Primary vs. Secondary Sources: a Questionnaire

Answer the questions below about your source. If you answer, “yes” to any of the following questions, there is a good chance the source is PRIMARY.

- Did the author personally witness or experience the subject in question?
  
  Yes □  No □

- Does the author know about this subject because of personal experience rather than having just read about it?
  
  Yes □  No □

- Is this source a diary, letter, memoir, autobiography, oral history, or interview of a person with first-hand experience of the subject?
  
  Yes □  No □

- Is this source an official document or record published at the time of the event by the government, courts, or another organization?
  
  Yes □  No □

- Is this source a newspaper or magazine article written at the time of the event?
  
  Yes □  No □

- Is this a creative work such as a novel, poem, art or music piece created by a firsthand witness of the subject in question?
  
  Yes □  No □

- Is this an excerpt from a primary source, such as the constitution or a letter written by a Civil War soldier that has been imbedded in a secondary source, such as a textbook. Remember, secondary sources may include reprints of primary sources.
  
  Yes □  No □

- Is this an artifact or relic such as jewelry, pottery, clothing, music, art, architecture, dance or weaponry that was used by witnesses of the subject in question?
  
  Yes □  No □

- Is this a compilation of raw scientific data or statistics, such as census statistics published by the U.S. Census Bureau, that is being published without commentary or interpretation?
  
  Yes □  No □