





Year 7 History: Primary and Secondary Sources

See also your textbook, pp. 7–8.

 **Primary sources** are those that were created at the time that historians or students are investigating. This means that they can be **prehistoric, ancient, medieval or modern** sources.

 **Secondary sources** are those that are written later, often by historians, teachers or students, based on an interpretation or explanation of the primary sources and perhaps other secondary sources.

 Examples of **primary sources** include a mummified body found in a peat bog from the time of the Anglo-Saxons, Pliny's eye-witness account of the eruption of Vesuvius in AD 79 or a poem fragment by Sappho, the ancient Greek poet.

 Examples of **secondary sources** include an article on the *New York Times* website, an essay by a historian, a Wikipedia article, a textbook containing summaries and explanations, an artist's reconstructions of a past event, films that explore a period in history, or an account of an event in an encyclopaedia.

1 Which period? – Label the period in which each **primary source** below was created.

prehistoric • ancient x 2 • medieval • modern



A part of the Parthenon in Athens



Trench warfare in 1917



Bayeux Tapestry, 11th century



Neolithic mortars and pestles



A Roman aqueduct

2 What type of source? Match up the type of source with each description below. Use **branches** or **colour coding** to classify each description as primary (5) or secondary (5).

Type of Source



Cave painting, c. 20,000 years ago

Primary source ☐

Secondary source ☐



Description of Source

- ☐ Explanation: A source produced in the period being investigated
- ☐ Example: A book by a historian
- ☐ Example: A painting of a mammoth from a prehistoric cave
- ☐ Example: An article written in 2016 on a website or blog about Renaissance art
- ☐ Explanation: A source created after the period being investigated
- ☐ Example: Graffiti written on the wall of a house in Pompeii and uncovered during archaeological excavations
- ☐ Explanation: This kind of source may be based on both primary sources and other secondary sources
- ☐ Example: Jared Diamond's book about history and the roots of human inequality: *Guns, Germs and Steel*
- ☐ Example: An artefact found by archaeologists studying the Natufians, a people thought to be among the first to start farming
- ☐ Example: Partial remains found in a Neanderthal grave

3 Your future biography: One hundred years after your death, a historian decides to write a biography about you and your life. She needs to use both primary and secondary sources to write her book. Design a half-page in your workbook that represents **likely primary sources** and **possible secondary sources** about your life. Use the setting out below for starter ideas but feel free to create your own design.

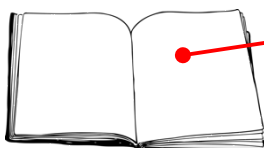
Sources for My Future Biography

Primary Sources

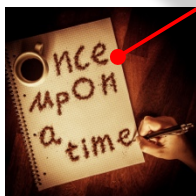
- Photographs



- My journal



- My first novel



Secondary Sources

- My Wikipedia entry (written well after my death)

- An ABC podcast about famous people from the past (including me)



- An encyclopedia article about me, written by a future history professor



4 Key Vocabulary about People, Periods and Sources in History

Fill in the blanks with the options provided in the box.

ancient • archaeologists • artefacts • conclusions • evidence • primary • secondary x 2

a A group of _____ decides to excavate a part of Herculaneum, one of the cities destroyed after the volcanic eruption of Mt Vesuvius.

b They discover many cultural _____, including pots, statues and the remains of dwellings. These are examples of _____ sources.



c The site and the objects provide _____ of how people lived in AD79.

d Later, a historian writes an article in which she reaches _____ about everyday life in Herculaneum in the years before the volcanic eruption.

e Her article is published in *History Today*. It is a _____ source.

f An artist imagines how Herculaneum might have looked before the volcanic eruption, based on the site and the historian's article. He sketches a picture after visiting the excavations. His "artist's reconstruction" is a _____ source.

g This volcanic eruption of Mount Vesuvius occurred in the _____ period.

