**What is a Primary Source?**

Simply put, primary sources are the original items or records that have survived from the past – such as clothing, letters, photographs, and manuscripts. They were part of a direct personal experience of a time or event. The online collections of the Library of Congress American Memory project are comprised of primary sources. For the purpose of contrast, it is important to note that secondary sources are created by documenting or analyzing someone else’s experience to provide a perspective or framework of a past event. They may have been written long after an event took place and include items such as textbooks, encyclopedias, biographies, and documentaries.

