

## 5. Sources.



Sources are what historians call the evidence of the past. There are many different kinds of sources that an historian looks at to discover the people and events in history. Some examples include:

- Newspapers
- Photographs
- Coins
- Skeletons
- Shipwrecks
- Statues
- Buildings
- Pottery
- Weapons
- Witness accounts
- Diary entries
- Books
- Mummies
- Jewellery



Anything that can help you learn about the past is a source.

### Primary and Secondary Sources

Historians **classify** their sources into two groups – Primary Sources and Secondary Sources.

A primary source is one which was created *during the time period* you are studying, or by someone who was present at the time. This could be an Ancient Egyptian **statue**, a photograph of a World War One soldier, an Aboriginal cave painting, or a diary entry of someone who survived the sinking of the Titanic.

A secondary source is one which was created *after the time period* you are studying. Examples include a school textbook, wikipedia articles, a documentary film using re-enactments.

Primary sources are useful because they contain first hand information about history, although we must be careful because sometimes witnesses from the past are **unreliable**.

Secondary sources are useful because they usually come from someone who has **investigated** many primary sources and are giving us some **conclusions** about what may have occurred. Again we must be careful because some secondary sources may be **biased**.

# Activities



## Comprehension Questions

Before you start, define the terms in **bold**.



1. What are sources?
2. Name 5 examples of sources.
3. What is a primary source?
4. What is a secondary source?
5. Give 2 examples each of primary and secondary sources.
6. Why are primary and secondary sources useful?
7. Why must historians be careful when using either primary or secondary sources?

## Thinking Questions

1. State whether each of the following sources is primary or secondary.
  - a. A diary entry
  - b. A coin
  - c. A movie about Tutankhamun
  - d. A statue
  - e. A newspaper
  - f. A photograph
  - g. A school history textbook
  - h. The shipwreck of Titanic
  - i. The movie "Titanic"
  - j. An eyewitness account