



Library Services, HCDSB

What is a primary source?

A primary source is any resource written or created at the time of the event under study. This type of source offers hands-on experience of a particular event. For example, a journal written during the French Revolution would be a primary source for the French Revolution. Some examples of primary sources include:

- Original documents such as journals, diaries, speeches, news recordings, autobiographies, official documents.
- Literature, such as poetry, novels written during the time period and on the time period.
- Artifacts or picture of artifacts from the time period such as clothing, pottery, buildings

Primary sources would include:

- *Anne Frank, diary of a young girl* which shows the experience of a Jewish girl and her family during the Holocaust.
- Ancient Greek pottery
- The Coliseum

What is a secondary source?

A secondary source is usually written after the event. It tends to interpret or provide an analysis of the event. Secondary sources usually are based on primary sources and may include some primary in them (e.g. an article on life during the reign of Queen Victoria may include passages from her journal). Some examples of secondary sources include:

- Publications such as textbooks, articles from magazines, criticisms, commentaries

Secondary sources would include:

- An article from a magazine which interprets or offers opinions on a topic
- A textbook
- A book written after the even that discusses opinions or views of the event.