

Lesson Title: The Historian's Toolkit: Source Sorting

Grade Level: 6th Grade (World Cultures)

Setting: School Library

Time: 45 Minutes

TEKS Alignment

- **SS 6.21(B):** Analyze information by sequencing, categorizing, and identifying cause-and-effect.
 - **ELAR 6.12(D):** Identify and gather relevant information from a variety of sources.
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The Co-Teaching Model: Station Teaching

The library is split into two main zones. Students rotate halfway through.

1. The Hook: The "Witness vs. Reporter" (5 mins)

Librarian & Teacher (Whole Group):

- **The Scenario:** Someone dropped a tray in the cafeteria today.
 - **Primary Source:** The student who saw it happen and filmed it on their phone (an eyewitness).
 - **Secondary Source:** The student who heard about it from their older brother and wrote a blog post about it later that night.
 - **Key Question:** Which one is "closer" to the event? Which one might have more "perspective" or "context"?
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2. The Stations (15 mins each)

Station A: The "Vault" (Physical Primary Sources)

Led by: The Librarian

Focus: Categorizing & Identifying.

- **Activity:** The Librarian presents a "Discovery Box" containing physical items or high-quality replicas (e.g., a 1940s passport, a handwritten letter, a physical map of the Roman Empire, a piece of pottery).
- **Task:** Students use a "Source DNA" checklist to determine if the item is Primary or Secondary.

- **Questioning:** "Is this an original record created *during* the time period? Or was it created *after* the fact to explain the time period?"

Station B: The "Lab" (Digital Secondary Sources)

Led by: The Teacher

Focus: **Main Idea & Cause-and-Effect.**

- **Activity:** Using library Chromebooks, students access a specific entry in a database (like *World Book Online* or *CultureGrams*) regarding a world culture (e.g., Ancient Egypt or the Maya).
- **Task:** Students find the "Main Idea" of the secondary source and identify one "Cause-and-Effect" relationship mentioned in the text (e.g., "Because the Nile flooded annually, the Egyptians developed a calendar").
- **Connection:** Why is this a secondary source? (It was written by a modern researcher who studied many primary sources to give us the "big picture").

3. The "Big Sort" Challenge (5 mins)

Whole Group:

The Librarian and Teacher hold up "Mystery Items" on the big screen. Students vote "Primary" or "Secondary" using hand signals (1 finger for Primary, 2 for Secondary).

- **Item 1:** A 6th-grade History Textbook. (**Secondary**)
- **Item 2:** Anne Frank's actual diary. (**Primary**)
- **Item 3:** A YouTube video by a historian explaining the Black Death. (**Secondary**)
- **Item 4:** A photograph of the Great Wall of China taken yesterday. (**Primary**—it is a direct record of the Wall as *it exists now*).

4. Assessment: The Reflection Map

Students complete a simple T-Chart exit ticket:

Source Type	One Example I Saw Today	When should a historian use this?
Primary	<i>The Passport</i>	To see first-hand evidence/emotions.
Secondary	<i>The Database</i>	To get a summary or expert

		opinion.
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Library Resources Needed:

- **Artifacts:** Old letters, maps, or household items (check your local public library's "Teacher Kits").
- **Tech:** Access to your school's subscription databases (Britannica, GALE, or EBSCO).
- **Print:** A few non-fiction books and an encyclopedia set for physical comparison.