TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE: PRIMARY or SECONDARY SOURCE? (1)

GROUP NAMES: ___________________________ ___________________________

DIRECTIONS: In the space provided after each of the items listed below, write “P” if the item is a primary source and “S” if it is a secondary source.

1. ___ An essay written by an eighth grader during the Great Depression.
2. ___ A 1945 photograph of a high school cheerleading squad from the Mon-Valley.
4. ___ An interview with a veteran of World War II describing his job as a bombardier.
5. ___ A description of a scientific experiment carried out by an author of a textbook.
6. ___ A history textbook on Western civilization.
7. ___ A complete set of the Encyclopedia Britannica for the years 1949-1953.
10. ___ A 19th century teacher’s account of what it was like to live with a frontier family.
11. ___ A magazine article summarizing Aristotle’s view on slavery.
12. ___ Letters written between an American student and a Japanese student describing their school experiences during the Korean conflict.
13. ___ Notes from a school board meeting in 1878, taken by the board secretary.
14. ___ A dictionary signed by Samuel Johnson.
15. ___ A biography on Kurt Cobain of Nirvana.
17. ___ A “Post-It note” that a detective found in the trash can of a “person-of-interest.”
18. ___ My American Journey, an autobiography by Colin Powell.
19. ___ A report from Fox News on the situation involving North Korea and two U.S. journalists—Laura Ling and Euna Lee.
20. ___ The recorded audio of pilots from the “blackbox.”
PRIMARY SOURCE
A primary source of information is often called “a raw piece of history.” A primary source is an object that has been written, created, or otherwise produced during the time under study. They often come from participants or witnesses to an event being described. A marriage certificate between Henry VIII and Catherine Parr is an example, as would the reporting of the result of an experiment carried out directly by a researcher. Primary sources are usually more difficult to acquire than secondary sources. They provide a unique insight into the details of a particular event.

SECONDARY SOURCE
A secondary source of information is one prepared by an individual who was not a direct witness to an event, but who obtained his or her description of the event from someone else. As indirect sources of information, they necessarily involve the reinterpretation of the object or event under study. Thus, they are “one step removed” from the direct primary source. A newspaper article on a teacher’s strike would be an example.