Whose Needs Counted?

Use records to weigh competing claims about a town decision.

6.P.1.2 "Develop practices which demonstrate an understanding that social studies involves the evaluation of evidence. Investigate and propose answers to essential questions representing complex enduring issues across the social studies..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two details from different records that could support a town project, circle one claim the evidence cannot fully prove, and write 1 beside a limit of a record.

The Bridge or the Road?

1. Imagine you are studying a made-up town called Cedar Ford in 1924. Its council must decide whether to build a footbridge across a creek. Families on the east bank say the crossing would shorten the walk to school. Some west-bank residents say the town should repair the main road instead. The question is not just whether a bridge was built. It is whose needs counted in the decision. To investigate, you examine records made by people with different reasons for speaking up.

2. The school notebook lists twelve east-bank students arriving late during a rainy week. It does not say why each student was late. A letter to the council from a west-bank shopkeeper says carts hit deep holes on the main road, delaying deliveries. The letter describes one business, not every traveler. Both records point to problems, but neither tells how many people would benefit from each project. A careful investigator asks who created a record, what it reports, and what it leaves out.

3. A petition asks for the bridge and carries twenty-six signatures. Its heading claims, "Every family needs this crossing," but the signatures cannot show what every family thought. Council notes record a four-to-two vote to repair the road instead. One reader might argue that officials ignored students' needs. Another might argue that road repairs served more people. The notes give no reasons for each vote, so neither claim is settled. Finding meeting speeches or asking whose names are missing from the petition could sharpen the answer.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How could the school notebook support the case for a bridge? What does it not prove?

2. How does the shopkeeper's letter support road repairs? Why is it not enough to show that repairs would help more people than a bridge?

3. What is wrong with using the petition's signatures to claim that every family wanted the bridge?

4. What two interpretations of the council's vote does the passage offer? What missing evidence could help you judge them?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a new question about who could take part in Cedar Ford's decision, not whether the bridge was built. Name two kinds of records you would seek, explain how each could help answer your question, and identify one assumption you would test.

ANSWER KEY

Whose Needs Counted?

GRADE 6 · 6.P.1.2

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two details from different records that could support a town project, circle one claim the evidence cannot fully prove, and write 1 beside a limit of a record. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How could the school notebook support the case for a bridge? What does it not prove?	**It shows that twelve east-bank students arrived late during a rainy week, but it does not prove that the creek crossing made them late.**
2	How does the shopkeeper's letter support road repairs? Why is it not enough to show that repairs would help more people than a bridge?	**It reports that road holes delayed deliveries, but it describes only one business and does not compare the number of people helped by each project.**
3	What is wrong with using the petition's signatures to claim that every family wanted the bridge?	**Twenty-six signatures show support from those who signed, not the views of every family.**
4	What two interpretations of the council's vote does the passage offer? What missing evidence could help you judge them?	**Officials may have ignored students' needs, or they may have thought road repairs served more people. Meeting speeches or other records of council members' reasons could help judge the claims.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Who was allowed to speak at the council meeting? I would seek the meeting rules to learn whether residents could speak. I would also seek a newspaper report to find out who actually spoke. I would test the assumption that people who signed the petition were allowed to speak at the meeting.

Accept other interpretations when students distinguish evidence from what it cannot establish. For the open task, look for a new, investigable question, two relevant records with distinct uses, and an assumption to test.