

## PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SOURCES

**Primary Sources** – are the raw materials of history — original **documents** and objects which were created at the time under study. They are different from secondary **sources**, accounts or interpretations of events created by someone without firsthand experience. *examples: letters, diaries, photographs, artifacts*

**Secondary Sources** – any **source** about an event, period, or issue in history that was produced after that event, period or issue has passed. *examples: textbooks, essays and biographies*

**Analyzing Primary and Secondary Sources - Each of the questions below lists 2 sources that a historian might consult to answer a question about Ancient Egypt. Indicate whether that source is a primary or secondary source.**

1. What were Egyptian beliefs about the afterlife?
  - a. Egyptian tomb inscriptions \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. article written by a university professor of Ancient Egyptian history \_\_\_\_\_
2. Why did the Nile flood every year?
  - a. songs of praise to the Nile written by Egyptian priests \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. a book about the rivers of Africa written by a modern geographer \_\_\_\_\_
3. What kinds of goods did the Egyptians trade?
  - a. ancient Egyptian trade records \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. a ancient Egyptian story about a trader \_\_\_\_\_
4. What kind of warrior was Ramses the Great?
  - a. a poem in praise of Ramses \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. a description of a battle in which Ramses fought, written by a researcher \_\_\_\_\_

### Practice

"The Egyptians quickly extended their military and commercial influence over an extensive (wide) region that included the rich provinces of Syria...and the numbers of Egyptian slaves grew swiftly.

- C. Warren Hollister, from *Roots of the Western Tradition*

1. What is this passage mostly about?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

"Let me tell you how the soldier fares...how he goes to Syria, and how he marches over the mountains. His bread and water are borne (carried) upon his shoulders like the load of (a donkey);...and the joints of his back are bowed (bent)...When he reaches the enemy...he has no strength in his limbs."

- from *Wings of the Falcon: Life and Thought of Ancient Egypt*  
translated by Joseph Kaster

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2. What is this passage mostly about? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Which of the above passages is a primary source, and which is a secondary source?

\_\_\_\_\_

4. Which passage would be better for learning about what life was like for Egyptian soldiers and why?

\_\_\_\_\_

5. Can you think of another example of a primary sources from ancient Egypt? \_\_\_\_\_

6. Can you think of another example of a secondary source from ancient Egypt? \_\_\_\_\_

### Reflect:

1. What do you understand about primary and secondary sources? \_\_\_\_\_

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2. What questions or uncertainties do you still have about primary and secondary sources?

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