Follow the Evidence

Evaluate a news warning by checking its sources and the reach of its evidence.

SS24.CWI.2a "Explain how to determine the reliability of news stories and their sources."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two details that make a claim checkable, circle two details that make a source less trustworthy, and number two checks in the final paragraph that you would use before trusting the warning.

A Warning About Riverton Water

1. On Monday morning, a post in a neighborhood group warned that Riverton's tap water contained dangerous lead levels. Its headline said, “Do not drink the water today!” The post linked to an unsigned blog entry dated three years earlier. That entry quoted an unnamed “insider” but gave no test results, location, or date for any sample. Its author sold home water filters through a link below the warning. Several neighbors shared the post, and one comment said a metallic taste proved the claim. Shares and personal experiences can raise questions, but neither identifies the source of a measured lead level.

2. That afternoon, the Riverton Gazette published a report by named journalist Maya Chen. The report linked to a dated testing summary from the city water department. The summary listed sample sites, collection dates, and lead readings; one site had a higher reading than the others. A city spokesperson said technicians would retest that site. Chen also quoted a university chemist, who explained that a single sample cannot establish conditions across a whole city. The Gazette noted that its reporter had not collected samples independently. City officials might want to protect their reputation, so their records still deserve scrutiny.

3. To judge a news story, trace each claim to its earliest available evidence. A screenshot of a report is weaker than the complete, dated report because missing pages may change its meaning. Check whether another source gathered its own evidence or merely repeated the same statement. Look for named authors, relevant expertise, specific methods, corrections, and possible financial or political interests. A source can be careful about one detail and mistaken about another, so judge each claim separately. When evidence is incomplete, limit your conclusion to what it supports and name what you would need to know next.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Which two details make the neighborhood post's lead warning hard to verify? Explain why one of them matters.

2. What in the Gazette report helps a reader check its claims, and what limit does the report admit?

3. Does the higher reading at one site support the post's warning about all Riverton tap water? Use evidence from the passage.

4. Suppose another outlet repeats only the city's testing summary. Would that independently confirm the readings? What additional evidence would help?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine a post claims your school will switch to a four-day week next month. In four or five sentences, explain how you would check the post's source, seek independent confirmation, and decide what to believe if the evidence conflicts.

ANSWER KEY

Follow the Evidence

HIGH SCHOOL · SS24.CWI.2a

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two details that make a claim checkable, circle two details that make a source less trustworthy, and number two checks in the final paragraph that you would use before trusting the warning. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Which two details make the neighborhood post's lead warning hard to verify? Explain why one of them matters.	**The blog entry is unsigned and gives no sample results, location, or date. Without those details, readers cannot trace the claimed lead level to a test.**
2	What in the Gazette report helps a reader check its claims, and what limit does the report admit?	**It links to a dated summary with sample sites, dates, and readings. The Gazette admits that its reporter did not collect samples independently.**
3	Does the higher reading at one site support the post's warning about all Riverton tap water? Use evidence from the passage.	**No. One site had a higher reading than the others, and the chemist said a single sample cannot establish conditions across a whole city.**
4	Suppose another outlet repeats only the city's testing summary. Would that independently confirm the readings? What additional evidence would help?	**No. Repeating the same summary is not an independent check. Results from separately collected samples or access to the original testing methods would help.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I would check whether the post names an author and links to a dated school board announcement. I would read the board's meeting records to see whether it approved a schedule change. I would also ask a school administrator for confirmation rather than count reposts of the same claim as separate evidence. If the records and administrator disagree, I would wait for a clear, dated decision before treating the change as certain.

Accept other passage-based credibility concerns, such as the filter sales link or unnamed insider. For Part 3, look for a source check, a genuinely separate way to confirm the claim, and a conclusion that reflects any uncertainty.