**Document Analysis Worksheet**

When historians examine a primary source document, they conduct an ***external*** and ***internal*** analysis. This analysis helps determine the document’s authenticity and credibility as evidence. The historian then considers whether the evidence presented in the document addresses an important historical question or problem.

Use the following outline as a guide in your analysis of the two documents from the Cleveland Cliffs Iron Mining Company.

**External Analysis** (Establishing the historical origin and context of a documents creation)

1. Who created or authored the documents?

In most texts, an author’s name appears near the top; sometimes, as with letters, it will be at the bottom instead. On pictures, the creator’s name may appear in a bottom corner, in a caption outside the image, or nowhere at all. The audience often has infer the author from the document’s content.

Why is knowing and confirming authorship important?

1. Where were the documents created?

Published works will usually have a title page, masthead, or byline; letters will usually have a return address.

Why is it important to confirm the location?

1. When were the documents created?

What do you know about the historical context of the document’s creation? Was it a particularly important time in Upper Peninsula or United States history?

Why is it important to confirm the date?

1. Why were the documents created?

What were the authors trying to accomplish? Simply inform a single reader? Change public opinion? Persuade influential decision-makers? Create a lasting historical record for posterity? Win a contest such as a court case or election? Educate a particular audience about new facts?

Why is it important to understand the document’s purpose?

**Internal Analysis** (Evaluating and interpreting the substantive information or evidence presented by the documents)

1. List three things that the authors wrote that you believe are important.
2. What are the author’s warranted or unwarranted claims?

When people take the time to write, they usually have something important to say, or they are trying to sway someone else to their point of view. Use the following techniques to ascertain an author’s warranted or unwarranted claims:

* Look at the beginning. The main point may be plainly stated, or the author may pose a question he or she intends to answer;
* Look at the end. There may be a short conclusion where the author sums everything up;
* Look at the middle. Paragraphs may open with a topic sentence or end with a conclusion reached. Chapters may have entire paragraphs that do this;
* Look for statements of what the author claims are “facts” or the “truth.”

1. Identify Underlining Assumptions

What type of assumptions about the author of a document do you need to make in order to understand and evaluate a primary source?

* Review the claims above. What must a person believe for those claims to be true?
* Look for the author’s values.
* Look for omissions in the story. What is the author purposely leaving out of the narrative?

1. Identify the Authors’ Point of View

Almost every creator of a document embraces a cluster of beliefs, desires, and values that go together. This is his or her conceptual framework, or point of view, which is usually shared by a community of like‐minded people. Identifying a document’s basic point of view allows you to establish possible unrevealed biases or prejudices.

1. List two things the documents tell you about working life in the iron mines of the Upper Peninsula.
2. List three things the documents tell you about the United States during this period in the country’s history.