



Western Civilization from Prehistory to 1650

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TOPIC 1.2. COMPARING PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SOURCES

The following sources relate to the Black Death, which reached the shores of Italy in the spring of 1348. The first is a primary source (an eyewitness account), the second is secondary (written by someone who was not present), and the third contains primary sources with commentary. Examine each of these sources so that you are able to answer the questions below.

1. **The Florentine Chronicle**
<http://jefferson.village.virginia.edu/osheim/marchione.html>
2. **Satan Triumphant: The Black Death**
<http://www.historyguide.org/ancient/lecture29b.html>
3. **The Black Death, 1348**
<http://www.ibiscom.com/plague.htm>

How do you tell the difference between a primary and a secondary source?

What type of information (facts, artwork, interpretation, social commentary) does each of these sources provide?

Which source do you find most helpful in understanding what actually happened in Florence in 1348? If you find discrepancies in the three accounts, which source do you think is most accurate? Why?

Which source do you find most interesting? Most dramatic? Most shocking?

If someone only had time to read one of these sources, which would you recommend?