Test the Claim

Question assumptions in a town council debate.

8.P.1.2.C "Develop deeper critical thinking skills by questioning assumptions and identifying inconsistencies or errors in reasoning."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Circle two statements that cannot both be true, underline one claim that rests on an untested assumption, and number one way to check a claim.

Should Oak Street Park Close Earlier?

1. At a town meeting, council members debated closing Oak Street Park at 7 p.m. instead of 9 p.m. Ms. Ruiz, who lives across the street, said loud sounds had interrupted her sleep on three evenings last month. She urged the council to change the hours. Two students said their soccer team practices in the park at 8 p.m. because the school field is locked. The council had not counted evening visitors or checked where the sounds came from. Members listened to both sides before discussing a vote.

2. One council member argued, "Closing at 7 will solve the noise problem. The park is empty at 8 p.m. anyway." He pointed to two snack wrappers found near the swings on a Monday morning. "That proves the soccer team leaves trash here every night," he added. The wrappers had no names on them, and no one had watched the team leave trash. Ms. Ruiz said she had heard shouting, but she could not tell whether it came from the park or the basketball court across the road.

3. Another council member suggested a one-week check before changing the hours. Volunteers could count visitors at 7, 8, and 9 p.m. and note where loud sounds begin. They could also record trash found each morning without guessing who dropped it. Ms. Ruiz's report matters because it describes a problem residents may face. The students' account matters because a new rule could affect their practices. Neither account alone shows that an earlier closing would stop the noise or explain the wrappers.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What does the council member assume when he says closing the park at 7 p.m. will solve the noise problem?

2. Which statement about park use conflicts with the students' account? Explain the conflict.

3. Why do the two wrappers not prove that the soccer team leaves trash every night?

4. Which part of the proposed one-week check could test the claim that closing the park will stop the noise? Why?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

A resident says, "I saw only two people at the community garden at noon, so nobody in town cares about it." Write 3 or 4 sentences that identify an assumption, explain a weakness in the reasoning, and propose one way to check the claim.

ANSWER KEY

Test the Claim

GRADE 8 · 8.P.1.2.C

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Circle two statements that cannot both be true, underline one claim that rests on an untested assumption, and number one way to check a claim. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What does the council member assume when he says closing the park at 7 p.m. will solve the noise problem?	**He assumes the noise comes from the park, even though it might come from the basketball court across the road.**
2	Which statement about park use conflicts with the students' account? Explain the conflict.	**The council member says the park is empty at 8 p.m., but the students say their team practices there at 8 p.m.**
3	Why do the two wrappers not prove that the soccer team leaves trash every night?	**No one saw the team drop them, so their source is unknown. Wrappers found on one morning also cannot show what happens every night.**
4	Which part of the proposed one-week check could test the claim that closing the park will stop the noise? Why?	**Noting where loud sounds begin could show whether the noise comes from the park or somewhere else.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The resident assumes that people who care about the garden would be there at noon. Seeing two people at one time does not show how many people use or value it at other times. Volunteers could count visitors at different hours over several days.

For the marking job, accept either the noise claim or the wrapper claim as an untested assumption. For the open task, accept a specific check that gathers evidence beyond one noon observation.