**Determining the Reliability of a Source**

In examining both primary and secondary materials , you will need to determine the reliability of the sources. A reliable source is one that provides accurate information related to the question being asked.

1. Examine the author’s background. This is known as attribution.
2. Who produced the source?
3. What credentials does the author have that qualifies him or her to write about the topic? What is the author’s position?
4. Determine if the author has a particular bias that could cause inaccuracy or subjectivity.
5. Identify the author’s purpose in writing and the author’s targeted audience.
6. Verify the methods the author used in writing the source. For example, did the author include footnotes or a bibliography? Are the author’s claims supported by facts or other source documents? This is referred to as corroboration.
7. When was the account written? At the time of the event or after?
8. Is the document reliable for the question or purpose at hand? (context) Why was the source developed?