

Primary Sources

BECOME A GOOD RESEARCHER! When you know what kinds of sources are available to you, you can find exciting stories, facts, and photographs which can make history come alive!

A PRIMARY SOURCE is an ORIGINAL WORK (or reproduction of an original work) of a person. A PRIMARY SOURCE tells you a person's ideas in his or her own words. You can gather first-hand information about people, events, topics, or places that a person may have written about years ago. When you are a good research you become an eyewitness to history! When you use first-hand, eyewitness accounts to help you write a story, book, paper, or film, you are creating a secondary source. Two examples of PRIMARY SOURCES are letters and diaries. Try to identify other examples in the activity below.

ARE YOU A GOOD RESEARCHER???

Read the following examples of sources. Place a check by the ones that are PRIMARY SOURCES. Be careful! Some of these are difficult!

- 1. Diary kept by John Smith, a soldier in the Confederate Army, published in a collection of Alabama papers
- 2. Photograph of George Washington Carver taken in 1898
- 3. Biography of George Washington
- 4. Newspaper article about the assassination of President Kennedy written on November 23, 1963
- 5. Television mini-series about President Franklin Roosevelt's life
- 6. Scrapbook kept by Mrs. Mary Smith in 1883 with copies of recipes and household items
- 7. Photograph album containing pictures of classmates at Tuskegee University in 1923.
- 8. Letter written by Emily Smith to her friend Paula Jones, May 3, 1826, describing her trip by wagon from North Carolina to Huntsville, Alabama and the log cabin her father was building
- 9. Article about Martin Luther King, Jr., in *People Magazine*, 1988
- 10. Information about Creek Indians in *World Book Encyclopedia*
- 11. Cassette tape of an interview with Dr. James Lee describing his life as a doctor in Montgomery County during the 1920s
- 12. *The Story of Alabama*, a textbook by Virginia Van der Veer Hamilton
- 13. Matthew Mason's will, 1896
- 14. Map of Alabama drawn by John LaTourette, 1841
- 15. Minutes from the 1898 organization of Dexter Avenue United Methodist Church published in a play in 1988

Visit the Alabama Department of Archives and History Reference Room or your local library to find many types of PRIMARY SOURCES.



Answers: 1,2,4,6,7,8,11,13,14,15

Visit our website: www.archives.alabama.gov