

# Primary & Secondary Sources

## What is a primary source?

A primary source is a document or other sort of evidence written or created during the time under study. Primary sources offer an inside view of a particular event.

## What is a secondary source?

A secondary source interprets and analyzes primary sources. Secondary sources are one step removed from the event.

Some examples of secondary sources

### Primary Sources

#### **Original Documents**

Diaries  
Speeches  
Letters  
Minutes  
Photographs  
Scholarly journal articles reporting NEW findings  
Official records  
Autobiographies

#### **People**

Interviews  
E-mail contacts  
Discussions  
Debates  
Community Meetings  
Surveys

### Secondary Sources

Textbooks  
Reference Materials  
Most books on a topic  
CD Roms  
Encyclopedias  
Biographies  
Magazines or Newspapers written at the time by someone not present

\*Newspapers are a tricky category. If the author was present at the event it is considered primary. Use your best judgment.

