Primary vs. Secondary Sources

**Primary Sources**
- created during the time period they represent
- provide the materials for further study or analysis
- allow examination of an event or time period from a first-hand perspective

**Secondary Sources**
- an analysis, description, or restatement of primary sources
- at least one step removed from the original event
- based on primary sources, other secondary sources, or a combination of both
- sometimes use primary sources to argue a point or persuade the reader

**Primary Sources**
- diaries
- speeches
- interviews
- letters
- poetry, novels, drama
- original artwork
- original research
- records, such as minutes and reports
- records, such as births and deaths
- artifacts
- photos
- documentary video or audio
- data

**Secondary Sources**
- encyclopedias
- dictionaries
- handbooks
- manuals
- textbooks
- commentaries
- articles that explain
- articles that review
- newspaper articles
- histories
- biographies
- analytical articles
- critical articles

**Examples:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Primary Source</th>
<th>Secondary Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Literature</td>
<td><em>Hamlet</em> by William Shakespeare</td>
<td>the biography: <em>Life of William Shakespeare</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>a letter from a soldier in WWII to his wife</td>
<td>the book: <em>A History of United States Foreign Policy</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Science</td>
<td>The Bill of Rights</td>
<td>an essay discussing Freedom of Speech</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art</td>
<td><em>Starry Night</em> by Vincent Van Gogh</td>
<td>an article comparing the painting techniques of Van Gogh and Monet</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>