

Definitions: Primary and Secondary Source¹

Primary sources are materials that provide direct or first-hand evidence about an event, person, object, or work of art. Usually, primary sources are created during the time in question. Examples: letters, diary entries, news films, photographs, poetry, fiction, music, pottery, clothing, and buildings.

- Can you think of an example of a **primary** source?

Secondary sources are at least one step removed from the event or phenomenon being studied; they interpret, assign value to, conjecture about, and draw conclusions about the events reported or thoughts expressed in primary sources. Many secondary sources are published works such as textbooks, histories, magazine articles and reviews, encyclopedias, etc., but can also take the form of radio or TV documentaries, for example.

- Can you think of an example that is a **secondary** source?

¹ Adapted from <http://www.loc.gov/teachers/usingprimarysources/>