Clues from the Past

Use clues about creators, timing, and purpose to classify sources.

7.12.E "differentiate between primary and secondary sources;"

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline details that show a source was created during an event or by someone directly involved. Circle details that show a source was created later to explain or interpret earlier evidence.

Apollo 11 Evidence

1. When planning an exhibit about Apollo 11, a museum team gathers materials from 1969. They find a transcript of radio messages between astronauts and Mission Control, recorded as the landing happened. They also examine photographs taken by astronaut Buzz Aldrin on the Moon. A reporter's newspaper article, printed the day after the landing, describes crowds watching television and includes interviews from that week. Each item was created by someone who witnessed, recorded, or reported events at the time.

2. Next, the team reads a 2019 book by historian Maya Chen. Chen uses mission records, interviews, and newspapers to explain why the landing changed television coverage around the world. Her book was written fifty years after Apollo 11, so it interprets evidence from the past. The team also finds an online encyclopedia article updated in 2024. Its unnamed writers summarize the mission, link to other resources, and explain its historical importance for modern readers. Both later works use information gathered from earlier materials.

3. Historians call an item made during an event or by a person directly involved a primary source. Such sources offer firsthand evidence, but they may show only one person's view. A secondary source is created later by someone who studies primary sources and other evidence. It explains, compares, or interprets the past. A source's date alone is not enough to classify it. To decide, ask who made it, when it was made, and whether the creator directly experienced the event.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Which source from the first paragraph is a primary source? Use one detail from the passage to support your answer.

2. Is Maya Chen's 2019 book a primary or secondary source? Give two details that support your classification.

3. Classify the reporter's newspaper article and the online encyclopedia article. Explain one difference between them.

4. What three questions does the passage say you should ask when classifying a source? Why is the date alone not enough?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Choose a past event at your school or in your community. In 3 to 4 sentences, describe one primary source and one secondary source someone could use to learn about it. Label each source and explain who made it and why it fits its category.

ANSWER KEY

Clues from the Past

GRADE 7 · TEKS 7.12.E

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline details that show a source was created during an event or by someone directly involved. Circle details that show a source was created later to explain or interpret earlier evidence. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Which source from the first paragraph is a primary source? Use one detail from the passage to support your answer.	**The radio-message transcript is a primary source because it was recorded as the landing happened. Accept the Aldrin photographs or the newspaper article with accurate evidence.**
2	Is Maya Chen's 2019 book a primary or secondary source? Give two details that support your classification.	**It is a secondary source. It was written fifty years after Apollo 11 and uses records, interviews, and newspapers to explain the event.**
3	Classify the reporter's newspaper article and the online encyclopedia article. Explain one difference between them.	**The newspaper article is a primary source because it was printed the day after the landing and includes interviews from that week. The encyclopedia article is a secondary source because later writers summarize and explain the mission.**
4	What three questions does the passage say you should ask when classifying a source? Why is the date alone not enough?	**Ask who made it, when it was made, and whether the creator directly experienced the event. Date alone is not enough because the creator's connection to the event and the source's purpose also matter.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

For our school's 2016 tree-planting day, a photograph taken by a student volunteer is a primary source because the volunteer made it during the event. A 2026 environmental-club report that uses the photograph and an archived newsletter is a secondary source because club members studied earlier evidence to explain the event. Together, the sources provide firsthand evidence and a later interpretation.

Accept other reasonable classifications when students accurately explain the creator's relationship to the event, the time of creation, and the source's purpose. For the open task, require one clearly described primary source and one clearly described secondary source.