**Interpreting Sources:**

**help for annotating your evidence in your research**

1. Place the source or sources in the historical context. This shows you are **informed**. Going beyond the obvious points and bringing out less evident points also shows you are **informed.**
2. Then add something else to show you are **perceptive**. This could be done by commenting on:
   * what is being said in the source
   * who the author of the source is and whether they are reliable or may be biased
   * whether the source is primary or secondary and the key issues around this
   * what the tone of the source is and what the reason is for the source being written.
3. Read the date of the resource carefully – the date of publication does not necessarily mean that a resource was written in that year.
4. Take note of whether the source is primary or secondary. Remember a source found in a secondary book can still be primary.
5. Remember the pitfalls of secondary sources. Historians can provide different explanations of the same event as a result of different interpretations of primary resources.
6. Remember the pitfalls of primary sources:
   * They can often be patchy and give an incomplete picture of events.
   * They may be biased and give a prejudiced or one-sided version of events.
   * They may be so influenced by personal feeling that they are difficult to generalise from.
7. Remember all sources are useful, but not all are reliable.
8. What is the intent of the source – is it a personal letter, a publication, a piece of propaganda or an official document? Does this make it more or less reliable?
9. Reliability can be verified by checking other sources. Corroboration – if other sources are saying the same thing then you can be quite sure it’s correct – if its only found in one source and not others, can you trust it?
10. Take note of the author of a source. Are they a contemporary or a revisionist? Are they male or female? What country to they come from? What could this mean about their viewpoints?