

Reading Comprehension Worksheet: Firsthand vs. Secondhand

Read the short story and answer each question.



A Walk Through the Past

Firsthand Account - Journal Entry by Sora (Age 12)

March 12

Today we visited the ancient city of Petra. It was unreal! We walked through narrow canyons with walls taller than buildings. When I saw the Treasury—a giant building carved into the red rock—it took my breath away. I touched the stone walls and imagined what it was like thousands of years ago. The guide told stories of merchants and travelers who once passed through these same paths. My feet were sore by the end, but I didn't care. I didn't want to leave.

Secondhand Account - History Textbook Excerpt

Petra is an ancient city located in modern-day Jordan. Built over 2,000 years ago by the Nabataean people, it became a major trading hub. One of its most famous structures is the Treasury, a massive temple carved into sandstone cliffs. Petra was abandoned for centuries and rediscovered in the early 1800s. Today, it is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and attracts visitors from around the world due to its rich history and impressive architecture.



Name: _____

A Walk Through the Past

1. How are the two accounts different?

- A. The journal describes personal feelings; the textbook provides historical facts
- B. Both describe how to build a temple
- C. The textbook has more emotional details than the journal
- D. The journal focuses on the history of trading at Petra

2. Which sentence is from a firsthand account?

- A. Petra became a major trading hub
- B. The Treasury was carved into sandstone
- C. I touched the stone walls and imagined the past
- D. Petra was abandoned for centuries

3. Fill in the blank:

The **firsthand account** tells how it **felt** to visit Petra, while the **secondhand account** explains Petra's _____ and importance.

4. What details in the journal show how Sora felt during the visit? How does that compare to the tone of the textbook?

5. Why is it useful to read both types of accounts when learning about a historical place like Petra?



Instructional Guide

Guide Reading Level: R

Lexile Level: 790L-940L

Grade Level: 4th Grade, Middle of the Year

Genre: Informational Nonfiction – Historical Tourism

Introducing the Text

“Today we’ll explore the ancient city of Petra from two different viewpoints—one from a student who visited, and one from a textbook. We’ll look closely at how the tone and focus change depending on who is telling the story and why.”

Vocabulary: firsthand, secondhand, UNESCO, architecture, Nabataean

Before Reading Discussion Questions

1. What do you know about ancient places like temples or ruins?
 2. Have you ever written about a trip you went on?
 3. How is reading a story different from reading a textbook?
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During Reading Discussion Questions

1. How does Sora describe the Treasury?
 2. What kind of information does the textbook give that Sora doesn’t?
 3. What words or phrases show that the journal is written by someone who experienced the visit?
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After Reading Discussion Questions

1. How does Sora describe the Treasury?
 2. What kind of information does the textbook give that Sora doesn’t?
 3. What words or phrases show that the journal is written by someone who experienced the visit?
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Activity Idea

Have students create a side-by-side comparison chart of the firsthand and secondhand accounts. Then, invite them to write a “third account” from the point of view of a person who lived in Petra long ago—using both emotional detail and factual information.

