

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 explains, analyzes, or interprets information from primary and other sources. It gives ideas about evidence after the fact.

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 MAKE YOUR OWN One of each

Write one new example of a primary source and one new example of a secondary source.

PRIMARY _____

SECONDARY _____

CHALLENGE

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

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	The article explains an event that happened long before it was written.
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:** A farmer's 1930 record of rainfall measurements.
- **SECONDARY:** A website article that explains how volcanoes form by using geology studies.

Challenge: The podcast is a secondary source because the historian created it later to explain the workers' letters, which are primary sources.

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.