Primary and Secondary Sources
Writing in the Humanities includes:

1) finding **primary text** material that will serve as evidence for the researcher's argument and

2) reading **secondary sources** to see what other researchers have said about the topic.
Three Kinds of Texts Used in the Humanities

- Creative (Primary Text)
- Critical
- Theoretical
Creative (Primary Text)

- Includes film, artwork, buildings (architecture), music, documents, stories, novels, religious texts, rituals, etc.
- Called “Primary” because they are unfiltered
Examples

Research Question: In what ways did Director Akira Kurosawa use different film making techniques to make the film *Seven Samurai* popular across the world?

   (Primary Text) *Seven Samurai* (film)

Research Question: What influenced Coco Chanel’s idea of fashion?

   (Primary Text) Chanel’s “modernism” collection.

Research Question: How did drugs influence the Beatles’ music?

   (Primary Text) *Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band* (album)
Why has math been influential, now and in the past, to M.C. Escher’s art? “Relativity”
Critical (Secondary Sources)

These sources:
- Interpret and analyze the Primary Text.
- Look for meaning in the Primary Text.
- The writers of secondary sources have done close readings, multiple viewings, and have spent a lot of time getting to know the text.
These sources:

• Find connections between the primary text and the social/historical context.

For Example: If one were to write a paper on Hip Hop music, it may explore how hip hop music reflects hip hop culture. It would analyze the origins and characteristics of the culture from which the music emerged.
More on Secondary Sources

• The secondary sources play a large role in supporting your thesis.

• Published humanities-based criticism of your topic.

In other words, what do scholars in the field or experts have to say about your topic?
Skills Learned

1. Read the primary text carefully and critically.
2. Familiarity with library and Internet resources relating to Humanities.
3. Ability to synthesize and evaluate information and opinions from a variety of secondary sources.
4. Develop a thesis consistent with evidence found in your sources.
5. Organize and write a paper that effectively supports the thesis.
6. Employ the formal conventions of research papers in the Humanities.
What next?

Topics

• Search for a topic that interests you.
• Remember that this is something that you must interpret and explore the meaning of.
• It is much more enjoyable to write about what you like!