

<p>PRIMARY SOURCES</p>	<p>One of the most exciting ways to study history is through primary sources. The distinction that the Library of Congress makes between primary and secondary sources is an excellent one:</p> <p><i>Primary sources are actual records that have survived from the past, such as letters, photographs, articles of clothing. Secondary sources are accounts of the past created by people writing about events sometime after they happened.</i></p>
<p>How Historians Use Primary Sources</p>	<p>Historians discover primary sources in archives and attics, put order into the chaos of materials, analyze and interpret them, and then communicate what they have learned to others.</p> <p>Historians speak to us in behalf of the men and women of the past. However, the men and women of the past speak directly to historians – through letters, diaries, newspaper ads, public documents, photographs, remnants of clothing, furniture, tools, and other artifacts.</p> <p>Using primary sources gives students of history an opportunity to enter the laboratory and to do what historians do. If you were taking a biology course, there would be a laboratory component and you would have to dissect worms, grasshoppers, and other unspeakable things – just like a biologist does. In this course, you will have an opportunity to discover, analyze, interpret, and communicate primary sources – just like the historian does. And there won't be any formaldehyde involved. I promise.</p>
<p>LIBRARY OF CONGRESS ACTIVITY</p>	<p>To get you started and to give you a better understanding of primary sources, you will need to visit the Library of Congress web site and read what they have to say about primary sources and the historical record.</p> <p>What Are Primary Sources? http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/ndlpedu/lessons/psources/source.html</p> <p>When you have done that, do the Mindwalk Activity at the Library of Congress web site. http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/ndlpedu/lessons/psources/mindwalk.html</p>
<p>DISCUSSION QUESTIONS</p>	<p>What is your favorite definition of history? Why?</p> <p>Does your definition of history relate to any of the steps in the four-step historiographical process of discovery, analysis, interpretation, and communication? Explain.</p> <p>What would a future historian be able to tell about your life and your society based on evidence of your daily activities that might be preserved for the future? (Please base your answer on the records you kept during a 24-hour period.)</p> <p>If future archaeologists had the materials listed below, what could they infer or conclude about your life? What might the materials tell historians about your family, community, region, and/or nation?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The trash you have thrown away; ▪ Material objects you use every day (coins, paper money, stamps, computers); ▪ Objects in the place you live (especially in your own bedroom); ▪ Items in your locker or automobile. <p>Watch an episode of <i>West Wing</i> and keep records of all the evidence, both public and private, that historians might be able to use in the future to tell the story of the Bartlett administration. What's on your list? What kinds of records would you find in the White House today that you would not have found in Washington's day?</p>