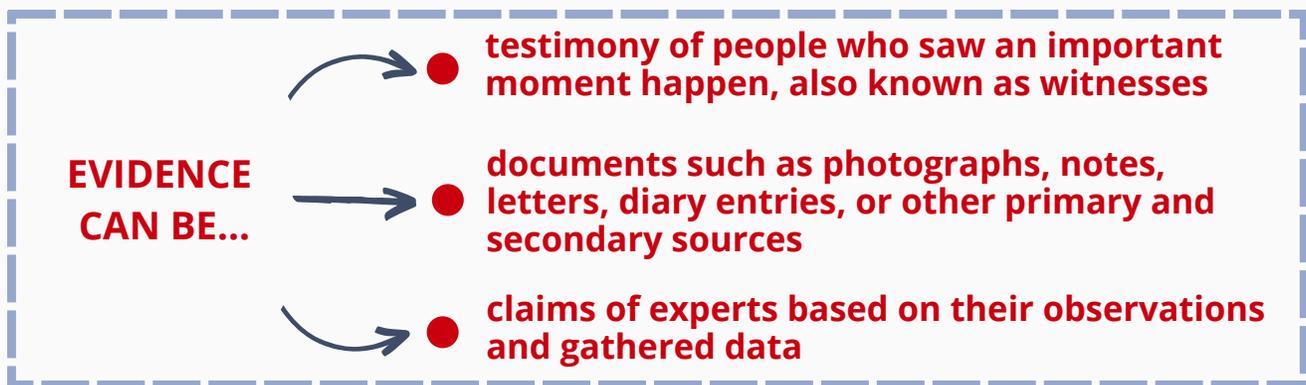


## Media Literacy Mini-Lesson #5

# EVIDENCE

“How was school?” is a question you’ve probably been asked a lot at this point in your life. You might share a story from science class, sports practice, or of course, lunch. Telling stories and including certain details that make it memorable is something humans have been doing for a very long time.

Whole professions like journalism and history revolve around sharing and understanding other people’s stories. To tell a story as accurately as possible, both journalists and historians rely on evidence or sources that provide the who, what, where, when, why, and how about a particular event.



### Is evidence the same as "proof"?

No. Have you ever found yourself trying to piece together a story from a friends’ night you missed? Journalists have to do the same thing and sometimes different sources contradict each other or rely on sources that may not be reliable. Very rarely will a journalist know every important detail about a story with absolute accuracy.

### Journalists will try to corroborate their sources in order to tell as accurate a story as possible —

that means look for additional evidence to back up their original source. One of the reasons why the issue of climate change proved to be so compelling was the abundance of evidence by top climate scientists whose research showed the earth was warming due to man-made activity. Despite journalists corroborating different scientists’ accounts, some people still think climate change is being overblown or exaggerated. Providing historical context like the example below might help the public understand the scope of the problem.



The following source connecting extreme weather to climate change was written in a Montana newspaper more than 100 years ago!

*The year 1911 will long be remembered for the violence of its weather. The spring opened mild and delightful, but in June a torrid wave of unparalleled severity swept over the country. The cities baked and gasped for breath while the burning sun and hot winds withered the corn and cost the farmers a million dollars a day.*

...

*With only one month out of twelve below normal, one may well ask if the climate is not changing and getting warmer. This important question is discussed by Francis Molena in the March Popular Mechanics Magazine. He says:*

*“Since burning coal produces carbon dioxide, it may be inquired whether the enormous use of that fuel in modern times may be an important factor in filling the atmosphere with this substance, and consequently indirectly raising the temperature of the earth.”*

“The Remarkable Weather of 1911” Fergus County Democrat, Lewistown, Montana. February 27, 1912. Library of Congress

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

What evidence does this excerpt provide about climate change?

What evidence is not included in the excerpt above that would help establish that the climate was actually changing at this time?