When Stories Spread

Trace how coverage can shape attention and opinion

9-12.GOV.17 "Evaluate the role of the media/social media as a means of communicating information/misinformation and how it influences the importance of issues and public opinion."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two details that can be checked against records, circle the false claim, and number two places where coverage could change what people discuss or believe.

The Route 8 Debate

1. In the fictional city of Pine Creek, the council considers adding evening bus trips on Route 8. At a public meeting, riders say late shifts make it hard to get home, while the transit director says extra trips would require money not yet in the budget. A local reporter publishes both statements and links to the council's agenda and the proposed cost estimate. The story does not tell readers what to think, but it puts evening transit in front of people who might not attend a meeting. More residents may now see bus service as an issue worth discussing.

2. That night, a short video from the meeting spreads on social media. It shows the transit director saying, "We cannot add trips," but cuts off her next words: "without a funding plan." A post beside the clip claims the council has already voted to end all evening buses. The meeting record shows no such vote; the council has only scheduled another hearing. People who see only the post might believe service is disappearing and blame council members. Some may share it quickly because the claim feels urgent. The false claim can shape opinions even though the original video came from a real meeting.

3. A week later, the reporter publishes a follow-up explaining what the full video says and where to find the meeting record. Several residents share that report, but others keep sharing the shorter clip. The repeated posts make buses a frequent topic in neighborhood feeds, even for people who never ride Route 8. More attention can bring useful questions to the next hearing, yet repetition alone cannot prove that a claim is true. Readers can compare a post with the complete recording, meeting record, and cost estimate before deciding what the council has done or what it should do.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How could the reporter's first story change which issue residents discuss, even if they do not agree about evening buses?

2. How does the shortened video change the meaning of the director's words, and how might that affect opinions of the council?

3. Why might Route 8 remain a major topic online even after the reporter publishes a correction? Does frequent posting prove either claim?

4. Which sources in the passage would help a resident check what the council has done, and why are they more useful than the short post alone?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine your town council is considering weekend library hours. In four or five sentences, explain how a news report and a viral post might affect what people discuss and believe, then name one claim you would check and the records you would use.

ANSWER KEY

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HIGH SCHOOL · 9-12.GOV.17

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two details that can be checked against records, circle the false claim, and number two places where coverage could change what people discuss or believe. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How could the reporter's first story change which issue residents discuss, even if they do not agree about evening buses?	**It brings the proposed evening trips to people who missed the meeting, making bus service an issue more residents may discuss.**
2	How does the shortened video change the meaning of the director's words, and how might that affect opinions of the council?	**Removing "without a funding plan" makes her sound opposed to adding trips under any circumstances. Paired with the false claim, the clip could lead viewers to blame the council for ending service.**
3	Why might Route 8 remain a major topic online even after the reporter publishes a correction? Does frequent posting prove either claim?	**People continue sharing the shorter clip, so the issue keeps appearing in feeds. Frequent posting does not prove a claim is true.**
4	Which sources in the passage would help a resident check what the council has done, and why are they more useful than the short post alone?	**The meeting record and complete recording show what was said and whether a vote occurred. The council agenda and cost estimate add context that the short post leaves out.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

A report on proposed weekend library hours could make access for working families a topic at the next town meeting. A viral post claiming the council has already cut weekday hours might make people angry, even if it gives no evidence. I would check the council agenda, meeting minutes, and current library schedule to see whether any change was proposed or approved. If the claim is false, I would share those records with a correction. Both stories could draw attention, but I would use the records to decide what I believe.

Accept other supported explanations of how coverage affects attention or opinion. For Part 3, look for a specific claim and records that could test it.