

Teacher Resource

Discussion & Activity on Primary Sources & Archives

**Ask: How is history created?
How is it retold?**

All history is an interpretation of 'what really happened', based on the quality and quantity of primary source records available and the author's point of view

Have students observe primary source material on this Learning Pathway to develop a broader understanding of the impact the First World War had on British Columbians. To prepare for this, they can also engage with primary sources by evaluating different kinds of sources, and the strengths and limitations in retelling events with individual perspectives of the past.



Hand out copies of the 'Primary Sources' worksheet, read the first paragraph as a class.

- Divide the class into small groups. Ask each group to analyze a digital or printed copy of a primary source. (e.g. Photograph, Diary, Newspaper, Letter...)
Disclaimer: the diary entries on the Learning Portal can deal with mature subject matter about the First World War. Look through the entry prior to assigning this document to younger students, and use all resources at your discretion.
- Have students work together to decide their primary source's strengths and limitations.
- Follow up with a class discussion comparing answers, and discussing each type of primary source.

**Ask: Where are primary sources found & stored?
Who has a say in what is saved or collected and what is thrown away?
Whose voices do you think are most represented?**

- All the materials on the learning portal can be found in the BC Archives, which is a place for the collection of records of the Government of British Columbia, with an emphasis on the social and political history of the Pacific Northwest. It is the accumulated record of the lives and activities of people, businesses, associations, and government. The Archives is available for anyone to use, and an important resource for historical researchers.
- The basis for selecting primary sources to enter into the collection was at the subjective discretion of collectors and archivists in the past. Because of this, some voices and histories are harder to find than others. *What histories do you think are most represented? Which ones would be less represented? Why?*

Possible further discussion points for each primary source provided:

Photograph: Who are the people in the photo? Where are they? Is it candid, or posed?

Diary: What are the conditions like for soldiers on the front line?

Poster: What is the emotional effect of these images? Are they effective?

Letter: Who do you think this letter was addressed to? Why would a king send a letter during war?

Teacher Resource

Primary Sources

Primary sources are original, first-hand accounts of the past. They can take many forms: photographs, diaries, letters, newspapers, objects, films, oral histories.

All primary source material can help document circumstances of everyday life in the past and perspectives towards significant events. It is important to note that each type of primary source has its own respective strengths and limitations when used to build an understanding of the past.

Look at one of the primary sources offered and evaluate what strengths and limitations you encounter as an interpreter of the past.

(Consider bias, perspective, the type of information present, and what might not be included...)

What type of primary source is it?



ROYAL BC
MUSEUM

Strengths

What are the strengths of using this type of primary source to interpret the past?

Limitations

What are the limitations of using this type of primary source to interpret the past?

Teacher Resource

Primary Source Analysis

First Impressions

What is it? Summarize the document.

Who made it?

Who is it made for?

Is there a date? If not, are there any clues we can use to learn when it is from?

Looking Closer

What is the purpose of the document?

Does the creator have a point of view or bias?

Thinking Further

What is the relationship between the creator of this document and the audience? How can you tell?

What do you want to know more about?



ROYAL BC
MUSEUM