

Teaching with Primary Sources





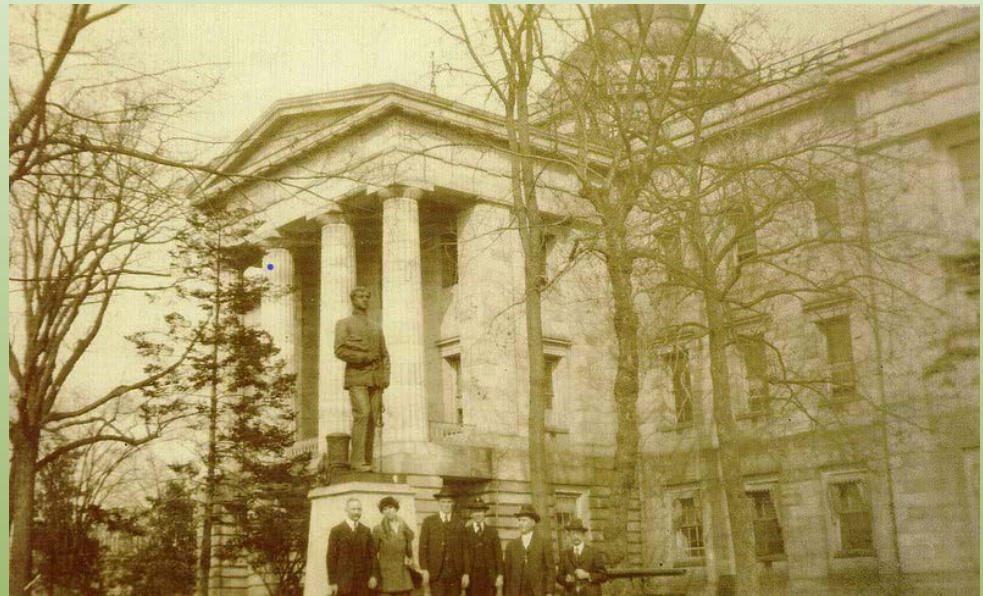
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This tutorial, “Teaching with Primary Sources,” is one of a series produced by the North Carolina State Historical Records Advisory Board with funding from the National Historical Records & Records Commission.

Learning to use and interpret sources is an important skill for students to master. Young students can be introduced to various documents that provide clues to the past. Older students should be encouraged to examine such documents and think critically about them.



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To begin, teachers must help students understand the differences between primary and secondary sources.

Primary? *OR* **SECONDARY?**

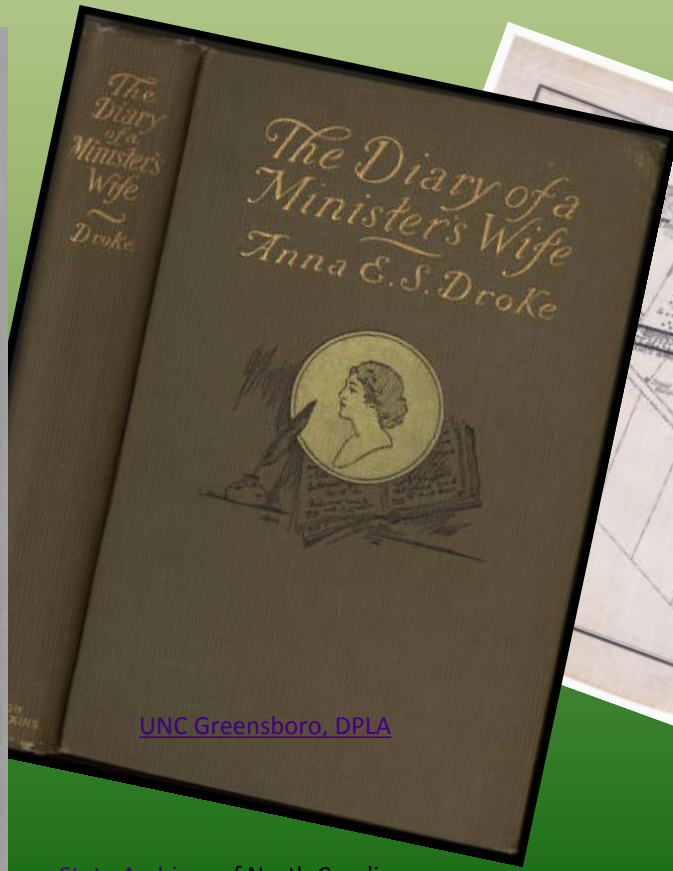
Primary sources are ones that were created or in use during the time period being studied.

Diaries, letters, photographs, maps, newspapers, and music are some of the types of documents that might be considered primary sources. Documented memories of individuals who experienced an event are also primary sources.

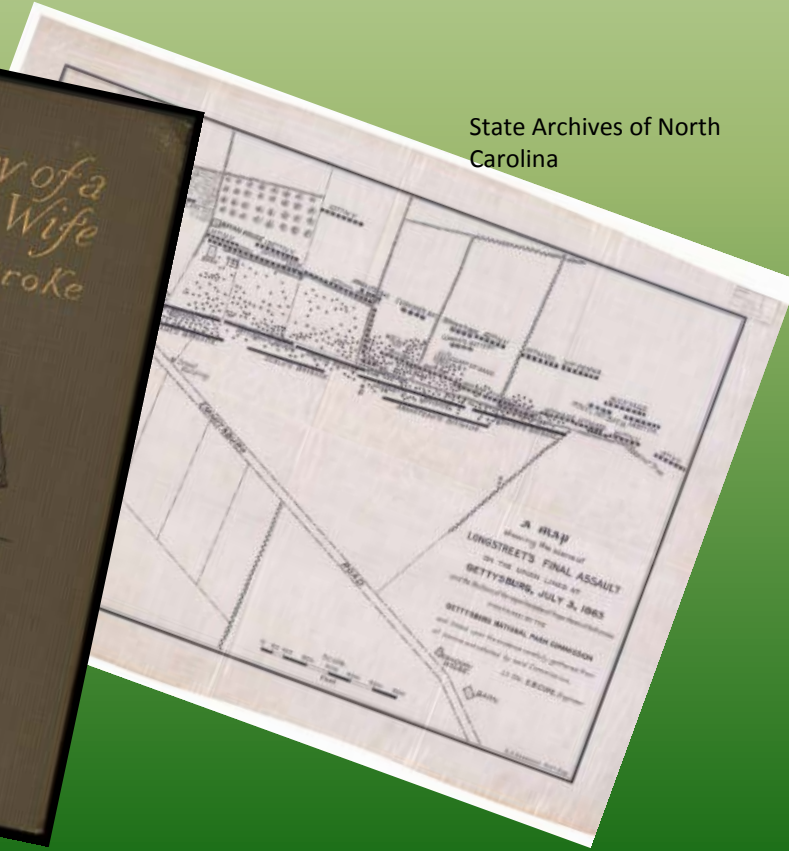
Vol. I. [65] No. 9
 The NORTH-CAROLINA
MAGAZINE;
 OR,
 UNIVERSAL INTELLIGENCER.
 From FRIDAY JULY 27, to FRIDAY August 3, 1764.

An ACT for granting certain Duties in the British Colonies and Plantations in America, for continuing, amending, and making perpetual, an Act passed in the Sixth Year of the Reign of his late Majesty King George the Second, (intituled, *An Act for the better securing, and encouraging the Trade of His Majesty's Sugar Colonies in America*), for suppressing the Produce of such Duties, and of the Duties to stife by Virtue of the said Act, towards defraying the Expenses of defending, protecting, and securing, the said Colonies and Plantations; for explaining an Act made in the Twenty-fifth Year of the Reign of King Charles the Second, (intituled, *An Act for the Encouragement of the Greenland and Fishward Trades*), and for the better securing the Plantation Trade; and for altering and dissolving several Drawbacks on Exports from this Kingdom, and more effectually preventing the clandestine Conveyance of Goods to and from the said Colonies and Plantations, and improving and securing the Trade between the same and Great Britain.

HEREAS it is expedient that new Provisions and Regulations should be established for imposing the Revenue of this Kingdom, and for extending and securing the Navigation and Commerce between Great-Britain and your Majesty's Dominions in America, which by the Project, have been so happily enlarged; And whereas it is just and necessary, that a Revenue be raised, in your Majesty's said Dominions in America, for defraying the Expenses of defending, protecting, and securing the same; we, your Majesty's most dutiful and loyal Subjects the Commons of Great-Britain, in Parliament assembled, being desirous to make some Provision, in this present Session of Parliament, towards raising the said Revenue in America, have resolved to give and grant unto your Majesty, the several Rates and Duties herein after mentioned; and do most humbly beseech your Majesty, that it may be enacted, *And so it enacted by the King's Most Excellent Majesty, by and with the Advice and Consent of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and Commons, in this present Parliament assembled, and by the Authority of the same*, That from and after the 25th Day of September, 1764, there shall be raised, levied, collected and paid, unto his Majesty, his Heirs and Successors, for and upon all white or clayed Sugars of the Produce or Manufacture of any Colony or Plantation in America, not under the Dominion of his Majesty, his Heirs and Successors; for and upon Indigo, and Cash of foreign Produce or Manufacture for and upon all Wines (except French Wines); for and upon all wrought axes, hogsheads and staves, mixed with Sile or Herbs, of the Manufacture of Perla, China, or East India, and all Callico printed, dyed, painted or finished there; and for and upon all Iron in Lumps, Cast, rolled, Cast-iron, and French Irons, which shall be imported or brought from any Colony or Plantation in America, which manner, or hereafter may be, under the Dominion of his Majesty, his Heirs and Successors, the several Rates and Duties following, That to wit, For every Hundred Weight of white or clayed Sugars, One Pound

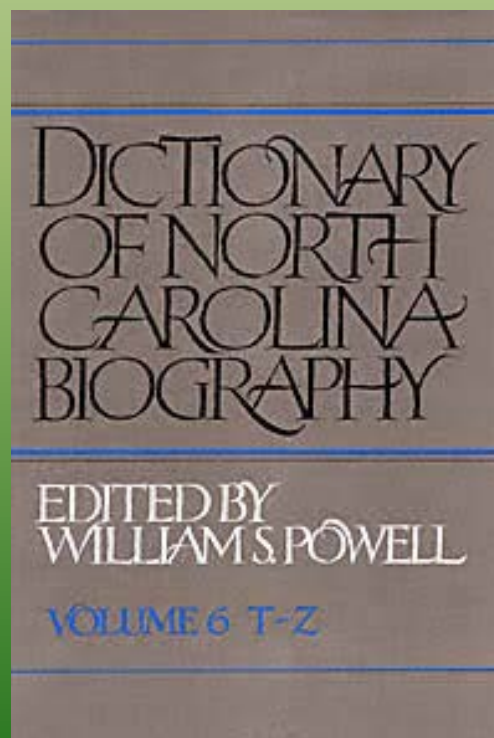
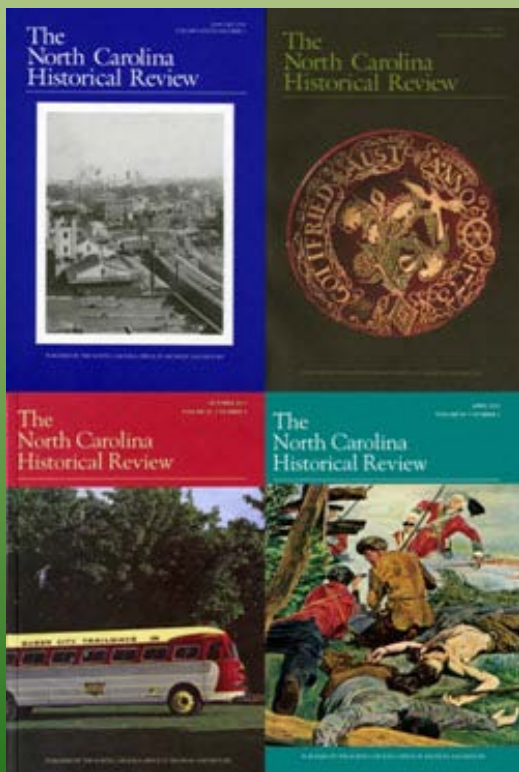


UNC Greensboro, DPLA



State Archives of North Carolina

Secondary sources are ones that are created later or by people who were not present at an event. Textbooks or other academic works written by scholars long after an event would be examples of secondary sources.



It is essential that students understand that both types of sources are important. Primary sources give insight into the actual time period being studied, but secondary sources provide context and perspective.

Primary sources are contemporary evidence.

Secondary sources provide context and perspective.

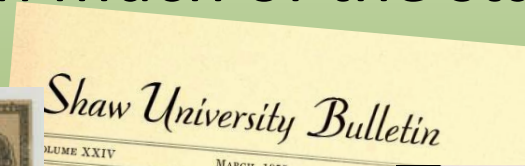
An excellent repository for primary sources is the [Digital Public Library of America](https://dp.la) or DPLA. It is a free digital resource that includes many types of sources from cultural agencies around the country.

The screenshot shows the homepage of the Digital Public Library of America (DPLA) in a web browser. The browser's address bar shows the URL <https://dp.la>. The website features a navigation menu with links for About, Hubs, For Developers, Education, Get Involved, Help, News, Contact, Donate, Login, and Sign Up. The main content area includes a large banner for a "NEW EXHIBITION" titled "American Empire" with a map of the Philippines. Below this is a search bar with the text "A Wealth of Knowledge" and "explore 16,739,564 items from libraries, archives, and museums". To the right, there are three featured sections: "Exhibitions" with a photo of tractors, "Explore by Place" with a map of Clemson and a photo of a man speaking, and "Explore by Date" with a photo of a horse race. The Windows taskbar at the bottom shows the time as 10:41 AM on 7/25/2017.

More than 400,000 of the sources on DPLA are contributed by the North Carolina Digital Heritage Center. It provides sources from agencies across the state that span much of the state's history.



[Orange County Historical Museum, DPLA](#)



SUMMER SCHOOL 1955



SIX WEEKS SESSION, JUNE 8 to July 15

Ministers' and Women's Missionary Courses

Annual Institute, June 6 - 10

Ministers' and Missionary Study Courses, June 13-24

Published six times the year in the months, February, March, May, July, October and November
Entered as second-class matter January 25, 1921, at the post office at Raleigh, North Carolina,
under act of August 24, 1912.

[Shaw University, DPLA](#)



[East Carolina University, DPLA](#)

Activity sheets can help determine students' understanding of sources. The website, Common Core Sheets, has worksheets in several subject areas, including social studies.

<http://www.commoncoresheets.com/Sources.php>

Determine if the sources is a primary or secondary source:

1. A play showing how Benjamin Franklin flew a kite during a lighting storm
2. A short story showing Thomas Edison and Nikolas Tesla's electrical battle
3. Anne Frank's diary describing her life during World War 2
4. A cartoon showing how Pocahontas met John Smith.
5. A text book describing the Civil Rights movement.
6. A news report about the opening of a power plant.
7. A scientist explaining what it was like for Buzz Aldrin to walk on the moon.
8. A YouTube video describing how the pyramids were built.
9. An interview with Alexander Graham Bell.

A useful activity for evaluating primary sources is to have students use analysis worksheets. Several agencies provide such resources.

THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES provides worksheets that help students evaluate a particular type of document, such as a photograph or a map.

<https://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/worksheets/>

THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS provides instruction on guiding students through the interpretation of difference sources.

<http://www.loc.gov/teachers/usingprimarysources/guides.html>

Written Document Analysis Worksheet

1.	<p>TYPE OF DOCUMENT (Check one):</p> <table><tr><td><input type="radio"/> Newspaper</td><td><input type="radio"/> Map</td><td><input type="radio"/> Advertisement</td></tr><tr><td><input type="radio"/> Letter</td><td><input type="radio"/> Telegram</td><td><input type="radio"/> Congressional Record</td></tr><tr><td><input type="radio"/> Patent</td><td><input type="radio"/> Press Release</td><td><input type="radio"/> Census Report</td></tr><tr><td><input type="radio"/> Memorandum</td><td><input type="radio"/> Report</td><td><input type="radio"/> Other</td></tr></table>	<input type="radio"/> Newspaper	<input type="radio"/> Map	<input type="radio"/> Advertisement	<input type="radio"/> Letter	<input type="radio"/> Telegram	<input type="radio"/> Congressional Record	<input type="radio"/> Patent	<input type="radio"/> Press Release	<input type="radio"/> Census Report	<input type="radio"/> Memorandum	<input type="radio"/> Report	<input type="radio"/> Other
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<input type="radio"/> Letter	<input type="radio"/> Telegram	<input type="radio"/> Congressional Record											
<input type="radio"/> Patent	<input type="radio"/> Press Release	<input type="radio"/> Census Report											
<input type="radio"/> Memorandum	<input type="radio"/> Report	<input type="radio"/> Other											
2.	<p>UNIQUE PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE DOCUMENT (Check one or more):</p> <table><tr><td><input type="checkbox"/> Interesting Letterhead</td><td><input type="checkbox"/> Notations</td></tr><tr><td><input type="checkbox"/> Handwritten</td><td><input type="checkbox"/> "RECEIVED" stamp</td></tr><tr><td><input type="checkbox"/> Typed</td><td><input type="checkbox"/> Other</td></tr><tr><td><input type="checkbox"/> Seals</td><td></td></tr></table>	<input type="checkbox"/> Interesting Letterhead	<input type="checkbox"/> Notations	<input type="checkbox"/> Handwritten	<input type="checkbox"/> "RECEIVED" stamp	<input type="checkbox"/> Typed	<input type="checkbox"/> Other	<input type="checkbox"/> Seals					
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3.	<p>DATE(S) OF DOCUMENT:</p>												
4.	<p>AUTHOR (OR CREATOR) OF THE DOCUMENT:</p> <p>POSITION (TITLE):</p>												
5.	<p>FOR WHAT AUDIENCE WAS THE DOCUMENT WRITTEN?</p>												
6.	<p>DOCUMENT INFORMATION (There are many possible ways to answer A-E.)</p> <p>A. List three things the author said that you think are important:</p> <p>B. Why do you think this document was written?</p> <p>C. What evidence in the document helps you know why it was written? Quote from the document.</p> <p>D. List two things the document tells you about life in the United States at the time it was written.</p> <p>E. Write a question to the author that is left unanswered by the document:</p>												

National Archives Document Analysis Worksheet

Library of Congress Primary Source Analysis Tool

Observe

Ask students to identify and note details.

Reflect

Encourage students to generate and test hypotheses about the source.

Question

Invite students to ask questions that lead to more observations and reflections.

Further Investigation



Students who learn to distinguish between primary and secondary sources and who know how to evaluate such sources will develop better critical thinking skills.