I. The Source Basics: who, what, when, where...

A. What is the type or genre of this primary source? (newspaper article,

diary, drawing, advertisement, legislation, etc.)

A poem written in december of 1675 (during kings phillips war) and then reprinted in 1721 in New London, Connecticut

B. Who is the author? What do you know about them, their goals, and their perspective? Has someone altered / changed it since it was created?

Written by Wait Winthrop who was a colonial military leader and politician during King Philip's War. He led the Massachusetts army in the war he is presumably writing about. He was born in Massachusetts Bay Colony, so he was almost certainly a puritan, which can be seen in the poem. His father and grandfather had been and were governors of their colony and Wait would also serve as governor in the late 1600s. The reprint of this in 1721 make it a posthumous work as Wait died in 1717, so it's possible there were changes made beside the change to “plain verse”, but it is unclear.

C. Who was it intended for? Think in terms of this individual source

specifically as well as the larger context in which it appears. How was this source distributed?

The poem clearly states that this version of the poem is specifically for the general public of the colonies and even specifically New London as it is reprinted there in 1721. This version is for the public because it is written in “plain verse”. It was printed by a New London publishing company. It was distributed as a broadside, which was a common form of news/info spreading in the early colonies, and was essentially a “broadcast”.

D. When and where did this primary source first appear? What version are you looking? What is the relevant historical and cultural context for this source (be as brief and specific as possible? Is this a typical source for the time period?

The source was written in 1675, but first printed and distributed in 1721. The version I am using is one of those said reprints. Written in the context of King Phillips War which was a very deadly conflict from 1675–1676 between English colonists and Native American Tribes mainly over land/colonial expansion.

II. The Message: what it’s trying to say and how it says it...

E. What does it say explicitly and how does it communicate this message?

What does it argue?

The poem recounts the difficulties faced by the British soldiers in Kings Phillips war and how brave they were. However, Wait also blames the british colonists themselves for causing this because God was angry (likely for New Englands moral failing) at them (very puritan). The poem communicates this through vivid imagery and a general religious/moral tone. It argues that people should be appreciative of the soldiers, but also recognize that this war was God being angry at the colonists for now being good puritans, which implies the Natives were some kind of weapon of the devil. Argues the war was a religious trial.

F. How is this source organized? How are its parts related?

Broken into numbered stanzas/lines, all related as part of the same poem

G. How does the author use language (or visuals) to communicate? What is

the implicit meaning of this source?

Uses lots of religious language, implicitly suggests collective responsibility, divine punishment and test, spiritual warfare

H. What does this source leave out? What does it not say? What are the

limits of this source?

Leave out any Native perspective. Frames the war as purely a religious war, nothing about economics or anything. Does Not explicitly say any of the moral failing of the colonists that are making the war more difficult than it “should” be

III. The Ideas: why it’s important and how you could use it as a historian...

I. What about this source is unusual, interesting, or surprising?

It's an artistic representation of an important figure’s thoughts on a war he was leading. It was also written in 1675 but not published/distributed until 1721 which seems strange, especially since Wait was dead by then. This could be due to his familial connection to the New London colony as his father founded it. The idea that the natives were only able to make it a difficult fight was because they were instruments of the devil (fits nicely into the puritan colonist worldview).

J. What specific “how” and “why” questions can this source answer? How does this source contribute to our understanding of history? What larger questions does this source raise for you? What other sources or kinds of sources might you interpret alongside this one to gain deeper understanding of the topic?

How puritan colonists thought about their conflicts with native americans, particularly the more important figures in that society

How puritan leaders thought about their own people in respect to their action in the colonies

How religion influence the perspectives of native americans and vice versa

Raises question about what was happening in 1721 in new london that caused them to reprint this poem.

Could look at other broadsides from connecticut during 1721 to better understand the context it was reprinted in

K. How does this source deepen your understanding of the course themes / topics? How might you use this source in an assignment (final paper or elsewhere)?

The source deepens my understanding of how colonist, particularly puritan, worldviews were so wrapped up in religion that it allowed them to justify awful beliefs about the native americans and allowed them to overcome cognitive dissonance about the native people being non-advanced barbarians but also often putting up a real fight.

Winthrop, W. S. (1721) Some meditations concerning our honourable gentlemen and fellow-souldiers, in pursuit of those barbarous natives in the Narragansit-Country; and their service there. By an unfeigned friend. Re-printed at N. London, April 4. New London. [Pdf] Retrieved from the Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/2020776728/>.

This primary source is printing of a poem written by Wait Winthrop in 1675, but not printed until 1721 in New London, Connecticut. More specifically the printing is a broadside, which was a common form of broadcasting in early American colonies. The author Wait Winthrop was born into a family of governors in the Massachusetts Bay Colony, which means Wait was a puritan. He would go on to lead the Massachusetts army in King Philip's War before becoming a politician. His family, particularly his father and grandfather, were influential in the early New England colonies. King Philip's War, which the poem was written during, was a short but deadly fight between English colonists and multiple native American tribes from 1675-1676. The conflict emerged mostly because of land conflicts between the groups, as the English wanted to keep expanding their colonies into native American land. Wait writes this poem during the war in presumably sophisticated prose, as the reprint specifies the poem has been rewritten in “plain verse” by an unspecified person. This likely means Wait originally wrote the poem for himself and for people similarly educated to him, but upon reprinting someone wanted it to be more accessible to the general public.

The poem demonstrates a very particular bend to Waits beliefs about the war and why it's being fought. The first obvious meaning and purpose of the poem is to highlight how brave and incredible he and his soldiers were for fighting in this war. He emphasizes the difficult environmental problems like forests and snow, and also how the natives were stronger foes then he expected. He directly tells the audience on line 17 to “,Open your Eyes, and Sympathize, with those brave Gentlemen, A heart of Flint, it would Releut, to think how it hath been.” Wait wants the English people to know how difficult this war was. However, Wait also makes it clear throughout that the reason the war was difficult was because god was punishing the colonists for their sins. He says on line 22 once again speaking directly to the audience “O New-England , I understand, with thee God is offended: And therefore He doth humble thee, till thou shy ways hast mended.” Wait believes god is trying to humble the people of New England because they haven’t been good enough puritans. It is also not even just that god is humbling the colonists, but also that the native Americans are agents of “their god the Devil, ” (line 21) which is why they are able to put up such a fight. Wait uses very vivid imagery in the poem and lots of religious language which serves his two main points: the war was very difficult and it was difficult because the New England colonists weren’t good enough puritans. Wait frames the war as an entirely religious matter, a pure test from god, nowhere does he mention economic or territorial motives for the war.

This source is particularly interesting and useful because it seems unique as an artistic expression of an important leader's beliefs on a very violent war as it was happening, and that it was only released posthumously as Wait died in 1717 four years before it would be reprinted. The most interesting insight I was able to gather from this source was the cognitive dissonance that seemed to be present in Wait and the audience he is addressing. English colonists approached native Americans from a perspective of being superior in warfare, civilization, religion, and every aspect of life. So, in theory any war against them should be easy, especially since god was on the English side. However, when Wait enters into this war and realizes it isn’t easy he quickly decides it must be god punnishing the colonists because they haven’t been good enough puritans. The only way the native Americans could ever be able to fight back against them would be if they were agents of the devil. This framework also allows Wait to allow the audience to hold both the idea that the English are in every way better and stronger than the native Americans, but also that the soldiers are brave and deserving of sympathy and support for going into war with the agents of the devil for the sins of the colonists. The source deepens my understanding of how colonist, particularly puritan, worldviews were so wrapped up in religion that it allowed them to justify awful beliefs about the native americans and allowed them to overcome cognitive dissonance about the native people being non-advanced barbarians but also often putting up a real fight.