



Just the Facts: A Primary Source Debate



Credits:

Canadian Jewish Heritage Network
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Teacher Guide

Concepts and Competencies Covered:

- *Information Literacy Concept(s):* Evaluates information sources for bias, responsibility and authenticity regardless of format.
- *Historical Inquiry Concept(s):* Identifies and uses primary source material.
- *Core Competencies:* Integrates elements of media literacy.

Situation: You are an archivist and historian assigned to go through the private and professional material of a controversial politician who was in the Canadian House of Commons from 1980-1990. Below is a summary list of the materials you find in his home and office.

Time Required: 25-30 minutes

Prior Knowledge or Skills Required:

- An understanding of some record terminology, particularly: minutes, correspondence and Parliamentary debates.
- Previous instruction on identifying responsibility and credit in sources, possible bias, authenticity and reliability of source material.

Instructions: Split your students into groups and provide them with the accompanying exercise sheet, a marker and a piece of chart paper. Each group is given 10 minutes to identify the primary sources and also to decide which of those sources, primary or otherwise, has historical value and should be preserved in an archival collection of the politician. They should use the questions provided on their student sheets for guidance. Each group should select a representative to present their group's result. Encourage students to question each others' choices and reasoning.

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Student Sheet

Situation: You are an archivist and historian assigned to go through the private and professional material of a controversial politician who was in the Canadian House of Commons from 1980-1990. Below is a summary list of the materials you find in his home and office.

Instructions: With your group discuss each item on the list using the **Guidance Questions**. Fill out the **Answer Chart** with your answers and then present to your class.

Guidance Questions:

1. Is this item a primary source? Why?
2. Is this item a secondary source? Why?
3. Would you keep this in the politician's archive and why? What historical evidence does it provide for future researchers?

Archival Materials?

1. Correspondence/E-mail (Personal and Political)
2. Electoral maps of the politician's riding
3. Photograph albums
4. Phone books from twenty years ago
5. Photocopies of Parliamentary debates
6. Stacks of bound newspapers (ca1970-1990)
7. Several cell phones still with memory chips
8. Secret recordings of meetings the politician had with various lobby groups
9. Bank account statements (ca1980-1992)
10. An old hat
11. A computer with electronic files still on it
12. Diaries and agendas
13. Copies of speeches written by the politician (including draft copies with editing marks and comments and final copies)
14. Several bookshelves of biographies of various politicians from the US and Canada
15. Minutes from different Parliamentary committees that the politician served on, with and without comments written in the margins by the politician

Item	Primary Source? Why?	Secondary Source? Why?	Keep or Toss?	Historical Value?