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 trail ________________________________

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.