



**BRANDYWINE  
RIVER MUSEUM  
OF ART**

## **Assessing Primary and Secondary Sources- Social Studies and Visual Arts**

### **Objectives:**

1. Learn the difference between a primary and secondary source of History
2. Use paintings to learn about people and events in History

**Grade Level:** 4-8 grade

### **Common Core Academic Standards:**

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.8.1 Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.2 Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.

### **Suggested Images:**

1. *The Nation Makers*, 1903, Howard Pyle- secondary source
2. *The Tory Escort*, 1857, William Tylee Ranney- secondary source
3. *Portrait of Miss Mary du Pont*, 1906, Jefferson David Chalfant – primary source
4. *Draft Age*, 1965, Jamie Wyeth – primary source

**Introduction:** Primary sources are documents, letters, recordings and paintings created during the time period being studied. They are first-hand original accounts of what was happening at that time. Secondary sources are written, painted, or recorded in a later time than the events they depict. Often, secondary sources cite primary sources to make the work more authentic.

The date of a painting can provide a clue as to whether a painting is a primary or secondary source. William Tylee Ranney and Howard Pyle painted their works long after their subject, the Revolutionary War, which was fought between April, 1775 and September, 1783. Neither artist was alive during that time.

Howard Pyle's *Nation Makers* is based on an actual battle, specifically the September 11, 1777 Battle of Brandywine, in which an outnumbered group of American soldiers fought, and lost, against the British. A tattered flag is visible in the painting. This is the first version of the Stars and Strips flag, which at the time of the battle, had just been declared the official flag of the young nation.

Ranney's *The Tory Escort* does not depict a specific moment in history but rather a fictitious moment rooted in facts known about that time. In the work, three British Loyalists lead a bound American Patriot away from a house, likely burning from a raid. Raids like this were known to happen in Pennsylvania and Delaware during the War.

Just as dates give clues for secondary works, they can also provide information about possible primary sources. The *Portrait of Miss Mary du Pont* by Jefferson David Chalfant features a woman in her home surrounded by some of her belongings. Research on the artist shows that he painted a series of portraits of Wilmington, Delaware society including Miss Mary du Pont. Miss Mary requested to be shown in her private sitting room with an important detail about the time period included in the form of an electric lamp. In the 1930s many homes in America were electrified however, before that time, not many homes could afford that luxury. Chalfant painted this portrait in 1906, showing the viewers that Miss Mary was someone who could afford such a new and expensive item before it became affordable.

*Draft Age*, painted by Jamie Wyeth in 1965, is a primary source about the time period of the Vietnam War. Both the title and the date are clues to what Wyeth may be referencing. The military draft was used during the War and was met with opposing opinions. Although the artist does not openly state how he personally felt about the draft, Wyeth gives the viewer some idea as to how some people felt through the dress and pose of his model.

**Discovery:** As a class, look at the four images listed above and decide whether they are primary or secondary sources. In the primary sources *Portrait of Miss Mary du Pont* and *Draft Age*, the artists painted portraits with important details about the subjects. Viewers today can make inferences about the models and their time period. In the secondary source images, Pyle's *The Nation Makers* and *The Tory Escort*, the artists evoke feelings of patriotism through their works.

**Assignment:** Imagine it is a hundred years from now and students from your school have discovered drawings left in a time capsule.

1. Students will decide what is important for someone from the future to know about their life today. They can think of things like:
  - a. Clothing
  - b. Electronics
  - c. Books
  - d. Transportation
  - e. Hobbies
2. Students will draw self-portraits, including the details that would help someone from a hundred years in the future know more about life today.