

Yellow Fever Mini-Lecture

Questions	Notes
	<p data-bbox="500 346 836 382">Last week we learned:</p> <p data-bbox="500 577 844 613">Two Sides, Same Coin:</p> <p data-bbox="500 808 1247 844">“All was not right in our city.” Dr. Benjamin Rush</p> <p data-bbox="500 976 824 1012">Haiti To Philadelphia</p> <p data-bbox="500 1144 828 1180">Yellow Fever Spreads</p> <p data-bbox="500 1312 673 1348">Mass Panic</p> <p data-bbox="500 1480 665 1516">Treatment</p> <p data-bbox="500 1648 698 1684">Mass Exodus</p> <p data-bbox="500 1806 1068 1841">Philadelphia’s Free Black Community</p>

	Dilemma: What would you do?
Lecture Summary:	

Yellow Fever Inquiry Part 1

Document 1: Drinker Diary

Publication (type of source, date of source)	Point of View (who is the author, and what is their perspective?)
Intended Audience	Predicted Purpose (what is doc's purpose?)

Elizabeth Sandwith Drinker, a white Philadelphia Quaker, began keeping a daily diary in 1758, when she was 23 years old. Drinker remained in the city during the Yellow Fever epidemic of 1793, recording news from her merchant husband, Henry (referred to as "H.D." or "H.S.D") and other visitors, as well as her own observations on the effects of the epidemic. Although no one in Drinker's immediate family succumbed [died] to the epidemic, four of her nine children died in childhood, an adult daughter died of cancer, and two others suffered from debilitating [crippling] illness. Drinker continued to chronicle [record] life in Philadelphia until her death in 1807.

Aug. 23. A Fever prevails in the City, particularly in Water St. between Race and Arch Streets. of ye malignant [*deadly*] kind; numbers have died of it. Some say it was occasioned [*caused*] by damaged Coffee and Fish, which were stored at Smiths'; others say it was imported in a Vessel from Cape Francois (city in Haiti), which lay at our wharf [*dock*], or at ye wharf back of our store. Doctor Hutchinson found, as 'tis said, upwards of 70 persons sick in that square of different disorders; several of this putrid [*rotting*] or bilious [*vomiting*] fever. 'Tis really an alarming and serious time.

Aug. 26. We have been rendered very uneasy this evening by news from the City of a great number of funerals that have been seen this day there. Hope and believe that the number is greatly exaggerated. We have not heard from home since seventh day when John Lamsback was taken ill and left the store.

Aug. 27. The Yellow Fever spreads in the City -- many are taken off with it, and many of other disorders. They have burnt Tar in ye Streets, and taken many other precautions; many families have left ye City.

Aug. 28. H. S. D. left us about 6 this morning. I gave him a small spoonful of Daffy's Elixir, and Vinegar in a sponge, and a sprig [*stem*] of wormwood. J. S. went after breakfast using the same precautions. The inhabitants [*residents*] are leaving the City in great numbers. Poor John Lamsback died yesterday.

Source: *Extracts from the Journal of Elizabeth Drinker 1759 to 1807*, edited by Henry D. Biddle. Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1889. [Link](#).

Debrief Questions	
What feelings does Elizabeth Drinker express in this text?	What is the main idea of this source? What is important about it?

Document 2: Benjamin Rush's Account

Publication (type of source, date of source)	Point of View (who is the author, and what is their perspective?)
Intended Audience	Predicted Purpose (what is doc's purpose?)

Among the comments Rush made in 1793 was one about refugees from Haiti avoiding infection from yellow fever as it struck the city. Though Rush did not know it at the time, this was no doubt because the men and women who had come from Haiti had been exposed to yellow fever before and were thus immune to it. Unfortunately, Rush took a mis-step in his assessment of another group as being immune to the disease:

From the accounts of the yellow fever which had been published by many writers, I was led to believe that the black people in our city would escape it. In consequence of this belief, I published the following extract in the American Daily Advertiser, from Dr. Lining's history of the yellow fever, as it had four times appeared in Charleston, in South Carolina.

“There is something very singular (says the doctor) in the constitution [*composition, structure*] of the Africans, which renders [*makes*] them not liable [*likely to get*] to this fever; for though many of them were as much exposed as the nurses to the infection, yet I never knew of one instance of this fever among them, though they are equally subject with the white people to the bilious fever.”

Shortly after the passage was published, Matthew Clarkson (1733–1800), the mayor of Philadelphia, wrote a response to the printer of the paper:

September 6th, 1793

Sir,
It is with peculiar satisfaction that I communicate to the public, through your paper, that the African Society, touched with the distresses which arise from the present dangerous disorder, have voluntarily undertaken to furnish [*provide*] nurses to attend the afflicted [*sick*]; and that, by applying [*asking*] to Absalom Jones and William Gray, both members of that society, they may be supplied.
Matthew Clarkson, Mayor.

But, Rush admits, he has been wrong in his belief that African-Americans would be immune to the disease:

It was not long after these worthy Africans undertook the execution of their humane offer of services to the sick before I was convinced I had been mistaken. They took the disease in common with the white people, and many of them died with it...

Parents desert their children as soon as they are infected, and in every room you enter you see no person but a solitary black man or woman near the sick...Many people thrust their parents into the street as soon as they complain of a headache.

Source: Benjamin Rush, *An Account of the Bilious Remitting Yellow Fever, as it Appeared in Philadelphia, In the Year 1793(book)*. 1794.

Debrief Questions

What flawed assumption did Rush make?

What is the main idea of this source? What is important about it?

Document 3: Mother Bethel Church Audio Tour

Publication (type of source, date of source)	Point of View (who is the author, and what is their perspective?)
Intended Audience	Predicted Purpose (what is doc's purpose?)

Click [here](#). Listen only to Stop 4.

Source: Scott, Maiken. "Yellow Fever Epidemic of 1793: 'All was not right in our city.'" PBS, 25 Oct 2019.

Debrief Questions	
What is important about recording the truth in writing?	How were the actions of Absolem Jones and Richard Allen similar to the actions of the Civil Right Movement 150 years later?