



# Primary or Secondary?

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## What is a primary information 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.

### Types of primary sources

#### ORIGINAL DOCUMENTS

Diaries, speeches, letters, minutes, interviews, news film footage, autobiographies, official records, scholarly journal articles reporting NEW research or findings.

#### CREATIVE WORKS

Poetry, drama, novels, music, art.

#### RELICS OR ARTIFACTS

Jewelry, pottery, furniture, clothing, buildings

### Examples of primary sources

Diary of Anne Frank -- experiences of the Jews in WWII

Declaration of Independence -- U.S. history

Bible -- Hebrew customs in biblical times

Arrowheads and pottery -- American Indian history

Plato's Republic -- women in ancient Greece

## What is a secondary information source?

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

### Types of secondary sources

#### DOCUMENTS

Textbooks, magazine articles, histories, criticism, commentaries, encyclopedias, systematic reviews, meta-analyses

### Examples of secondary sources

A journal/magazine article which interprets or reviews previous findings

A textbook

A newspaper reporting the findings in a medical journal

*(over)*

A systematic review which interprets and reviews the findings of many studies.

## **What is a tertiary information source?**

A tertiary source indexes, organizes and compiles citations to secondary (and sometimes primary) sources. A tertiary source is also information from secondary sources that has been "digested", or reformatted and condensed, to put it into a convenient, easy-to-read form.

### **Types of tertiary sources**

#### INDEXES

Cochrane, MEDLINE, PeDRO

#### REFERENCE WORKS

Almanacs, Bibliographies (may also be secondary), Guidebooks, Manuals, Handbooks, Data Compilations (may also be secondary).

### **Examples of tertiary sources**

An encyclopedia of World War I