**Document A: Galileo’s Letter** (Modified) *Galileo wrote the following letter to Duchess Christina of Tuscany in 1615.*

*In this letter, he defends himself against the charges of heresy.*

Some years ago I discovered in the heavens many things that had not been seen before our own age. The **novelty** of these things . . . stirred up several professors against me. They hurled various charges and published numerous writings filled with **vain** arguments, and they made the grave mistake of sprinkling these with passages taken from places in the Bible, which they failed to understand properly.

The reason given for attacking the opinion that the earth moves and the sun stands still is that in many places in the Bible one may read that the sun moves and the earth stands still. Since the Bible cannot **err**, it follows that anyone who claims that the sun is motionless and the earth movable takes an **erroneous** and heretical position.

With regard to this argument, I think in the first place that it is very **pious** to say and **prudent** to affirm that the holy Bible can never speak untruth- whenever its true meaning is understood. But I believe nobody will deny that the Bible is often very complex, and may say things which are quite different from what its bare words **signify**. . . .

I do not believe that the same God who has given senses, reason and intellect has intended us to not to use them. . . . He would not require us to deny sense and reason in physical matters of direct experience. . . . Can an opinion be heretical and yet have no concern with the salvation of souls?

***Source:*** *Galileo Galilei, “Letter to the Grand Duchess Christina of Tuscany,” 1615.*



**Vocabulary**

novelty: original or unusual vain: conceited

err: to be wrong erroneous: wrong pious: devoutly religious

prudent: wise  signify: mean

QUESTIONS

1) (Sourcing)When was this document written?

2) (Contextualization)Look at your timeline. Why might Galileo write a letter defending himself at this time?

3) (Close Reading) According to Galileo, why do some people think his teachings are heretical?

4) (Close Reading) How does Galileo defend himself against these charges?