

Name: _____ Period: _____

Primary vs Secondary Sources

A **primary source** is an original object or document -- the raw material or first-hand information.

- Examples:
 - 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?

- 1.) A photograph of soldier on the front line during WWI _____
- 2.) A commentary written on the O.J. Simpson murder trial _____
- 3.) A graph that shows student data from the 2015 6th grade AIR test _____

Reliability of Sources

Is a source reliable??? (reliable: able to be trusted)

Three things we need to consider

1.) Who is the Author?

- Qualifications – Is he an expert in his field?
- Bias – is his perspective one-sided?
 - Perspective: how someone sees a topic

2.) 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?

3.) Why did they write it?

- To convince/persuade someone?
- To inform someone?
- For fun?
- Some other reason?

How Reliable?

i) If you were looking for information on Hurricane Katrina which source would be the most reliable?

- A. victim blog
- B. novel
- C. newspaper report**
- D. eyewitness account

ii.) If you were doing a report on Barack Obama (USA President 2009-2017), rank these sources from most reliability (1) to least reliability (4).

- ___ A recent *Time* magazine article
- ___ An encyclopedia article dated 1/30/05
- ___ An article in the *National Enquirer*
- ___ A blog by Obama's campaign manager

iii.) Rank the following resources from greatest reliability to least reliability for an essay titled "War in Iraq."

- ___ Newspaper article "War in Iraq" by a war correspondent
- ___ Tabloid article "What They Don't Let Us Know"
- ___ Internet site on Iraq and the postwar period
- ___ Journal of a soldier serving in Iraq

iv.) Rank these sources from most reliable to least reliable.

- ___ Article in *The Tennessean newspaper*
- ___ Eyewitness account
- ___ Internet article
- ___ *National Enquirer Magazine*

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.