Primary *vs.* Secondary Sources

When working on assignments for a writing or literature course, you'll need to be aware of the distinction between primary and secondary sources:

- Primary sources include most material from any textbook for the course. In other words, the assigned readings for the course count as primary sources. These sources might be essays like Judy Brady's "I Want a Wife," or they might be poems like Robert Frost's "Mending Wall," or they could include longer texts like George Bernard Shaw's play called *Mrs. Warren's Profession*.

- Secondary sources include material from outside the textbook that discuss or analyze primary sources. Examples of this type of source would include journal articles, books, magazine articles, web pages, biographies, and so forth. Your best resource for secondary sources almost always will be the university library's databases.

In the following two examples, the first is a primary source since it's the actual novel that Joseph Conrad wrote called *Heart of Darkness*. The second item is a journal article *about* the same novel, so it counts as a secondary source.

Conrad, Joseph. *Heart of Darkness*. Norton, 2016.

Nawaz, Azhar. "Civilization Versus Savagery: Exploring the Darkness of Heart in Heart of Darkness." *Contemporary Literary Review India*, vol. 7, no. 4, Nov. 2020, pp. 74–80. *EBSCOhost*, search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=hsi&AN=148031064 &site=ehost-live.