

## Assessing Source Reliability Worksheet



Starting in the early 1830s, textile corporations required their female workers, without family in Lowell, to live in company-owned boardinghouses. The workers had to follow strict rules, under the watchful eye of the company-hired boardinghouse keeper. The companies would take out one third of a worker's pay to cover living expenses. To make the boardinghouse system work, the textile corporations had to subsidize the cost of running Lowell's boardinghouses. By the 1840s, the cost of living had risen, but the amount of money, from workers' pay and subsidies, the companies gave boardinghouse keepers remained the same.

This editorial was published in the *Lowell Courier* on September 5, 1845. Many in the city considered the *Lowell Courier*, published from 1837-1893, be a "mouth-piece" of the mill owners, as many of the editors were friendly with the mill owners. William Schouler, the owner of the *Lowell Courier*, also owned *The Lowell Offering*, a literary magazine written and edited by the female mill workers. Schouler's family owned a textile company in Arlington, Massachusetts, and he served in the Massachusetts Legislator as a representative from Lowell.

The author of this article is responding to a letter (from whom we do not know, but the author refers to the person as "the writer" and "our correspondent") about the price of board (food and lodging) in the corporation boardinghouses. Knowing that the newspaper's owner had such a close relationship with the mill owners, and that the mill owners also owned the boardinghouses, assess the reliability of the author's argument. Respond to the questions and support your answers with evidence from the text.

1. Circle the parts of the article that you consider opinion and underline the parts you think are fact.
2. Identify the two "voices" in the article – the author of the article and the writer/correspondent who wrote a letter to the paper.

Which opinions belong to the author and which to the writer/correspondent? Cite evidence from the article.

3. Why do you think the article was written?

4. Is this a reliable source? Why or why not? What would be an appropriate research use for this article?

5. Do you think the author's opinion is justified? Why or why not?