

Research Detective

Check sources, use exact language carefully, and cite ideas.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.8 "Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, using search terms effectively; assess the credibility and accuracy of each source..."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline details that show how Maya checks a source, circle the exact quotation, and number the steps she takes to give credit to a source. These marks show how researchers find trustworthy information and avoid plagiarism.

Maya Checks Her Facts

- ① Maya is researching how spotted lanternflies affect grapevines. Her first search, "lanternfly facts," brings up advertisements and short social media posts. She revises it to "spotted lanternfly grapevine damage site:.gov" and finds a page from the United States Department of Agriculture. The page identifies its agency, gives a publication date, and links to research. Maya checks the claim against a Penn State Extension fact sheet. Both sources report that heavy lanternfly feeding can weaken grapevines and reduce their winter survival.
- ② On the USDA page, Maya reads, "Spotted lanternfly is known to feed on more than 70 species of plants." She copies those exact words into her notes, places quotation marks around them, and records the page title, agency, date, and web address. For a different note, she writes that the insect feeds on many kinds of plants. This is a paraphrase because Maya uses her own wording, not the source's exact sentence. In her draft, she ends the paraphrase with (United States Department of Agriculture). Her source details will make a matching Works Cited entry.
- ③ A blog says lanternflies arrived in the United States in 2013, but it gives no author or links. Maya does not use it until she checks a reliable source. A Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture page states that the species was first detected in Pennsylvania in 2014. Because the agency page identifies the organization and provides information it is responsible for reporting, Maya uses that date. Before writing, she compares dates and details across sources. A source can look polished yet still need checking for evidence, author, date, and purpose.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE Use the passage

- 1 How does Maya improve her first search, and what kind of source does her revised search find?

- 2 Name two details Maya uses to judge whether the USDA page is credible.

- 3 Why does Maya put quotation marks around the sentence about more than 70 plant species, but not around her note that the insect feeds on many kinds of plants?

- 4 Why does Maya choose the 2014 date from the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture instead of using the blog's 2013 date?

3 YOUR TURN Your own words

Choose a research question about a science, history, or school topic. Write exactly four sentences that list two effective search terms, explain why each of two sources is credible, include one exact quotation with a parenthetical citation, and include one paraphrase with a parenthetical citation. After the four sentences, add two MLA-style Works Cited entries.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline details that show how Maya checks a source, circle the exact quotation, and number the steps she takes to give credit to a source. These marks show how researchers find trustworthy information and avoid plagiarism. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How does Maya improve her first search, and what kind of source does her revised search find?	She adds specific words about grapevine damage and uses site:.gov. Her revised search finds a United States Department of Agriculture page.
2	Name two details Maya uses to judge whether the USDA page is credible.	The page identifies its agency, gives a publication date, and links to research. Any two are correct.
3	Why does Maya put quotation marks around the sentence about more than 70 plant species, but not around her note that the insect feeds on many kinds of plants?	The first sentence uses the source's exact words, so it is a direct quotation. The second note uses Maya's own wording, so it is a paraphrase.
4	Why does Maya choose the 2014 date from the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture instead of using the blog's 2013 date?	The blog has no author or links, while the agency page identifies its organization and provides information it is responsible for reporting.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I searched "NASA solar eclipse Moon passes between Sun Earth" and "NOAA solar eclipse explanation." NASA is credible because it is a government science agency that publishes astronomy information. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration is credible because it is also a government science agency and identifies the organization that publishes its information. NASA explains, "A solar eclipse happens when the Moon passes between the Sun and Earth" (NASA); the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration explains that the Moon can block all or part of the Sun's light during an eclipse (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration). Works Cited NASA. "What Is a Solar Eclipse?" NASA Science, science.nasa.gov/eclipses/future-eclipses/eclipse-2024/what-is-a-solar-eclipse/. Accessed 4 Aug. 2026. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. "Eclipses." National Ocean Service, oceanservice.noaa.gov/education/tutorial_eclipses/. Accessed 4 Aug. 2026.

Accept equivalent explanations that use passage evidence about specificity, source authority, evidence, dates, links, and exact wording. For the open task, accept varied topics and citation details if the student uses two sources, clearly distinguishes an exact quotation from a genuine paraphrase, and gives credit in a consistent MLA-style format.