

# History Detectives: Uncovering the Past with Primary Sources!

Welcome, History Detective! Today, you're on a mission to dive deep into the past, not by just reading about it, but by examining the raw evidence left behind – primary sources. Get ready to integrate evidence and build your own historical accounts, explanations, and arguments, just like a real historian! This lesson aligns with HI5-SOU-01: Integrating evidence from sources to develop historical accounts, explanations, and arguments about the past.

## What are Primary Sources?

Primary sources are original materials from the time period you're studying. They are like clues left behind! Examples include:

- Diaries and letters
- Government documents and laws
- Speeches and interviews (including oral histories)
- Photographs and videos
- Newspaper articles from the time
- Artwork and political cartoons
- Artifacts (objects)

Secondary sources, on the other hand, interpret or analyze primary sources (like textbooks or documentaries made much later).

## Your Detective Toolkit (Materials Needed):

- Computer with internet access
- Notebook or digital document for taking notes
- Pen or pencil
- Your brilliant detective mind!

## Case File 1: The Stolen Generations

**The Mission:** To understand the impact of the Stolen Generations, where many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were forcibly removed from their families in Australia. You will use primary sources to create a short historical account.

### Evidence Locker (Primary Source Exploration):

- **Oral Histories and Testimonies:** These are powerful ways to hear directly from those affected.
  - Explore the [Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies \(AIATSIS\)](#) website for information and links to testimonies.
  - Search the [National Archives of Australia – Stolen Generations](#) for documents and stories.
  - Look for excerpts from the "Bringing Them Home" Report (1997) – many are available online. This report contains many personal testimonies.
- **Government Documents:** Look for policies or official letters that illustrate the government's role.
  - Example Document (search for similar ones): A letter regarding the removal of a child (you might find summaries or excerpts in historical analyses if full documents are hard to parse initially).

**Your Assignment:**

1. Choose at least two different primary sources (e.g., an oral history excerpt and a government document summary).
2. Take notes: What does each source tell you about the experiences of the children, families, or the policies in place?
3. Write a short historical account (2-3 paragraphs) explaining what the Stolen Generations involved and its impact, using direct evidence or specific details from your chosen sources.

**Case File 2: The Great Depression**

**The Mission:** To investigate the causes and effects of the Great Depression, particularly in the 1930s. You will use primary sources to build a narrative and explain the economic downturn.

**Evidence Locker (Primary Source Exploration):**

- **Photographs:** Dorothea Lange's photos are iconic.
  - Explore the [Library of Congress - Farm Security Administration/Office of War Information Black-and-White Negatives](#). Search for terms like "migrant mother," "dust bowl," "unemployed."
- **Newspaper Articles:** See how events were reported at the time.
  - Many historical newspaper archives are subscription-based, but your local library might offer free access. You can also find excerpts in online exhibits.
  - Try searching specific dates (e.g., October 1929 "Black Tuesday") on archives like the [Library of Congress - Chronicling America](#) (US newspapers).
- **Speeches:** What were leaders like Franklin D. Roosevelt saying?
  - Search for transcripts of FDR's "Fireside Chats" (e.g., on the [FDR Presidential Library website](#)).

**Your Assignment:**

1. Select at least one photograph and one newspaper headline/short article excerpt or a segment from a speech.
2. Analyze: What does the photograph show about life during the Depression? What does the text reveal about its causes or effects?
3. Write a 2-3 paragraph narrative explaining one major cause and one major effect of the Great Depression, using evidence from your sources. For instance, how did bank failures (cause) lead to widespread unemployment (effect)?

**Case File 3: The Cold War**

**The Mission:** To understand the major conflicts and ideologies that defined the Cold War (roughly 1947-1991). You will examine documents and propaganda to articulate these aspects.

**Evidence Locker (Primary Source Exploration):**

- **Government Policies and Treaties:**
  - [Wilson Center Digital Archive - Cold War International History Project](#): An excellent resource for declassified documents from around the world. Search for topics like "Berlin Wall," "Cuban Missile Crisis," or specific treaties.
  - [US National Archives - Cold War Records](#): Explore policies, memos, and reports.
- **Propaganda Posters/Media:** How did each side try to influence public opinion?
  - Search online image databases for "Cold War propaganda posters" (e.g., US vs. Soviet Union). Pay attention to symbols, messages, and target audiences.
  - Hoover Institution Library & Archives has a good online collection of posters: [Hoover](#)

[Institution Poster Collection](#) (search for "Cold War" or specific countries/themes).

### **Your Assignment:**

1. Choose one government document (or an excerpt) and one piece of propaganda.
2. Analyze: What ideology (e.g., communism, democracy, capitalism) is promoted or criticized in your sources? What specific Cold War conflict or tension do they relate to?
3. Write a short explanation (2-3 paragraphs) articulating one major ideological conflict of the Cold War and how one specific event (e.g., the Space Race, an arms treaty, a crisis) reflected this conflict, using evidence from your chosen sources.

## **Mission Debrief: What You've Learned**

Congratulations, History Detective! You've successfully used primary sources to:

- Gather direct evidence about the past.
- Understand different perspectives and experiences.
- Build your own historical accounts.
- Explain causes and effects of major events.
- Articulate complex ideological conflicts.

Keep honing these skills! The past is full of clues waiting to be discovered. The more you practice analyzing primary sources, the better you'll become at understanding history on a deeper level.