Access for All?

Investigate how communities make knowledge available

E.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 past and present, circle two possible answers, and number two facts you could use to test those answers.

Who Pays for a Public Library?

1. In 1854, Boston opened a public library that people could use without paying a membership fee. That choice raised a question that still matters: Who should pay to make knowledge available to everyone? In the late 1800s and early 1900s, Andrew Carnegie funded the construction of many public libraries, but communities had to provide land and money to maintain them. One possible answer is that local taxes should support shared access. Another is that private donors should pay most costs. Neither answer, by itself, settles who can actually enter, use materials, or feel welcome.

2. A historian investigating these answers might compare library rules from different periods. Under racial segregation, some public libraries denied Black residents the same access that white residents had. A library could be called public while excluding part of the public. An economist might compare the cost of building a library with the continuing costs of books, staff, and repairs. These costs matter because a gift for a building does not necessarily keep its doors open. A civics researcher might ask residents whether the library's hours and services meet their needs, then check whose views were included.

3. Now imagine a town choosing whether to extend its library hours and offer more computers. A donor offers to buy the computers, but the town would have to pay for internet service and staff. Some residents worry about higher taxes. Others say that people without reliable internet at home need the library to apply for jobs or complete schoolwork. Past library decisions suggest questions to investigate, not an automatic answer for this town. Decision makers could examine costs, ask who would use the new hours, and consider whether the plan reaches people who have had less access.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How does the question in the first paragraph connect a past library decision to the town's decision today?

2. What evidence from the passage could you use to challenge the claim that calling a library public guarantees access for everyone?

3. The town wants to know whether the donated computers are an affordable solution. What two kinds of evidence should it investigate, and why?

4. Which answer seems more workable for the town, relying on the donor alone or combining the gift with public funding? Evaluate it using two details from the passage.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine your community is deciding whether its museum should charge admission or offer free entry. Write an essential question that connects this choice to the past and to other shared resources, propose a plausible answer, and explain what evidence you would gather to test it. Evaluate one possible drawback using both a money lens and an access lens.

ANSWER KEY

Access for All?

HIGH SCHOOL · E.P.1.2.A

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the question that connects past and present, circle two possible answers, and number two facts you could use to test those answers. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How does the question in the first paragraph connect a past library decision to the town's decision today?	**Both decisions concern who pays for public access to knowledge. Carnegie-funded buildings needed community support, just as the town would need to pay for service and staff after receiving donated computers.**
2	What evidence from the passage could you use to challenge the claim that calling a library public guarantees access for everyone?	**Under racial segregation, some public libraries denied Black residents the same access as white residents.**
3	The town wants to know whether the donated computers are an affordable solution. What two kinds of evidence should it investigate, and why?	**It should investigate the ongoing costs of internet service and staff, since the donation covers only the computers, and ask who would use them to judge whether the expense meets a need.**
4	Which answer seems more workable for the town, relying on the donor alone or combining the gift with public funding? Evaluate it using two details from the passage.	**Combining the gift with public funding seems more workable because the donor pays only for computers, while the town must pay for internet service and staff. Residents' concerns about taxes still need consideration.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Who should pay so people can use shared places for learning, both in the past and today? The museum could offer free entry with public support, as libraries have done. I would investigate the museum's yearly costs, ask who visits now, and find out whether admission fees keep anyone away. Public support could reduce a barrier to access, but it would also use money the community might spend on other needs. I would compare those costs with evidence about who benefits before deciding.

Accept other defensible evaluations when students use passage evidence and address both costs and access. In the open task, look for a question that applies beyond one museum decision, a testable answer, and a specific drawback.