**Analyze Multiple Accounts**

Informational text can be written from different perspectives

A **firsthand** account of an event or topic is based on an author’s personal experience. Diaries, autobiographies, and letters are considered to be firsthand accounts. The author’s perspective with regard to the event or topic may be influenced by his or her feelings about it.

A **secondhand account** of an event or topic is based on an author’s research, rather than personal experience. Encyclopedia entries, biographies, and textbooks are considered to be secondhand accounts. The author’s perspective with regard to the event or topic is usually neutral. The author simply states facts about it.

The following passages are three accounts that relate to the same topic: indentured servitude in the American colonies. Two are firsthand accounts and one is a secondhand account. Read each and see how to analyze it.

**Passage A**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  |  |
| **Indentured Servants**  Early settlers in the American colonies had a lot of land but not enough people to work on it. So, beginning in the decade after the settlement of Jamestown, Virginia, in 1607, many men and women came to the colonies to live as indentured servants. In exchange for their passage overseas and room and board, these men and women agreed to work for a period of between four and seven years. Then they would be considered free. Until then, they had to fulfill their contracts by working very hard. Their lives were harsh and restricted. People who tried to run away could be punished by having their contracts extended. If they survived the hard labor, however, indentured servants received freedom packages which sometimes included at least 25 acres of land. |  |
|  |  |

This passage is a **secondhand account.**

* The author of this passage was not an indentured servant and has no personal experience with indentured servitude.
* Instead, the author uses researched information to tell about indentured servants.
* The author’s purpose for writing is to inform readers.
* The author’s perspective with regard to indentured servitude is neutral. The author states facts about both the drawbacks and the potential outcomes of being an indentured servant.

**Passage B**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  |  |
| **Adapted from a letter by Richard Frethorne, an Indentured Servant:**  Virginia, 1623  Loving and Kind Father and Mother,  There is nothing here to comfort me. Since I left the ship, all I have eaten is watery porridge and peas. There is not enough meat or poultry to be had; I haven’t seen any deer around, and I am working too hard to hunt for fowl. Early until late I work and work, awarded for my labor with yet more porridge. Four men have to share a meager serving of bread, so it’s little wonder that so many have fallen ill.  Not only am I hungry, I hardly have any clothing. My cloak was even stolen by a man whom I believe sold it for food. Fortunately, Mr. Jackson in Jamestown is kind to me and has given me some fish, but I am still miserable and hungry. I want nothing more than to go home. I do beg you, good Father, to release me from my great grief. I know you would cry if you saw my pathetic state. Give my love to all my friends and family. The answer to this letter will mean life or death for me; please, Father, send for me as soon as possible.  Richard |  |
|  |  |

This passage is a **firsthand account.**

* The author of this letter is a young man named Richard Frethorne. He is telling about his personal experiences of living in Virginia as an indentured servant.
* The author’s purpose for writing is to persuade his parents to let him come home.
* The author’s perspective with regard to indentured servitude is negative. His experience as an indentured servant has been very harsh. He is trying to convince his parents to send for him by showing just how harsh it has been.

**Passage C**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  |  |
| **Adapted from an advertisement in the *Virginia Gazette, Parks*from November 12, 1736:**  A white servant boy named John Turner, belonging to Mr. Darby Skinner of Hampton, was sent to Williamsburg and has not returned. It is suspected that he has run away. He had on a blue jacket and trousers and had with him a small bay horse. . .Whoever will bring the boy and horse to Mr. Darby Skinner shall have a reasonable reward, over and above what the law allows.  *Credit:Virginia Gazette (Parks), Williamsburg,* November 12, 1736. |  |
|  |  |

This passage is a **firsthand account.**

* The author of this newspaper advertisement is a man named Darby Skinner. He is telling about how his servant, John Turner, ran away.
* The author’s purpose is to persuade anyone who might find John Turner to bring the boy and the horse back to Hampton.
* The author’s perspective with regard to indentured servitude is unsympathetic. According to Darby Skinner, John Turner belongs to him just as much as the horse does. Skinner feels that Turner owes him a debt, and he is trying to convince others to find Turner by offering a reward.