Teacher’s Quiz: Primary and Secondary Sources

Consider the following items from The Charles R. Drew Papers site. Assign whether each item is a Primary or Secondary source.

   Hand-written letter from Dr. Drew to his mother, Nora, dated June 18, 1938.
   Courtesy Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University

   Dr. Drew’s letter to his mother is a primary source. The letter was hand written by him and contains his own words and perspectives (firsthand account) about the situation and events that Dr. Drew was experiencing directly in 1938.

   Dr. Drew’s typed letter to his high school coach, Edwin Henderson, dated May 31, 1940.
   Courtesy Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University

   This typed letter from Dr. Drew to his high school coach, Edwin Henderson is a primary source. Dr. Drew wrote and sent this to his coach and described his experiences and ideas to the coach.
3. “Drew attended Stevens Elementary and then Dunbar High School, which was then one of the best college preparatory schools--for blacks or whites--in the country. Though bright, he was not an outstanding student; instead, he devoted much of his effort to athletics, where he excelled. Ambitious and competitive, he lettered in four sports, and won the James E. Walker Medal for all-round athletic performance in both his junior and senior years.”


Courtesy National Library of Medicine

This excerpt from the online exhibition is a secondary source. The text provides facts and evidence for Dr. Drew’s early schooling and athleticism.

4. (A photograph of Dr. Drew with a microscope in a laboratory, ca. 1940-1941.

Courtesy Scurlock Studio Records, Archives Center, National Museum of American History, Behring Center, Smithsonian Institution

This photograph is a primary source as it was taken of Dr. Drew in early 1940s. It provides visual evidence of Dr. Drew working in a laboratory at that time.)