Source Time Detectives

Tell firsthand evidence from later explanation.

7.R "The student will conduct research and read a series of conceptually related texts on selected topics to build knowledge on grade seven content and texts, solve problems, and support cross-curricular learning…"

NAME _____ DATE _____

PRIMARY SOURCE

A primary source is a firsthand record or account from someone who experienced an event or collected original data. It gives direct evidence.

A ship captain's log written during an 1847 voyage.

SECONDARY SOURCE

A secondary source interprets or explains other sources. The relationship to the research question matters; publication date alone does not decide the type.

A museum book published in 2024 that interprets ancient Roman coins.

1 SORT

8 items

For each source, circle its category, then choose two items and explain how you knew.

1.	A letter written by a nurse during the 1918 flu pandemic	PRIMARY	SECONDARY
2.	Results from a survey students conducted about school lunches	PRIMARY	SECONDARY
3.	A 2020 article explaining the causes of World War I	PRIMARY	SECONDARY
4.	An interview recording with a person who marched in the 1963 March on Washington	PRIMARY	SECONDARY
5.	A biography published in 2015 about Katherine Johnson	PRIMARY	SECONDARY
6.	A documentary that explains the Civil Rights Movement using historians' narration	PRIMARY	SECONDARY
7.	A video recording of a city council meeting made during the meeting	PRIMARY	SECONDARY
8.	A journal entry written by a child during the Great Depression	PRIMARY	SECONDARY

2 PROVE IT

Explain your thinking

Pick two items from Part 1. For each one, tell how you knew where it belonged.

ITEM # _____ **HOW I KNEW** _____

ITEM # _____ **HOW I KNEW** _____

3 · Actual Inquiry — attach source notes

Conduct a short inquiry on a teacher-approved question using two actual sources. On an attached page record: source title/author/date/location, one accurate paraphrase from each, one brief exact quotation with location, and a relevance/credibility limitation. Include one primary and one secondary source and explain their relationship to your question. Write a short answer combining both sources and credit every quoted or paraphrased idea. Share it with a partner.

Source 1 notes _____

Source 2 notes _____

CHALLENGE

A historian makes a podcast that explains 1902 factory workers' letters. Is the podcast a primary or secondary source? Explain why.

ANSWER KEY

Source Time Detectives

GRADE 7 · 7.R

PART 1 · SORT

#	ITEM	CATEGORY	WHY
1	A letter written by a nurse during the 1918 flu pandemic	**PRIMARY**	The nurse experienced the event and wrote a firsthand account.
2	Results from a survey students conducted about school lunches	**PRIMARY**	The students collected original data directly.
3	A 2020 article explaining the causes of World War I	**SECONDARY**	It interprets causes using other evidence; a later date alone does not make a source secondary.
4	An interview recording with a person who marched in the 1963 March on Washington	**PRIMARY**	The interview gives an account from someone who participated in the event.
5	A biography published in 2015 about Katherine Johnson	**SECONDARY**	A biography interprets and explains a person's life using information from other sources.
6	A documentary that explains the Civil Rights Movement using historians' narration	**SECONDARY**	The documentary uses later explanation and analysis from historians.
7	A video recording of a city council meeting made during the meeting	**PRIMARY**	The video records the event as it happened.
8	A journal entry written by a child during the Great Depression	**PRIMARY**	The child wrote a firsthand account during that historical period.

PART 2 · PROVE IT

Accept any explanation that names the deciding feature from the rule box for the chosen item.

PART 3 · MAKE YOUR OWN (SAMPLE ANSWERS)

- **PRIMARY**: Actual notes must be traceable to sources the student read; correct quotations preserve wording and meaning.
- **SECONDARY**: Synthesis combines evidence from both sources and includes source titles/authors/dates/locations; no fabricated citation is acceptable.

Challenge: Secondary for an inquiry about the1902workers, because the podcast analyzes their letters. It could be primary evidence for a different inquiry about how present-day podcasts portray history.

Accept an oral history as a primary source when the speaker directly experienced the event, even if the interview happened later. Students should identify the source being evaluated, not a primary source quoted inside a later secondary source. Sorting is preparation only. Supply or help locate two accessible sources; check all notes, quotations, locations and source-type/credibility explanations. Require a credited synthesis and sharing. The attached inquiry may take a separate lesson.