**PRIMARY, SECONDARY, AND TERTIARY SOURCES**

**A QUICK GUIDE TO USING AND INCORPORATING QUALITY SOURCES**

**DIFFERENT SOURCES**

*Tertiary source* is based off of secondary sources, instead of research using primary documents. Examples of tertiary sources include reference works such as encyclopedias, textbooks, or Bible dictionaries. Tertiary sources are ideal for basic research and preliminary discussion on a topic.

*Secondary sources* are one step removed from the original source that elaborates, summarizes, analyzes, or is based off of primary source content. These might be a second-person account of an event, a review, a biography, or academic work. Secondary sources are ideal for analysis and interpretation.

Lastly, a *primary source* provides first-hand accounts of events, practices, or conditions you are researching. This includes original manuscripts, journals, interviews, newspaper articles, and photographs. Primary sources are ideal for use in your writing.

**HOW TO IDENTIFY A SOURCE**

If the type of content does not clearly indicate whether the information was obtained first-hand or through secondary means, check the bibliography to determine what sources were used in its creation.

**Context Questions**

Who created the source? What do we know about them?
When and where was the source created?
What do you know about the context in which the source was created?

**Content Questions**

Why did the person create the source?
What opinions are conveyed in the source?
What is interesting and/or unique about the source?
What don’t you understand about the source?
How does the creator of the source make his/her point?
What worldview does the source support?
How would others during that time react to this source?
How does this source compare to other sources?