



## PRIMARY SOURCES

What is a **primary source**? It is any direct evidence produced during a specific period under study. Primary sources vary widely from objects like artifacts, photographs, diaries, maps, movies, songs, and eyewitness accounts. The key is that they were created during the time period being studied.

Primary sources are different from **secondary sources**, which are an interpretation of the past. History textbooks are typically secondary sources because the authors were not present at the time in history they are writing about, but are interpreting what they have learned about the event.

This is what makes learning with primary sources so engaging -- you get to hold a real piece of history in your hands and come up with your own conclusions of its significance. The answers are not always provided by the primary sources, so you are encouraged to seek the answers through inquiry and research.



You may have not realized, but you have actually been looking at primary sources already. Take a minute to review the images on pages 4-7 and decide whether the sources of information are primary or secondary.

## LEARNER COMPREHENSION CHECK

What is the key to determine if information or items are primary or secondary?

## OMAHA BEACH

Operation OVERLORD targeted Allied landings on five beaches: Utah, Omaha, Gold, Juno, and Sword. American soldiers from the 1st and 29th Infantry Divisions trained together for months for the landing on Omaha Beach. Many of the soldiers strongly believed the Omaha Beach landing was going to be “a walk-in.”

The document excerpt you have is just part of one page for a fairly small group of soldiers. The plan called for over 34,000 soldiers to land on Omaha Beach. What was the plan for this four-mile stretch of sand codenamed Omaha Beach? It was all spelled out in that great big plan - Operation NEPTUNE. It is all very specific: the time; in what order soldiers were to walk onto the beach; and what to do first. Then, when they got time, what they were to do next.

Why did so many soldiers think this was going to be so easy? Using primary sources, you will discover if the Omaha Beach landing the soldiers trained for matched the reality of the landing they made and explore how strategic thinking saved lives when things did not go as expected.

