
Primary vs. Secondary Sources - Activity

(10 minutes)

Primary Source:

A primary source is a document or object from the past created by people who lived during that time. Primary sources provide a view into an event or experience that only people living during that time could have experienced. Using a primary source, or an original document created by someone living in the past about their own experience, help to describe what the person in the past experienced.

Archives collect and preserve primary sources so that students can learn history from the experiences of people who were there. At an archives, primary sources are called records. At museums, primary sources are called artifacts.

Secondary Sources:

Secondary sources are documents people today write about the past. A secondary source is a document or recording that writes or speaks about information that is one step removed from the original source. The secondary source depends on the primary source or original source of the information. Secondary sources interpret, evaluate or discuss information found in primary sources.

What are some other examples of primary and secondary sources?

Primary Source <i>original material from the past</i>	Secondary Source <i>material people today write about the past</i>
Letters	Textbooks
Diaries	Reference books
Photographs	Websites such as Wikipedia
Paintings and sketches	Current news articles
Graphs	Documentaries
Maps	Movies
Interviews	Review of a movie or television show

Diaries have been used for centuries as a way for people to record what was happening in their day-to-day lives.

Do any of you keep a diary? Have you ever had to write a journal entry for a class? Did you write it in a notebook, on your computer, phone, iPad?

Well, before there was technology people used paper-based notebooks to keep track of their personal thoughts. A very good example of this would be the diary of Annie Rothwell. Annie and her family lived in Innisfil, part of Simcoe County, from about 1872 To 1960. She wrote about her studies, her family and friends, events and parties she attended, and her love of history and architecture.

Annie wrote her diary when she was 22 years old. Her diary is held by the Simcoe County Archives.

If Annie lived today, how do you think that she could have gotten her ideas and thoughts across to people instead of writing in a diary? Blogging, Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat

These forms of social media are a way of getting your personal thoughts and pictures across just like Annie did when in the 1890s.

Have he students do the activity sheet for Primary vs Secondary Sources.

Supplies Needed:

- Worksheets: [Primary vs. Secondary source material worksheet](#)
- Scanned copy of the [Diary of Annie Rothwell, 1894-1895](#)
Available through the [Rural Diary Archive](#)