

# the warhol: resources & lessons

## Unit Lesson Plans / Historical & Cultural Context / History & Memory / Lesson 3



### Overview:

Primary sources and secondary sources are defined and their reliability assessed. Students then evaluate their own primary and secondary sources in terms of strengths and weaknesses.

Grades: 6-12

Subjects: Research Skills, Historical Sources

### PA State Standards:

History:

8.1.9.B Students will: synthesize and evaluate historical sources

8.3.12.B Identify and evaluate primary documents, material artifacts, and historic sites important in United States history from 1890 to present

Arts and Humanities:

9.2 Historical and Cultural Contexts

### Cognitive Skills:

Comprehension:

Students will define and distinguish between primary and secondary sources

Students will understand classification systems and how they are used by historians

Synthesize and Apply:

Students will categorize diverse materials as primary and secondary

Evaluate:

Students will evaluate the reliability of sources

Students will compare and contrast the strengths and weaknesses of sources

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### Sources of Information (continued)

**Secondary sources:** secondhand sources are accounts of the past created by people interpreting the event some time after it happened. For example: textbooks, historical essays and books, film or television documentaries, and text labels in a museum.

5. Evaluate the reliability of sources using the questions historians ask:

What type of source is it?

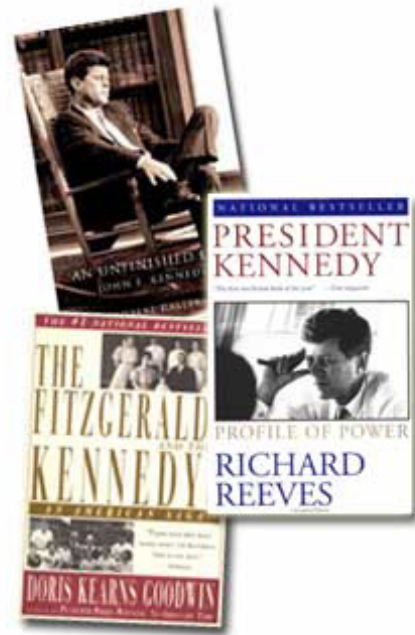
Why was it created?

Who created it?

6. Discuss the types of primary sources used by historians and their strengths and weaknesses when considering reliability.

7. List your sources for information as discussed in Step 2 of this unit. Categorize these sources as primary and secondary.

8. List each source's strengths and weaknesses in terms of accuracy and reliability.



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### Handout: Primary and Secondary Sources

<p><b>Published Documents</b></p> <p>Books, magazines, newspapers, government documents, non-government reports, advertisements, etc.</p>	<p><b>Oral Histories</b></p> <p>Audio recordings of spoken stories, witness testimonies, and interviews of people.</p>
<p><b>Strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reveal information about the past from people living at that time.</li> <li>• Contain opinions and points of view that are important in evaluating cultural norms and customs.</li> <li>• Are easy to find—many copies of the documents were produced and distributed.</li> </ul> <p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Truthfulness or accuracy not guaranteed even though published.</li> <li>• Every document has a creator each with his or her own point of view and biases.</li> <li>• Published documents may reflect only the point of view and biases of parties/people in power.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Firsthand account of an event.</li> <li>• A person’s point of view is embellished with speech inflections.</li> <li>• Provides stories, anecdotes, and other information about the past from groups of people, especially minorities, who were not represented in mainstream publications or did not leave behind written records.</li> </ul> <p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal accounts can be subjective and biased.</li> <li>• Hard to find.</li> <li>• Stories orally passed down from generation to generation are subject to the unreliability of human memory.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Unpublished Documents</b></p> <p>Personal letters, diaries, journals, wills, deeds, family bibles containing family histories, church documents, and school report cards.</p>	<p><b>Visual Documents and Artifacts</b></p> <p>Photographs, films, media footage, paintings, and other types of artwork.</p>
<p><b>Strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reveal information about communities and the people who lived during a specific time period.</li> <li>• Because unpublished documents such as letters were not meant to be read by more than one person, they often provide interesting clues about the past.</li> <li>• Clues into the lives of everyday or common people.</li> </ul> <p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difficult to find because few copies exist.</li> <li>• Every document has a creator each with his or her own point of view and biases.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capture moments in time and provide evidence of change over time.</li> <li>• Provide evidence about a culture, such as clothing styles, customs, special occasions, work, and play.</li> </ul> <p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The creators (painters, sculptors, or filmmakers) have points of view and biases.</li> <li>• Sometimes evidence is missing. For example: a photographer chooses what to photograph by looking through the viewfinder on the camera and shooting the picture. Evidence of what is happening in the periphery of the photograph is omitted.</li> </ul>

What are your sources for information? What are the strengths and weaknesses of these sources?