PRIMARY SOURCES
A QUICK GUIDE TO USING AND INCORPORATING QUALITY SOURCES

WHAT IS A PRIMARY SOURCE?
“[sources] that provide first-hand accounts of the events, practices, or conditions you are researching or “documents that were created by the witnesses or first recorders of these events at about the time they occurred” (University of Illinois)

STEP 1: GET TO KNOW THE CONTEXT OF YOUR SOURCE
You should already know what kind of source it is (newspaper article, song lyrics, interview, etc.) Now start asking yourself some questions to get to know the source:

1. Who created the source?
2. What do you know about the person who created the source?
3. When was the source created?
4. Where was the source created?
5. What do you know about the context in which the source was created?

STEP 2: GET TO KNOW THE CONTENT OF YOUR SOURCE
Your primary sources should shape your writing. They are the “foundation of your argument and interpretation” (American Library Association).

a. Why did the person create the source?
b. What opinions are conveyed in the source?
c. Is anything implied through the source?
d. What is NOT said in the source?
e. What is interesting and/or unique about the source?
f. What don't you understand about the source?
g. How does the creator of the source make his/her point?
h. What worldview does the source support?
i. How would other during that time react to this source?
j. How does this source compare to others?
k. What do you believe and not believe from the source?
l. What do you still want to know?