



Primary vs. Secondary Sources*

	Primary Sources	Secondary Sources
Definitions	Sources that are written by someone who experienced or witnessed an event. They are original documents.	Sources that interpret and evaluate primary sources.
Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Autobiographies• Diaries• Government Documents• Internet Communications on email, listservs, and newsgroups• Interviews• Letters• Newspaper articles (may also be secondary)• Original Documents (Birth certificates)• Photographs or Works of Art• Speeches• Survey Research• Works of Literature (Poems, Short Stories, and Fiction)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Abstracts (a brief summary outlining the main content of a journal article or other document)• Bibliographies (a list of books, articles, and other sources usually on a particular subject or by a particular author)• Biographies (a book about a person written by another person)• Commentaries• Dictionaries• Encyclopedias• Handbooks• Indexes• Review articles and literature reviews• Scholarly Journal Articles (may also be primary)• Textbooks

* There are other sources known as Tertiary Sources. These are sources that collect, analyze, and digest primary and secondary sources. They tend to be factual. You will rarely be asked to differentiate between secondary and tertiary sources.