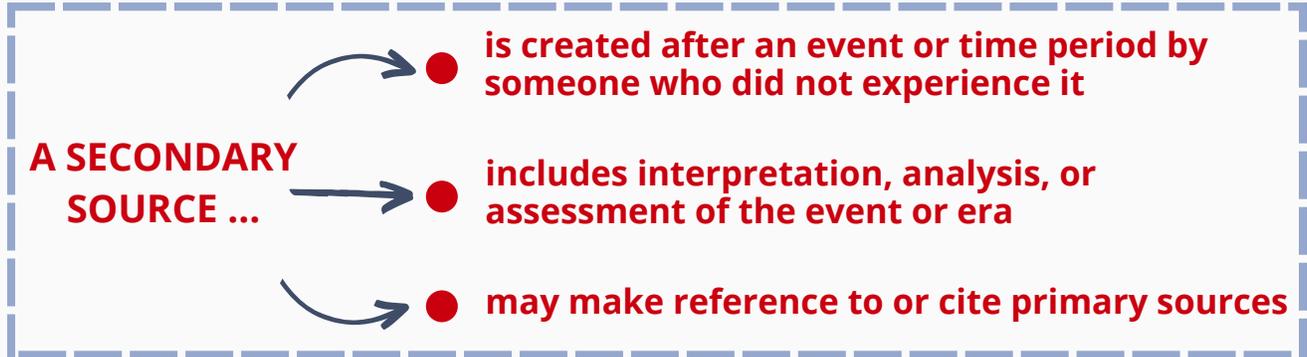


## Media Literacy Mini-Lesson #2

# SECONDARY SOURCES

Do you know that the website you are looking at right now is an example of a *secondary source*? The teachers who wrote the Journalism in Action website didn't actually stand behind World War II enemy lines or go undercover as muckrakers.

Teachers rely on sources from the past in the form of photographs, eye-witness accounts, and documents from official proceedings. **Secondary sources** help interpret or explain primary sources, or firsthand accounts.



### Secondary sources can take many forms:

Some of the most common forms of secondary sources are textbooks, histories, articles in academic journals, and commentary in newspapers, which can help us understand how people reacted to historical events as they happened.

### Sometimes sources are both primary and secondary, depending on how they are used:

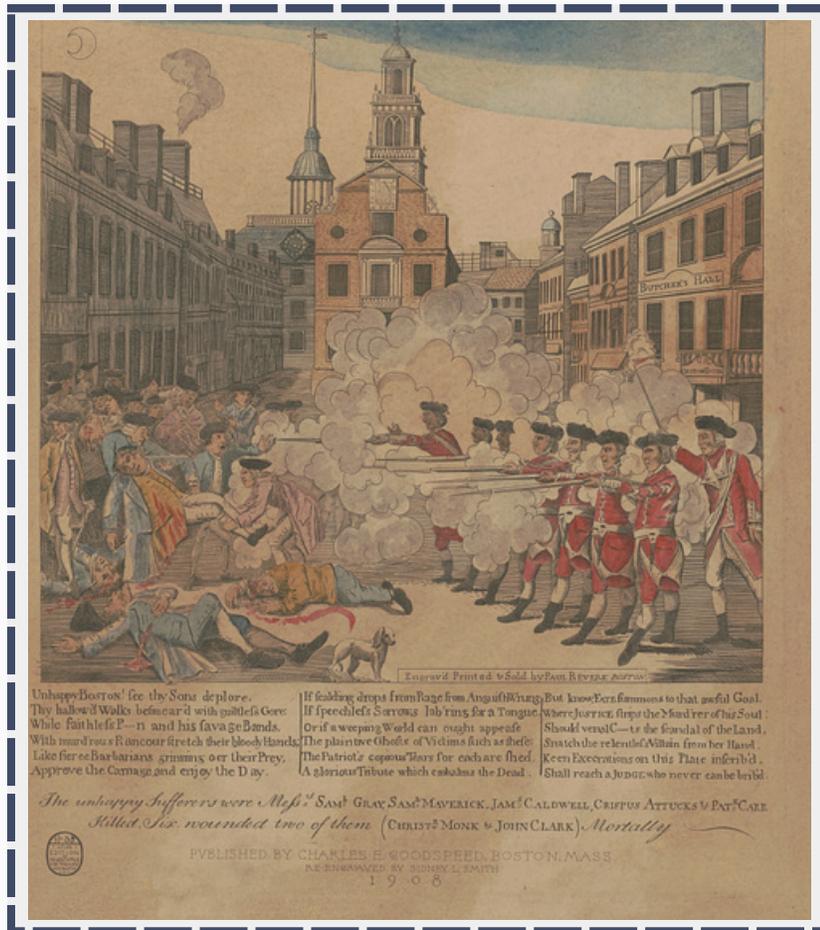


For example, if a researcher is trying to learn what actually happened at the Boston Tea Party, a newspaper article published by someone who witnessed the events could be seen as a primary source. An article or pamphlet circulated at the time, but written by someone *who was not* in Boston, would be considered a secondary source.

But what if a researcher were writing an essay about “the way that colonists responded to the Boston Tea Party”? Now that pamphlet by the person who heard about the event can be seen as a primary source in answering the researcher’s question.

The following source was created by Paul Revere, a famous Revolutionary War figure. It depicts the 1770 Boston Massacre, in which British soldiers shot five protesting colonists. **It is important to note that Revere's depiction of the scene was published 3 weeks after the events and differs from eyewitness accounts on the day.**

Examine the source, answer the questions, and share your responses with a peer in-person or online.



The bloody massacre perpetrated in King Street Boston on March 5th 1770 by a party of the 29th Regt. Boston : Engrav'd Printed & Sold by Paul Revere, 1770. Library of Congress

Describe what is happening in the image. What did you notice or wonder about?

Is Revere's engraving a primary or secondary source for a researcher trying to determine what happened at the Boston Massacre?

What kind of questions would make Revere's depiction a primary source?