

Primary Sources

A **primary source is an original, "first-hand", or "eye-witness" account** offering an **inside view**, containing **contemporary information** (new at the time it was created) that has not been interpreted, evaluated, paraphrased, or condensed.

Such sources are usually created during or very close to the time of the events they report on. The author of a primary source typically provides direct impressions of events he or she is reporting on.

Primary sources are generally considered to be the most *scholarly*.

A List of Primary Sources and Examples	
Source	Example
Diaries	<i>The Diary of Anne Frank</i> , which provides a first hand account of life as a Jew in hiding during the Holocaust.
Interviews (including recordings or transcripts)	Barbara Walter's 2001 interview with George W. Bush regarding his impending inauguration.
Letters	Abraham Lincoln's Dec 26, 1864 letter to General Sherman congratulating him on his military capture of Savannah several days before.
Raw data	Wind speed measurements from the weather monitoring station at PDX.
Official documents	The U.S. <i>Declaration of Independence</i> .
Court records and transcripts	Transcripts of testimony given before Judge David Ezra regarding the impact on longline fisheries on Hawaii's population of endangered turtles.
Photographs	Two aerial photographs of the shoreline taken ten years apart, revealing the extent of coastal erosion in the area.
Journal articles that report the findings of original research, and which are written by the researchers themselves	E.F. Cox and S. Ward. "Impact of elevated ammonium on reproduction in two Hawaiian scleractinian corals with different life history patterns." <i>Marine Pollution Bulletin</i> , 44 (2002): 1230-1235.

Newspaper articles reporting on current events	An article in the <i>East Oregonian</i> describing a multi-car crash on I 84 that happened the day before.
Autobiographies	<i>A Living History</i> , Hillary Rodham Clinton's book about her experiences as the First Lady.
Speeches	Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech.
Creative works such as novels, plays, poems, music and art	Beck's <i>Song Reader</i> Album

To see some good examples of primary sources, **go to the [American Memory website](#) and try a sample search.**

Secondary Sources

A **secondary source** provides "**second-hand**" information that has been digested, analyzed, reworded or interpreted, and often combines information taken from primary sources and even other secondary sources. Secondary sources are often written well after the events they report on, and can put past information into its historical context. In a secondary source, the author typically reports on the impressions and experiences of *other* people. Examples of secondary sources include:

- Magazine and journal articles that review or interpret previous research or events
- Most non-fiction books, including text books, history books, and reference books like almanacs and encyclopedias.