

# What's the Big Picture?

## Understanding Primary & Secondary Sources

### TEACHER GUIDE

#### AUDIENCE

Grades 4-5

#### TIME

60 minutes

#### STANDARDS

Social Studies

· Grade 4: C.S. 1, C.S. 6

English Language Arts

· Grades 3-5: RL.4.1, RL.5.1, RL.5.4, RL.4.7, RL.5.7, RI.4.1, RI.5.1, RI. 4.3, RI.5.3, RI.4.6, RI.5.6

Visual Arts

· Grade 4: 1RE  
· Grade 5: 1RE

Social and Emotional

· C1. 1.b, C3 1.b, D1. 1.b, E1. 1.b, E4. 1.b.

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### Introduction

The goal of this activity is to give students a greater understanding of primary and secondary sources, and how each are used in historical research. Students will practice analyzing primary sources using background information and additional sources. Participating in the activity will also demonstrate to students why it is important to use a wide variety of sources during research. This will prepare students to find, analyze, and use primary and secondary sources in their Youth History Day projects.

### Learning Objectives

- Students will be able to define the characteristics and differences between "primary source" and "secondary source".
- Students will recognize the importance of primary and secondary sources in studying history.
- Students will understand the importance of having a variety of sources with different viewpoints.

### Materials

- Teacher guide
- [Lesson Slides](#) PPT
- [Source Guides for All Images \(1 & 2\): A, B, C and D](#)
- [Primary Source Analysis Worksheet](#)

[Pre-Activity Image 1](#): This cartoon comes from William Henry Harrison's campaign for the presidency against incumbent Martin Van Buren. Van Buren is depicted as a frock-coated dandy supported by Washington insiders, while Harrison is shown as a simple Ohio farmer bearing a club labelled "Reform."

[Image 1](#): A William Henry Harrison campaign ribbon created for the 1840 presidential election. 1840 is considered the first election when candidates campaigned openly for themselves. In the ribbon, Harrison touts his military experience through the victories at the Battle of Lake Erie (September 10, 1813), Tippecanoe, Fort Meigs and Thames in the War of 1812.

[Image 2](#): A boxing match, or another bloody nose for John Bull / W. Charles, del et sculp. In this political cartoon, James Madison gives King George III a black eye and bloody nose, symbolizing the victory of the American frigate "Enterprise" over the British warship "Boxer" early in the War of 1812.

## Teacher Guide

**Vocabulary**

Primary Source	Direct or firsthand evidence about an event, object or person. Some examples include artifacts, autobiographies, letters, diaries, photographs and oral histories.
Secondary Source	Created by studying primary sources and gathering information about an event, object or person. Some examples include encyclopedias, documentaries, biographies and textbooks.

**Program Outline***Introduction*

Review the definitions for secondary and primary sources with the class. Also, discuss examples of each type of source.

## Examples of Primary Sources

- Historical Objects
- Manuscript Collections
- Interview with Eyewitness
- Autobiographies
- Government Records
- Newspapers from the Era
- Letters
- Photographs
- Music of the Era
- Original Film Footage

## Examples of Secondary Sources

- Biographies
- Encyclopedias
- History Textbooks
- Media Documentaries
- Books about the Topic by Historians
- Interviews with Scholars/Experts
- Articles about the Topic
- Websites

Below are potential discussion topics:

- A) Discuss with your students whether specific examples are primary or secondary sources. Some Examples could include:
- a. Your class's history textbook (secondary source: It is written by people who were not eyewitnesses to the events).
  - b. An interview with a historian (secondary source: while historians are experts on their areas of study, they did not witness them first-hand).
  - c. A painting (varies can depend on when the painting was created and if the artists saw first-hand what they painted).

*Pre-Activity 1: Primary Source Analysis*

Show students the Pre-Activity 1 Image. To practice analyzing primary sources, students will investigate this image and fill out the Primary Source Analysis Worksheet. This will assist students when doing analysis on the images in the main activity below.

Explain to the students that historians use a variety of both kinds of sources when doing historical research.

- A) Ask students why they think it is important to look at primary sources when doing historical research. Why is it important to have information from an eyewitness of an event?

## Teacher Guide

- Discuss with your students how thoughts, feelings, and ideas about past events can change with time, and how that can change how we see them.
  - Also explain when people write about the past, even if they are being historically accurate, they still make choices about what things they write about, what things they leave out, and how they are going to write about it. By looking at primary sources, you can come up with your own ideas about a topic.
- B) Make sure students realize that while no good historical research can be done without primary sources, secondary sources are still very important to the historical research process.
- Secondary sources help you understand what was going on before, during, and after the time you are researching. Without this background information, or historical context, it may be hard to understand what you are looking at when viewing a primary source.
  - Good secondary sources will usually have bibliographies or works-cited pages. You can look at these to find more secondary and primary sources.
  - When reading secondary sources, you will often start to have questions about what you are researching. These questions can guide your research and lead you to other areas to explore.

*Pre-Activity 2: Provocation Activity*

Ask the students "Why is it important to include different perspectives when doing historical research?" Have the students discuss in small groups and write down their answers on Post-it Notes. Stick the Post-it notes somewhere in the classroom where everyone can read them. Next, share out each group's responses.

*Main Activity: What's the Big Picture?*

- I. Divide students into two groups "Group 1" and "Group 2." Distribute the Source Guides Image 1\_A, Image 1\_B, Image 1\_C and Image 1\_D. Each student should have only one of the Source Guides. Distribute Source Guides Image 2\_A, Image 2\_B, Image 2\_C, and Image 2\_D to Group 2.
- II. \*Consider pairing students with a partner within their group for this activity. \* Each student or pair of students will have 10 minutes to view their Source Guide and answer the questions on the Primary Source Analysis Worksheet.
- III. Once most students are finished, call the group together to share their images with another group of students. Students from Group 1 should be paired with students from Group 2.
- IV. Afterwards, the class will discuss the answers they've gotten to their worksheet questions and what they've learned from the activity. Here are some suggested questions to guide the discussion:
  - What questions on your worksheet do you still have trouble answering? What other questions do you have about the sources you saw, the War of 1812, or the election of 1840? What other primary or secondary sources might there be that would help you answer those questions?
  - Why do you think it is important to look at many different sources when you're doing historical research?
  - Why are primary sources important when doing historical research? Why are secondary sources important?