HOW TO READ A MEMORANDUM

Correspondence within the government is often formatted like the following example. This worksheet will help you understand how to read all parts of this type of correspondence to prepare for the Situation Room Experience.

- **Find sender, receiver, subject, etc. here**

- **The main message**

- **Notification of additional attachments to the message**

- **NOTE: Text like “Confidential” that denotes the level of secrecy around a message**

- **Recipient approves/disapproves a suggestion**

- **Note the “declassified” stamp that makes the document available for the public to read**
HOW TO WATCH A NEWS REPORT

TIPS:

• Television is a visual medium. Watch the report once without the sound. Evaluate the images. Read the titles and text. Predict the content and tone of the report.
• Watch the report with the sound. Listen carefully to vocal inflection as well as content.

Example of a Breaking News report:

1. Take notes as you watch the news report shown in class or a report at home. Add in any questions or comments that you have at any point in the report:

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2. Who created the report? Do you think that any bias was shown in the report?

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

The term “Breaking News” means you are meant to be watching new information about and event that is happening right now.


2. Did the reporter accurately reflect what was happening in the background?

3. Did you bring previous knowledge or preconceived ideas to your experience? Did this influence your experience of the material?

4. What are the differences between a breaking news broadcast and a pre-recorded report? What might change in the images, content, situation, and level of impact of each?

5. What were some of your emotions while watching the video, and what prompted them?

6. Do you think the report was one-sided or did it explain differing viewpoints on the situation?

7. What two or more questions would you like to ask about the situation you just watched unfold?
HOW TO READ A BILL

Bill – proposed law, amendment to a law, or amendment to the Constitution

Legislative session of the bill:
A new Congress number starts every 2 years. The 114th Congress is in year 2015. Within each Congress, there are two sessions.

The bill number is assigned by the House or Senate clerk. HR or HB indicates a House bill, while S or SB indicates a Senate bill. A bill's number is unique to it throughout the legislative session.

Date of proposal

Stated purpose

Title – the short title of a bill provides a comprehensive, clear brief summary of the subject of a major portion of the text. Titles should not conceal or mislead the readers.

Sections:
If several topics must be covered in a bill, it is divided into various sections.

Subsections:
Within sections, it is sometimes appropriate to designate further subsections (for clarification) indicated by (a), (b), (c) and then (1), (2), etc.

Authors followed by the committee the bill was referred to
How to Read Tables and Charts

Know what is being measured: look at the graph title, x & y axis, and other labels or keys to familiarize yourself with the content.

Look for sub-categories or keys that allow for further analysis of graph or chart data. For example, the color coding in these two graphs allows for easier differentiation, and the sub-categories of heavy, light, and medium TV viewers in minutes watched per day clarifies meaning in the second graph.

What are the units used in measurement? (Hours versus minutes is a big difference!)

Test your graph reading skills:

Can you state one data piece from the graph? Example: Heavy TV viewers for Local TV News watch about 21.8 minutes of it per day.

Look for short-term and long-term trends or surprising data to make inferences and generalizations. (Does anything double or show dramatic change? What could have caused this?)

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**TV News Viewing**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Percent of Americans Reached</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local TV News</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Network TV News</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cable TV News</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Nielsen data, February 2013

**Average Time News Consumers Spend on Various Platforms**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Platform</th>
<th>HEAVY VIEWERS</th>
<th>MEDIUM VIEWERS</th>
<th>LIGHT VIEWERS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local TV News</td>
<td>21.8 min</td>
<td>6.5 min</td>
<td>1.2 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Network TV News</td>
<td>31.8</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cable TV News</td>
<td>72.4</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Nielsen data, February 2013
HOW TO READ A CABLE

Cable - the term given to a confidential message.

The situation and subject matter of the cable

The subject of the cable

The message

The author

All the people who will get the cable

Date

PAGE 18 SITUATION(S) MESSAGE(S) LISTING

SITUATION:

FLASH

Z 310101Z MAR 81 223

FROM WASHDC

TO ALL DIPLOMATIC POSTS FLASH

STATE Wash DC

UNCLASS STATE 00707

E.G. 120651/A

TAGS DIP

SUBJECT: STATEMENT TO FOREIGN GOVERNMENTS

1. THE PRESIDENT HAS UNDERGONE SURGERY FOR THE GUNSHOT WOUND RECEIVED IN THE ATTEMPTED ASSASSINATION. THIS AFTERNOON IN WASHINGTON, THE BULLET HAS BEEN REMOVED. THE PRESIDENT HAS BEEN REMOVED TO POST-OPERATIVE CARE, IS IN GOOD CONDITION WITH PROGNOSIS EXCELLENT.

2. PLEASE INFORM YOUR GOVERNMENT OF THIS LATEST DEVELOPMENT AND CONTINUE TO ASSURE YOUR HOST THAT THE CONTINUITY OF OUR GOVERNMENT IS ASSURED.

3. WE WILL KEEP YOU CLOSELY INFORMED AS EVENTS WARRANT.

BY

******* WHS COMMENTS *******

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

SITUATION ROOM

E X P E R I E N C E