

Understanding Primary and Secondary Sources

This worksheet gauges your ability to source, contextualize, and corroborate a document. You should consider how the contextual information about the creation of video affects its reliability as historical evidence of the particular event or person. You should watch the videos and critically analyze them to determine how the content of the video and the context might call its reliability into question. Finally, you should think about what other information you might seek to help you evaluate the video.

Topic: _____

Members: _____

(Part 1) Write down 10 key facts about your topic using complete sentences. Use a textbook or encyclopedia (secondary sources).

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
7.
8.
9.
10.

WORKSHEET

Film's title: _____

A (primary) or (secondary) source?

1. What do you notice first?
2. Describe what you view.
3. What does the video make you think about?
4. Find and describe something small but interesting about this film.
5. What do you notice in it that you cannot explain?
6. What did you learn that you did not know earlier?
7. Where did this primary source come from? When did it occur?

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8. Why did someone make it?

9. What do you think was happening when this film was made?

10. Who was the film's audience?

11. Why do you think this film is important?

12. If someone made this type of film today, would it be different? How so?

GUIDE: Definitions of Primary and Secondary Sources

According to Princeton University, a **primary source** is a document or physical object which was written or created during the time under study. These sources were present during an experience or time period and offer an inside view of a particular event. Some types of primary sources include:

- ORIGINAL DOCUMENTS (excerpts or translations acceptable): Diaries, speeches, manuscripts, letters, interviews, live news footage, autobiographies, official records, documentaries
- CREATIVE WORKS: Poetry, drama, novels, music, art
- RELICS OR ARTIFACTS: Pottery, furniture, clothing, buildings

Examples of primary sources:

- Diary of Anne Frank - Experiences of a Jewish family during WWII
- The Constitution of Canada - Canadian History
- News footage of a live event
- A new piece or article with NEW research or findings
- Weavings and pottery - Native American history

According to Princeton University, a **secondary source** interprets and analyzes primary sources. These sources are one or more steps removed from the event. Secondary sources may have pictures, quotes or graphics of primary sources in them. Some types of secondary sources include:

- PUBLICATIONS: Textbooks, magazine articles, histories, criticisms, commentaries, encyclopedias, films made after an event occurred.

Examples of secondary sources:

- A journal/magazine article which interprets or reviews previous findings
- A history textbook
- A book about the causes of WWI
- A film or movie about an event or person but removed from the time and place.

Citation: Princeton University. *What is a Primary Source?*,
<http://www.princeton.edu/~refdesk/primary2.html>.