Tracing the Evidence

Use different sources to test a historical claim.

SS24.HS.5 "Differentiate between primary and secondary sources on the subject and evaluate the quality of evidence each type yields."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the records created during the events, circle the later account, and number two limits on what the records can prove. Use your marks to compare the evidence each source provides.

What Can the Records Tell Us?

1. On September 28, 1918, Philadelphia held a Liberty Loan parade while influenza was spreading in the city. Suppose you are researching whether the parade added to the strain on local hospitals. In a city archive, you find a parade permit issued before the event. It lists the planned route and the names of organizers. You also find a nurse's shift log dated October 2. It records that every bed in her ward was occupied and notes the number of patients admitted that day. Both items were created during the events you are studying, but they answer different questions.

2. A permit shows what officials approved, not how many people actually marched or became ill. The log gives a close view of one ward, but it cannot show conditions in every hospital. The nurse may have recorded admissions carefully, yet her log does not identify where each patient caught influenza. A researcher should ask who created each record, why it was made, and what information its creator could access. A source can be reliable for one claim and weak for another. Neither record alone can prove that attending the parade caused a particular infection.

3. Now imagine a 2018 history article that compares hospital records from several Philadelphia institutions and cites the permit and shift log. Its author was not present in 1918 but can bring scattered records together and explain patterns. The article reports that admissions rose after the parade. That timing is worth investigating, but other exposures could also explain illnesses, and not all hospital records may have survived. Check whether the article shows its data, cites records accurately, and considers other explanations. To judge its claim about the parade, compare its interpretation with the surviving records rather than treating either kind of source as automatically stronger.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Which is a primary source for this research, the parade permit or the 2018 article? Which is a secondary source? Explain the difference.

2. What claim does the nurse's log support well? What claim about the parade can it not establish?

3. How might the 2018 article give a broader view of hospital admissions than the nurse's log? Name one limit of that broader view.

4. The article reports that admissions rose after the parade. Name two checks from the passage that would help you judge its claim, and explain what each would reveal.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

A student is researching whether a factory closure in the 1970s changed employment in a town. In one paragraph of 80 to 110 words, propose one primary and one secondary source, explain what each could show and one limit of each, and describe how you would compare them to check a claim.

ANSWER KEY

Tracing the Evidence

HIGH SCHOOL · SS24.HS.5

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the records created during the events, circle the later account, and number two limits on what the records can prove. Use your marks to compare the evidence each source provides. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Which is a primary source for this research, the parade permit or the 2018 article? Which is a secondary source? Explain the difference.	**The permit is primary because it was created during the events being studied. The article is secondary because it was written later to interpret earlier records.**
2	What claim does the nurse's log support well? What claim about the parade can it not establish?	**It supports that her ward was full and records admissions on October 2. It cannot establish that patients caught influenza at the parade.**
3	How might the 2018 article give a broader view of hospital admissions than the nurse's log? Name one limit of that broader view.	**It compares records from several hospitals rather than one ward. Some records may not have survived, or the author may not have considered other explanations for the rise.**
4	The article reports that admissions rose after the parade. Name two checks from the passage that would help you judge its claim, and explain what each would reveal.	**Check the article's data to see whether they show a rise in admissions, and check its citations against surviving records to see whether it represents those records accurately. Accept checking other possible exposures as one of the two checks.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I would look for the factory's payroll ledger from the year before it closed. It could show how many people worked there, but it would not show everyone who lost a job across town. I would also seek a later local history that compares census employment figures over several years. It could show wider changes, but its conclusions depend on which records the author used. If the history claims the closure raised townwide unemployment, I would compare its account of factory job losses with the ledger, then check whether its townwide figures come from cited census records. Other employers might have cut jobs too.

Accept other plausible sources if students correctly distinguish records created during the events from later interpretations and evaluate what each can establish. Part 3 responses should explain a specific comparison, not simply say that one source is more reliable.