

# 6.11 SkillBuilder: Making your own notes to analyse relevant sources

## 6.11.1 Tell me

### What is note-making?

Do you ever feel overwhelmed when you see a lot of information on a page? Do you sometimes wonder how you will be able to remember it all? Don't worry, you don't need to know all of it — you just need to understand the important parts. Note-making cuts the information down into smaller pieces that are easier to remember.

### Why is note-making useful?

Note-making and learning to summarise will make information easier to understand and recall. You simply write out the key information in point form. Then it won't seem so hard. Note-making also helps you analyse and therefore understand what you are reading. Here you will be learning to make notes on sources that are relevant to change and decline in the Khmer Empire.

## 6.11.2 Show me

### How to make notes

The most important thing to remember when making notes is that you are aiming to *reduce* the number of words used by keeping only the important points — and not just copying out a lot of text.

#### Step 1

Read the extract that you need to summarise. Don't try to make notes the first time you read it. Just try to understand the main points the author is making. Try reading **SOURCE 1**. It is about the weakening of Angkor (Cambodia) and the growing power of the Thais.

**SOURCE 1** The fall of Cambodia and the rise of Thailand, from Milton Osborne, *An Introductory History: Southeast Asia*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 2004, pp. 59–60

Cambodian power had extended from its base in Angkor to incorporate large sections of modern Thailand, Laos and Vietnam. The really important unifying feature for the Angkorian empire was . . . the acceptance by many lesser rulers and governors that the king at Angkor was their supreme lord . . . When some of these lesser rulers no longer accepted this situation and chose to fight for their independence from the Angkorian ruler, they shattered the political relationship. In addition they threatened and eventually damaged the agricultural system upon which Angkor's very existence depended. The decision of the Cambodian King . . . to leave Angkor some time in the fifteenth century was an event of deepest importance for mainland Southeast Asia . . . A great empire had come to its end and with its end other states began their rise to greatness. The Thais were the people who brought Angkor down and their history from that time onwards was marked by slow but sure progress towards the achievement of control over the territories that comprise modern Thailand.

#### Step 2

Now re-read the text. Ask yourself:

- What are the main points the author is trying to make?

Highlight these (shown in light blue in **SOURCE 2**).

#### Step 3

Highlight any supporting ideas in the text (shown in green in **SOURCE 2**).

#### Step 4

Highlight any keywords that are new to you or that seem to relate specifically to the topic (shown in red in **SOURCE 2**).

## SOURCE 2 Identifying important information.

Cambodian power had extended from its base in Angkor to incorporate large sections of modern Thailand, Laos and Vietnam. The really important unifying feature for the Angkorian empire was . . . the acceptance by many lesser rulers and governors that the king at Angkor was their supreme lord . . . When some of these lesser rulers no longer accepted this situation and chose to fight for their independence from the Angkorian ruler, they shattered the political relationship. In addition they threatened and eventually damaged the agricultural system upon which Angkor's very existence depended. The decision of the Cambodian King . . . to leave Angkor some time in the fifteenth century was an event of deepest importance for mainland Southeast Asia . . . A great empire had come to its end and with its end other states began their rise to greatness. The Thais were the people who brought Angkor down and their history from that time onwards was marked by slow but sure progress towards the achievement of control over the territories that comprise modern Thailand.

### Step 5

Now you need to start writing. Write down the heading and then use dot points for each of your notes. Look for key words, dates, ideas, facts and evidence.

Remember, the aim is to analyse and summarise, not just to copy. Look for ways of shortening the text. Instead of listing lots of examples, use just one or two. Include definitions of words that are important to the topic. Your notes should be designed to help *you*, not other people, so use your own words. If you already know a lot about a topic, you may not need as many notes as other people; but if the topic is new to you, you may need more notes.

Now look at **SOURCE 3** and you will see how much we have reduced the text (from 170 words to about 50 words).

## SOURCE 3 Summary

Cambodia had a great empire **[1st main point]**. Angkor:

- controlled much of modern Thailand, Laos and Vietnam **[supporting point]**.
  - depended on lesser rulers accepting Angkor's authority **[supporting point]**.
- Angkor was brought down in the fifteenth century by the Thais **[2nd main point]**.
- Thai rulers rebelled and fought for independence **[supporting point]**.
  - Thais damaged Angkor's agriculture and gained territory **[supporting point]**.

### 6.11.3 Let me do it

Complete the following activities to practise this skill.

#### 6.11 ACTIVITIES

Using what has been done with **SOURCE 1** to create **SOURCES 2** and **3** as an example, make notes to analyse **SOURCE 4**.

1. Outline the main point in **SOURCE 4**. (*Note: The author's main point about the power and wealth of the Khmer king is not directly stated. But you will see what it is.*)
2. Briefly outline each of the supporting points.

**SOURCE 4** Description of a royal procession written by Zhou Daguan, a Chinese diplomat who visited Angkor in 1296–1297

When the king goes out, troops are at the head of the escort; then come flags, banners, and music. Palace women, numbering from three to five hundred, wearing flowered cloth, with flowers in their hair, hold candles in their hands . . . Then come other palace women, bearing royal paraphernalia made of gold and silver . . . Then come the palace women carrying lances and shields, [and] the king's private guards . . . Carts drawn by goats and horses, all in gold, come next. Ministers and princes are mounted on elephants, and in front of them one can see, from afar, their innumerable red umbrellas. And after them come the wives and concubines of the king, in . . . carriages, on horseback and on elephants . . . Behind them comes the sovereign [king], standing on an elephant, holding his sacred sword in his hand. The elephant's tusks are encased in gold.

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