

## **Lesson Plan: Identifying Primary and Secondary Sources**

### **Content Standards**

**Delaware State History Standards:** History Anchor Standard Two: Students will gather, examine, and analyze historical data

**6-8a:** Students will master the basic research skills necessary to conduct an independent investigation of historical phenomena.

**6-8b:** Students will examine historical documents, artifacts, and other materials, and analyze them in terms of credibility, as well as the purpose, perspective, or point of view for which they were constructed.

**9-12a:** Students will develop and implement effective research strategies for investigating a given historical topic.

**9-12b:** Students will examine and analyze primary and secondary sources in order to differentiate between historical facts and historical interpretations.

**Grade Level: Middle and High School**

### **Procedure:**

#### **Warmup:**

- Questions:
1. What is the difference between primary and secondary sources?
  2. How does a historian write a book or an article about a historical figure?

List the items they might need or the places they may visit to write about a historical figure. (If it helps the class come up with a specific person the class can think about. Brainstorm no computer searches. When class completes the brainstorm go over the ideas they came up with.

#### **Procedure:**

1. Have students complete the **Word Maps** on primary and secondary sources.

Depending on grade level teachers may want to go over the word maps with appropriate definitions, characteristics, and examples. The alternative with older groups is to have them fill out the maps on their own then go over. Teachers can use the **What is the Difference between Primary and Secondary Sources** to assist students in the completion of the word map

2. Have students brainstorm a list of problems with both primary and secondary sources on the worksheet **What are the possible Disadvantages of using Primary and Secondary Sources**. Have students brainstorm a list of the advantages of using primary and secondary sources. Teachers can reference the **What is the Difference between Primary and Secondary Sources** to assist the completion of the activity.

3. Using the two primary sources listed below have students answer the following questions. The second document is from the Delaware Archives and is a petition to the Delaware Legislature advocating the adoption of the Declaration of Independence.

4. Once you have completed the word maps, the disadvantages and advantages with primary and secondary sources, and primary sources activities have the students complete the **Can you Identify** as a summarizing activity. The primary sources listed below in the **Can you Identify** activity are in the Delaware Archives.

**Extension Activity:** Have students explore the Delaware Archives looking for examples of primary sources. Students could find examples such as letters, diaries, maps, and photographs. Have students either print out the sources or cut and past links into a document to share.

# What is the Difference Between Primary and Secondary Sources?

Primary Source: A primary source is a record that come from the time period which is being researched. These items are produced by people who have first hand accounts of the events or people which the historian is studying. Examples of such records can include letters, diaries, photographs, paintings, speeches, and government documents. These documents may come in the form of paper, audio, visual, computer generated, or objects.

A historian using a primary source must consider the following when using them.

1. Did the person who created the source tell the truth?
2. Did the person who created the source create it with their own benefit in mind?
3. The person who created the source may be to close the event to have an unbiased view.
4. The person who created the source may be to far away from the event to know the full extent of what happened.
5. Memory issues, how long after the event was the document created and does the person clearly remember the events?

The advantage of a historian using primary sources are first hand accounts of events. They provide a historian with knowledge and feelings surrounding the event in question.

Secondary Source: A secondary source is one that was created by referencing a primary source. These documents usually provide some interpretation of primary sources. Examples of secondary sources include biographies, books on any subject matter, textbooks, review of books or plays and scholarly articles.

A historian using a secondary source must consider the following when using them.

1. Where did the source get their information? What primary sources did they consult and how many did they consult?
2. Is the source biased in their appraisal of the event in question?
3. Secondary sources often disagree with one another.

The advantage for a historian who uses secondary sources is that it gives them a chance to see different interpretations of a particular historical event. A secondary source allows a historian to gain background information of a topic.

Overlap: At times it becomes difficult to distinguish between a primary or secondary source. A student must then refer to the historical question being asked for guidance. If the students question is about How the memory of the Civil War was taught in U.S. History then a textbook, which is normally a secondary source, may in fact be a primary source.

**Name:**

**Date:**

**Directions: Students should read each source and place a P (Primary Source) or an S (Secondary Source) next each one.**

**Can you identify?**

1. A receipt to Elizabeth Battle for the use of room at her inn
2. A biography about George Washington by Ron Chernow
3. Governor Saulsbury letter
4. Broadside announcing Death of President Lincoln
5. 1819 Map of the State of Delaware
6. A petition to the Delaware Assembly in support of the Ratification of the Constitution
7. Letter from Delaware soldier in 1<sup>st</sup> Delaware Cavalry to his Captain
8. U.S. History Textbook: American History by Alan Brinkley
9. 2024 Newspaper article describing the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the D-Day Invasion
10. Essay that a student writes on Caesar Rodney
11. Photo of student engaged in a scrap drive during World War II
12. Diary of Cyrus Forwood a Union Army Soldier
13. 1845 Governor Stockton speech to Delaware General Assembly
14. Wikipedia search on Allan McLane
15. Documentary by Ken Burns on The Civil War

**What are the possible disadvantages using Primary and Secondary Sources?**

**Brainstorm**

Primary Source	Secondary Source

**What are the advantages of using Primary and Secondary Sources?**

Primary Source	Secondary Source

## Document 1

My Lords and Gentlemen,

Nothing could have afforded me so much satisfaction as to have been able to inform you, at the opening of this session, that the troubles, which have so long distracted my colonies in North America, were at an end; and that my unhappy people, recovered from their delusion, had delivered themselves from the oppression of their leaders, and returned to their duty: but so daring and desperate is the spirit of those leaders, whose object has always been dominion and power, that they have now openly renounced all allegiance to the crown, and all political connection with this **country**; they have rejected, with circumstances of indignity and insult, the means of conciliation held out to them under the authority of our commission; and have presumed to set up their rebellious confederacies for independent states. If their treason be suffered to take root, much mischief must grow from it, to the safety of my loyal colonies, to the commerce of my kingdoms, and indeed to the present system of all Europe. One great advantage, however, will be derived from the object of the rebels being openly avowed, and clearly understood; we shall have unanimity at home, founded in the general conviction of the justice and necessity of our measures

Abridged speech by King George III to Parliament October 31, 1776

## Document 2

A Petition of the Freedholders and Electors of the Delaware State to the General Assembly

Whereas the Citizens of the State have for some time experienced great inconveniences and disadvantages, which in the opinion of your Petitioners have chiefly proceeded from a want of a more efficient general governance of the Union. And as the late General Convention appointed to meet at Philadelphia have with the most auspicious unanimity agreed upon and recommended a federal Constitution for the excellent purposes of forming a more perfect Union establish justice, providing for the common Defense, promoting the general welfare, and securing the Blessings of Liberty to the Citizens of the United States and their Posterity. And have resolved that the same be laid before the United States in the Congress assembled, and afterwards submitted to a Convention of Delegates chosen in each State by the People thereof under the recommendation of its legislature for their assent and Ratification your Petitioners therefore having had the Satisfaction to hear that Congress have approved the Constitution above mentioned, most earnestly request your honorable Houses to appoint a time as early as may be convenient for the Election of Delegates to a State Convention, in order that the Citizens of Delaware may from their zeal for the general welfare by a speedy ratification an adoption of a plan of Government which your petitioner trust will be attended with the most desirable consequences of Peace, stability, efficacy and Prosperity in all the confederate state respect and confidence in forging a nation and meet the applause and cordial approbation of the true notaries of Liberty whatever Country the inhabit.

## **Primary Source Documents**

Directions: Read Document 1 and Document 2 and answer the questions. As you answer them think about the Advantages and disadvantages of using primary and secondary sources.

1. Are the two documents primary or secondary sources?
2. What are the two documents above referring to?
3. Who wrote document 1?
4. How does the person who wrote document feel about the colonists? Why might this person feel this way?
5. The group that wrote document 2 is urging the Delaware General Assembly to do what?
6. Why do you think they are advocating that position?