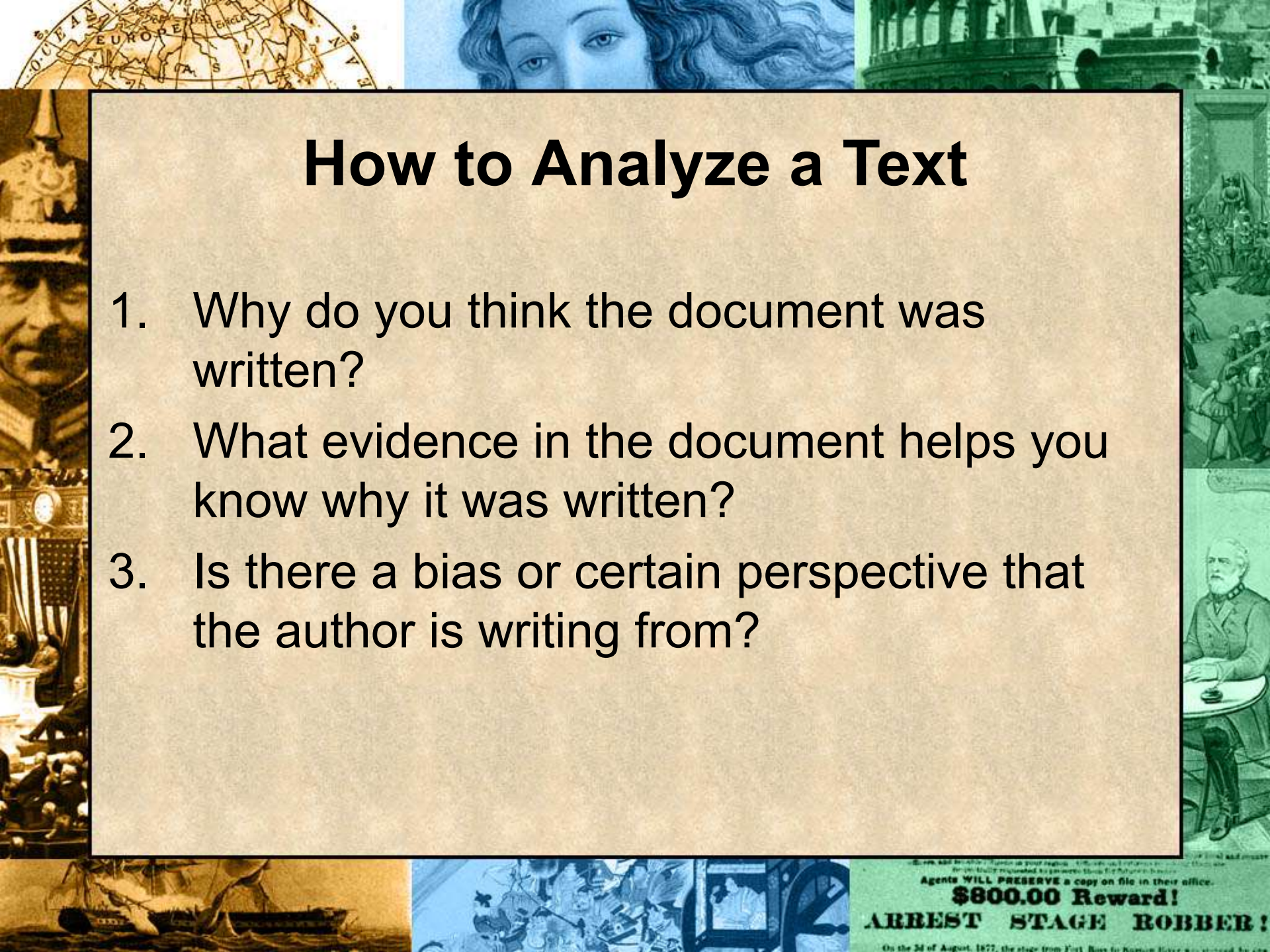
Questions for Analyzing Primary Sources

1. Who created the source and why?
2. Did the recorder have first-hand knowledge of the event, or report what others saw or heard?
3. Was the recorder a neutral party or did the author have opinions or interests that might have influenced what was recorded?
4. Did the recorder wish to inform or persuade others? Did the recorder have reasons to be honest or dishonest?



Bias or Perspective

- Most evidence that historians analyze is biased in one way or another. It represents a certain perspective from one person or a group. Historians use the following guidelines when reviewing evidence from the past:
- Every piece of evidence and every source must be read or viewed skeptically and critically.
- Evidence should not be taken at face value. The author's point of view must be considered.
- Each piece of evidence and source must be crosschecked and compared with related sources.



How to Analyze a Text

What type of document is this? Is it a letter, an official proclamation, a private diary entry, an advertisement, or perhaps a coded message?

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On the 24 of August, 1877, the stage from Fort Ross to Russian River was stopped by

How to Analyze a Text

WESTERN UNION TELEGRAM

RECEIVED 1887

NEW YORK: EARLTON, PRESSER

via Galveston

JAN 20 1917

Send the following telegram, subject to the terms on back hereof, which are hereby agreed to

GERMAN LEGATION
MEXICO CITY

130	13042	13401	8501	115	3528	416	17214	6491	11310
18147	18222	21560	10247	11518	23677	13605	3494	14936	
98092	5905	11311	10392	10371	0302	21290	5161	39695	
23571	17504	11269	18276	18101	0317	0228	17694	4473	
23284	22200	19452	21589	67893	5569	13918	8958	12137	
1333	4725	4458	5905	17166	13851	4458	17149	14471	6706
13950	12224	6929	14991	7382	15857	67893	14218	36477	
5870	17553	87893	5870	5454	16102	15217	22801	17138	
21001	17388	7446	23638	18222	6719	14331	15021	23845	
3156	23552	22096	21604	4797	9497	22406	20855	4377	
23610	18140	22260	5905	13347	20420	39889	13732	20887	
6929	5275	18507	52262	1340	22049	13339	11265	22295	
10439	14814	4178	6992	8784	7032	7357	6926	52262	11267
21100	21272	9346	9559	22464	15874	18502	18500	15857	
2188	5376	7381	98092	16127	13486	9350	9220	76036	14219
5144	2831	17920	11347	17142	11264	7667	7762	15099	9110
10482	97556	3569	3670						

BEPNSTOPFF.

Charge German Embassy.

MAILED TELEGRAM RECEIVED.

By *Wm. H. E. Hoff*

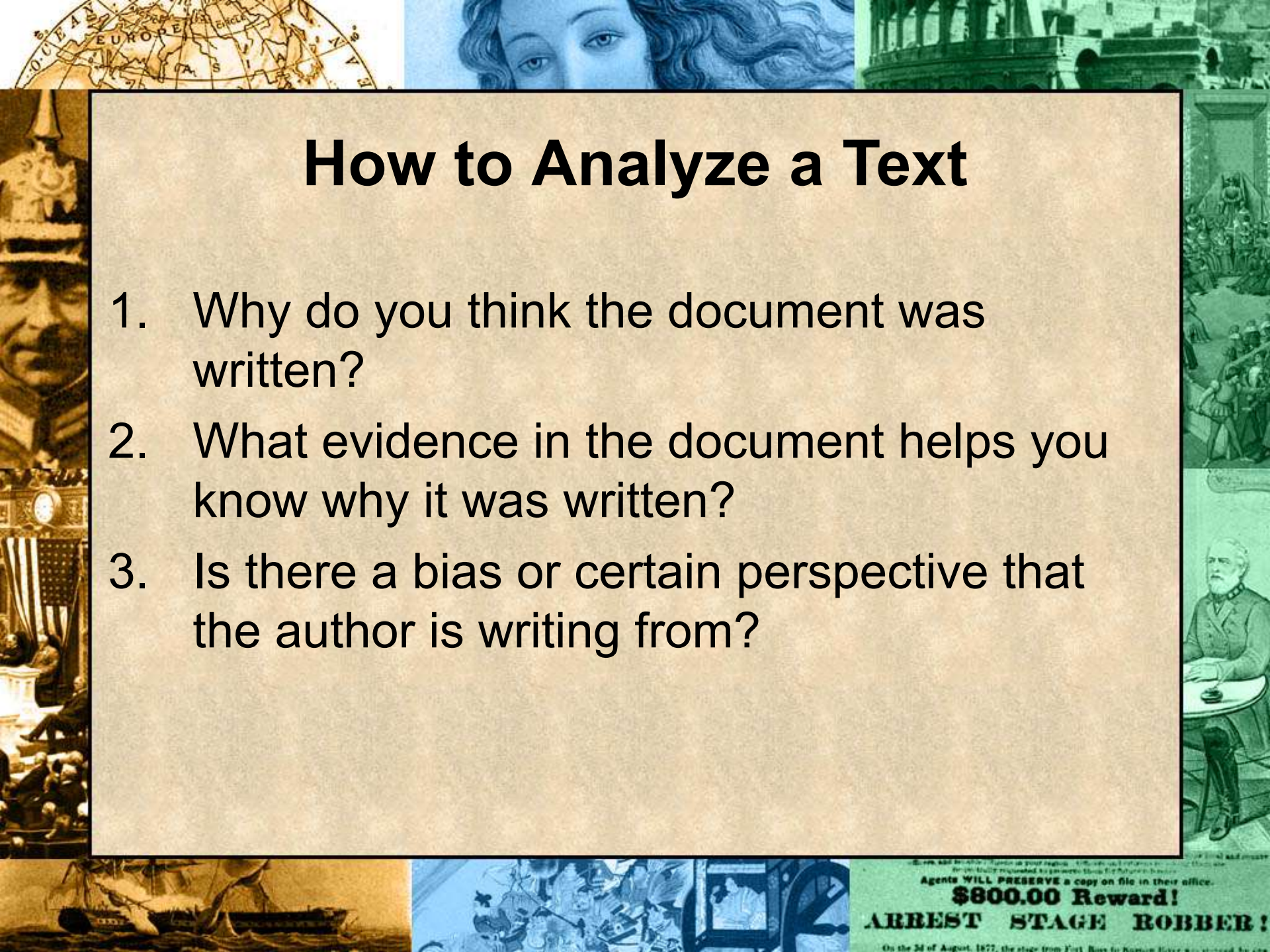
Date *Oct 27 1887*

FROM 2nd from London # 5747.

"We intend to begin on the first of February unrestricted submarine warfare. We shall endeavor in spite of this to keep the United States of America neutral. In the event of this not succeeding, we make Mexico a proposal of alliance on the following basis: make war together, make peace together, generous financial support and an understanding on our part that Mexico is to reconquer the lost territory in Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona. The settlement in detail is left to you. You will inform the President of the above most secretly as soon as the outbreak of war with the United States of America is certain and add the suggestion that he should, on his own initiative, *invite* Japan to immediate adherence and at the same time mediate between Japan and ourselves. Please call the President's attention to the fact that the ruthless employment of our submarines now offers the prospect of compelling England in a few months to make peace." Signed, ZIMMERMAN.

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On the 24 of August, 1877, the stage from Fort Ross to Russian River was robbed by...



How to Analyze a Text

1. Why do you think the document was written?
2. What evidence in the document helps you know why it was written?
3. Is there a bias or certain perspective that the author is writing from?



How to Analyze a Photograph

Study the photograph for several minutes and write down everything that you think is important. Then divide the image into quadrants (4 sections) and detail the important elements from each section.



How to Analyze a Photograph



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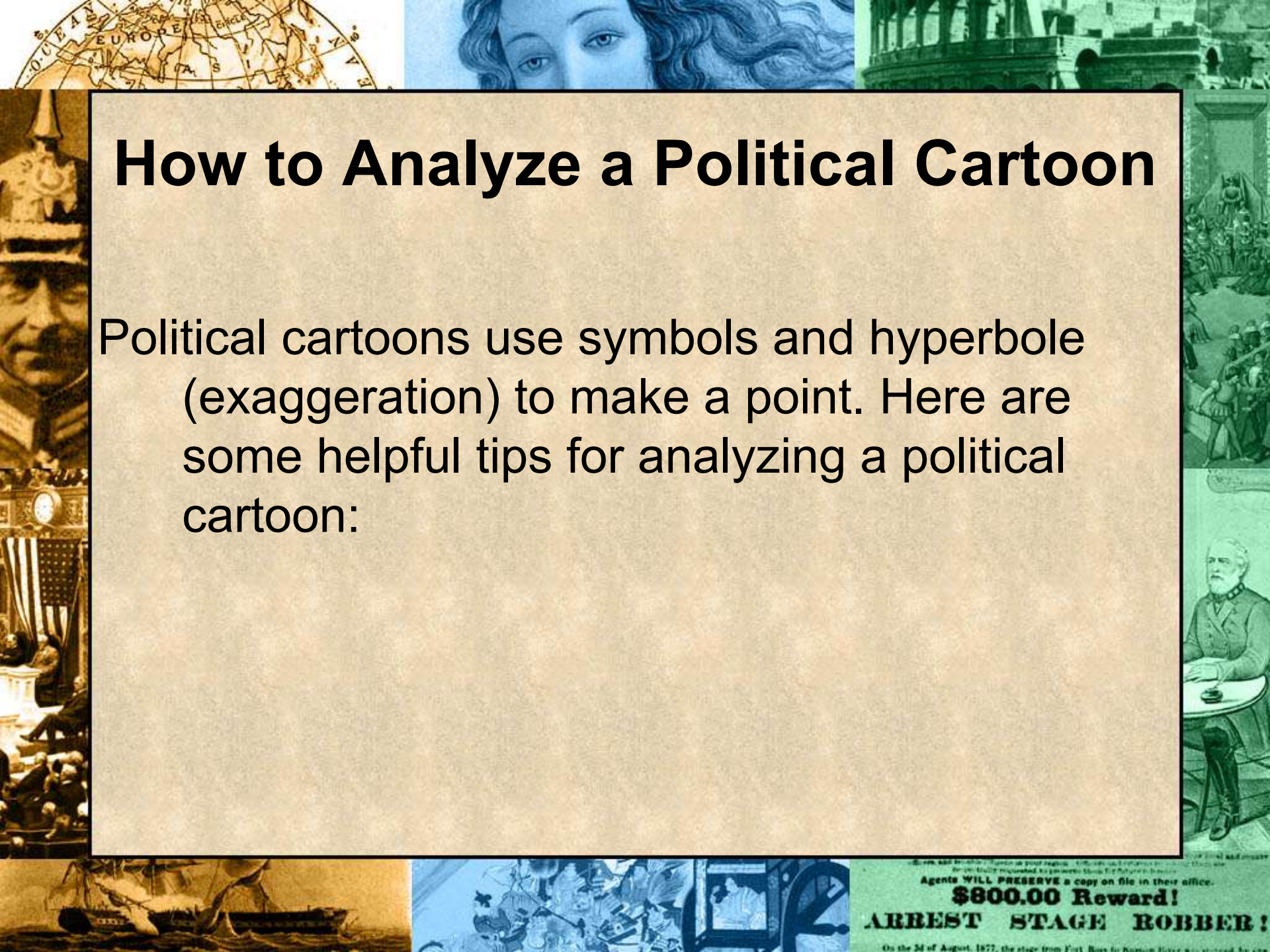
ARREST STAGE ROBBER!

On the 24 of August, 1877, the stage from Fort Ross to Russian River was stopped by...



How to Analyze a Photograph

- What is the subject of the photograph? What does the photograph reveal about its subject?
- What is the setting for the photograph?
- What other details do you observe?
- When and where in the past do you think the photograph was taken? How can you tell?
- How would you describe the photographer's point of view?



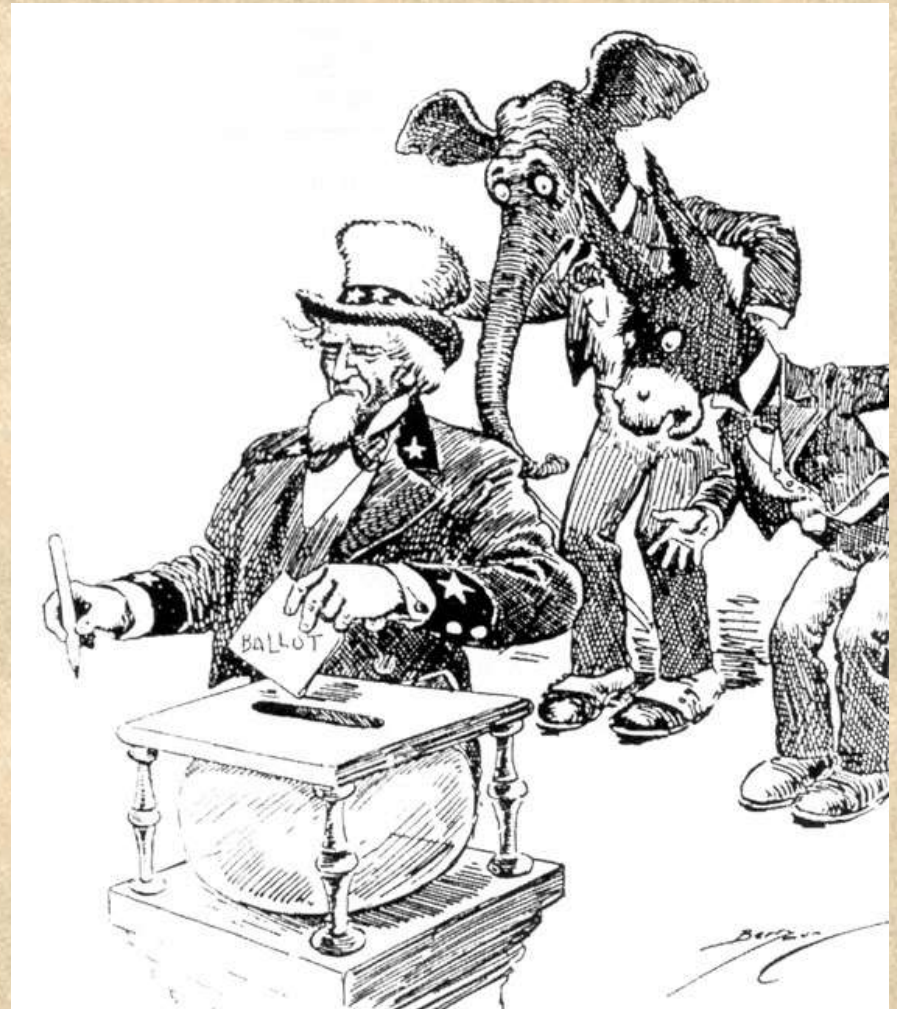
How to Analyze a Political Cartoon

Political cartoons use symbols and hyperbole (exaggeration) to make a point. Here are some helpful tips for analyzing a political cartoon:

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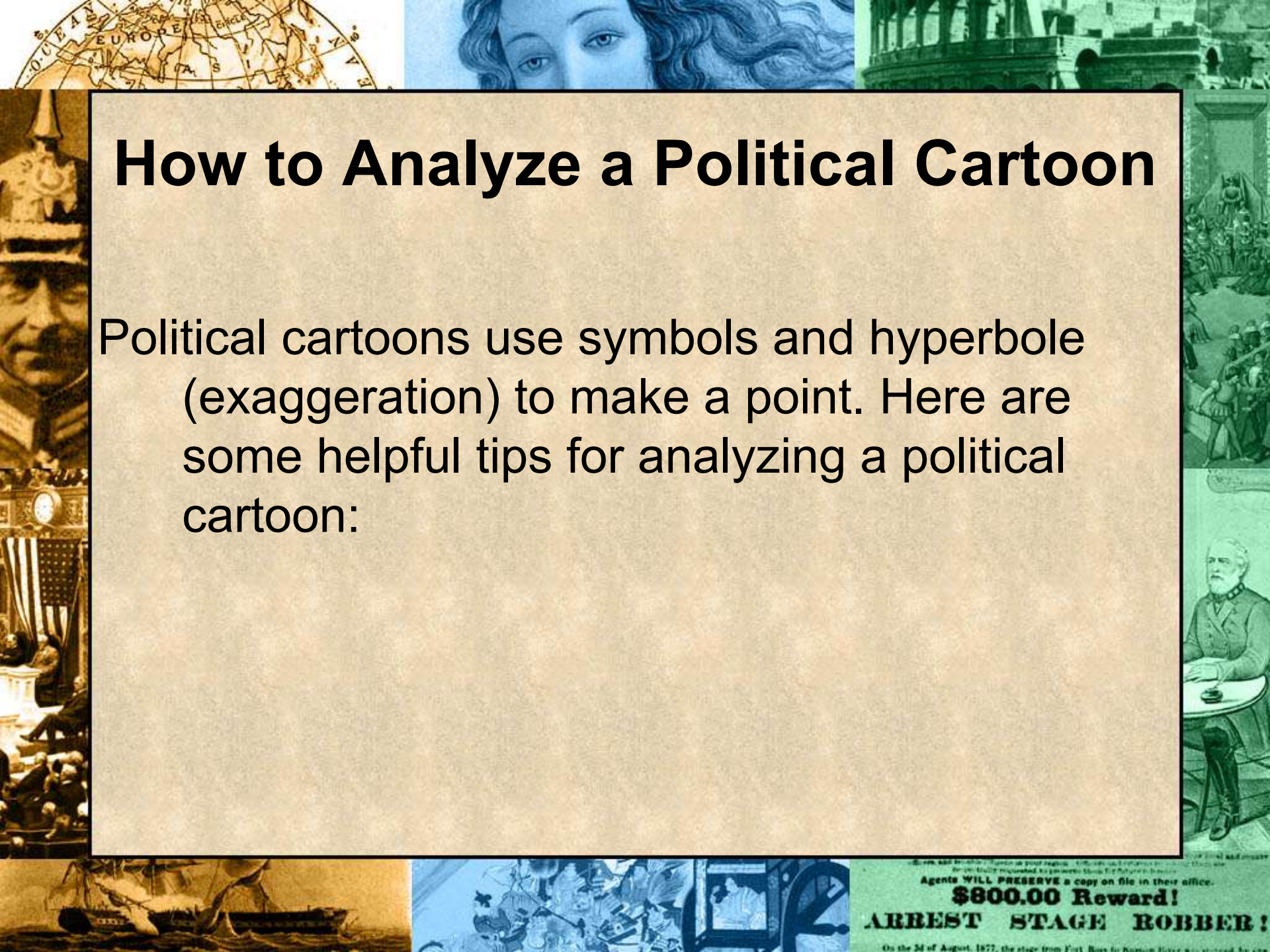
On the 24 of August, 1877, the stage from Fort Ross to Russian River was robbed by...

How to Analyze a Political Cartoon



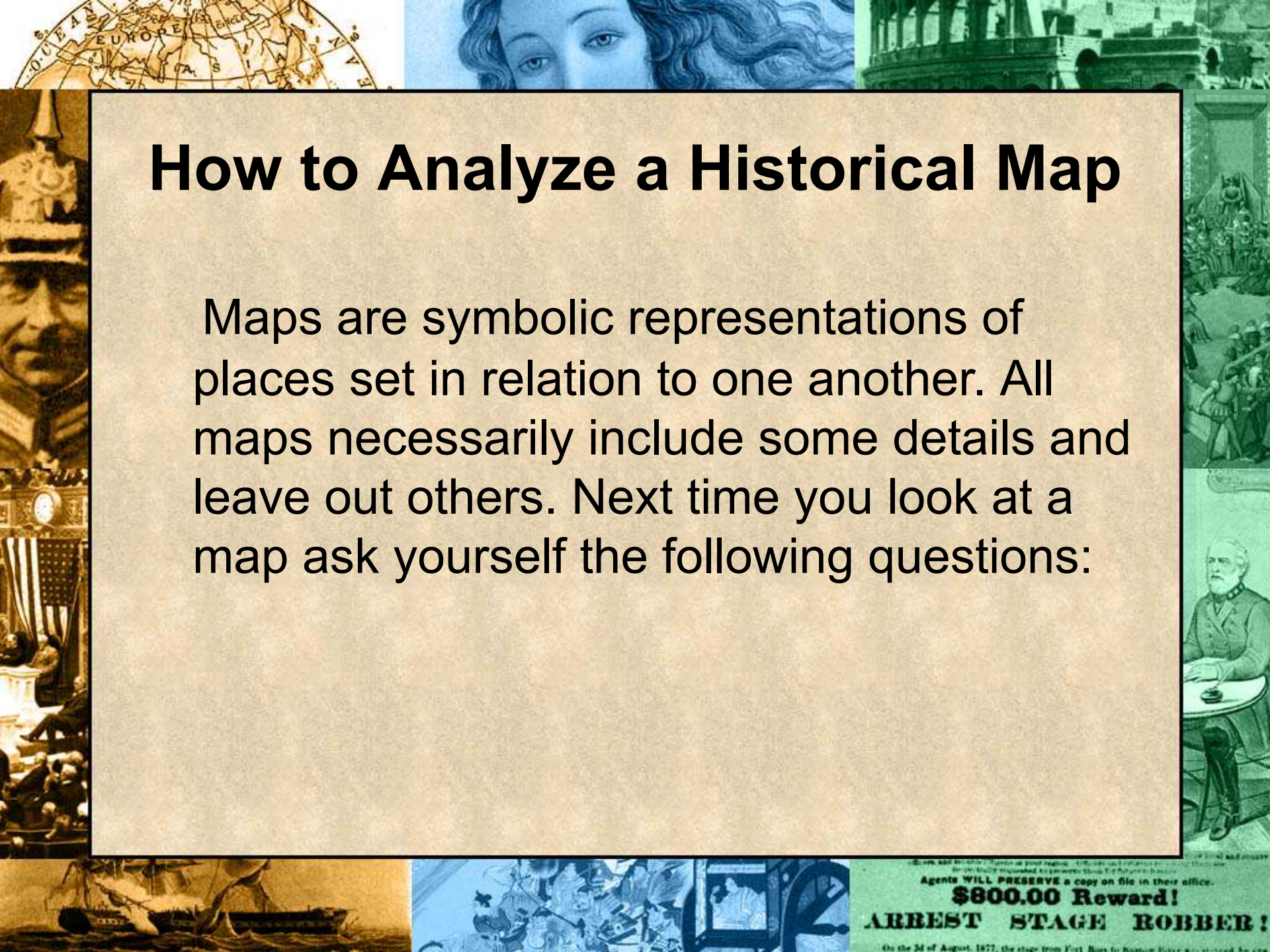
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On the 24 of August, 1877, the stage from Fort Ross to Boston Bay was stopped by



How to Analyze a Political Cartoon

1. List the objects, people or symbols you see in the cartoon.
2. What do you think each symbol means?
3. Describe the action taking place in the cartoon.
4. Are there words? Do they help to clarify the cartoon's symbols?
5. In your opinion, what is the message of the cartoon? Do you think others will interpret it differently?



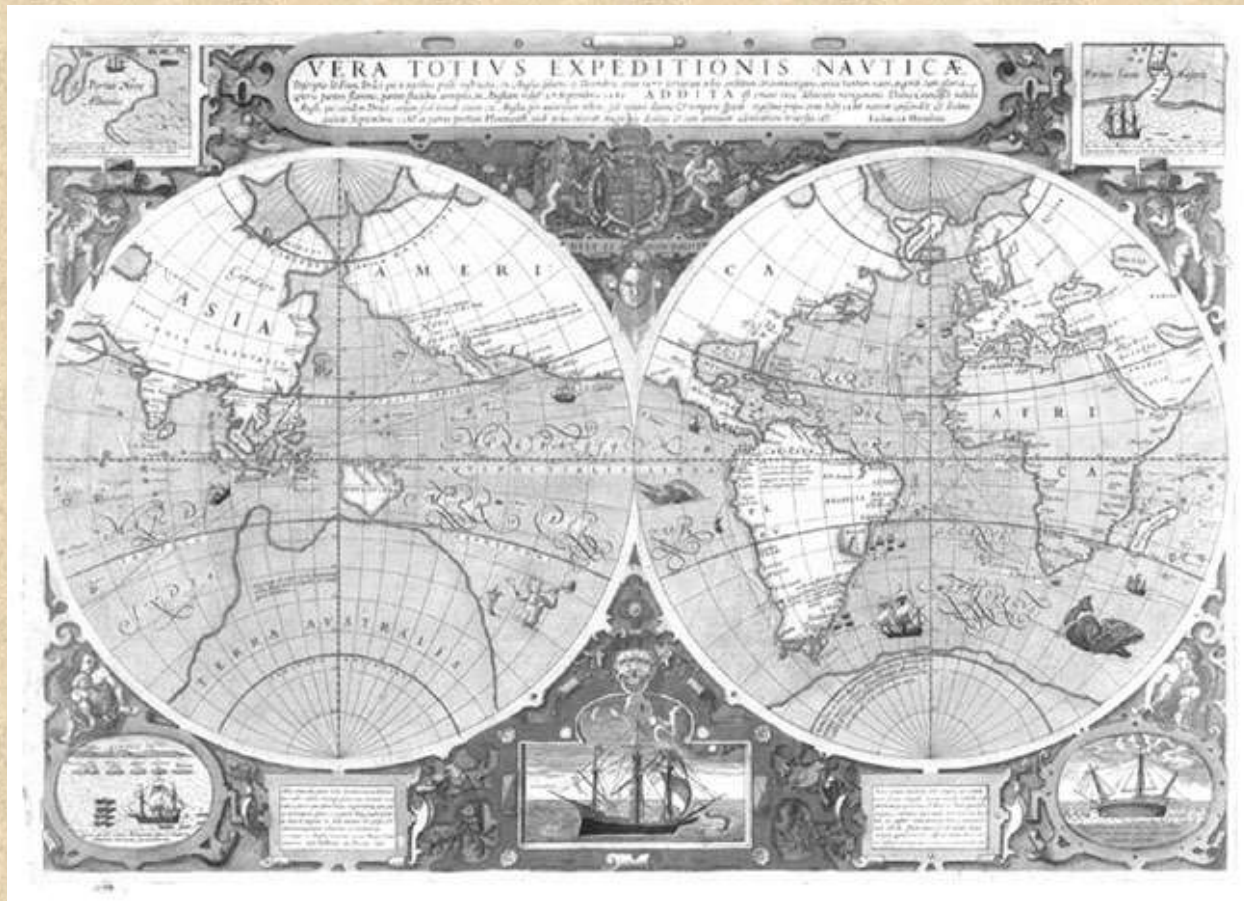
How to Analyze a Historical Map

Maps are symbolic representations of places set in relation to one another. All maps necessarily include some details and leave out others. Next time you look at a map ask yourself the following questions:

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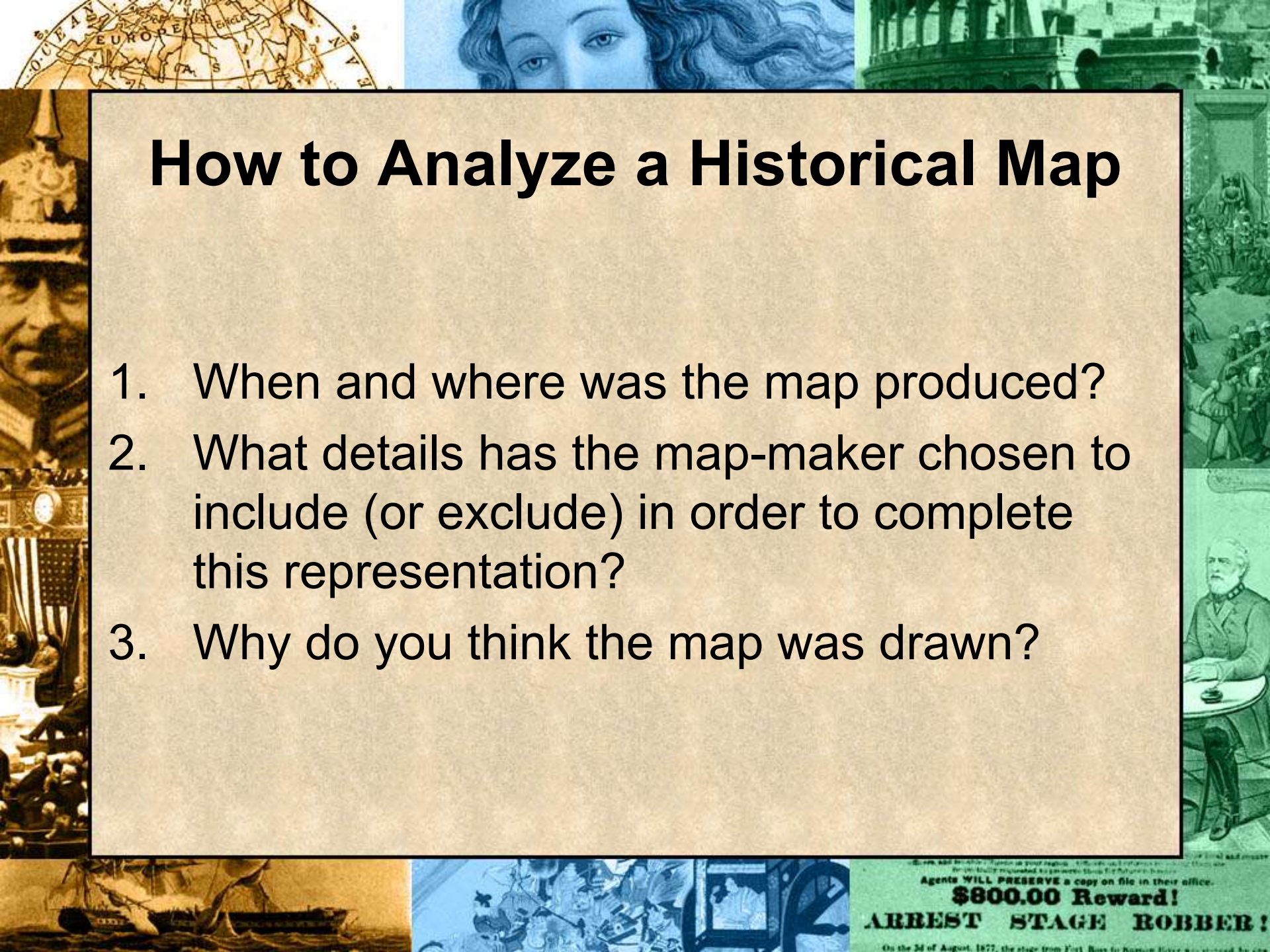
On the 24 of August, 1877, the stage from Fort Ross to Russian River was stopped by a

How to Analyze a Historical Map



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On the 24 of August, 1877, the stage from Fort Ross to Russian River was robbed by...



How to Analyze a Historical Map

1. When and where was the map produced?
2. What details has the map-maker chosen to include (or exclude) in order to complete this representation?
3. Why do you think the map was drawn?



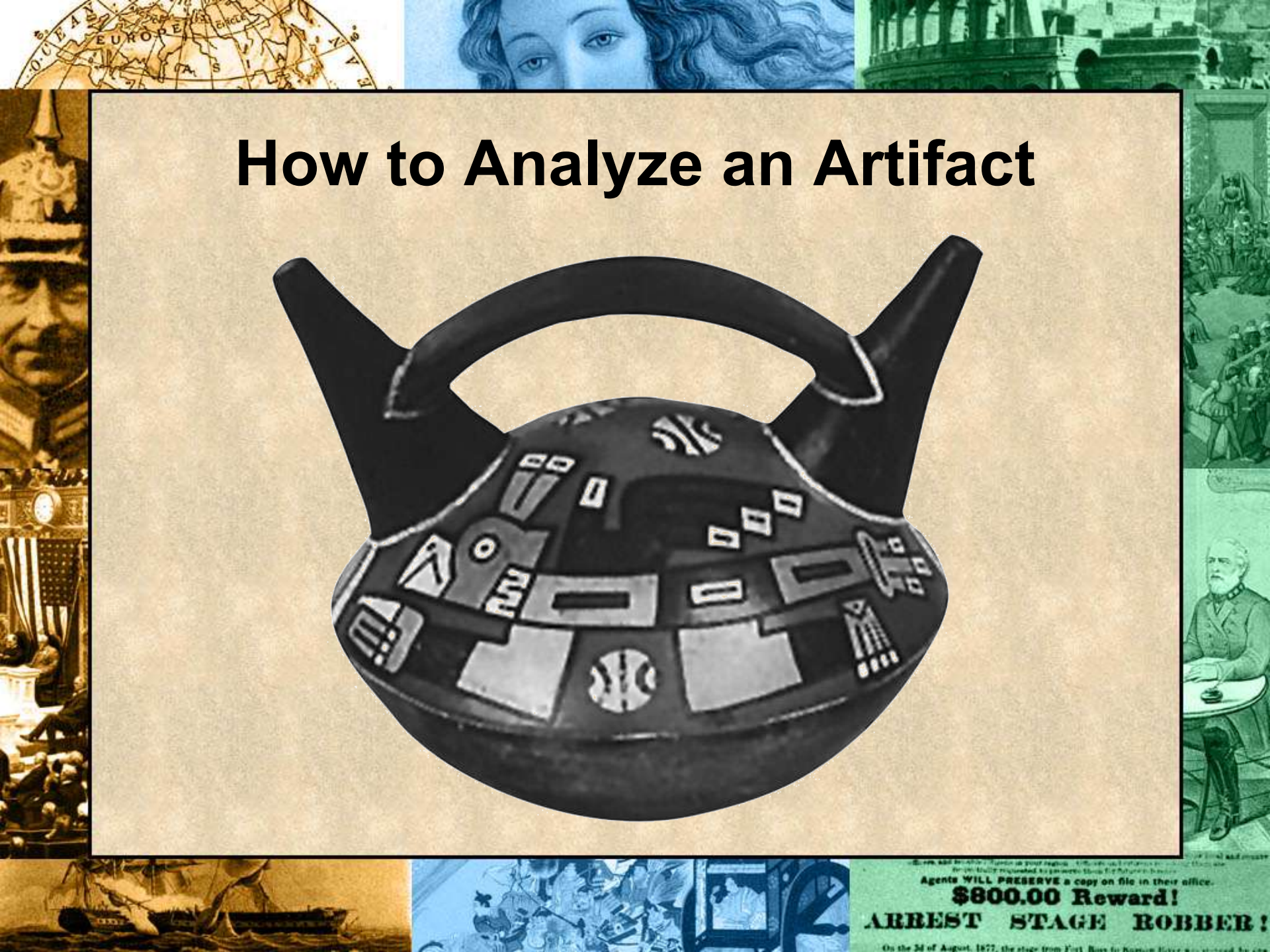
How to Analyze an Artifact

Artifacts take on many forms. They might be a coin, a stone tool found in an archaeology excavation, a piece of clothing, or even a piece of trash from your classroom's rubbish bin. Keep these points in mind when analyzing an artifact:

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How to Analyze an Artifact



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How to Analyze an Artifact

1. Why was this object created?
2. What and where would it have been used?
3. What does the artifact tell us about the technology at the time it was created?
4. What can it tell us about the life and times of the people who used it?