

## Week Six: Identifying Primary and Secondary Sources

**Weekly Focus:** Comprehension  
**Weekly Skill:** Primary and Secondary Sources

**Lesson Summary:** This week students will be introduced to the concept of primary vs. secondary sources. They will then be given the chance to identify primary and secondary sources and, finally, to practice conducting research to find a primary and secondary source.

**Materials Needed:** Importance of Primary Sources Video, Primary Sources Handout, Activity Handout, Group Roles, Laptops, Internet, and Projector.

**Objectives:** Students will be able to...

- Define primary and secondary sources
- Identify primary and secondary sources in an assessment quiz
- Provide valid critical reasoning for primary vs. secondary source identification
- Locate a primary or secondary source via research and identify which type of resource it is

**Common Core Standards Addressed:** RH.11-12.2, RH.11-12.6, RH.11-12.7, WHST.11-12.2

**Notes:** This week will focus on the Comprehension step of our CARE learning model. Help students to understand that in the coming weeks and on the GED test, they will be presented with both primary and secondary sources. Therefore, being able to distinguish between the two will be an important step in aiding their comprehension of the material.

### Activities:

#### Testing: TABE

**Time: 50 minutes**

For the first hour, students will be testing on the TABE Reading test. Talk to your coordinator about this as well as your role as a proctor.

**Break: 10 minutes**

#### Activity 1: Introduction to Primary & Secondary Sources

**Time: 60 minutes**

- 1) Explain to students that today we will be looking at various sources that historians use to learn about the past.
- 2) Divide students into groups and hand out group role sheets. Have students choose a role.
- 3) Have students work through the steps in the Group Activity in the handout together.
- 4) Have each group present to another group. If there are even numbers, one group may present to the teacher.
- 5) Next, hand out Primary and Secondary Sources sheet. Go over the categories together.

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As a class, fill out the "My examples" section based on their group-work.

- 6) Show students the "Importance of Primary Sources Video."
- 7) Finally, as a class, discuss the following questions:
  - a) Are primary sources always unbiased and accurate?
  - b) Are secondary sources always unbiased and accurate?
  - c) If someone in the future wanted to study who YOU were and what YOUR life was like, what primary and/or secondary sources might they turn to?
- 8) Either assign as homework, or have students complete the Quiz in groups.

**Break: 10 minutes**

### Extension Activity: Comparing Primary Sources

**Time: 60 minutes**

- 1) Have students divide back into their small groups. Students should each pick a new role from the group roles sheet.
- 2) Have students choose an historical event that they'd like to know more about. Then, in their groups, have them research to **find one source about this event**. They should then **identify if this source is primary or secondary and explain why**. Finally they should **prepare a one to two minute class presentation about what they've found**. (Note: if class is mostly beginning level students, you may want to choose the historical event for them based on the plentitude of information available. For classes without computers, you may choose to provide books, newspaper articles, copies of speeches, etc ).
- 3) Regroup and have groups present their findings.

### Extra Work/Homework: Research Essay

Have students write a short essay in which they define primary and secondary sources and then explore a topic using one of each.

### Online Resources:

- 1) [Understanding the Difference b/w Primary and Secondary Sources](#)
- 2) [Using Primary Sources](#)
- 3) [Primary Source Set from the Library of Congress](#)

### Suggested Teacher Readings:

[\*Lies my Teacher Told Me: Everything Your American History Textbook Got Wrong\* by James Loewen.](#)

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**What are Primary and Secondary Sources?**

	<b>PRIMARY SOURCE</b>	<b>SECONDARY SOURCE</b>
Definition	<p>A <b>primary source</b> is a document or physical object which was written or created during the time under study. These sources were present during an experience or time period and offer an inside view of a particular event. Some types of primary sources include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>ORIGINAL DOCUMENTS</b> (excerpts or translations acceptable): Diaries, speeches, manuscripts, letters, interviews, news film footage, autobiographies, official records</li> <li>• <b>CREATIVE WORKS:</b> Poetry, drama, novels, music, art</li> <li>• <b>RELICS OR ARTIFACTS:</b> Pottery, furniture, clothing, buildings</li> </ul>	<p>A <b>secondary source</b> interprets and analyzes primary sources. These sources are one or more steps removed from the event. Secondary sources may have pictures, quotes or graphics of primary sources in them. Some types of secondary sources include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>PUBLICATIONS:</b> Textbooks, magazine articles, histories, criticisms, commentaries, encyclopedias</li> </ul>
Examples	<p><b>Examples</b> of primary sources include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diary of Anne Frank - Experiences of a Jewish family during WWII</li> <li>• The Constitution of Canada - Canadian History</li> <li>• A journal article reporting NEW research or findings</li> <li>• Weavings and pottery - Native American history</li> <li>• Plato's Republic - Women in Ancient Greece</li> </ul>	<p><b>Examples</b> of secondary sources include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A journal/magazine article which interprets or reviews previous findings</li> <li>• A history textbook</li> <li>• A book about the effects of WWI</li> </ul>
Your Examples		

Information taken from Princeton Reference Desk: <http://www.princeton.edu/~refdesk/primary2.html>

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### Primary and Secondary Sources Group Activity

**Directions:** In your group, work to answer the questions below.

- 1) Using a dictionary, find the definition for the two words below:

**Primary:**

**Secondary:**

- 2) When historians look at documents in order to understand history, they often divide these documents into categories, including primary and secondary sources. One of these categories includes *material produced by individuals who lived through an event* and the other includes *material produced from individuals about an event after it happened*. Based on the dictionary definitions above, which do you think is which? Fill in the blank, placing the correct word with its correct definition (taken from the Society of American Archivists) below:

**Primary Source**

**Secondary Source**

- a) A \_\_\_\_\_ is material that contains firsthand accounts of events and that were created contemporaneous to those events or later recalled by an eyewitness.
- b) A \_\_\_\_\_ is a work that is not based on direct observation of or evidence directly associated with the subject but instead relies on sources of information.
- 3) If you are an historian who wants to research what life was like for women living in America in 1994, what kinds of primary sources might you look for? What kinds of secondary sources? Try to list three of each.
- 4) Why might it be important for us to consider both primary and secondary resources when we look at history?

## Primary vs. Secondary Sources Quiz

**Directions:** Look at the sources below. Determine if they are a primary or secondary source. Then, write the reason that you think this is true.

**Document One:** Excerpt taken from *Tupac: Resurrection* by Jacob Hoyer and Karolyn Ali

My mother was a Black Panther and she was really involved in the movement.

Just black people bettering themselves and things like that. She was in a high position in the party which was unheard of because there was sexism, even in the Panthers. All my roots to the struggle are real deep. My stepfather at the time, Mutulu Shakur, he was also a well-known revolutionary. And then my godfather, Geronimo Pratt, he had a top official rank position with the Panthers on the West Coast.

There's racism, so when the Panthers hit, the government panicked and they felt like the Panthers were detrimental to American society. So they raided every Panthers' house, especially the ones who they felt like, could do damage as an orator. My mother was seven months pregnant, they put a match to the door and said "Fire, Fire!" And you know it's like five in the morning so my mother opened the door and they just burst in, put a shotgun to her pregnant belly and put a gun to her head and said, "Don't move, bah, bah, bah, you're under arrest." They treated them like less than humans.

- 1) **What event or historical period is being discussed?**
- 2) **Is this a Primary or Secondary Source?**
- 3) **Why do you think this?**

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**Document Two:** Video interview with Aaron Dixon, co-founder and Captain of the Seattle chapter of the Black Panther Party.



- 1) What event or historical period is being discussed or represented?
- 2) Is this a Primary or Secondary Source?
- 3) Why do you think this?

**Document Three:** *Tlaloc ceramic face pot, Templo Mayor, Mexico. Between between AD 1325-1521.*



- 1) What event or historical period is being represented?
- 2) Is this a Primary or Secondary Source?
- 3) Why do you think this?

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**Document Four:** Excerpt from entry from Encyclopedia Britannica Online concerning Aztec rain deity Tlaloc.

“Five months of the 18-month ritual year were dedicated to Tlaloc and to his fellow deities, the Tlaloque, who were believed to dwell on the mountaintops. Children were sacrificed to Tlaloc on the first month, Atlcaualo, and on the third, Tozoztontli. During the sixth month, Etzalqualiztli, the rain priests ceremonially bathed in the lake; they imitated the cries of waterfowls and used magic “fog rattles” (*ayauhchicauaztli*) in order to obtain rain. The 13th month, Tepeilhuitl, was dedicated to the mountain Tlaloque; small idols made of amaranth paste were ritually killed and eaten. A similar rite was held on the 16th month, Atemoztli.”

- 1) **What event or historical period is being discussed?**
  
- 2) **Is this a Primary or Secondary Source?**
  
- 3) **Why do you think this?**

### Group Work Roles

#### LEADER

- Makes sure that every voice is heard
- Focuses work around the learning task; guide group from exercise to exercise

**Sound bites: Let's hear from \_\_\_\_ next." "That's interesting, but let's get back to our task."**

#### RECORDER

- Compiles group members' ideas:
  - Make a star on the sections/numbers we need to go over
  - Write specific questions

**Sound bites: "I think I heard you say \_\_\_\_\_; is that right?" "How would you like me to write this?"**

#### TIME KEEPER

- Encourages the group to stay on task
- Announces when time is halfway through and when time is nearly up

**Sound bite: "We only have five minutes left. Let's see if we can wrap up by then."**

#### PRESENTER

- Presents the group's finished work to the class

**Sound bite: "Which questions do we need to go over in this section?" "What else do we need to ask?"**

Created by Jen Ouellette for the Minnesota Literacy Council