

A **secondary source** is information gathered by someone who did not take part in or witness an event. Examples include history textbooks, journal articles, biographies, and encyclopedias. The textbook you are reading right now is a secondary source. The historians who wrote it did not take part in the events and conflicts described. Instead, they gathered information about these events and conflicts from different sources. Historians organize and interpret information from both primary and secondary sources.

Historians often create visual secondary sources to use as tools. One such tool, called a timeline, is a representation of a time period. Timelines show the sequence of events within time periods. People use timelines to identify causes and effects. They can also use timelines to recognize patterns and make predictions. Other visual secondary sources that historians use include charts and newly created maps.

Sources of Change Writers of secondary sources don't always agree about the past. Historians form different opinions about the primary sources they study. As a result, historians may not interpret past events in the same way.

For example, one writer may say that a king was a brilliant military leader. Another may say that the king's armies won their battles only because they had better weapons than their enemies did. Sometimes new evidence leads to new conclusions. Often, viewpoints expressed in sources change over time. Writers are influenced by major issues of their day, and their writings reflect these concerns. As historians review and reanalyze information, their interpretations can and do change.

Summary and Preview We benefit from studying the past. Scholars use many clues to help them understand past events. In the next lesson, you will learn how geography connects to history.

Reading Check
Contrast How are primary and secondary sources different?

Lesson 11 Assessment

Review Ideas, Terms, and People

- Identify** What is history?
 - Explain** What kinds of things do historians try to discover about people who lived in the past?
 - Predict** What kinds of evidence will historians of the future study to learn about your culture?
- Describe** How does knowing its own history provide a group with a sense of unity?
 - Elaborate** Explain the meaning of the saying "those who forget their past are doomed to repeat it."
- Identify** What is a primary source?
 - Explain** How did the invention of writing affect the sources on which historians rely?

- Elaborate** Could a photograph be considered a primary source? Why or why not?

Critical Thinking

- Categorize** Create a graphic organizer like the one shown. Use it to identify four types of clues to the past, and give at least two examples of each.

