

COLLEGE LEVEL WRITING: TERMINOLOGY SHEET

Term One: Primary Sources

1. Definition: According to Cheryl Lederle of the Library of Congress: “Primary sources are the raw materials of history — original documents and objects which were created at the time under study. They are different from secondary sources, accounts or interpretations of events created by someone without firsthand experience”
[<http://blogs.loc.gov/teachers/2011/10/what-makes-a-primary-source-a-primary-source/>]
2. Examples:
 - Textual [Ex. diaries, letters, logs and records, government and legal documents]
 - Visual [Ex. paintings, sculptures, buildings, maps, artifacts, films, photographs]
 - Other [Ex. music, interviews, speeches]

Term Two: Context

1. Definition: In its most simple meaning, context is background. Therefore, in the case of college papers, cultural and historical context refers to understanding the impact of different events of an era on a source and, at the same time, that source’s ability to represent the culture of that era. The main item to remember with context is to place the document in a larger framework (i.e. its purpose, what it represents, how it illustrates changing society or cultural understandings, etc.).
2. Things to keep in mind...
 - This should form the nuts and bolts of your paper
 - Sources should not be solely “described” but also “analyzed” and “discussed”
 - Make sure you include original, academic observations and discussions of sources

Term Three: Citation

1. Definition: Citation occurs when a student mentions a specific source they used to borrow ideas or words. This is divided into categories of in text citation – references included throughout the body of the paper – and external citation – references added to the end of the paper.
2. Things to keep in mind...
 - There are several styles of citation. MLA is typically standard but make sure you check with your professor to verify which style they prefer
 - An external citation in the works cited page needs to supply clear, full information of the sources. This includes publishing information for print sources and URLs for websites.
 - Failure to use in text and external citation is a form of plagiarism