Primary vs Secondary Sources
A primary source is an original object or document -- the raw material or first-hand information.

- historical and legal documents
- results of an experiment
- Personal diary or journal
- art objects
- eye witness accounts
- autobiography
A secondary source is something written about a primary source.

- Secondary source materials can be:
  - articles in newspapers
  - popular magazines
  - books, including biographies and textbooks
  - articles found in scholarly journals that evaluate or criticize someone else's original research
Is this a primary or secondary source?

A photograph of soldier on the front line during WWI
IT’S A PRIMARY SOURCE

This photograph is a primary source because it is an original document that offers an inside look of...
Throughout history there have been many high-profile crimes that have divided public opinion. One such case was the murder trial of O.J. Simpson, a former pro-football player and actor. Simpson was accused of murdering his ex-wife, Nicole Brown Simpson and her friend Ronald Goldman on June 12, 1994. After a lengthy trial that lasted from January to October 1995, a jury found Simpson innocent of all charges after just four hours of deliberation. Although he was found innocent in a court of law, the majority of the country was shocked and outraged by the verdict because of the overwhelming evidence that pointed to Simpson’s guilt.

The first piece of evidence that points to Simpson’s guilt is the history of domestic abuse against Nicole Brown Simpson. According to an article “Facing the Rage” that was published by People Magazine in February 1995, “there were many witnesses to the abuse in the Simpson marriage...Neighbors heard him screaming threats and obscenities.” Furthermore, there was the highly publicized 1989 New Year’s Day beating, where Nicole called 911 because she was frightened for her life. When the police arrived, they saw the beating that she received from her husband and arrested him; however, he plead no contest and received a slap on the wrist for punishment. The domestic abuse and threats did not stop even after the couple divorced in 1992. Excerpts from two 911 calls made on October 25th, 1993 by Nicole Brown Simpson show a threatening and deranged O.J. who broke into Nicole’s home. Simpson can be heard yelling obscenities at Nicole in the background of the conversation. This history of domestic abuse towards Nicole Brown Simpson proves that O.J. Simpson not only had the motive to kill his ex-wife but also that he had violent tendencies and was more than capable of becoming angry enough to commit a brutal double murder.

Coupled with the history of domestic abuse, there was an enormous amount of physical evidence collected from the crime scene and O.J. Simpson’s residence that ties him to the murders. One of the most popular pieces of physical evidence discussed at the trial was a black glove that was found at the crime scene that contained blood that did not match either of the victims. When the police searched O.J.’s residence, they found the matching glove. Through the questioning of witnesses, it was determined that the size and style of the matching gloves were the exact same that Simpson owned and wore. The fact that the police found a glove identical in style, shape, and size in Simpson’s home to the glove covered in blood that was found at the crime scene is no coincidence and clearly shows that Simpson was present at the crime scene at the time of the murders. Who else besides the killer and the victims would have been there? In addition to the glove evidence, blood found at the crime...
The commentary written about the O.J. Simpson case is a secondary source because it uses evidence found in primary sources and other secondary sources. It is not an original document related to the O.J. Simpson case.
Is this a primary or secondary source?

A graph that shows student data from the 2015 6th grade AIR test
It’s a primary source because it offers insight into how students performed on a test.

In addition, I know this is a primary source because the text states that a primary source is something that can be used for research. This pie chart is a direct piece of evidence that shows student performance and could be used by teachers to make instructional decisions.
Reliability of Sources

How can you tell if a source is going to be reliable?
Is a source reliable???
(reliable: able to be trusted)

Three things we needs to consider

1. Who is the author?
2. How did they get the information?
3. Why did they write it?
Who is the Author?

- Qualifications – Is he an expert in his field?

- Bias – is his perspective one-sided?

  Perspective: how someone sees a topic
How did they get the information?

- Was the author or speaker a witness to the information or did they gather it from some other source?
Why did they write it?

☐ To convince/persuade someone?
☐ To inform someone?
☐ For fun?
☐ Some other reason?
How Reliable?
How Reliable?
How Reliable?
How Reliable?
How Reliable?
Let’s rank some sources!

- If you were looking for information on Hurricane Katrina which source would be the most reliable? **C. newspaper report**
- A. victim blog
- B. novel
- C. newspaper report
- D. eyewitness account

- Which one is the least reliable? **B. novel**
If you were doing a report on Barack Obama (USA President from 2009–2017), rank these sources from most reliability (1) to least reliability (4)

1. A recent *Time* magazine article
2. An encyclopedia article dated 1/30/05
3. An article in the *National Enquirer*
4. A blog by Obama’s campaign manager

1,2,4,3
Rank the following resources from greatest reliability (1) to least reliability (4) for an essay titled “War in Iraq.”

1. Newspaper article “War in Iraq” by a war correspondent
2. Tabloid article “What They Don’t Let Us Know”
3. Internet site on Iraq and the postwar period
4. Journal of a soldier serving in Iraq

1, 4, 3, 2
Rank these sources from most reliable to least reliable.

☐ 1. Article in The Tennessean newspaper
☐ 2. Eyewitness account
☐ 3. Internet article
☐ 4. National Enquirer Magazine

2, 1, 3, 4
Perhaps the best way to think of the reliability of information is to think of it as existing on a scale, rather than falling into the categories of reliable or unreliable. Information can range from very unreliable to highly reliable and also anywhere in between.
How can you judge the reliability of the information that you find?

- One way is to compare the information about the same topic across multiple sources.
- Let’s look at three different sources on the Internet about the same subject:
- Elvis Presley
Let’s compare some sources and check for reliability.

☐ As we visit these websites, ask yourself:

☐ Which one would you judge as having the highest reliability? Which one would you place lowest on the reliability scale? Which one might fall somewhere in between?

☐ You will need your “Judging Reliability by Comparing Sources” worksheet.
Here are the websites we will evaluate for reliability:

- Elvis Graceland
- Elvis Sightings
- Info Please
How reliable is the Internet?

- Let’s check out this website on the tree octopus.

• Guess what?? It’s a complete hoax!!
• The entire website (as well as MANY others) is a joke.
• Remember – Don’t believe everything you read.....ESPECIALLY on the Internet.
• Question: Is the internet a reliable source?
• Answer: Not always....BE CAREFUL!
Rank these sources from most reliable to least reliable.

1. Internet website
2. Written diary of an eye-witness to an event
3. Newspaper article from USA Today
4. An article in a supermarket tabloid

2, 3, 1, 4