The Library Debate

How a community weighs competing needs

AWH.P.1.1.A "Evaluate the impact of perspectives, civil discourse, and democratic principles on addressing civic issues."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two statements showing different residents' priorities, circle one action that keeps disagreement respectful, and write 1 and 2 beside two ways residents can examine or challenge the council's decision.

Who Gets an Evening at the Library?

1. On a Tuesday night, the Riverton City Council considered whether to keep the public library open until 9 p.m. twice a week. High school students said evening hours would give them a quiet place to study after sports and family duties. A library worker supported access but warned that the current staff could not safely cover extra shifts without overtime pay. A resident who pays local taxes asked what programs might lose funding if hours expanded. Each speaker wanted a useful library, yet their different experiences pointed to different costs and benefits. A decision based only on the loudest group could miss those tradeoffs.

2. At the hearing, the chair gave each speaker two minutes and asked people to address the proposal rather than attack one another. When a student called the worker "against kids," another student asked how many employees an evening shift would require. The worker explained that at least two employees were needed to close the building. A council member then requested a public cost estimate before the vote. These exchanges changed the discussion from a clash of motives to a question the council could investigate. Time limits did not make every viewpoint equally persuasive, but they gave more residents a chance to be heard.

3. Two weeks later, the council posted the estimate: paying for two extra evening shifts each week would require cutting a planned weekend workshop series. Residents could read the estimate and speak at a second public meeting. Some students favored the evening hours; families who relied on weekend workshops objected. The elected council voted for a six-month trial of one late evening per week, using a smaller workshop cut, and promised to publish attendance and cost figures before reconsidering. The compromise did not satisfy everyone. Still, public evidence, an open hearing, and an accountable vote gave residents a way to challenge the decision later.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How do the students' and library worker's perspectives reveal a tradeoff in the proposal?

2. Why was asking about staffing more useful to the council than calling the worker “against kids”?

3. How did posting the cost estimate and holding a second meeting help residents take part in the decision?

4. Evaluate the council's six-month trial. Whose concerns did it address, and what concern remained?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Your town must decide whether to install brighter lights in a neighborhood park after dusk. In one paragraph, describe two residents' different concerns, a respectful way to discuss them, a democratic way to decide, and a tradeoff the decision must weigh.

ANSWER KEY

The Library Debate

HIGH SCHOOL · AWH.P.1.1.A

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two statements showing different residents' priorities, circle one action that keeps disagreement respectful, and write 1 and 2 beside two ways residents can examine or challenge the council's decision. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How do the students' and library worker's perspectives reveal a tradeoff in the proposal?	**Students would gain study time, but the worker says safe evening shifts require overtime pay for enough staff.**
2	Why was asking about staffing more useful to the council than calling the worker “against kids”?	**The question led to a specific staffing requirement the council could investigate, rather than an accusation about the worker's motives.**
3	How did posting the cost estimate and holding a second meeting help residents take part in the decision?	**Residents could examine the proposed cost, including the workshop cut, and speak about its effects before the council voted.**
4	Evaluate the council's six-month trial. Whose concerns did it address, and what concern remained?	**One late evening gave students some study time while requiring a smaller workshop cut than two evenings. Families still faced a loss of workshop time.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

A runner might want brighter lights to see the path, while a nearby resident might worry about light shining into bedroom windows. At a public meeting, each could explain a specific concern without accusing the other of selfishness. The town council should publish lighting costs and invite comments before voting on a limited trial with shielded fixtures. The council could then review complaints and park use before deciding whether to keep the lights. The trial might improve visibility, but it could still disturb neighbors and cost money.

Accept other passage-supported evaluations of the trial, including its limited duration and the council's plan to publish results. For the open task, look for distinct perspectives, respectful discussion, a public decision process, and a specific tradeoff.