The 5Ws (+ H) Framework

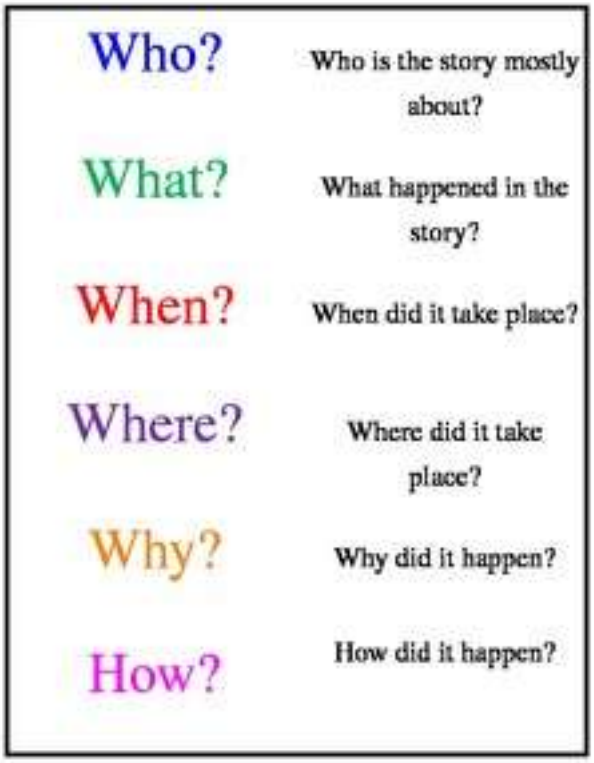


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5Ws is an acronym that stands for "**Who, What, Where, When, Why**"; most authors add a sixth question, "**How**", to the list. The **5Ws (+ H)** is an analysis method, composed of several stages that question the fundamental characteristics of a situation. They are often mentioned in journalism, research and police investigations In political science, international relations, and public policy, the **5Ws (+ H)** method serves as a **structured analytical framework** used to deconstruct complex geopolitical events, policy decisions, legislative processes, and institutional dynamics.
According to the principle of the **5Ws (+ H)**, a report, as well as a policy brief, academic report, or geopolitical analysis can only be considered rigorous and complete if it systematically addresses these fundamental questions starting with an interrogative word.

Basic information conveyed by a report according to the 5Ws (+ H) procedure:



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Core Analytical Framework for Political Analysis

Question	Political Science Focus	Analytical Application
Who?	**Political Actors & Stakeholders**	Identifies state and non-state actors, international organizations, political leaders, interest groups, or voters involved. • *Who are the key decision-makers? Who is affected by this policy?*
What?	**Political Phenomenon & Policy Subject**	Defines the specific problem, law, international treaty, election, or diplomatic conflict under examination. • *What is the core issue or legislative proposal? What are its key provisions?*
Where?	**Geopolitical & Institutional Context**	Establishes the geographical area, geopolitical arena, or institutional setting (e.g., local, national, EU, global). • *Where does this policy apply? What regional or international dynamics are at play?*
When?	**Temporal Dynamics & Historical Process**	Examines the timeline, legislative procedure, electoral cycle, or historical context leading to the event. • *What triggered this event at this specific moment? What is the implementation timeline?*
Why?	**Interests, Ideologies & Root Causes**	Analyzes underlying motivations, strategic national interests, political ideologies, or policy failures. • *Why was this political choice made? What strategic or economic interests are at stake?*
How?	**Policy Instruments & Implementation**	Details the mechanisms, strategies, or legal tools used to execute a policy or political strategy. • *How will this policy be enforced (e.g., diplomacy, sanctions, legislation, incentives)?*

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Critical Evaluation Checklist for Source & Policy Analysis

When analyzing a political document, academic paper, policy proposal, or news article, incorporate these critical questions to extend your report beyond basic description:

- **Who** authored the document, and what is their institutional background or theoretical framework?
- **Where** and **When** was it published, and what contemporary political debate does it address?
- **What** is the author's primary argument, and what empirical evidence supports it?
- **How** do the proposed measures impact governance, international stability, or public welfare?
- **Critical Assessment:** What is your opinion or evaluation of the situation? What are the potential policy alternatives or unintended consequences?

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