

# Reading Comprehension Worksheet: Firsthand vs. Secondhand

Read the short story and answer each question.



## One Day, Two Voices

### **Firsthand Account - Letter from a Protester (1965)**

March 8, 1965

Dear Sister,

Today I walked across the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma. I marched with hundreds of others, hoping for the right to vote. As we crossed the bridge, we were met by police. They wore helmets and held clubs. I heard shouting. Then chaos. I saw people knocked down, coughing from the tear gas. I was scared—but I held the hand of the woman beside me and kept walking. We were hurt, but we did not stop. I believe what we did today will make history.

With hope,

Isaiah

### **Secondhand Account - Textbook Excerpt**

The Selma to Montgomery marches were part of the civil rights movement in 1965. African American citizens marched to demand voting rights. On March 7, during the first march, police attacked peaceful protesters on the Edmund Pettus Bridge. This event became known as "Bloody Sunday." National television showed images of the violence, leading to public outrage. The marches helped pressure Congress to pass the Voting Rights Act later that year.



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## One Day, Two Voices

1. What is one way the firsthand account is different from the secondhand account?

- A. It shares personal feelings and what it was like to be there
- B. It talks about every law passed in 1965
- C. It focuses more on police procedures
- D. It includes interviews with reporters

2. Which sentence would most likely come from a secondhand account?

- A. I held the hand of the woman beside me
- B. I heard shouting as we crossed the bridge
- C. The event became known as "Bloody Sunday"
- D. We were met by police in helmets and clubs

3. Fill in the blank:

The **letter** shares what Isaiah **saw and felt** during the march, while the **textbook** explains the event's \_\_\_\_\_ and national impact.

4. How does the firsthand account help you understand what the protest felt like? How is that different from the secondhand account?

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5. Why might reading both types of accounts give a fuller picture of what happened during the civil rights marches?

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# Instructional Guide

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**Guide Reading Level:** S

**Lexile Level:** 850L-1000L

**Grade Level:** 4th Grade, End of the Year

**Genre:** Informational Nonfiction – Social Movements

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## Introducing the Text

“Today we’ll read about the same historic event—the Selma marches—from two different viewpoints. One is a letter from a person who was there. The other is from a textbook. We’ll explore how the two accounts focus on different things and how that affects the way we understand the event.”

**Vocabulary:** firsthand, secondhand, protest, civil rights, Voting Rights Act

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## Before Reading Discussion Questions

1. What do you know about the civil rights movement?
  2. What’s the difference between reading someone’s memory and reading a report?
  3. Why do people join protests?
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## During Reading Discussion Questions

1. How does Isaiah describe the bridge and what happened there?
  2. What facts does the textbook include that Isaiah’s letter doesn’t mention?
  3. Which account gives more personal emotion, and how can you tell?
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## After Reading Discussion Questions

1. How do the two texts help you understand the same event in different ways?
  2. Why is it important to compare firsthand and secondhand accounts in history?
  3. If you were writing about this event, what details would you include from each source?
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## Activity Idea

Have students write two short paragraphs: one that tells about a major event in their own life (firsthand), and one that retells something they’ve learned in class (secondhand). Then they compare how the tone, focus, and details are different.

