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Activity Two – Reading Comprehension

Unit 2 – Reading

Historical Sources and Evidence

History is based on evidence. Without historical evidence, historians would know very little about the past. Every event, civilisation and historical figure is studied through different types of sources that provide information about what happened and why it happened.

A historical source is any object, document or material that helps us understand the past. Historians use these sources to investigate historical events and build explanations based on evidence rather than personal opinions. However, not all historical sources are the same. They are generally divided into primary sources and secondary sources.

Primary sources are original materials created during the historical period being studied. They provide direct evidence of past events and often reflect the experiences or opinions of people who lived at that time. Examples of primary sources include letters, diaries, photographs, official documents, newspapers, coins, maps and archaeological artefacts. A speech given by a king or queen is also considered a primary source because it was produced during the historical event.

Secondary sources are created after the events have taken place. They analyse, explain or interpret information obtained from primary sources. History textbooks, biographies, documentaries and academic journal articles are common examples of secondary sources. Historians often compare several secondary sources because different authors may present different interpretations of the same historical event.

Not every historical source is completely reliable. Some sources may contain mistakes, personal opinions or political bias. For this reason, historians carefully evaluate every

source before using it as evidence. They ask questions such as: Who created the source? When was it created? Why was it produced? Can the information be confirmed by other sources?

Today, technology has transformed the way historians work. Many historical documents have been digitised and are now available in online archives, museums and digital libraries. These resources allow historians and students from around the world to access valuable historical evidence without travelling to the place where the original documents are kept.

Studying historical sources helps students develop important academic skills. It encourages critical thinking, careful observation and the ability to evaluate information objectively. These skills are useful not only in History but also in many other academic disciplines and professional careers.

Choose the correct answer.

1. What is the main purpose of historical sources?

- a) To entertain readers.
- b) To provide information about the past.
- c) To replace history books.
- d) To describe future events.

2. What is a primary source?

- a) A modern documentary.
- b) A history textbook.
- c) An original source created during the historical period being studied.
- d) A book written many years later.

3. Which of the following is an example of a primary source?

- a) A biography.
- b) A documentary.
- c) A soldier's diary.
- d) An academic article.

4. Secondary sources...

- a) are created during historical events.
- b) analyse and interpret primary sources.
- c) are always more reliable than primary sources.
- d) cannot be found online.

5. Why do historians compare different secondary sources?

- a) Because they are easier to read.
- b) Because they contain photographs.
- c) Because different authors may have different interpretations.
- d) Because they are shorter.

6. According to the text, why are some historical sources not completely reliable?

- a) Because they are always very old.
- b) Because they are written in different languages.
- c) Because they may contain mistakes or bias.
- d) Because historians never trust them.

7. Which question is NOT mentioned as part of evaluating a source?

- a) Who created it?
- b) When was it created?
- c) Why was it produced?
- d) How much did it cost?

8. How has technology helped historians?

- a) It has replaced historical research.
- b) It has eliminated primary sources.
- c) It has made many historical documents available online.
- d) It has reduced the number of museums.

9. Which skill is NOT mentioned in the text?

- a) Critical thinking.
- b) Careful observation.
- c) Evaluating information.
- d) Mathematical calculation.

10. What is the main idea of the text?

- a) History is mainly based on textbooks.
- b) Technology has replaced historians.
- c) Historical sources are essential for understanding and interpreting the past.
- d) Every historical source is completely reliable.

Answer Key

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