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TORN WITHIN & THREATENED WITHOUT
KENTUCKIANS IN THE CIVIL WAR ERA



Understanding Primary and Secondary Sources
Elementary School Lesson Plan

Overview

This quick lesson is designed to teach students how to distinguish between primary and secondary sources. As a class, students will explore examples, and employ critical thinking skills to determine whether specific sources are primary or secondary.

All HistoryMobile activities support Common Core English Language Arts standards.

Time Required

20-30 minutes

Materials Needed

Internet Connection

Instructions

1. Explain to students the difference between primary and secondary sources by looking at images from the Kentucky Historical Society collections.

A **primary source** is an artifact, document, or other source of information that was created at the time under study. Primary sources represent real pieces of history such as inventions, letters, diaries, or photographs.

Questions for Primary Source Example

- Is this a real photograph from history?
- What is being shown in the photograph?

A **secondary source** is an opinion, account, or interpretation of a past event by someone who wasn't actually there. Examples of secondary sources include encyclopedia entries, movies about historical events, and textbooks.

Questions for Secondary Source Example

- What person is this postcard referencing?
- Is it a photograph or a piece of art?
- Lincoln died more than 140 years ago. Do you think the artist ever met Abraham Lincoln?
- Does the image look like it's from Lincoln's time?



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Primary Source Example

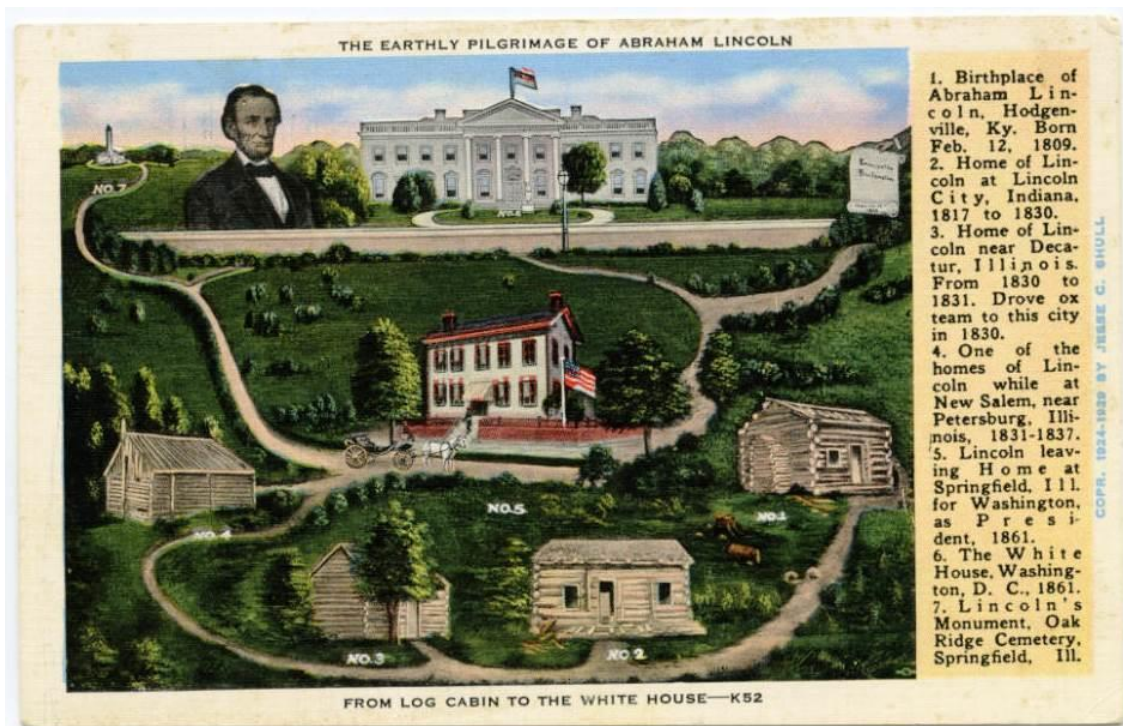
<http://www.kyhistory.com/cdm/singleitem/collection/GRP/id/1667/rec/3>



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Secondary Source Example

<http://www.kyhistory.com/cdm/compoundobject/collection/Morgan/id/3545/rec/13>





2. One at a time, display each of the following sources and ask students to raise their hand and identify and explain whether it is a primary or secondary for the Civil War. Allow other students to make comments and ask questions. (Correct answers are below)
 1. **Source 1:** A letter written by a man named George about the Civil War. Written in 1861.
<http://www.kyhistory.com/cdm/compoundobject/collection/MS/id/152/rec/14>
 2. **Source 2:** An entry for Mary Todd Lincoln in the Kentucky Encyclopedia.
<http://kyenc.msudev.com/entry/l/LINCO02.html>
 3. **Source 3:** A Confederate flag from the 1st Kentucky Cavalry (1861-65).
<http://kyhistory.pastperfectonline.com/webobject/A300E6B7-DCED-4C9B-AFEE-143624853297>
 4. **Source 4:** A soldier photograph from 1862.
<http://www.kyhistory.com/cdm/compoundobject/collection/PH/id/2656/rec/4>
 5. **Source 5:** Dated 1920, a postcard of the Cumberland Gap, a strategic Civil War point near Pineville Ky.
<http://www.kyhistory.com/cdm/compoundobject/collection/Morgan/id/5801/rec/2>

Answers

1. Primary
2. Secondary
3. Primary
4. Primary
5. Secondary