

## Evaluating Historical Resources

Definitions:

**Primary Sources:** Primary sources are materials directly related to a topic by time or participation. These materials include letters, speeches, diaries, newspaper articles from the time, oral history interviews, documents, photographs, artifacts, or anything else that provides first-hand accounts about a person or event. An interview with an expert (a professor of Civil War history, for example) is not a primary source. Quotes from historical figures in secondary sources are not considered primary.

**Secondary Sources:** Secondary sources are usually published books or articles by authors who base their interpretation on primary sources.

**Objective:** concerned with the reality rather than the thoughts of the artist, writer, etc.; without bias or prejudice

**Subjective:** resulting from the feelings of the person thinking; personal

(1) What is the name of the document? \_\_\_\_\_

(2) Who wrote it? \_\_\_\_\_

(3) What is the date of the document? \_\_\_\_\_

(4) Is the source primary or secondary? \_\_\_\_\_

(5) How can you tell? \_\_\_\_\_

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(6) What are the circumstances under which this document was written?

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(7) What is the subject or topic of the document? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

(8) What is the author's purpose? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

(9) What important information, if any, does the author reveal in the document? \_\_\_\_\_

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(10) Is the document reliable? In other words, if you were a historian piecing together an event, could this document be used as evidence? \_\_\_\_\_ Explain your answer. \_\_\_\_\_

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(11) Is the author's point of view objective or subjective? \_\_\_\_\_ Explain. \_\_\_\_\_

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(12) Does your answer to number 11 alter your answer to number 10 in anyway? \_\_\_\_\_ Explain. \_\_\_\_\_

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