Step 1: Primary Sources 101

1. What Are Primary Sources?

**Primary Sources** are original, first-hand materials about people, places, or events created by people who were personally involved.

Conversely, **secondary sources** are analyses of people, places, or events created by those who were not present.

2. Examples of Primary Sources Include:

- Advertisements
- Court Records
- Government Documents
- Interviews
- Newspapers
- Objects
- Photographs
- Press Releases
- Speeches

3. Find Primary Sources in **SIRS Issues Researcher**

Narrow your search results by limiting to **Primary Sources** in the left-hand sidebar from any Leading Issue search results page.

List three examples:

Example 1: __________________________________________

Example 2: __________________________________________

Example 3: __________________________________________

**Common Core Standard**

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.10 Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.
Step 2: Analyze Primary Sources

Select one of your examples from step one and review it carefully.

Key Ideas and Details

List the following:

1. Source Type

2. Source

3. Author(s)

4. Date

5. Location

6. Central Message

Summarize the central message of this primary source.

Sample of a Primary Source

Billions Lost Before Market Sounds Bottom

Summary: "The bottom of the stock market decline in progress for more than a month has been hit, say the economists, bankers, traders and corporation heads. The sacrifice was loss in profits running into many billions of dollars. So great has been the shearing off in values that the full scope of the shock will not be realized in its true form for many weeks." (UPI's 20th Century Top Stories) This 1929 article reports that billions were lost before the stock market hit the bottom.
Step 2: Analyze Primary Sources (Cont’d)

Craft and Structure

7. Audience
Who is the intended audience of this primary source?

8. Purpose
What is the purpose of this primary source? For example, was the purpose to inform or to persuade?

9. Tone
How do words, phrases and ideas expressed in the primary source affect the tone?

10. Structure
How does the structure, or elements within the type of primary source, influence the central message?

Common Core Standards*

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.4** Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone.

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.5** Analyze in detail how an author's ideas or claims are developed and refined by particular sentences, paragraphs, or larger portions of a text (e.g., a section or chapter).

Definition

Tone* is the general character or attitude of a place, piece of writing, situation, etc.

Need Help?

The structure of a primary source can influence a message. For example, advertisements contain visuals, photographs may be cropped, speeches involve how words are spoken, and newspaper articles can combine words and visuals. Pay attention to what is included and what is missing in the primary source structure.
Step 2: Analyze Primary Sources (Cont’d)

11. Credibility
Is this primary source credible? Explain.

________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________

12. Bias
Is this primary source biased? Explain.

________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

13. Reasoning
Does this primary source use effective reasoning to convey its central message? Explain.

________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________

Definitions

- **Credibility** is the quality of being trusted in and believed.
- **Bias** is prejudice in favor of or against one thing, person, or group compared with another, usually in a way considered to be unfair.

Common Core Standards*

- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.6** Determine an author’s point of view or purpose in a text and analyze how an author uses rhetoric to advance that point of view or purpose.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.8** Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, assessing whether the reasoning is valid and the evidence is relevant and sufficient; identify false statements and fallacious reasoning.


Step 2: Analyze Primary Sources (Cont’d)

14. Omissions

Are there any important points that this primary source fails to address?

__________________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________

15. Context

Explain how events that were occurring when this primary source was created affect your understanding.

__________________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________

16. Compare and Contrast

Find an alternative, relevant primary source from this time period.

__________________________________________________________________________________

Does this alternative primary source alter your interpretation? Explain.

__________________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________

Tip

Go to any Leading Issue and click on Timeline at the top of the page to find relevant events.

Contents
Viewpoints
Critical Questions
Timeline

Common Core Standard*

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.9 Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.
Step 3: Apply Knowledge

Evaluate Primary Sources

Evaluate:

- Source Type
- Location
- Tone
- Reasoning
- Source
- Central Message
- Structure
- Omissions
- Author(s)
- Audience
- Credibility
- Context
- Date
- Purpose
- Bias
- Compare & Contrast

Draw inferences about the primary source using your research. Include as many elements as you can from the checklist as evidence to support your conclusions.

Need Help?
An inference is a conclusion based on evidence, or clues. For example, you could infer from a photograph of a dog next to a shredded pillow that the dog chewed-up the pillow. You could infer from a tone of voice in the speech that a speaker was passionate about a topic.
