

Name _____ Date _____

Primary & Secondary Sources

Learn more about this topic! Each section gives more detail on one of the lyrics from the song. Read each section, and then respond by answering the question or taking notes on key ideas.

1. When you're doing research about an event, person or period in history, you want to look for historical sources of information. Some sources are considered primary sources, and others are considered secondary sources. Primary sources are made by someone who was actually a witness to the events described. Secondary sources are created some time after an event. They are information that someone has gathered and shaped. Secondary sources are often a summary, analysis, criticism or interpretation of the events based on one or more primary sources.

Notes

2. Primary sources are always original, first-hand information. They are usually created at the time a specific event occurred. Sometimes, though, primary sources are told later by someone who witnessed the event. What matters is that the person giving the information actually experienced what he or she is telling about. Primary sources give an eyewitness account of what life was like at a certain time. They sometimes show the witness's opinion about an event. Primary sources can be letters, diary entries, audio or video clips, personal interviews, photographs, property deeds, court records and even objects from a certain time and place.

Notes

3. Secondary sources are made by someone who did not experience an event first-hand. Examples include textbooks, biographies, encyclopedia entries, concert reviews and magazine articles in which the reporter had to do research. A secondary source often uses one or more primary sources to create an overall picture of what life was like at a certain time or place. For example, the author of a book about the American Revolution would probably study letters, journal entries and artifacts from that time. Secondary sources are useful because they can give a lot of information at once. In essence, someone has already done a lot of research for you.

Notes

4. Both primary and secondary sources can contain bias. Primary sources are usually the work of one person. Some primary sources, like property deeds and census records, only state the facts. However, letters and diary entries often include a writer's opinion about something in addition to the facts.

Secondary sources like textbooks and biographies are often largely factual, but they may also contain the opinions of the author. An author may use primary sources to shape a secondary source in a certain direction. For this reason, it's important to think critically to distinguish impartial facts from biased opinion.

Notes