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# Primary vs. Secondary Sources

What is the difference?

Lets find out.



# Primary Sources

- **Contemporary Accounts** of an event written by the person who witnessed or experienced it. **FIRST HAND!**
- **Original Documents, Unpublished** – not about another document or account
- **Published works** - as long as they are written soon after the fact and not as historical accounts

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# Primary Sources

## ***Include:***

- Diaries
- Letters
- Memoirs
- Journals
- Speeches
- Manuscripts
- Statistical Data
- Historical newspaper and magazine articles (from the time of the event)
- Interviews
- Photographs
- Audio or video recordings
- Research reports (natural or social sciences)
- Original literary or theatrical works
- Historical documents
- Maps

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# Primary Sources

- Primary sources are easier than ever to find by using the internet. Downloading photos, journals, diaries, government reports, and many other primary sources is quite easy to do.
- Sites like loc.gov give access to all kinds of on line primary sources. (loc.gov is Library of Congress)

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# Secondary Sources

- **Interpret primary sources** - at least one step removed from the event or phenomenon under review
- **Examination** of studies that other researchers have made of a subject
- **Second Hand** - conveys the experiences and opinions of others



# Secondary Sources

- Usually in the form of published works
  - Journal articles
  - Books
  - Radio and TV documentaries
  - Encyclopedia entries
  - Most web-based information
  - Textbooks
  - Magazine and Newspaper articles

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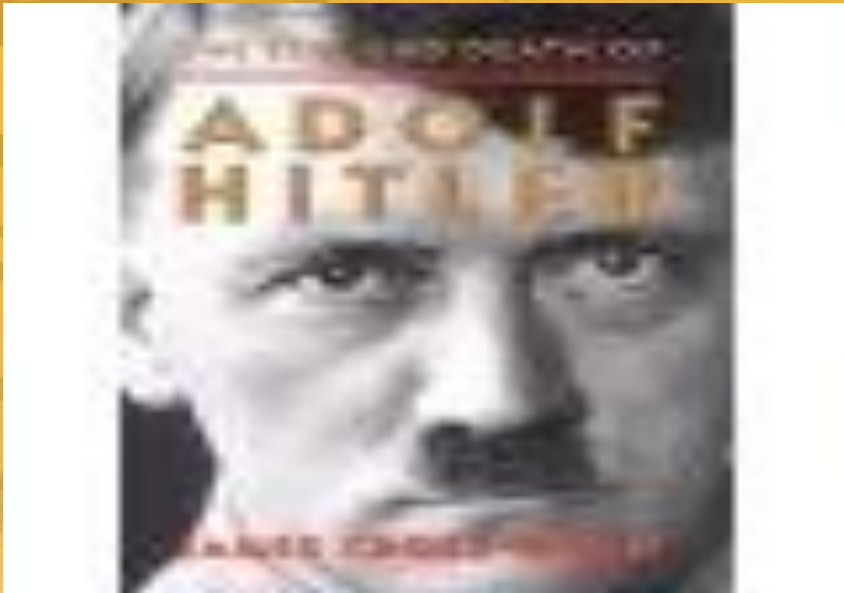
# How do you know?

- Ask yourself some questions:
  - How does the author know these details?
  - Was the author present at the event or soon on the scene?
  - Where does this information come from—personal experience, eyewitness accounts, or reports written by others?
  - Are the author's conclusions based on a single piece of evidence, or have many sources been taken into account?



# Lets Practice

- What type of source is this?



A book written in 2010 about the life of the villain Adolf Hitler, who led Germany from 1933-1945.

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# It's a Secondary Source

- Because it is a study that a researcher has made about a subject from the past. The author gathered material about Hitler from a variety of primary and secondary sources to write his book. His book is a secondary source.

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# Let's Practice

- What type of source is this?



A news paper article  
from 1963.

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# It's a Primary Source

It is a Primary Source because it is a published work (newspaper article) that was written soon after the fact soon after the fact.

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# Lets practice

- What type of source is this?



An election campaign poster from 1900.

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That's right! It is a primary source

It is a primary source because it is an historical document.

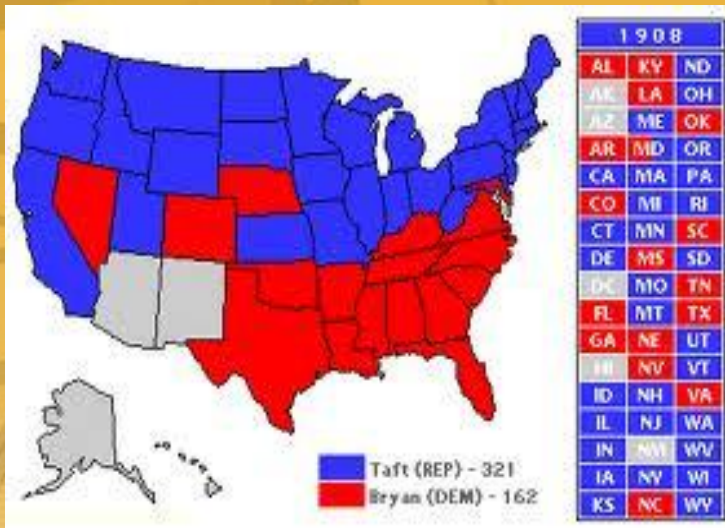
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# Lets practice

What type of source is this?



A map showing the electoral college and election results from the 1908 presidential election.

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# Another Primary Source

It is a Primary Source because it contains a map showing statistical data (results from an election). In a project, using statistical documents and maps as primary sources is a very good idea because you can use your own analysis to support your argument, hypothesis, or theory.

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# One more practice.

- What type of source is this? (the article, not the photo.)



An article from last month's Time magazine focused on the legacy and history of the Berlin Wall.

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# It is a Secondary Source

- It is a secondary source because it is an article written about the past. Like the book about Hitler, the author used a variety of sources, both secondary and primary to write her article. Her article is a secondary source.

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## For more information...

- *Library Research: Finding Primary Sources*. Berkeley: Library, University of California, Berkeley.  
<http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/TeachingLib/Guides/PrimarySources.html>
- *Research Skills Tutorial: Primary Research*. Toronto: Gerstein Science Information Centre.  
[http://www.library.utoronto.ca/gerstein/tutorial/primary\\_research1.html](http://www.library.utoronto.ca/gerstein/tutorial/primary_research1.html)
- *Primary and Secondary Sources*. Ithaca College.  
<http://www.ithaca.edu/library/course/primary.html>



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