

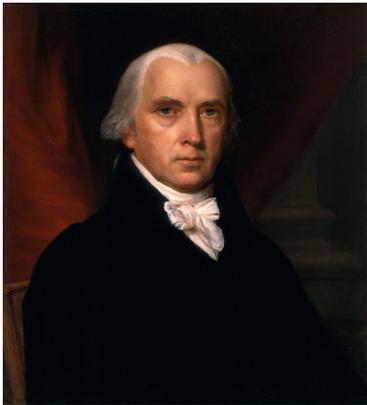


Civics is all around us. There is a lot to know about the government and how “We the People” interact with the government and each other. Let’s help each other expand our civic literacy.

The Value of Primary Sources in Extraordinary Times

Years from now, people will study how the COVID-19/Novel Coronavirus pandemic of 2020 affected life around the world, and primary sources will be utilized to help with that understanding. Primary sources are any item that contains a first hand account of what took place or what life was like for the people who lived at the time. [Primary sources](#) can be created by anyone, and one never knows how helpful or impactful their writings, recordings, or images may be to future generations wanting to understand the past.

How do we know so much about our past? For example, how do we know what happened during the debate on the proposed Constitution?



James Madison

We know what happened because James Madison took [excellent notes](#) during the debates. He wrote things down so he could remember who said what, which plans had been proposed, and how compromises were reached. His notes have been invaluable primary sources for helping historians and political scientists understand all that went into crafting the U.S. Constitution.

The letters and diary entries written today, the information and pictures shared on social media, and videos uploaded to Youtube, will be used to help the future understand this moment in time. Like Madison’s notes during the Constitutional Convention, these will tell the story of what happened during the 2020 COVID-19/Novel Coronavirus pandemic.

- ✓ **To Do and To Think**: If you were to create personal primary source artifacts (letter, diary entry, photo, video) showing or explaining what life is like in the United States right now due to COVID-19/Novel Coronavirus what would you create and why?
- ✓ **Optional Next Steps**: Create personal primary source artifacts and [submit them to a museum](#).

Learn MORE about the concept of the primary sources. Free registration may be required.

- [Finding Primary Sources for Teachers and Students](#), from the National Archives
- [Using Primary Sources](#), from the Library of Congress
- [Document Analysis Worksheets](#), from the National Archives

