

4-1-2014

# Introduction to Primary and Secondary Sources

Becky Haagsma

---

## Recommended Citation

Haagsma, Becky, "Introduction to Primary and Secondary Sources" (2014). *Lesson Plans*. 18.  
<https://via.library.depaul.edu/tps-lesson-plans/18>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Teaching with Primary Sources Program at Via Sapientiae. It has been accepted for inclusion in Lesson Plans by an authorized administrator of Via Sapientiae. For more information, please contact [wsulliv6@depaul.edu](mailto:wsulliv6@depaul.edu), [c.mcclure@depaul.edu](mailto:c.mcclure@depaul.edu).

## **Introduction to Primary and Secondary Sources**

**Overview:** Students will learn about primary and secondary sources.

**Goal:** Students will be able to analyze a source to help determine its authority, and differentiate between primary and secondary sources.

### **Objectives:**

- Students will be able to differentiate between primary and secondary sources.
- Students will learn about the importance of determining a source's authority.
- Students will practice determining source authority.

**Investigative Question:** How can we tell what is a primary source? How can we use them to help us understand the past?

**Time required:** 50 minutes – 1 hour

**Recommended Grade Range:** 4-6

**Subject:** Social studies; language arts; information literacy

### **Common Core Standards:**

English Language Arts Standards » Anchor Standards » College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Reading

*CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.1:* Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

*CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.6:* Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

*CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.7:* Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.

English Language Arts Standards » Anchor Standards » College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Speaking and Listening

*CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.1* Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

*CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.2* Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

*CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.3* Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric.

Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.4 Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and

English Language Arts Standards » Reading: Informational Text » Grade 5

*CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.5.1:* Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

*CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.5.2:* Determine two or more main ideas of a text and explain how they are supported by key details; summarize the text.

*CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.5.4:* Determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases in a text relevant to a grade 5 topic or subject area.

*CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.5.5:* Compare and contrast the overall structure (e.g., chronology, comparison, cause/effect, problem/solution) of events, ideas, concepts, or information in two or more texts.

*CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.5.6:* Analyze multiple accounts of the same event or topic, noting important similarities and differences in the point of view they represent.

*CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.5.10* By the end of the year, read and comprehend informational texts, including history/social studies, science, and technical texts, at the high end of the grades 4–5 text complexity band independently and proficiently.

**Illinois Social Studies State Goals (Late elementary):**

*Goal 16.A. Apply the skills of historical analysis and interpretation.*

*16.A.2b* Compare different stories about a historical figure or event and analyze differences in the portrayals and perspectives they present.

*16.A.2c* Ask questions and seek answers by collecting and analyzing data from historic documents, images and other literary and non-literary sources.

**Credits:** Rebecca Haagsma

**Preparation:**

**Materials Used:**

Board or chart paper

Copies of “What is a Primary Source” worksheet (front and back)

Either computers or tablets for students to access document

([http://wiki.d181.org/wiki/pages/i561H27/Primary\\_Sources.html#](http://wiki.d181.org/wiki/pages/i561H27/Primary_Sources.html#)) with links to primary and secondary documents, or printed out copies of the primary and secondary documents.

**Resources Used:**

(\* Denotes items I would not consider primary sources.)

### **Group 1:**

- 1) Title: Narrative of Henry Watson, a fugitive slave.  
URL: <http://memory.loc.gov/rbc/rbaapc/32910/0001.jpg> and  
<http://memory.loc.gov/rbc/rbaapc/32910/0001.jpg>  
Author: Henry Watson  
Date: 1949
- 2) Title: "Tubman, Harriet" \*  
URL: <http://worldbookonline.com/student/article?id=ar569550&st=tubman%2C+harriet>  
Author: Matthew Clavin  
Date: 2013
- 3) Title: President Lincoln and his cabinet: in council, Sept. 22nd 1862. adopting the Emancipation Proclamation, issued Jany. 1st 1863 \*  
URL: <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2001702376/>  
Author/Creator: Currier & Ives  
Date: 1876
- 4) Title: City of Atlanta, Ga., no. 1  
URL: <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2008679857/>  
Author/Creator: George N. Barnard  
Date: 1866
- 5) Title: Scott's Great Snake  
URL: <http://myloc.gov/Exhibitions/civil-war-in-america/april-1861-april-1862/ExhibitObjects/Anaconda-Plan.aspx>  
Author/Creator: J.B. Elliot  
Date: 1861

### **Group 2:**

- 1) Title: Speech of Thomas J. Randolph in the House of Delegates of Virginia, on the abolition of slavery.  
URL: [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=rbaapc&fileName=23920//rbaapc23920.db&recNum=0&itemLink=r?ammem/rbaapcbib:@field\(NUMBER+@od1\(rbaapc+23920\)\)&linkText=0&presId=rbaapcbib](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=rbaapc&fileName=23920//rbaapc23920.db&recNum=0&itemLink=r?ammem/rbaapcbib:@field(NUMBER+@od1(rbaapc+23920))&linkText=0&presId=rbaapcbib)  
Source: Unknown  
Date: 1932
- 2) Title: Zina, the slave girl, or, Which the traitor? : a drama in four acts  
URL: [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=rbaapc&fileName=29600//rbaapc29600.db&recNum=0&itemLink=r?ammem/rbaapcbib:@field\(NUMBER+@od1\(rbaapc+29600\)\)&linkText=0&presId=rbaapcbib](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=rbaapc&fileName=29600//rbaapc29600.db&recNum=0&itemLink=r?ammem/rbaapcbib:@field(NUMBER+@od1(rbaapc+29600))&linkText=0&presId=rbaapcbib)

Author: Dr. A. Thompson

Date: 1882

- 3) Title: African Americans in the Civil War  
URL: [http://mrunussbaum.com/civil-war/african\\_americans/](http://mrunussbaum.com/civil-war/african_americans/)  
Author: Greg Nussbaum  
Date: Unknown
- 4) Title: The first reading of the Emancipation Proclamation before the cabinet \*  
URL: <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/resource/pga.02502/>  
Author/Creator: Ritchie, Alexander Hay  
Date: 1866
- 5) Title: Confederate flag Flying [Interior view of Fort Sumter after the evacuation of Major Anderson]  
URL: <http://myloc.gov/Exhibitions/civil-war-in-america/april-1861-april-1862/ExhibitObjects/Fort-Sumter-Falls.aspx>  
Author/Creator: Alma Pelot,  
Date: April 16, 1861.

**Group 3:**

- 1) Title: The War, and How to End It?  
URL: [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=rbaapc&fileName=26701//rbaapc26701.db&recNum=0&itemLink=r?ammem/rbaapcbib:@field\(NUMBER+@od1\(rbaapc+26701\)\)&linkText=0&presId=rbaapcbib](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=rbaapc&fileName=26701//rbaapc26701.db&recNum=0&itemLink=r?ammem/rbaapcbib:@field(NUMBER+@od1(rbaapc+26701))&linkText=0&presId=rbaapcbib)  
Author: William N. Slocum  
Date: 1861
- 2) Title: The Martyr of liberty \*  
URL: <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/alhtml/alrb/stbdsd/00405300/001.html>  
Author/Creator: unknown  
Date: Unknown
- 3) Title: Distribution of Slavery in the Southern States  
URL: <http://myloc.gov/Exhibitions/civil-war-in-america/prologue/ExhibitObjects/Distribution-of-Slavery-in-Southern-States.aspx>  
Author/Creator: Edwin Hergesheimer (published by Henry S. Graham)  
Date: 1861
- 4) Title: "If you could see the multitudes of wounded and sick soldiers"  
URL: <http://blogs.loc.gov/civil-war-voices/if-you-could-see-the-multitudes-of-wounded-and-sick-soldiers/>

Author/Creator: Mary Ann Bickerdyke

Date: August 23, 1864

- 5) Title: Lincoln's First Inaugural Address

URL: <http://myloc.gov/Exhibitions/civil-war-in-america/prologue/ExhibitObjects/Lincolns-First-Inaugural-Address.aspx>

Author/Creator: Abraham Lincoln

Date: March 4, 1861.

**Group 4:**

- 1) Title: Slavery Sanctioned By the Bible

URL: [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=rbaapc&fileName=14900//rbaapc14900.db&recNum=0&itemLink=r?ammem/rbaapcbib:@field\(NUMBER+@od1\(rbaapc+14900\)\)&linkText=0](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=rbaapc&fileName=14900//rbaapc14900.db&recNum=0&itemLink=r?ammem/rbaapcbib:@field(NUMBER+@od1(rbaapc+14900))&linkText=0)

Author: John Richter Jones

Date: 1861

- 2) Title: The Civil War: Overview \*

URL: <http://www.nps.gov/civilwar/overview.htm>

Author/Creator: James McPherson

Date: 2011

- 3) Title: Lincoln's last hour \*

URL: <http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/scsmbib:@field%28DOCID+@lit%28scsm000355%29%29>

Author/Creator: unknown

Date: 1865

- 4) Title: "Keeping track of soldiers"

URL: <http://myloc.gov/Exhibitions/civil-war-in-america/december-1862-october-1863/ExhibitObjects/Keeping-Track-of-Soldiers.aspx>

Author/Creator: Clara Barton

Date: 1863

- 5) Title: City Point, Virginia. Negro soldier guarding 12-pdr. Napoleon. (Model 1857?)

URL: <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/cwp2003004911/PP/>

Author/Creator: unknown

Date: 1865

**Group 5:**

- 1) Title: Lincoln's Place in History \*

URL:

<http://digital.library.cornell.edu/cgi/t/text/pagevieweridx?c=cent;cc=cent;rgn=full%20text;idno=cent0047-4;didno=cent0047-4;view=image;seq=00600;node=cent0047-4%3A1>

Author: John Coleman Adams. Published in *The Century; a popular quarterly*

Date: February, 1894

- 2) Title: Bull Run \*

URL: <http://www.harpercollins.com/browseinside/index.aspx?isbn13=9780064405881>

Author: Paul Fleischman

Date: 1993

- 3) Title: The Battle of Gettysburg

URL: <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/resource/ppmsca.22556/?co=drwg>

Author/Creator: Edwin Forbes

Date: 1863 July 3

- 4) Title: I must bid you farewell should I be killed

URL: <http://blogs.loc.gov/civil-war-voices/i-must-bid-you-farewell-should-i-be-killed/>

Author/creator: Lewis Henry Douglass

Date: July 20, 1863

- 5) Title: Fourth Regiment New Hampshire Volunteers

<http://myloc.gov/Exhibitions/civil-war-in-america/april-1861-april-1862/ExhibitObjects/Call-to-Arms.aspx>

Author/Creator: unknown, names on poster: Lieut J.M. Clough, Sergt. W.B. Rowe

Date: 1861

**Group 6:**

- 1) Title: Frederick Douglass \*

URL: <http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/odyssey/archive/02/0218001r.jpg>

Author/Creator: Charles White

Date: 1951

- 2) Title: Part of Charleston Harbor, Embracing Forts Moultrie, Sumter, Johnson, and Castle Pinckney, also Sullivan, James & Morris Islands

URL: <http://myloc.gov/Exhibitions/civil-war-in-america/april-1861-april-1862/ExhibitObjects/Fort-Sumter-Falls.aspx>

Author/Creator: George T. Perry

Date: 1861

- 3) Title: Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, Gettysburg

URL: <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/cwp2008000003/PP/>

Creator: [unknown]

Date: 19 Nov. 1863

- 4) Title: Storming Fort Wagner \*  
URL: <http://myloc.gov/Exhibitions/civil-war-in-america/december-1862-october-1863/ExhibitObjects/Assault-on-Fort-Wagner.aspx>  
Date: 1890  
Creator: Kurz & Allison Art Publishers
- 5) Title: Ulysses S. Grant to Abraham Lincoln  
URL: <http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=mal&fileName=mal1/257/2579900/malpage.db&recNum=0>  
Author/Creator: Ulysses S. Grant  
Date: Sunday, August 23, 1863

**Group 7:**

- 1) Title: Grant: Loving Husband and Father  
URL: <http://myloc.gov/Exhibitions/civil-war-in-america/november-1863-april-1865/ExhibitObjects/Grant-Loving-Husband-and-Father.aspx>  
Author/Creator: Ulysses S. Grant  
Date: June 7, 1864
- 2) Title: "Those who struck at the nation's life, and those who struck to save it"  
URL: <http://blogs.loc.gov/civil-war-voices/those-who-struck-at-the-nations-life-and-those-who-struck-to-save-it/>  
Author/Creator: Frederick Douglass  
Date: May 30, 1871
- 3) Title: Unidentified young soldier in 5th New Hampshire Infantry uniform  
URL: <http://myloc.gov/Exhibitions/civil-war-in-america/april-1861-april-1862/ExhibitObjects/Call-to-Arms.aspx>  
Creator: unknown  
Date: 1861-1865
- 4) Title: [Dividing the] National [Map]  
URL: <http://myloc.gov/Exhibitions/civil-war-in-america/prologue/ExhibitObjects/Torn-Asunder.aspx>  
Author/Creator: unknown  
Date: 1860
- 5) Title: Campaign for Vicksburg \*  
URL: <http://school.eb.com/levels/middle/article/273689#198776.toc>  
Author/Creator: Encyclopædia Britannica



Date: 2013

**Example:**

Title: Draft of the Emancipation Proclamation

URL: <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/alhtml/alms/dep001.html>

Author/Creator: Abraham Lincoln

Date: July 22, 1862

**Procedure:**

1. Opening: (Connect, construct)
  - a. I'm going to tell you that there is a way to categorize types of sources that we get information from into primary sources and secondary sources. Ask if anyone has heard those terms before.
  - b. Explain that primary sources are an original record of an event, created by someone who was there at that event. A secondary source is a secondhand account of an event that was created later by someone who did not experience the event.
  - c. On board, make a T chart labeled "Primary sources" and "Secondary source." Have students tell you examples of things they think would be primary versus secondary.
2. Wonder:
  - a. Ask, how can we tell what is a primary source and what is a secondary source?
  - b. Which do you think there would be more primary sources from, the Revolutionary War or the Civil War?
  - c. What do you think is a more reliable source?
  - d. Look at example, "Draft of Emancipation Proclamation" and discuss whether this is primary source.
3. Activity (Investigate, construct, express):
  - a. You are going to look at some sources in groups and try to decide which ones are primary and which are secondary.
  - b. Break students up into (up to seven) groups. Each group has a computer/device to look at the resources, or print outs. Each group also has the "What is a Primary Source" worksheet, which has columns for Titles of Primary, Secondary, and not sure.
  - c. Look at one example together: Draft of the Emancipation Proclamation.
  - d. Give groups time to look at items and discuss, monitoring their discussion.
  - e. When groups are done, ask them to share. Make sure each group shares at least once, asking questions: Who wants to explain why they thought a source was primary/secondary? (The groups can pick which from their selection to share). If they had some that they were unsure of, ask why they were unsure and what information would have helped them decide.
4. Review (Connect, reflect):
  - a. Look at other side "What is a Primary Source?" worksheet and go through together, adding other sources they think would fit in each category.

- b. Ask if they have any questions or other things they wonder about.

**Evaluation**

The evaluation for this activity is informal. The teacher will listen to small group discussions about the sources as well as how they divide up their sources. The teacher will also use the whole group discussion after the activity, and listen to the ideas that students have about what makes a primary and secondary source.

April 18, 2014

Rebecca Haagsma

### Reflection on Primary Sources Introduction Lesson

I taught my lesson to a class of fifth graders in a 30-minute period. Overall, I thought it went quite well. When I originally designed the lesson, I expected the students to not have much, if any, background knowledge about primary and secondary sources, so this was intended to be an introduction. This year, the reading curriculum did touch on primary and secondary sources, so at least some of the students did recognize the terms and have some understanding. Still, the lesson provided a good way to have them examine, interact with, and discuss primary documents. They left with a better understanding of the differences between primary and secondary documents, and gained practice in thinking critically about the sources.

I am not sure whether I think having students look at the documents as printed out copies versus on a iPad would make a difference, but I do feel that it worked well to have them access the documents through links. I divided the resources into groups and put links to each resource on a blog, so the students would be able to access them easily on either iPads or laptops. This worked fairly well. There were a couple of instances where the links were not valid, either due to my error or because of the Library of Congress website changing. So, before I would do this lesson again, I will check for accuracy in those links. In some cases I helped the students find what they were supposed to be looking at by simply searching LOC.gov.

I would have liked to have more time for further discussion right after they examined the documents, but our schedules did not permit for that. We did review it the following week and the discussion included how it can be difficult to tell what is a primary document, especially with paintings and sketches. We also talked about biases in all kinds of sources. I think elementary school students need practice and instruction in thinking about their sources and learn to evaluate, and this lesson provided an opportunity for them to do that.

This lesson was at the beginning of their research on the Civil War. Students demonstrated their learning by creating letters or journal entries. Students learned about how journals and letters were an important part of the lives of those who experienced the Civil War. They examined letters and other primary sources and saw how soldiers and other key figures recorded their experiences and corresponded with their families and loved ones. Students then needed to choose three people or type of people from Civil War times and write letters or journal articles from before, during, and after the war. Types of people included a slave plantation owner, Union/Confederate soldier at a specific battle, a Southerner after reading the Emancipation Proclamation, a spy, a nurse, etc. The students were creative in their letters or journal entries and the classroom teachers were very pleased with how this went. Students displayed their letters on a tri-fold board or in a presentation on an iPad or laptop for their parents to see. It was definitely helpful for students to view and examine actual letters from the Civil War to help with this assignment.

Name:

## What is a Primary Source?

**Directions:** As a group, look at each of the resources and write the titles of them under the category you think they belong to. If you are not sure, write it under “Not sure” but explain why, or what information you would need to help you decide.

**Primary**

**Secondary**

**Not sure (explain what you would need to help you decide)**

## What is a Primary Source?

A **Primary Source** is an original record of an event, created by someone who participated or witnessed that event. Primary sources offer a variety of points of view and perspectives of events, issues, people, and places.

Primary sources include:

- Letters
- Photographs
- Maps
- Journals
- Art / Sketches
- Sound recordings
- Newspaper articles
- Physical objects (clothes, tools, etc.)
- 
- 
- 
- 

\*Just because an item is listed above does not mean it is automatically a primary source. The important thing to remember is they were used or created by someone with firsthand experience of an event.

## What is a Secondary Source?

A **Secondary Source** is a secondhand account of an event that was created later by someone who did not experience the event. It may use primary sources as examples or explain or analyze primary sources.

Secondary sources include:

- Textbooks
- Encyclopedias
- Biographies
- Books
- Art
- Newspapers
- 
- 
- 
-