

Primary vs. Secondary Sources

Primary sources are produced during the events they describe, such as diaries or letters from participants. Memoirs, written later, reveal more about the writing period. Current event newspaper articles are primary; those on past events are secondary but can provide context. Fiction as a study subject is primary, while used as evidence, it's secondary. A 19th-century history textbook can be primary if studying its historical context. Check out this table to help differentiate primary and secondary sources:

Primary Source	Secondary Source
<i>Pride and Prejudice</i> by Jane Austen	An article analyzing social class in <i>Pride and Prejudice</i> .
<i>The Autobiography of Malcolm X</i>	A book discussing the civil rights movement.
The <i>Magna Carta</i>	A history book on medieval English law.
Climate data from NASA	A study on the effects of climate change using NASA data.
<i>Frankenstein</i> by Mary Shelley	A critical essay on the themes of science and ethics in <i>Frankenstein</i> .

Evaluating Sources

Assess sources based on the author, publisher, and date of publication. Pay attention to the author's authority, bias, and consider objectivity, tone, audience, and authority to determine a source's credibility. See [MSJC's library resources](#) for more information on scholarly/non scholarly sources.