



# The Midway Museum: Primary Source Activity

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Grade: \_\_\_\_\_ School: \_\_\_\_\_

In this activity, you will learn how historians examine sources to try and form an assumption about the past. As a historian, your job is to interpret the past. Primary sources are a historian's best asset because they give them access to the past when the event occurred. Historians use the clues they find in their research, like a detective would, to solve a case. They pay attention to source information, select the main argument and supporting information, and look for credibility and bias.

Notice\* When working with primary sources, it is essential to understand the language and terminology used within the context of the source's creation. While definitions may remain the same over time, their meanings may change in any lexicon.

## Primary Source:

- *Journal of a Residence on a Georgian Plantation in 1838 – 1839* by Frances Anne Kemble.

*As for the exhortation with which Mr. — closes his letter, that I will not "go down to my husband's plantation prejudiced against what I am to find there," I know not well how to answer it. Assuredly I am going prejudiced against slavery, for I am an Englishwoman, in whom the absence of such a prejudice would be disgraceful. Nevertheless, I go prepared to find many mitigations in the practice to the general injustice and cruelty of the system -much kindness on the part of the masters, much content on that of the slaves; and I feel very sure that you may rely upon the carefulness of my observation, and the accuracy of my report, of every detail of the working of the thing that comes under my notice; and certainly, on the plantation to which I am going, it will be more likely that I should some things extenuate, than set down aught in malice.*

Question 1: Is this a primary or secondary source, and how do we know? What type of source is it? Is it a journal, newspaper, or interview?

Question 2: Who is the author? Is there any information in the source that says who the person is who is writing this?

Question 3: Underline a sentence that best describes the author's main idea. What is the big idea? Circle supporting evidence that she uses to support her argument/claim.

Question 4: Historians often seek answers beyond the source itself. Where do you begin your research? Would you look on the Internet or ask a librarian?

Question 5: How different is this source from others from the same period? Does it sound in favor of the societal norm or contrary to what people believed then?