

## Case #1: The Puzzle of the Past

UNCOVER HISTORY'S MYSTERIES

Historical events can be researched the same way a detective investigates a mystery.  
Ask questions and look for evidence to become a history detective.

### Ask Questions:

There are six basic questions a history detective should ask when researching a historical event:

- Who?
- What?
- When?
- Where?
- Why?
- How?

History detectives can usually find the answers to who, what, when, and where an event took place early on in an investigation. Answering why and how an event occurred usually takes the most research and thought.

### **CAUTION:**

Be careful not to mistake secondary sources that quote historic people or other printed materials as primary sources - if someone else is giving an opinion about the quote, then you are reading a secondary source!

### Look for Evidence:

There are two types of sources of historical evidence.

1. **Primary Sources**
2. **Secondary Sources**

A **Primary Source** is an original material from a time period, created by people who witnessed or participated in an event. A primary source presents original thinking, reports a discovery, or shares new information.

A **Secondary Source** is an account written after an event, with the benefit of hindsight, that provides interpretations and evaluations of primary sources.

Identifying what type of source you are using is important because you can analyze whether the creator might express a biased interpretation of how or why an event occurred. Another word for bias is prejudice. Good history detectives will look at many different sources to make sure their report presents multiple viewpoints of the event they are researching.



## Where To Find Evidence:

All of the different types of evidence listed on the chart can be either primary or secondary sources.

Always remember, **primary sources** are from the same time period as the historical event you're investigating.

If something was created after a historic event occurred, like a recreation of an artifact or a book about the event, the evidence is a **secondary source**.

## **CAUTION:**

The Internet has become an important research tool, but sometimes the sources found online are extremely biased or even made-up.

Be careful about drawing conclusions based on something you find online - it might not be accurate. If you can verify the information you find online in another type of source, your evidence can be considered more trustworthy.

Evidence	What is It?	What Can You Learn From It?	Where Can You Find It?
<i>Artifacts</i>	Three-dimensional objects made or used by humans. They can be handmade or manufactured.	Artifacts provide clues about a place, a people, or a particular industry.	Museums
<i>Ephemera</i>	Printed items, usually made of paper, that are only used for a short period of time. Concert posters, movie tickets, ferry schedules, catalogs and even junk mail all fit the ephemera category.	Ephemera show trends or popular events from particular time periods.	Museums, Archives
<i>Images</i>	Drawings, paintings, and photographs.	In the past, drawings and paintings provided a visual record of events. Today, photography is the most common way of recording events as they happen.	Museums, Archives, the Internet
<i>Maps</i>	Maps come in many forms: political boundary maps, aeronautical charts, and topographical maps are a few.	Maps demonstrate change over time of a place's political boundaries, resources, and physical characteristics.	Museums, Archives, Libraries, the Internet
<i>People</i>	Oral histories, letters, memoirs, diaries, journals and expert advice can be provided by people.	Many times, the initial investigation of an event begins by asking someone who might have special knowledge about a particular subject.	Local Community
<i>Books &amp; Periodicals</i>	One of the most commonly used sources of historical evidence, books are easiest to find while researching. Blogs, magazines, and newspapers are some examples of periodicals.	Books generally cover a topic in a more permanent and definitive way, while periodicals provide immediate and focused glimpses of current and historic issues and events.	Archives, Libraries, the Internet
<i>Electronic Media</i>	Audio recordings, film, and video.	Film, video and audio recordings allow "instant replays" of past events.	Museums, Archives, Libraries, the Internet



### **Draw Conclusions:**

Once you've completed your research and have gathered all your evidence, use the facts you've found to answer the six basic questions: who, what, when, where, why, and how.

Remember: When thinking about why and how an event happened there are multiple causes leading to multiple effects. Different viewpoints will highlight different causes and effects of historic actions. A well-written history report will present several different viewpoints and draw conclusions based on all the evidence - history detectives should make up their own minds about how and why a historical event took place.

It's time to tackle the puzzles of the past, sleuths! You now have all the tools you will need to start your investigation into history. Good luck and good research.



**For more information about historical investigation and the artifacts you can find at The Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum, visit our website at [TheStoryofTexas.com](http://TheStoryofTexas.com) or email one of the Education Staff with any questions at [Education@TheStoryofTexas.com](mailto:Education@TheStoryofTexas.com)**

