

HISTORY DAY RESEARCH STARTER

Sleuthing the Past



Good historians are like detectives – they investigate, search for evidence, and dig into records to find more sources. Then they piece together what happened based upon the evidence they find. For your History Day project, you'll do essentially the same thing. Start by learning all you can from experts on your topic, then search for primary sources.

1. Start with credible secondary sources

A credible secondary source is written by an expert on the topic, preferably a historian. Secondary sources include articles from professional journals, articles from the internet, and books from the library.

Tips for finding good secondary sources:

- Search for articles at Utah's Online Library (<http://onlinelibrary.uen.org>). Good article databases include Gale and EBSCO.
- Search for books at your local library. If your library does not have the book you want, you can usually request it from a partner library by placing a hold on the book.
- There are specialized historical journals on almost every topic (American history, Utah history, history of science, women's history, and so on) that contain excellent secondary source articles.
- Look at the bottom of an online article for its citations, then go find those articles or books.
- Look for secondary sources that show different sides of the story.
- Wikipedia is not a credible secondary source, but its articles can help you find better sources to use.
- Ask – Who wrote this? Are they an expert? If not, don't use it.

2. Read your secondary sources and record citation information

These sources should give you a good understanding of the events you are covering, including important dates, names, and facts. They should also explore the background events leading up to your topic, the **historical context** (the social, cultural, and political circumstances in that time and place), and the consequences or outcomes.

Take notes using a notebook, a Google Doc, or Noodle Tools. Write down sentences you might want to quote exactly as they are written. Use quotation marks to show they are quotes.

Record the citation information for each source using a History Day Source Tracker or Noodle Tools, and keep this information attached to your notes.

3. Search for primary sources

Primary sources are materials that were **created at that time** in history. They include eyewitness accounts, newspaper and magazine articles, letters, diaries, books, government records, court cases, laws, photographs, paintings, drawings, maps, images, artifacts, clothing, tools, and objects. Interviews with people who were involved in the historical event are primary sources – these are called oral histories.

Primary sources are usually kept in archives, special collections, and libraries. Their digital collections are available online, and they have even more resources at their location.

4. Analyze your sources

Examine each source and ask questions such as...

- Who created this? When did they create it? Who was able to read or see it?
- Why was it created? What was its purpose?
- What does the image show? What does the document say?
- What is the perspective? (Example: is it proslavery or antislavery?)
- Is there something missing? What questions do you have after examining this artifact? How can you answer your questions?
- Compare/contrast. Does it agree with other primary sources or disagree? If so, why?

Take notes and record the citation information for each source as you go.

5. Balance your research

- Find and use sources that show differing perspectives.
- Use a variety of types of sources, not just one or two.
- Use books as well as websites.

6. Keep digging!

Research builds its own momentum. When you find a lead, chase it down. Do your sources make you wonder about something? See if you can uncover an answer by doing more research.

PRO TIP!

Go to the Library of Congress or DocsTeach and search for primary source sets on your topic.

FINDING CREDIBLE SECONDARY SOURCES ONLINE

PRO TIP! All Utah students have free access to **Utah's Online Library**. This should be your first stop as a researcher! You can access credible secondary and primary source databases, as well as NoodleTools.

Available for Free	Through University Libraries
Digital Public Library of America Directory of Open Access Journals EBSCO (@ Utah's Online Library) Gale (@ Utah's Online Library) Google Books, Google Scholar Open Library Open J-Gate Utah HistoryToGo World Book (@ Utah's Online Library)	ISI Web of Knowledge (Web of Science) JSTOR ProQuest ScienceDirect SpringerLink WorldCat

Bonus Question 1

Why shouldn't you rely on Wikipedia as a secondary source?

Bonus Question 2

Where can you find credible secondary sources in your community?

FINDING CREDIBLE PRIMARY SOURCES ONLINE

Utah-Based Collections	Regional & National Collections
Ancestry	American Folklife Center
Archives of the Catholic Church in Utah	Bancroft Library
Brigham Young University L. Tom Perry Special Collections	California Digital Newspaper Collection
Dixie State University Special Collections	Chronicling America: American Newspapers 1836-1922
Downwinders of Utah Archive	DocsTeach
LDS Church History Library	Densho (Japanese American Incarceration)
FamilySearch Family History Library	Discovering American Women's History Online
Southern Utah University Special Collections & Digital Archives	Farmworker Movement Documentation Project
University of Utah Marriott Library Special Collections	Google News Archive
Utah American Indian Digital Archives	Huntington Library Collections
Utah Digital Newspapers	Internet Archive
Utah Division of State History Library & Collections	Library of Congress
Utah Ski Archives	National Archives & Records Administration
Utah State Archives & Records Service	Newspapers.com
Utah State University Merrill-Cazier Library	Mountain West Digital Library
Utah Valley University George Sutherland Archives	Veterans History Project
Weber State University Archives and Special Collections	Western History Collection, Denver Public Library
Westminster College Giovale Library	

And many more!

EXPLORING PRIMARY SOURCES IN UTAH

These archives have both digitized and physical resources. Check their websites to find out if they have primary sources about your topic. If they do, you may contact the archives for further assistance. Here are just a few of the topics they offer:

[Brigham Young University: L. Tom Perry Special Collections](#)

Mormon History
Military History (WWII)
Utah History
Exploration of the Western United States
Photography of the Western United States

[Dixie State University: Special Collections](#)

Juanita Brooks
WWII Correspondence
Hurricane Canal Company
Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC)
Irma Thomas Downwinder Collection

[Southern Utah University Library: Special Collections & Digital Archives](#)

Paiute Indian Tribe of Utah
William Shakespeare
Utah National Parks
Southern Utah History/Local History
Historic Trails - Old Spanish Trail, Pony Express

[University of Utah: Marriott Library Special Collections](#)

Science
Oral Histories
Women's Studies
Utah History
Literature

[Utah Division of State History: Library & Collections](#)

Utah labor history
River exploration
Early statehood
Utah transportation history
Utah women's history

[Utah State Archives & Records](#)

Colorado River
Joe Hill
Military History
Governors of Utah
Territorial Utah Government

[Utah State University: Merrill-Cazier Library](#)

Utah Folklore
Tourism in Utah
Topaz Internment Camp
Intermountain Indian School
Environmental Activism in Utah

[Utah Valley University: George Sutherland Archives](#)

Vietnam War Oral Histories
Peace Activism In Utah
UVU And Utah Valley History
Deaf Athletics
Organizations for the Deaf

[Weber State University: Archives and Special Collections](#)

Local Theater
Defense Depot Ogden
Immigrant Communities in Ogden
Nursing Education in Ogden
Northern Utah Satellite Program
Italian and German Prisoners of War
Utah Construction Company

[Westminster College: Giovale Library](#)

Nursing Education in Salt Lake City
Westminster Student Newspaper
Hannah Clair Haines, Utah's first female CPA

NHD RESEARCH TRACKER

Complete one page for each source you find.

Circle One:	Primary	Secondary				
Type:	Article	Book	Website	Image	Video	Audio
	Map	Gov Doc	Other:			
Author:						Date:
Title:						
Publisher:					City:	
URL:						Date you accessed:
For articles: Title of newspaper, magazine, journal, book, or website where you found it.						
For primary sources you found in an archive:						
Title of the collection:						
Name of the archive:						
Notes/Quotes						