Source Detective

Spot clues that show whether a source fits your research.

6.T.RA.2.b "Analyze print and digital texts to identify features of credible, relevant sources and to determine indicators that might signal unreliable sources. (I)"

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline details that make a source credible or relevant to Elena's question. Circle details that signal caution or show that a source does not fit her question.

Choosing Sources for a Pollinator Garden

1. Elena wanted to answer a focused question: Which native plants help bees and butterflies in small city gardens? She found an article on her county extension website. The article named its author, a horticulture educator, and gave the date it was updated, March 2025. It linked to university research and explained which plants bloom in different seasons. Because the article discussed local growing conditions and the same kinds of gardens Elena was studying, its information was both trustworthy and useful for her question.

2. Elena also opened a colorful gardening blog. A banner said, "One secret flower brings every pollinator to your yard!" The page did not name a writer, list a publication date, or link to evidence. Several buttons led to a store selling flower seeds, and the post used many excited claims but few details about plant care. These clues do not prove every sentence is wrong. However, Elena would need to check its claims against sources with named experts, dates, and evidence before using it.

3. A print book at the library had a named author, a publisher, and a list of sources, so Elena considered it more carefully than the blog. Yet the book, published in 1998, focused on large formal gardens in England. Its plant advice might not match her city's climate or the space on an apartment balcony. A source can have signs of careful research and still be a poor match for a particular question. Elena decided to use the extension article first and use the book only for background ideas.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What are two details that make the county extension article credible?

2. Name two warning signs in the gardening blog that mean Elena should check its claims carefully.

3. Why is the print book less relevant to Elena's question, even though it has some credible features?

4. Which source should Elena use first for her research question, and why?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write exactly three sentences about a research question you have. Name the question, describe one source you would use and give two credible or relevant features, then describe another source and name one warning sign or relevance problem.

ANSWER KEY # Source Detective

GRADE 6 · 6.T.RA.2.b

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline details that make a source credible or relevant to Elena's question. Circle details that signal caution or show that a source does not fit her question. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What are two details that make the county extension article credible?	**It names a horticulture educator as the author, gives an update date, and links to university research. Any two.**
2	Name two warning signs in the gardening blog that mean Elena should check its claims carefully.	**It has no named writer, no publication date, no links to evidence, exaggerated claims, and buttons that lead to a seed store. Any two.**
3	Why is the print book less relevant to Elena's question, even though it has some credible features?	**It focuses on large formal gardens in England and was published in 1998, so its advice may not fit Elena's city climate or apartment balcony space.**
4	Which source should Elena use first for her research question, and why?	**She should use the county extension article first because it has a qualified named author, a recent date, research links, and information about local small gardens.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

My question is, Which materials make a lunch box keep food cold longest? I would use a recent article from a university food-science department that names its experts and links to test data. I would be cautious with an undated video that promises one product works better than every other brand but gives no test results.

Accept reasonable source choices when the student names a clear research question and correctly connects source features to credibility or relevance. Warning signs may include missing author, date, evidence, extreme claims, or a source that does not match the question.