

September 22:

Week 5: Understanding Source Types

Being able to identify a primary, secondary, or tertiary source is an important skill for all students. Any student who participates in NM NHD should master this skill in their first year of participation. In this workshop, you will be giving your students a simple assessment to determine their skill level in this area, defining primary, secondary, and tertiary sources, and demonstrating each. For National History Day, it is important that students conduct balanced research using both primary and secondary sources. NHD judges will expect students to be able to tell the difference between the two.

Mini-Lesson:

Define each type of source for your students. Begin with primary sources. For instance, if your class is studying the Civil War, you could show them a Civil War soldier's journal, a letter from a soldier, a newspaper article, a battle map, etc... Then demonstrate for them that even a translation in modern type is still a primary source. You might use a transcript of the Emancipation Proclamation to make this point. Then, transition to secondary sources. Help students understand why a secondary source is considered secondary. Show them several secondary sources...a US History textbook, a biography written about Lincoln in modern times, a newspaper article that reflects on the war years later. It is important to explain that the age of the source has nothing to do with whether it is a primary source or a secondary source.

Rather, students should consider who the author/creator is. A newspaper article about this year's Broncos season can be a primary source, even though it was written yesterday, if it was written by a writer who has been an eyewitness to the season. It can also be a secondary source if the writer does not have any first-hand knowledge of this year's team.

You might also want to touch on the idea of tertiary sources, especially if you are teaching an advanced class. This is a great place for a discussion about Wikipedia. National History Day judges tend to view Wikipedia as an unreliable source, so it should not be cited. While tertiary sources are not disallowed, NHD recommends the use of primary and secondary sources. A tertiary source is defined as one that index, abstract, organize, compile, or digest other sources. Some reference materials and textbooks are considered tertiary sources when their chief purpose is to list, summarize, or simply repackage ideas or other information. Tertiary sources are usually not credited to a particular author. (definition: Univ of Minnesota Crookston)

Work Time:

This activity shows students several sources and asks them to determine if they are primary or secondary. After each answer, students will find out if they are correct, and learn more about why that type of source is primary or secondary. A link to the online practice is also found here. Source type practice activity. If you wish to grade this activity, use the simplified version that is found on the flash drive.

Homework:

If you are able to take your students to the public library for a research day, this should be done before Workshop 6 (or Workshop 6 could be presented at the library). If you do wish to make a library visit, call your library and explain what you are doing. Most libraries are happy to help students with research, and regional coordinators will also assist in organizing library days at local colleges (please contact Ellen for assistance in attending library days in your region, if necessary). If you are requiring your class to choose New Mexico topics, a trip to the University of New Mexico libraries are highly recommended. They will work with your students, and it is well worth your time.

If you cannot make a library fieldtrip, see if your library can come to you. Otherwise, assign students the task of going to the library before next week and checking out 3 books related to their topic before the Workshop 6 meeting date.

CONDUCTING RESEARCH USING PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SOURCES

I have my topic and I know how it is connected to the NHD theme.

What do I do next?

While you are researching a topic for an NHD project, you will read different types of sources: tertiary sources, secondary sources, and primary sources. Here is how to tell the difference.

Primary Sources

Primary sources are original materials. They are from the time period or event being researched. They have not been filtered through interpretation or evaluation. Other research is usually based on primary sources. Primary documents give an "eye-witness" account of the event. They present original thinking, report a discovery, or share new information. The purpose of primary sources is to capture the words, the thoughts and the intentions of the past. Primary sources help you to interpret what happened and why it happened.

Examples of primary sources include **documents, letters, diaries, artifacts, photographs, historic sites, songs, or other written and tangible items** created during the historical period you are studying.

Secondary Sources

A secondary source is a source that was not created first-hand by someone who participated in the historical era. Secondary sources are usually created by historians but based on the historian's reading of primary sources. Secondary sources are usually written decades, if not centuries, after the event occurred by people who did not live through or participate in the event or issue. The purpose of a secondary source is to help explain the "big picture". Reading secondary sources help us understand the context of the event and what the effect of the event on history was.

An example of a secondary source is ***Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era*** by James M. McPherson, published in 1988. Secondary sources are a great starting point in helping you see the big picture.

Understanding the context of your topic will help you make sense of the primary sources that you find.

The primary and secondary sources McPherson used are listed in the bibliography. Another researcher might consult these same primary sources and reach a different conclusion.

When searching for secondary sources, look to **magazine articles, history compilations or books on a specific subject, history textbooks, interviews with experts (historians, professors, etc.), etc.**

Tertiary Sources

Tertiary sources are based on a collection of primary and secondary sources and may or may not be written by an expert. Tertiary sources make good starting points to give you ideas about what to research. Wikipedia, for example, is a tertiary source. **NHD recommends that Wikipedia never be listed in the annotated bibliography.**

Examples are **dictionaries, encyclopedias, fact books, and guidebooks.**

When there is a question

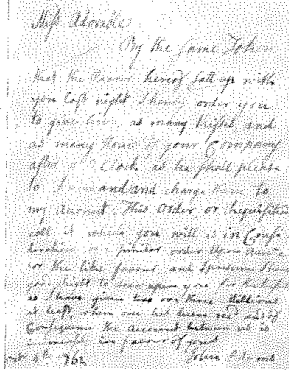
Sometimes it is difficult to decide if a source is primary or secondary. Sometimes a source might be primary for one topic but secondary for another. Choose the category you think it belongs in and build an argument. You can share the reasons for your choice with the judges in the annotations you provide in your bibliography.

Practicing Source Identification

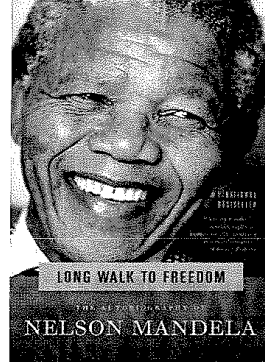
Determine which of the following items are primary sources and which are secondary sources.

Write P on the line by the sources that are primary.

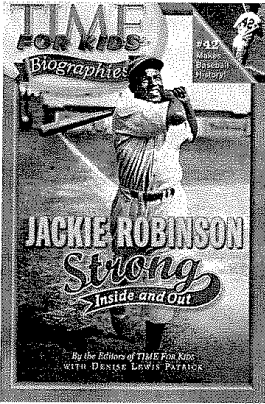
Write S on the line by the sources that are secondary.



Letter from John Adams to Abigail Adams _____



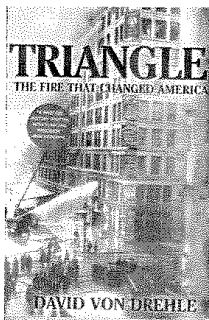
Nelson Mandela's autobiography _____



Article about Jackie Robinson _____



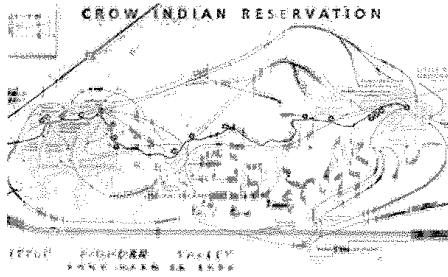
Menu from the Titanic _____



Book about the Triangle Factory Fire _____

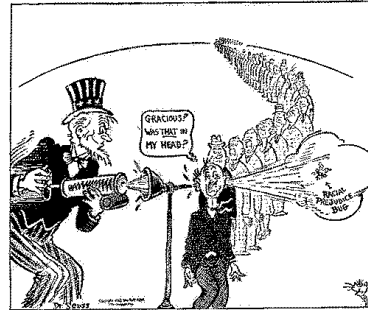


Photo of a Colorado Gold Mining town _____

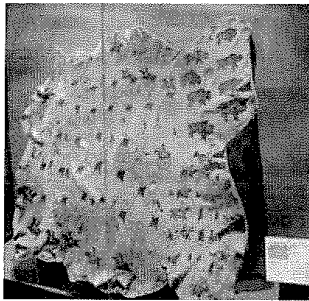


Map of the Custer's Battlefield

What This Country Needs Is a Good Mental Insecticide



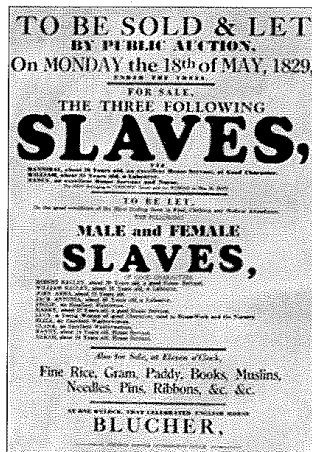
WWII Political Cartoon



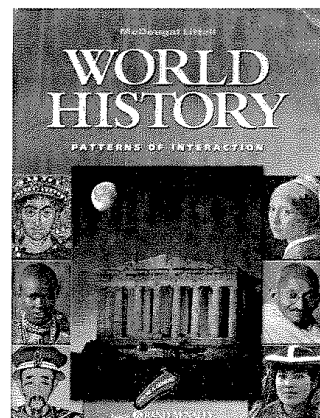
Buffalo Robe map of the Sand Creek Massacre



Documentary history of New York City



Slave sale poster



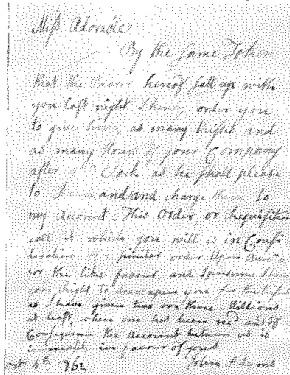
World History textbook

Finding Primary Sources

Determine which of the following items are primary sources and which are secondary sources.

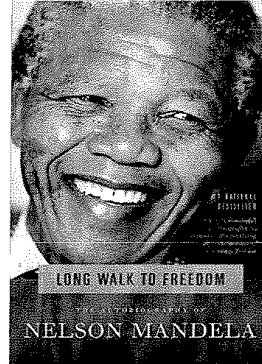
Write P on the line by the sources that are primary.

Write S on the line by the sources that are secondary.



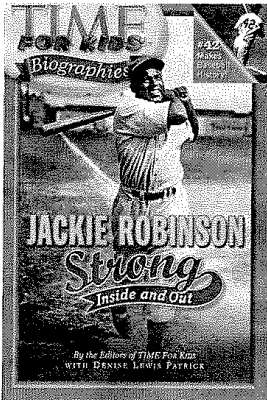
___ P ___

Letter from John Adams to Abigail Adams



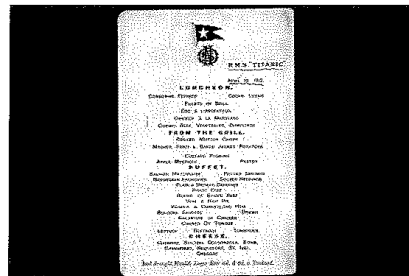
___ P ___

Nelson Mandela's autobiography



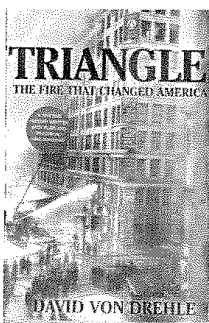
___ S ___

Article about Jackie Robinson



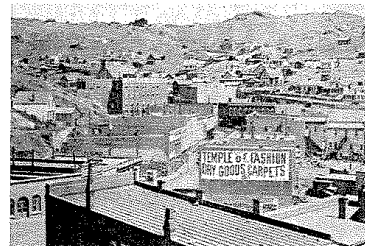
___ P ___

Menu from the Titanic



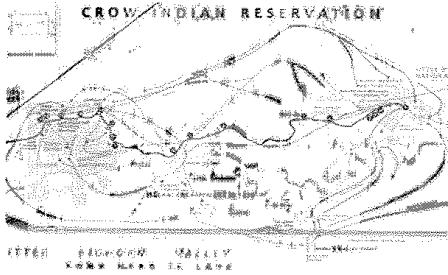
___ S ___

Book about the Triangle Factory Fire



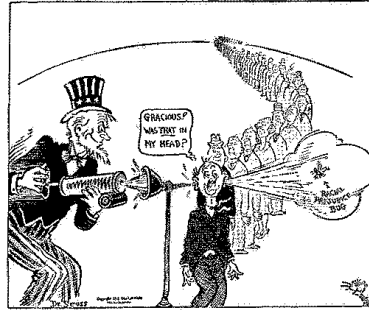
___ P ___

Photo of a Colorado Gold Mining town

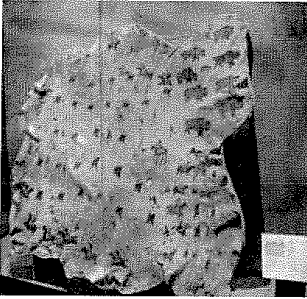


Map of the Custer's Battlefield

What This Country Needs Is a Good Mental Insecticide



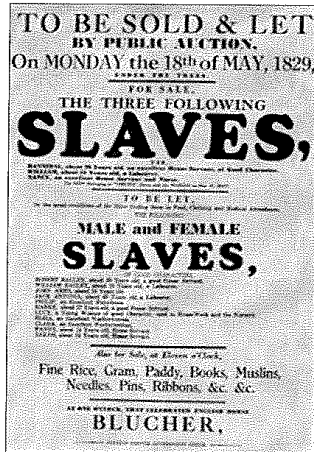
WWII Political Cartoon



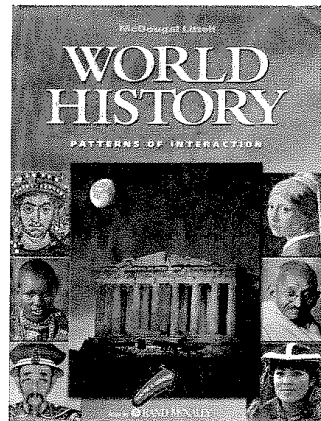
Buffalo Robe map of the Sand Creek Massacre



Documentary history of New York City



Slave sale poster



World History textbook

Week 6: Working with Secondary Sources

Differentiating between primary and secondary sources is an important skill. But once students can tell the difference, they must learn to analyze each type of source material. We will begin with secondary sources. This may seem backward, but researching from secondary sources first allows students to gain an understanding of "the big picture." Secondary source material can also help students know what primary sources they might look for.

If you are able to take a research trip to your local library, this would be a great time to do just that. Students will be able to experience the lesson first-hand, and then explore sources for their chosen NHD topic.

If you are not able to take your students to the library, contact your local library and see if they will come to you. At the very least, visit the library and check out several books your students could use.

Mini-Lesson:

Choose a demonstration topic and have several secondary sources ready to show your students. During the mini-lesson, you are going to demonstrate different ways to use a secondary source. As you demonstrate each source, show students where to find the publishing information and show them how to record this information of their research log, note cards, or digital log. Emphasize the importance of this.

Explain analysis to your students:

Begin with a few non-fiction sources about your subject. Use at least one book, but you could also show magazine or journal articles, chapters from a compilation books such as textbooks, documentary films, etc. Show your students that they should read at least 2-3 books on their subject. This way they can compare the authors' perspectives for consistency. Students should look for confirmation of information from more than one reliable source. If their project is about a person, encourage them to read a biography about their subject.

Many students will feel overwhelmed by the idea of reading three large books. Consider having them look in the junior non-fiction section. There are often great books about historical events and important people that won't be as over-whelming as larger texts. Show an example of this.

Continue by showing students how to use the table of contents and index to find specific information from a book. They may only need to read a chapter or two rather than the entire book. Consider a student who is doing a project on Jackie Robinson. They might find a book on the history of Major League Baseball. While some students might find it beneficial to read the entire book, many will find it overwhelming. They might instead just look for a chapter or two in the book about Jackie Robinson or the integration of the Major Leagues. Demonstrate this. Point out that if they find a reference to their

topic in the index, they should read that information in context. In other words, they should read a few pages before and after the mention to understand the meaning.

Demonstrate for students how they might find an idea in a book that leads them to new research possibilities. Let's go back to the Jackie Robinson topic. Using a biography about Robinson from the junior non-fiction section, one will come across the name Branch Rickey. The student could then take this name and do further research that would be beneficial to the topic. Encourage students to keep a list of other ideas or names to research.

Also demonstrate to your students that they might find information in compilation books. Again, they will not need to read and take notes on the entire book. Instruct them to record the title of the chapter as well as the title of the book they are working with in their notes. Again, using the Jackie Robinson topic, they might find a book titled Heroes of the Major Leagues. The student should be able to find a section on just Jackie Robinson.

Work Time:

Allow students to explore the library for information about their own topic. Often your local librarians will be more than willing to help by pulling material ahead of time. However, if you have the time, it is beneficial for students to learn how to locate materials in the library.

Group work: you will have students who are planning to do a group project when the time comes. At this stage, each member of the group should be researching individually, but they can certainly share sources and discuss what they find.

Encourage students who wish to work as groups to all check out materials and share them as they continue their research.

Homework:

For the next workshop, students should be ready for a progress check for a grade. They should have chosen a topic, written a working thesis statement, acquired ____ number of sources to show you, and taken notes on ____ number of sources (you choose the numbers according to the ability level of your class. This also lends a great opportunity for differentiation for students who are not on the same level as the class in general.)

Notes:

****As students begin to take notes, this is the time to discuss plagiarism. Direct quotes should be recorded in their notes with quotation marks and the name of the speaker. Anything a student copies word for word must be credited to the author. Be sure that your students understand that plagiarism will cause disqualification from any National History Day contest.**

How many sources should a student use?

- There is not a required amount, but a **minimum fifteen (with at least ½ primary) is recommended.**
- Students should use diverse sources and not rely on only one type of source (i.e. sources found on the internet.) The strongest projects' sources include: articles, films, interviews, internet, books, museums, etc.
- Research should be balanced. Students should consider differing perspectives and biases of their sources.
- Students should not pad their bibliography with sources that were not useful.
- Some topics, particularly those before recorded history or those written about in foreign languages, are challenging to find sources.
- It is sometimes easier (and more fun) to research a topic that relates directly to local or state histories. Available resources may include: historical sites, historical societies, museums, archives, colleges/ universities, and personal interviews of community members.