PRIMARY VS. SECONDARY SOURCES

Here are some references to use in teaching about the difference between Primary and Secondary Sources:

First of all, let's define Primary and Secondary Sources:

What is a primary source?

A primary source 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. Primary sources that are thoughtfully selected can help to bring history and cultures to life for students. Most basically, they are defined as the direct evidence of a time and place that you are studying – any material (documents, objects, etc.) that was produced by eyewitnesses to or participants in an event or historical moment under investigation. Primary sources are still created every day. They don't have to be old or in the past.

Some types of primary sources include:

- **ORIGINAL DOCUMENTS** (excerpts or translations acceptable): Diaries, speeches, journals, manuscripts, letters, interviews, news film footage, photographs, autobiographies, memoirs, official records such as census, court, immigration or government records; internet communication via email, blogs, listservs and newsgroups
- **CREATIVE WORKS**: Poetry, drama, fiction, cartoons, novels, music, songs, works of art such as paintings, drawings, sculptures, quilts
- **SCIENTIFIC STUDIES**: results of experiments, statistical data, surveys, fieldwork, direct observations
- **HISTORICAL DOCUMENTS**: maps from the place or time, ships' logs, charts/graphs, ledger books, labor records, recorded oral histories and people speaking for themselves, texts or recordings of speeches, sound recordings, documentary film, architectural landmarks
- **RELICS OR ARTIFACTS**: Pottery, furniture, clothing, buildings

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Specific examples of primary sources include:
- Diary of Anne Frank - Experiences of a Jewish family during WWII
- The Constitution of Canada - Canadian History
- A journal article reporting NEW research or findings
- Weavings and pottery - Native American history
- Plato's Republic - Women in Ancient Greece

What is a secondary source?

A secondary source 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:
- PUBLICATIONS: Textbooks, magazine articles, histories, criticisms, commentaries, encyclopedias

Examples of secondary sources include:
- A scholarly journal article which interprets, evaluates, or reviews previous findings
- Movie or book review
- A history textbook
- A book about the effects of WWI

Sources:
Princeton University: http://www.princeton.edu/~refdesk/primary2.html
Ithaca College: http://www.ithacalibrary.com/sp/subjects/primary

Why use them in the classroom?

Primary and secondary sources are both essential to the study of people and cultures past and present, and students should be introduced to both types of materials and learn to utilize them together to construct understanding. Students often connect deeply with a subject and develop passion for it when they are given the opportunity to encounter the "real stuff" of history, the encouragement to form questions and research answers, and assignments that allow them to take initiative and make genuine

discoveries. Primary sources can play a unique role in this type of learning. The craft of teaching relies on teachers' judgments about how to combine the use of primary and secondary sources, and how and when to introduce them for student discovery.

Source: Primarysource.org http://www.primarysource.org/what-is-a-primary-source

**this website has a lot of content, including curriculum guides written by teachers, a Primary Source Library, and an online curriculum.*

Why Use Primary Sources?

Primary sources provide a window into the past—unfiltered access to the record of artistic, social, scientific and political thought and achievement during the specific period under study, produced by people who lived during that period. They are different from secondary sources, accounts or interpretations of events created by someone without firsthand experience.

Bringing young people into close contact with these unique, often profoundly personal, documents and objects can give students a powerful sense of history and the complexity of the past. Helping students analyze primary sources can also guide them toward higher-order thinking and better critical thinking and analysis skills.

Before you begin:

- Choose at least two or three primary sources that support the learning objectives and are accessible to students.
- Consider how students can compare these items to other primary and secondary sources.
- Identify an analysis tool or guiding questions that students will use to analyze the primary sources

1. Engage students with primary sources

- Draw on students' prior knowledge of the topic. Primary

sources help students relate in a personal way to events of the past and promote a deeper understanding of history as a series of human events

HOW:

- Ask students to closely observe each primary source.
  - Who created this primary source?
  - When was it created?
  - Where does your eye go first?
- Help students see key details.
  - What do you see that you didn't expect?
  - What powerful words and ideas are expressed?

- Because primary sources are snippets of history, they encourage students to seek additional evidence through research.
- First-person accounts of events help make them more real, fostering active reading and response. Encourage students to think about their personal response to the source.
  - What feelings and thoughts does the primary source trigger in you?
  - What questions does it raise?

2. Promote student inquiry and develop critical thinking skills

- **WHY**: Many state standards support teaching with primary sources, which require students to be both critical and analytical as they read and examine documents and objects.
- **HOW**: Encourage students to speculate about each source, its creator, and its context.
  - What was happening during this time period?
  - What was the creator's purpose in making this primary source?

  - What does the creator do to get his or her point across?
  - What was this primary source's audience?
  - What biases or stereotypes do you see?

- Primary sources are often incomplete and have little context. Students must use prior knowledge and work with multiple primary sources to find patterns.
- In analyzing primary sources, students move from concrete observations and facts to questioning and making inferences about the materials.
- Questions of creator bias, purpose, and point of view may challenge students' assumptions.
- **HOW**: Ask if this source agrees with other primary sources, or with what the students already know.
  - Ask students to test their assumptions about the past.
  - Ask students to find other primary or secondary sources that offer support or contradiction.

3. Construct knowledge

- Inquiry into primary sources encourages students to wrestle with contradictions and compare multiple sources that represent differing points of view, confronting the complexity of the past.
- Students construct knowledge as they form reasoned conclusions, base their conclusions on evidence, and connect primary sources to the context in which they were created, synthesizing information from multiple sources.

Integrating what they glean from comparing primary sources with what they already know, and what they learn from research, allows students to construct content knowledge and deepen understanding.

4. Assess how students apply critical thinking and analysis skills to primary sources.

Have students summarize what they've learned.

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- Ask for reasons and specific evidence to support their conclusions.
- Help students identify questions for further investigation, and develop strategies for how they might answer them.

Analysis tools and thematic primary source sets from the Library offer entry points to many topics.

Source: Library of Congress: http://www.loc.gov/teachers/usingprimarysources/

Types of Primary Books

- There are many different types of primary books. Diaries are a type of primary book. Thus, "The Diary of Anne Frank" is a primary book because it provides a first-hand account of her life and the historical events that occurred. Autobiographies are also primary books. Frederick Douglass' autobiography, "Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave" is a primary book providing a first-hand account of his life. Furthermore, fiction works are also primary sources. Novels, poetry compilations, art and music are primary sources. Charlotte Bronte's famous book "Jane Eyre," which provides a strong look into her era, is among this category.

Types of Secondary Books

- Secondary sources provide second-hand accounts of information, events or time periods. Educational textbooks are considered reliable secondary sources. The high school English textbook, Holt's "Elements of Literature" is a secondary source providing texts, instruction and discussion of literary elements. Literary criticism and commentary are also secondary sources because they analyze and interpret primary sources. For instance, an anthology of Shakespeare criticism and review, or an academic journal are types of secondary sources. Other secondary books include encyclopedias and non-fiction novels. Thus, "Encyclopedia Britannica" and Jared Diamond's book "Guns, Germs and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies" are secondary books.

Source: http://www.ehow.com/info_8420100_primary-secondary-books.html