

Source Sleuth Notes

Use focused searching, source checks, and careful citations.

L6-8WHST8 "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 Maya uses to judge whether a source is credible or accurate. Circle actions that help her avoid plagiarism or give credit to a source.

Researching the Dust Bowl

- ① For a report about families leaving the Great Plains during the Dust Bowl, Maya begins with the search terms "Dust Bowl migration 1930s primary sources." The words name a topic, a time, and a kind of evidence. She finds a 1936 photograph by Dorothea Lange in the Library of Congress digital collection. Its catalog record lists the photographer, date, title, and collection. Because the Library of Congress preserves historical materials and identifies the item, Maya treats the photograph as credible evidence of one family's situation, not proof of every family's experience.
- ② Next, Maya checks a print history book written by a university historian. The book says drought and poor farming practices contributed to severe soil erosion on the southern Plains in the 1930s. Its notes list the sources behind its claims. Maya compares that explanation with a National Drought Mitigation Center website, which is run by the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Both sources agree about drought and erosion, so the information is more dependable than a blog post with no author or evidence. Agreement alone does not make a claim true, but it is useful to check.
- ③ Maya writes notes in her own words before drafting. Her paraphrase is this: drought and farming methods left some southern Plains soil exposed to wind. She puts quotation marks around exact words only when she copies them. After a quotation or paraphrase, she gives a citation so readers can locate the source. Her book citation follows a basic MLA pattern: Worster, Donald. Dust Bowl: The Southern Plains in the 1930s. Oxford UP, 1979. A website citation also includes the organization, page title, URL, and access date.

2

ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1

How do Maya’s search terms make her search more focused?

2

Name two details in the photograph’s catalog record that support its credibility. Then explain one limit of using the photograph as evidence.

3

Why does Maya compare the history book with the National Drought Mitigation Center website?

4

What four pieces of information does Maya include in a website citation?

3

YOUR TURN

Your own words

Choose a social studies question you want to investigate. Use one effective search term to find one print source and one digital source, then complete both rows with an MLA-style citation, a credibility and accuracy check, and a paraphrased fact or conclusion in your own words.

QUESTION AND SEARCH TERM	SOURCE AND TYPE, MLA-STYLE CITATION	CREDIBILITY AND ACCURACY CHECK	PARAPHRASED FACT OR CONCLUSION

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline details Maya uses to judge whether a source is credible or accurate. Circle actions that help her avoid plagiarism or give credit to a source. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How do Maya's search terms make her search more focused?	They name the topic, the time period, and the kind of evidence she wants.
2	Name two details in the photograph's catalog record that support its credibility. Then explain one limit of using the photograph as evidence.	The record lists the photographer, date, title, and collection, any two. The photograph shows one family's situation, so it cannot prove every family had the same experience.
3	Why does Maya compare the history book with the National Drought Mitigation Center website?	She compares sources to check whether their information agrees. Both support the idea that drought and erosion were important, although agreement alone does not prove a claim is true.
4	What four pieces of information does Maya include in a website citation?	The organization, page title, URL, and access date.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

QUESTION AND SEARCH TERM	SOURCE AND TYPE, MLA-STYLE CITATION	CREDIBILITY AND ACCURACY CHECK	PARAPHRASED FACT OR CONCLUSION
What caused the American Revolution? Search term: American Revolution causes primary sources	Wood, Gordon S. The American Revolution: A History. Modern Library, 2002. Print.	Written by a historian and published by a known press. Compare its claims with another source.	British policies and colonial resistance increased tensions before independence.
What caused the American Revolution? Search term: American Revolution causes primary sources	National Archives. "The Declaration of Independence: A Transcription." National Archives, www.archives.gov/founding-docs/declaration-transcript . Accessed 10 Sept. 2026. Digital.	This is an official archive's transcript of a primary document. Compare its words with a print history source.	The Declaration states that a government's rightful power comes from the people.

Accept any two catalog-record details in Question 2. For the open task, accept different topics and citation styles if students identify both source types, give reasonable credibility checks, and paraphrase rather than copy.