The terms **primary** (first hand) and **secondary** (second hand) refer to the degree to which the author of the material experienced the event being described.

### PRIMARY SOURCES

Primary sources are materials written by someone who personally experienced or witnessed the event being described. These original documents are not about another document or account, nor are they an interpretation of another source.

**Examples:** Autobiographies/diaries/memoirs, collections of documents, recordings of speeches, creative works, relics/artifacts, journal articles reporting new research

### SECONDARY SOURCES

Secondary sources are interpretations and evaluations of primary sources. They are not direct evidence, but commentary and discussion of evidence. Secondary source materials interpret and draw conclusions about the events reported on in primary sources.

**Examples:** Textbooks, history/research books, critical/commentary works, reviews, magazine articles based on others’ findings, journal articles which revisit previous research, interpretations

### IS MY SOURCE PRIMARY OR SECONDARY?

When evaluating primary or secondary sources, determine how the author knows the details being described. Was the author present at the event or are the author’s conclusions based on evidence from many different sources?

- If the author is speaking from **personal experience**, it’s a **primary source**.
- If the author’s knowledge is based on **reports written by others**, it’s a **secondary source**.

### WHERE CAN I FIND PRIMARY SOURCES?

1. Sign into **MyIvy** at http://my.ivytech.edu and click on the Library at the left side of the screen to access the Library website.
2. Under **Search & Find**, click **A-Z List**.
3. Scroll down and choose among databases including:

   - Congressional Quarterly (CQ)
   - LexisNexis Academic
   - American History Online
   - Original Sources
   - Opposing Viewpoints
   - Primary Source Highlights
   - EBSCOhost