The Empty Lot

Investigate a community choice through history, geography, and civic debate.

7.P.1.2.A "Investigate and propose answers to essential questions representing complex enduring issues across the social studies disciplines."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the question the town faces, circle details that could help answer it, and number two groups that see the choice differently. Use your marks to think about why this question may matter again in the future.

What Should Millbrook Build?

1. In the fictional town of Millbrook, a town-owned lot sits beside the bus station. Decades ago, a small factory stood there, and many families depended on its jobs. After it closed, the building was torn down. Today, some residents want a public garden on the lot. Others want low-cost apartments near the bus stop. Both ideas could help people, but the town has enough money for only one project this year. The choice raises a question that communities face again and again: Who should shape the use of shared land?

2. History shows why the lot matters to longtime residents: their relatives worked at the factory, and some want a sign telling its story. Geography adds another concern. The lot is on a busy street with little shade, so a garden with trees could offer a cooler place to gather. Yet apartments beside a bus stop would make it easier for residents without cars to travel to work. Neither the factory's past nor the lot's location alone tells the town which need matters most.

3. At a public meeting, renters say nearby apartments could reduce long trips and help them stay in town. Garden supporters say all neighbors, including apartment residents, could use a green space. A town planner points out that either project would need ongoing care, not just money to build it. Council members must listen to people who disagree, weigh who gains and who might be left out, and explain their choice in public. The same debate could return as the town's population and needs change.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What question about shared land could guide the council's decision? Why might the town need to ask it again?

2. How could the lot's past shape one person's answer to that question? How could its location shape another person's answer?

3. Why might renters and garden supporters disagree about the best use of the lot? Give one reason from each group.

4. Which project would you support? Use one passage detail to explain your choice and another to show what the town might lose by choosing it.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a new essential question about Millbrook's lot that links its history to a current need. Then answer your question in four sentences, using two details from the passage and explaining why one group might disagree.

ANSWER KEY

The Empty Lot

GRADE 7 · 7.P.1.2.A

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the question the town faces, circle details that could help answer it, and number two groups that see the choice differently. Use your marks to think about why this question may matter again in the future. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What question about shared land could guide the council's decision? Why might the town need to ask it again?	**The council could ask who should shape the use of shared land. The question could return as Millbrook's population and needs change.**
2	How could the lot's past shape one person's answer to that question? How could its location shape another person's answer?	**Someone whose relatives worked at the factory might want its story told. Someone who needs to travel to work without a car might favor apartments beside the bus stop.**
3	Why might renters and garden supporters disagree about the best use of the lot? Give one reason from each group.	**Renters say nearby apartments could shorten trips and help them stay in town. Garden supporters say a green space could serve all neighbors.**
4	Which project would you support? Use one passage detail to explain your choice and another to show what the town might lose by choosing it.	**I would support apartments because their location near the bus stop could help residents without cars get to work. Without the garden, neighbors would lose the chance for a cooler place to gather.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Question: How can towns honor the past while meeting the needs of people who live there now? Millbrook should choose apartments and find a way to tell the factory's story. The factory provided jobs for many families, so that history matters. Apartments beside the bus stop could help residents without cars reach work. Garden supporters might disagree because trees could give neighbors a cooler place to gather.

Accept either project in question 4 if the response supports it with a passage detail and recognizes a benefit of the other choice. For the open task, look for a question with no simple yes-or-no answer, a four-sentence proposal grounded in two passage details, and a reason for disagreement.