

Skill Worksheet

Analyze Primary Sources

Primary sources provide valuable information about the past. They let us find out directly about historical events. Primary sources include government records, personal journals, photographs, paintings, and speeches. Read the introduction and excerpt below. Then answer the questions that follow.

Ghana, which was once called the Gold Coast, won its independence from Great Britain in 1957. As head of the nation's new government, President Kwame Nkrumah was the first African to lead a black government since colonial rule began. In 1961, he gave this speech to representatives at the United Nations.

Over 200 million of our people cry out with one voice of tremendous power—and what do they say? We do not ask for death for our oppressors, we do not pronounce wishes of ill-fate for our slave masters, we make an assertion of just and positive demand. Our voice booms across the oceans and mountains, it calls for freedom for Africa. Africa wants her freedom. Africa must be free. . . .

For years Africa has been the footstool of colonialism and imperialism, exploitation and degradation. . . . Her sons languished in the chains of slavery and humiliation, and African exploiters and self-appointed controllers strode across her land with incredible inhumanity, without mercy, without shame, without honour. These days are gone for ever and now I, an African, stand before this august Assembly of the United Nations and shall speak with the voice of freedom proclaiming to the world the dawn of a new era.

Questions

1. What information about the historical context of this speech does the introduction give you? When and why was it written?

2. Use a dictionary to look up unfamiliar words. List those words and their meanings.

3. What is the main idea of President Nkrumah's speech?

4. Do you think Kwame Nkrumah is a credible source in asserting what freedom means for Africans? Why or why not?

5. How might a black African feel after having heard this speech? What might have been the impact of this speech on representatives at the United Nations?
