Evidence Trail

Trace how researchers build careful answers from trustworthy sources.

ELA.8.C.4.1 "Conduct research to answer a question, drawing on multiple reliable and valid sources and generating additional questions for further research."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Circle the three sources Maya uses as evidence, and underline the evidence each source provides to answer her question.

Following the Monarch Evidence

1. Researcher Maya asks, "How do city gardens help monarch butterflies?" She begins with sources that have expertise and evidence. A U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service page explains that monarch caterpillars eat only milkweed plants. A university extension article describes how native flowering plants provide nectar for adult butterflies. Maya records each source's author, date, and main claim. She does not treat a colorful garden-store advertisement as proof because it tries to sell plants and gives no research details.

2. Next, Maya finds a report from the city parks department. Staff counted adult monarchs in twelve gardens during late summer. Gardens with milkweed and several kinds of native flowers had more monarch sightings than gardens without those plants. This observation supports the two earlier sources, but it does not prove that plants alone caused the difference. Weather, garden size, and the number of times staff visited could also affect the counts. Maya compares the sources before writing a careful answer to her question.

3. Maya's answer is that city gardens can likely help monarchs when they include milkweed for caterpillars and native flowers for adults. Her wording, "can likely help," matches the available evidence without claiming too much. While researching, she notices that the parks report covers only late summer. She generates a new question: "Which garden features support monarchs during spring and fall migration?" To investigate it, Maya would look for migration-season observations from a university, a government wildlife agency, or a well-documented community-science project.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Why does Maya reject the garden-store advertisement as strong evidence?

2. What finding in the city parks report supports Maya's answer about gardens?

3. Why does Maya say gardens "can likely help" instead of claiming that the plants alone caused more monarch sightings?

4. What further research question does Maya generate, and what is one suitable type of source for investigating it?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Choose a research question about a school or community issue. In 3 to 4 sentences, name two reliable sources you would use, tell what evidence each could provide and why each source is reliable, then write one further research question.

ANSWER KEY

Evidence Trail

GRADE 8 · ELA.8.C.4.1

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Circle the three sources Maya uses as evidence, and underline the evidence each source provides to answer her question. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Why does Maya reject the garden-store advertisement as strong evidence?	**It is trying to sell plants and does not provide research details.**
2	What finding in the city parks report supports Maya's answer about gardens?	**Gardens with milkweed and several kinds of native flowers had more monarch sightings than gardens without those plants.**
3	Why does Maya say gardens "can likely help" instead of claiming that the plants alone caused more monarch sightings?	**The report is an observation, and weather, garden size, and visit frequency could have affected the counts.**
4	What further research question does Maya generate, and what is one suitable type of source for investigating it?	**She asks which garden features support monarchs during spring and fall migration. A university, government wildlife agency, or well-documented community-science project would be suitable.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

My research question is, "Would a covered bike rack increase the number of students who bike to school?" I would use the school district's annual travel survey, which explains how it collects student responses, to find current travel patterns and barriers to biking. I would also use the city transportation department's bicycle counts near the school, which list dates and counting methods, to compare bike traffic before and after a rack is installed. A further question is, "Would the rack's location let students reach it without crossing the busy driveway?"

Accept answers that identify the three evidence sources as the Fish and Wildlife Service page, university extension article, and city parks report. For Part 3, accept varied relevant questions and sources if students explain why each source is trustworthy, identify useful evidence, and generate a logical follow-up question.