

## The Source-berg: An Exercise in Source Lineage

### What are we doing?

Student conceptions of “research” and “sources” lean strongly towards absorbing facts from tertiary sources and shying away from secondary sources where experts use technical discourse to analyze technical statements. Where secondary sources are shunned due to an undervaluing of the student’s own contribution, primary sources are completely disregarded as lacking authority until that thing—a song, a portrait, an essay—gets acknowledged by an authoritative institution. Students shouldn’t be faulted for turning to tertiary sources first. Encyclopedias, handbooks, and especially textbooks are the knowledge mediums that they’re used to. Before teaching them to use new types of research mediums such as articles and periodicals, they should be taught to use what they are familiar with in an unfamiliar way. Expecting unfamiliar mediums to be used in an unfamiliar way is to miss a crucial transition. This assignment is developed as part of a composition course that focuses on making connections and transitions between stages and projects. This multi-part, one week project bridges takes into account the disconnect that students are unfamiliar with classifying sources into different groups and seeks to reconnect the sources by showing how they reference each other. These connections, when made visual using software such as Prezi or even when compiled into a flowchart will create a “source-berg” (working off the old “you only see the tip of it” concept). Seeing how the primary source references a secondary source will give the primary source authority, making it a reliable and trustworthy source to engage in. In a sense, charting the connections emphasizes the community created out of sources interacting with other sources. Unless students see this community of connections, they won’t see how they can situate their own essays and statements. When students map this community, they create their own guide to use while exploring and researching the community. When the project is completed, the guide can be used as a record of that community, and that visual record lets students locate their own place in that community, not just as a student, but as a participant.

### How are we doing it?

There are three core parts to the assignment, and they occur in the following order.

- In the first part, students will learn the three types of sources (primary, secondary, tertiary) and how to recognize them.
- In the second part, students practice gathering together various types of sources from various type of media (“quantity-based research”). Once gathered, students practice classifying each source by its type(s).
- In the third part, students create an extensive source-berg for one source (alternatively, one source of each type).



### Why are we doing it?

This exercise acts as a bridge between two common projects: creating an un-researched composition and seeing how that composition has underlying research elements. Said another way, this assignment bridges un-researched and researched writing. Before students research, they not only need to understand the value of research but also the value of each type of source found during research. Without a fundamental understanding of each source-type's value, student research will be less of a critical evaluation of the source and more a reliance on the critical evaluation of others. In the broadest sense, then, this is an exercise in understanding one's authority by mapping the authorities of others.

### Why will students like it?

It's a truism to say that humans are visual learners, but it's a good place to start with the average class. The more our society comes to rely on someone else's prefabricated visuals, the more visual our thoughts become. The making of a source-berg will make tangible the otherwise conceptual connections that exist between sources. Citation creates an invisible arrow that points to other sources. This assignment goes one step further. That arrow becomes a line, a line that exists on a (web) page that students can not only see but manipulate. Interaction and visualization are key to attentive learning; the finding of one's own authority (or if the student is already confident, confirming that authority) is a valuable tool, one often presupposed but not always realized. Once students see that they can authorize themselves by a simple point-click action—an act they likely perform daily but rarely think about--they should become more confident.

### What prep work is needed for it?

This exercise assumes at least one assignment to have preceded it: a non-research-based writing assignment. This pre-assignment would have engaged them over a few engaged days and resulted in a critical expressive essay. Ideally the students will have made critical statements without backing those statements up with research.

Since the value of community is a large factor to this project, this assignment explanation assumes a community-based exploratory essay. In this way the community aspect is not new but a continuation. Such a continuation acts as a thematic transition, transitions also being a thematic topic that continues into, over, and beyond this bridge.

A note to instructors: there's one more pre-assignment I urge you to consider. Students will learn best if they are using familiar material, and since students will be making a map of source connections, they'll have to start with an impetus source. One option is to choose this source for them, giving them a predetermined source or an essay that uses several sources, letting them choose the source they wish to chart. I suggest having the student make a music mix. This composition—a rhetorical arrangement of songs that express a thematic point—is really just a



collection of primary sources. Pop music references pop culture, and so it's likely that student will be able to choose one song from their mix and chart the references in that source. Charting the sources that support a song, a painting, or another type of primary source raises the authority of that type of source, thereby adding that type into pool from which students pull when writing a research paper. Additionally, charting the sources behind something created by the student adds authority to what the student made and therefore adds authority to the student.

This approach may be difficult. Primary sources will often reference other primary sources. This may lead to dead ends. Yet even primary sources as based in some pre-thought, and an analytical approach to this assignment might enjoy the critical analysis needed to figure out the impetus of a song or its style.

For the duration of this exercise, I'll assume a music mix was assigned, but note that other types of creative composition could be used if you can see (and get the students to see) the sources used in the piece.

#### How long will it take? What resources will it take?

Since there are three parts to the exercise, a minimum of three hours is needed. I have my preferences of how this time will be divided (3 meetings of 75 minutes each), but instructors could use one 3 hour session or three 50 minute session (though in my experience short classes require the charting to take place outside of the classroom). Homework time will also be required, as the students will need to design and chart their source-berg.

Concerning computers and Prezi software, it should first be noted that Prezi and computers are not required. This project can easily be done on paper with multicolored pens (for distinguishing between groups and lines). The software is preferred, though, as it engages them in a different way. A bit of technical savvy might be called for to learn Prezi software, but since the last day of the exercise is in-class work on the Prezi, the instructor will be able to help. This implies two things: the instructor understands Prezi and can help with it (perhaps he or she has used it earlier in the semester so the class is familiar with it) and that computers are available in the classroom. Again, if this isn't the case, a paper-based outline is fine.

#### How should the class do it?

##### *Day 1: What is a source and why should I care?*

Begin by referencing the notion that successful compositions use transitions and that the class itself is a composition. Then: say something like "Our next project will transition you into a new community. This community is made up of people writing, talking, painting, sculpting, and anthologizing. This community is based on the same notion that underlies all communities: connection. Painters reference other paintings. News articles reference speeches and company statements. Textbooks reference studies by experts in the field. Even comic books reference real



scientific discovers. Those references require research, and those references can be mapped in a real, visible way. So before we research, we'll get some experience in making a map that collects the community of connections that surrounds whatever it is you're going to research. And believe it or not, somewhere on this map you're going to find yourself."

Give each student a copy of hand out 1 (see appendix). Have the students generate a list (in groups or as a class) of media. Once the list is sizable, have the students group all the media by their source type. They likely will choose movies and TV; that's fine. Once they've grouped their movies and TV shows by whether it would be a primary and secondary source (there probably won't be any tertiary sources) have them list all the sources that each media cites, saying something like "If a song by Kanye uses a beat from RATATAT, write it down; that's a primary source referencing a primary source." After they list the sources of a few media, have them look at the types of media most frequently cited by each media. Discuss genre conventions: each genre and its medias is likely to privilege different types of sources: "Artists may not often cite an encyclopedia, but they might cite other artists." Conclude with answering their questions about the day's discussion.

Student Homework: Make a free account at [Prezi.com](https://prezi.com). Watch the Prezi [intro video](#) and read the [publishing tips](#).

### *Day 2: Listing the sources of the (re)mix*

Give them a version of hand out 2 (see appendix) that has the column headings removed; have the students circle which sources they are familiar with and/or use the most, and have them underline the sources they aren't familiar with, and have them state the three sources that have (in their opinion) the most authority. Give them the section titles. Let them see what source types they use, don't know, and think are authoritative. Discuss. How have their individual contexts caused them to be familiar or unfamiliar with a certain media? Have them freewrite 5 minutes describing a rhetorical situation that they've been in and the sources used in those situations; how does the situation call for a specific type of source? Discuss.

They've used the sources that are most relevant to their most common rhetorical situation (if they haven't been introduced to "rhetorical situation" yet, this might be a good spot). Each situation calls for a different type of source since each situation values a different type of work. Some sources have social backing and are thus seen as more authoritative. Did they write down a parent as an authority? Their own critical thoughts? Emphasize that by using any source, they are doing research and analysis.

Have them revisit their music mix (these mixes are assumed to be saved on a classroom desktop computer; if this is not the setting, they should bring in a laptop or MP3 player with the mix on it). They previously chose to collect these primary sources and arrange them as they did to make a thematic statement. Draw a parallel between this arrangement of sources and the arrangement of sources in an article, movie, or blog. What events, people, places, or other media do their songs



specifically reference? Have them create a list. These songs might reference any of the following: recent news events, other songs, other performers, specific wars, specific restaurants, the beat in the song being sourced from another song, etc. Really play up the last one I mentioned: the “what song does this song sound like, reference, or directly remix.” This use of remix will be the ideal place for the Prezi work on the final day of this 3-day exercise.<sup>1</sup>

So how many primary, secondary, and tertiary sources were directly referenced in their songs? They should make a thorough but accurate list and hold onto that list for the third day.

*Note:* Their songs might reference a war, and an article published on the war could be a source, but unless the publication itself was referenced, it doesn’t count for this assignment.

### *Day 3: Prezi-ing the Source-berg*

On this day—the final day in this exercise—the students will use their mix/remix source list to design a source-berg using Prezi. Have each student log into a computer and log into his or her Prezi.com account. The first item entered will be the music mix. Have them place the word “mix” on the screen (centering it is not necessary). Tell them to zoom in and place the name of the artists/songs around the word “mix.” This is how each entry will proceed: sources will be placed around the item that sourced it, much like a bubble chart or cloud chart. The difference here is that size scale is important. The students are conceptually taking an overhead perspective on an iceberg, finding a point, and then following how far “down” or how “deep” the source-berg goes. Starting with the first entry (the mix), the next entries (the songs on the mix) will be on the same zoomed in scale, making each source approximately half the size of the item in which it was found. So the mix is surrounded by, in addition to other songs, Kanye West’s “Stronger”; Kanye’s “Stronger” is surrounded by, among other things, Daft Punk’s “Harder, Better, Faster, Stronger”; that song is in turn surrounded items like “Cola Bottle Baby” by Edwin Birdsong, which the song references. Each new entry zooms in the reader further, centering the screen on one item at a time. Eventually the student will reach a dead end; at that point, they should move to another source. The most viable sources for depth will come from instances when the lyrics reference items that are more secondary in nature; secondary sources are more likely to include explicit lists of their sources. When the students have exhausted their connections, have them zoom back out so they can see how deep they went.

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<sup>1</sup> Note that most of these references they list will be to primary sources, probably media; some will be general concepts. A quick convention to give them that will help them distinguish between primary sources and an event is this: was it published or presented? Sources are the result of human intervention: the more intervention, the more the event is filtered and edited, the longer it takes to publish, the more likely it is a tertiary source. Note that tertiary sourced material is probably so established that it comes off as fact; secondary comes off as argument/analysis; primary comes off as opinion/statement. These points come easiest by looking at Handout 3 (see appendix), specifically “the timing of publication” and “format” section.



*Note:* for each entry, the student should either include the MLA citation (if that's been discussed; also, this will slow down the process considerably) or the author/name of the work/date it was published.

At this point class will be half-over (or more) and the students will hate the instructor and the source-berg equally. This is to be expected. Now give them the chance to decorate their Prezi, adding images and quotes from the sources they choose. This decoration is both a relaxing portion of the assignment and a chance to choose which sources get decorated (therefore attention, showing which one's matter). Most important, though, is that this part of the assignment invites students to revisit the berg from a different perspective. This will likely take up the rest of class. To conclude this exploration of sources (likely over the weekend), give students the homework below. The project grade will be taken from the homework. Criteria and weight are up to the instructor and his or her intentions with the exercise, but it's suggested that the design, the depth, and the scope of the tree be taken into consideration.

*Homework:* Students should find more sources for the items that interest them. Unlike finding sources that the item specifically cites, students should find sources that cite the item. So if "Mix" cites Kanye's "Stronger," find another item that cites/uses "Stronger." This could be an MTV Music Award video hosted at YouTube, the album that the song comes on, an LP where the song was first released publicly, a movie that uses the song, a football article in the school newspaper that uses the lyrics, etc. The levels of equality created by the different depths in Prezi should be maintained, so since "Student Name, Mix title, year" and "Kanye West, Graduation, 2007" are both sources for "Stronger" by Kanye, then they should be the same size/same scale. Students should mark each source as primary/secondary/tertiary and conclude the assignment by counting each source they found throughout the entire source-berg. Award the student with the "biggest berg" (most sources). How? Buy them a giant Slushy from the local gas station.



### Summary of day 3 (just to be clear)

Students will make a “source berg” by tracing one source to other sources and each one of those sources to its other sources, etc. Each source, especially secondary, will no doubt cite other sources, so each entry will have its own berg grow around it. This berg will be digitized and visualize through Prezi. A written cloud could also work, though it would remove the depth aspect and instead strain the visual limits of what can be seen at once (also a useful metaphor). The berg should be deepened to minimum of 4 sources but can also be limited in scope; students could be limited to 3 sources for each item, indirectly causing them to gauge the value of each source. Each source will be labeled primary/secondary/tertiary as appropriate, and the number of sources will be the measure of scope. If the first source has 3 sources, then each of those sources have 3 sources, then each of those 3 have sources, and each of those 3 have sources (stopping there), each student will end up clouding 81 sources. This should be sufficient to impress them. They’ll also note that primary sources may refer to other primary sources or secondary sources, showing that primary source material is synonymous with neither starting point nor authority (relevant for students trying to place their mix into the source community). Also, since they are a part of the berg (there are sources above them and below them), they should feel included in the community, therefore authorized to make statements about it and engage in it.

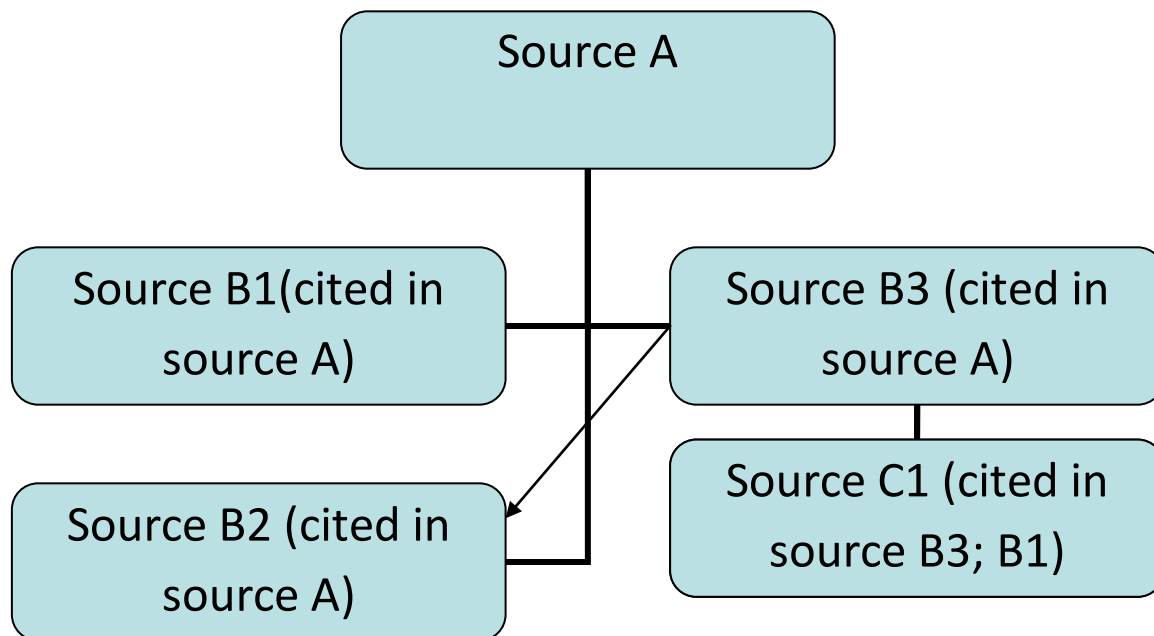
### What are my alternatives?

An textual example of an alternative version of this project follows:

The class was told to continue the previous chart, adding to its examples music-based sources (an example being as follows: primary—A Beatles Song; secondary—Study on reception of Beatles music in the 00’s; tertiary—Beatle’s Lyric Reference Guide). Lucky for the class, that reference guide is online, so they can each access it on their own schedule. Each student is told to trace the sources back. Perhaps they are told to think like the editors and use other sources to justify their entries into the reference guide, but as responsible editors, they know to check the sources of their own sources. They all agree that they will use Word 2007 and make a SmartArt cloud representing the tree. They are given a week to do this and told to use proper MLA citation. Over the week while they conduct this research into research, they are given two lectures, one on the use of citation (with accompanying handouts) and one on the use of determining the primacy of sources by looking at the amount of reliance that the writer puts on each source (quantity and quality).



An example of a visual alternative follows:



#### How should I follow it up?

Instructors may choose to assign a source-berg to each major assignment, making this assignment a reoccurring approach to mapping the community behind any assignment. Such an approach will reinforce the value of a community and its context. Even if not used as a reoccurring assignment, consider setting aside a day to show off some of the source-bergs, especially if you choose to use Prezi or another presentation-type software. Students may not appreciate showing off their own work, but since the assignment is in part geared towards giving authority to the student, they should be given the change to confirm that authority in front of their peers. If nothing else, seeing each student's conception of "source-berg" will give the other students context to judge their own source-bergs (this can be seen as assertive or damaging; the instructor should decide based on the candor of the class).



## Hand Out 1: IDENTIFYING PRIMARY, SECONDARY, AND TERTIARY SOURCES

*Primary sources* include:

- Accounts by an eyewitness or the first recorder of an event, in written or other form, including microform and electronic reproduction. Examples are diaries, autobiographies, letters, minutes of meetings, news footage, newspaper articles.
- Data obtained through original research, statistical compilations or legal requirements. Examples are reports of scientific experiments, U. S. census records, public records.
- Creative works such as poetry, music, or art
- Artifacts such as arrowheads, pottery, furniture, and buildings.

*Secondary sources* are works that interpret the primary data, such as a book about eating disorders, a journal article about the role of tobacco in the colonial economy, or a critical review of a play.

*Tertiary sources* are works that compile, analyze, and digest secondary sources. General and specialized encyclopedias are familiar examples of tertiary sources.



## Hand Out 2: Library of Congress Subdivisions Indicating Primary, Secondary, and Tertiary ([source](#))

Primary	Secondary	Tertiary
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•biography (only if it's on an autobiographical record)</li><li>•cases</li><li>•correspondence</li><li>•description and travel</li><li>•diaries</li><li>•fiction</li><li>•interview</li><li>•personal narrative</li><li>•pictorial works</li><li>•poetry</li><li>•short stories</li><li>•art</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•biography (only if it's describing a biography--not an autobiography)</li><li>•criticism and interpretation</li><li>•history</li><li>•historical criticism</li><li>•government policy</li><li>•law and legislation</li><li>•moral and ethical aspects</li><li>•political aspects</li><li>•politics and government</li><li>•psychological aspects</li><li>•public opinion religion</li><li>•religious aspects</li><li>•social policy</li><li>•study and teaching</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•abstracts</li><li>•bibliography</li><li>•bio-bibliography</li><li>•chronology</li><li>•classification</li><li>•dictionaries</li><li>•encyclopedias</li><li>•directories</li><li>•guidebooks</li><li>•handbooks, manuals, etc.</li><li>•identification</li><li>•indexes</li><li>•registers</li><li>•statistics</li><li>•tables</li><li>•index</li></ul>



## Hand Out 3: The Cycle of Information

	PRIMARY	SECONDARY	TERTIARY
<b>DEFINITIONS</b>	Sources that contain raw, original, un-interpreted and unevaluated information.	Sources that digest, analyze, evaluate and interpret the information contained within primary sources. They tend to be argumentative.	Sources that compile, analyze, and digest secondary sources. They tend to be factual.
<b>TIMING OF PUBLICATION CYCLE</b>	Primary sources tend to come first in the publication cycle.	Secondary sources tend to come second in the publication cycle.	Tertiary sources tend to come last in the publication cycle.
<b>FORMATS</b> --depends on the kind of analysis being conducted.	Often newspapers, weekly and monthly-produced magazines; letters, diaries.	Often scholarly periodicals and books. (Professors like these.)	Often reference books.
<b>EXAMPLE: Historian</b> (studying the Vietnam War)	Newspaper articles, weekly news magazines, monthly magazines, diaries, correspondence, diplomatic records.	Articles in scholarly journals analyzing the war, possibly footnoting primary documents; books analyzing the war.	Historical Dictionary of Vietnam;
<b>Example: Literary Critic</b> (studying the literature of the Vietnam War)	Novels, poems, plays, diaries, correspondence.	Articles in scholarly journals analyzing the literature; books analyzing the literature; formal biographies of writers of the war.	Writing About Vietnam; A Bibliography of the Literature of the Vietnam Conflict; Dictionary of Literary Biography
<b>Example: Psychologist</b> (studying the effects of the Vietnam syndrome)	Article in a magazine that reports research and its methodology; notes taken by a clinical psychologist.	Articles in scholarly publications synthesizing results of original research; books analyzing results of original research.	Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders; The Encyclopedic Dictionary of Psychology
<b>Example: Scientist</b> (studying Agent Orange exposure)	Article in a magazine reporting research and methodology.	Articles in scholarly publications synthesizing results of original research; books doing same.	Agent Orange and Vietnam: An Annotated Bibliography