When Counts Conflict

Evaluate evidence behind different historical conclusions

OKH.P.1.2 "Develop practices which demonstrate an understanding that social studies involves the evaluation of evidence. Develop, investigate, and evaluate plausible answers to essential questions that reflect enduring understandings across time..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline a point of agreement between the early accounts and the later commission. Circle their different death estimates, then number two reasons the estimates may differ.

Counting the Dead in Tulsa

1. In 1921, a white mob attacked Greenwood, a prosperous Black neighborhood in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Homes and businesses burned, and thousands of residents lost their homes. How many people died? Early official accounts listed 36 deaths. A 2001 Oklahoma state commission reported estimates of 100 to 300 deaths. These numbers do not tell the whole story by themselves. The early count was recorded close to the event, but amid chaos and displacement. The later estimate drew on a wider range of records and survivor accounts, but researchers could not identify every person who died.

2. An investigator could compare a death certificate, a survivor interview, and a newspaper report. A death certificate records an identified person's death, but missing records leave people out. A survivor can describe what happened nearby, but no one witness saw the entire district. A newspaper might show what officials said at the time, yet a reporter could repeat an incomplete count. To judge each source, ask who made it, when, and how its information was gathered. The sources can agree that people died and disagree about the number without having equal evidence for every claim.

3. Suppose someone argues that the early count must be correct because it was made first. That reasoning assumes every death was reported promptly, an assumption the destruction and displacement make doubtful. The later estimate is not automatically exact, either. A stronger inquiry asks which kinds of deaths each record could miss and looks for independent evidence, such as burial records or names in family testimony. Researchers may still disagree about a final total while agreeing that the early count was incomplete. Explaining why conclusions differ is more honest than picking the number that feels most certain.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Where do the early official accounts and the later commission agree, and where do they disagree?

2. Does the later estimate settle the exact death toll? Use evidence from the passage to explain.

3. Compare a death certificate and a survivor interview. What can each show, and what can each miss?

4. What assumption is behind the claim that the first count must be correct? What evidence from the passage could help test it?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Choose a past or present change in your community. In four or five sentences, pose a question about its effects, name two kinds of evidence you would seek, explain why they might lead to different conclusions, and identify an assumption you would test.

When Counts Conflict

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline a point of agreement between the early accounts and the later commission. Circle their different death estimates, then number two reasons the estimates may differ. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Where do the early official accounts and the later commission agree, and where do they disagree?	**Both indicate that people died. Early accounts listed 36 deaths, while the commission reported estimates of 100 to 300.**
2	Does the later estimate settle the exact death toll? Use evidence from the passage to explain.	**No. It drew on more records and survivor accounts, but researchers could not identify every person who died.**
3	Compare a death certificate and a survivor interview. What can each show, and what can each miss?	**A death certificate documents an identified person's death, but missing records leave people out. A survivor can describe nearby events, but could not see the entire district.**
4	What assumption is behind the claim that the first count must be correct? What evidence from the passage could help test it?	**The claim assumes every death was reported promptly. Burial records or names in family testimony could help test whether the early count missed people.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Did expanding my town's library hours make the library more accessible to teenagers? I would compare library visit counts before and after the change with interviews with teen patrons. Visit counts could show increased use, while interviews might reveal that some teenagers still cannot get there. The sources could lead to different conclusions because total visits do not show who visited. I would test the assumption that more visits mean more teenagers gained access.

Accept other evidence-based explanations of agreement, disagreement, and source limits that are supported by the passage. For Your Turn, look for an investigable question, two distinct evidence types, a plausible reason for differing conclusions, and an assumption to test.