

Historians use both primary and secondary sources to study history.

Primary Sources: A primary source is an original work created by a person living during a time period being studied. For example, a primary source can be a letter written by a person who witnessed a historic event. A primary source could also be a material thing, such as the first automobile.

Secondary Sources: A secondary source is not created by an eyewitness. A secondary source is created by someone who learned about a historical event from another person. For example, a secondary source could be a newspaper article written by a reporter who interviewed someone who directly witnessed a historical event. Or a secondary source could be a school report about the Civil War. Since the student did not witness the Civil War, he or she had to read secondary sources to learn about it.

Check for Understanding

Read each statement carefully. Decide whether it is a primary or secondary source.

1. A schoolbook on American history, written in 2005 _____
2. A journal entry dated 1908 _____
3. A building built in 1823 _____
4. The first music record _____
5. A T-shirt from a rock concert _____
6. An original copy of the Declaration of Independence _____
7. A book about the first presidents _____
8. George Washington's hat _____
9. A letter dated 1935 _____
10. A painting made in 2005 about the American Revolution _____
11. Writing on the wall of a 3,000-year-old mummy's tomb _____
12. A recording of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's "Fireside Chats" _____
13. Twentieth-century songs from the Appalachian Mountains about life in nineteenth-century Scotland and Ireland _____
14. A perfect piece of ancient Native American pottery _____
15. Five letters from John Adams to his wife about politics _____
16. An American book about the pyramids in Egypt _____