Who Keeps Water Safe?

Use evidence across time to weigh answers to an enduring question.

AWH.P.1.2.A "Develop, investigate, and evaluate plausible answers to essential questions that reflect enduring understandings across time, real world circumstances, and social studies disciplines."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the question that connects both cases, circle one piece of evidence from Rome and one from Flint, and number the two plausible answers offered in the final paragraph.

Water, Power, and Public Responsibility

1 Who should be responsible for making sure people have safe water? The question reaches across centuries, but the people and tools involved change. In ancient Rome, aqueducts carried water into the city, where public fountains gave many residents a place to collect it. Some wealthy households also had private connections. Building and repairing aqueducts required organized labor and public spending. Yet a fountain could be far from a person's home, and access depended on the system being maintained. Rome suggests that shared infrastructure can widen access, while the distance between a source and a household still matters.

2 In 2014, Flint, Michigan, changed its water supply from treated Detroit water to water from the Flint River while a new pipeline was being built. The river water was not treated with corrosion control chemicals, allowing lead from some aging pipes and plumbing to enter drinking water. Residents reported discolored water and health concerns, and many demanded tests and action. Government officials initially dismissed or downplayed warnings. Researchers and residents gathered evidence of contamination, and the city later returned to Detroit water. The case shows why decisions about treatment, testing, and responses to complaints have consequences beyond a water plant.

3 Two plausible answers to the essential question are that government agencies should bear primary responsibility because they control large water systems, and that residents should share responsibility by monitoring water and reporting problems. Rome's aqueducts and Flint's treatment decisions support the first answer: individuals could not build or operate those systems alone. Flint residents' reports support the second: officials might overlook problems without public pressure. But neither case proves that reporting can replace safe treatment or that every government responds effectively. To judge either answer, ask what each group can control and whose warnings receive attention.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Use one detail from Rome and one from Flint to develop a plausible answer to the passage's essential question.

2. How do Flint residents' actions support the answer that residents should share responsibility? What limit does the passage place on that answer?

3. A student claims that public water systems guarantee equal access. Evaluate this claim using evidence from Rome.

4. A student argues that each household can secure safe water on its own. Which detail from each case challenges this answer?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine students report rusty-looking water from taps in a new school building. Write one paragraph that asks an essential question about responsibility for safe water, proposes two plausible answers, uses evidence from Rome or Flint to assess both, and names one fact you would investigate at the school before deciding.

ANSWER KEY

Who Keeps Water Safe?

HIGH SCHOOL · AWH.P.1.2.A

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the question that connects both cases, circle one piece of evidence from Rome and one from Flint, and number the two plausible answers offered in the final paragraph. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Use one detail from Rome and one from Flint to develop a plausible answer to the passage's essential question.	**Government agencies should bear primary responsibility. Rome's aqueducts required public spending and maintenance, while Flint's treatment decisions affected water safety.**
2	How do Flint residents' actions support the answer that residents should share responsibility? What limit does the passage place on that answer?	**Residents reported problems and gathered evidence, helping bring attention to contamination. Reporting cannot replace safe water treatment.**
3	A student claims that public water systems guarantee equal access. Evaluate this claim using evidence from Rome.	**Rome's public fountains widened access, but some people lived far from a fountain, and wealthy households had private connections. Access was not equal.**
4	A student argues that each household can secure safe water on its own. Which detail from each case challenges this answer?	**Roman households depended on shared aqueducts and fountains. In Flint, households could not make the city's water treatment decisions.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Who should be responsible for safe water at school? The agency that operates the water system should bear primary responsibility because Flint shows that treatment decisions can affect many people. Students and staff should also report problems because Flint residents' warnings helped bring attention to contamination. Reporting alone cannot replace safe treatment, however. I would investigate test results from the school taps before deciding what caused the water's appearance. Rusty-looking water is a reason to investigate, not proof that it contains lead.

Accept other plausible answers when students support them with accurate passage evidence and recognize a limit. In Part 3, students should treat the water's appearance as a concern to investigate, not proof of a specific contaminant.