Test the Thesis

Use relevant sources to build a defensible claim

OKH.P.4.2.A "Develop self-generated theses or claims related to independent research and investigations using credible and relevant sources."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline Mara's first claim and her revised thesis. Circle the two sources she uses, then write 1 and 2 beside the parts of her revised thesis that those sources support.

What Made the Dust Blow?

1. On a windy spring day, a student named Mara reads about Oklahoma's Dust Bowl years. She wonders, "Did drought alone cause the region's severe dust storms in the 1930s?" Her first answer is, "The drought caused every dust storm." That claim reaches beyond what one source could show and leaves no room for land use. Mara turns the question into a research plan. She will compare rainfall records with historical accounts of how farmers worked the soil. A useful thesis must do more than name a cause. It must make a defensible point that evidence from relevant sources can test.

2. Mara consults historical climate records from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), a federal agency that collects weather data. Those records document severe drought in the 1930s, so they help her examine the weather part of her question. She also reads historical materials from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) about soil erosion and farming practices on the Great Plains. That agency's agricultural expertise makes its materials relevant to land use. A photograph of a dusty road might show what a storm looked like, but it cannot establish that drought was the only cause.

3. After comparing the sources, Mara writes a narrower thesis: "In 1930s Oklahoma, drought and soil-disturbing farming practices together increased the risk of severe dust storms." The NOAA records support the drought part; the USDA materials connect exposed soil and erosion to the land-use part. Her thesis does not claim that every farm used the same methods or that every storm had identical causes. Before treating the thesis as settled, she would check when each USDA document was written and whether it discusses Oklahoma specifically. A federal source can be trustworthy yet too broad to answer a particular local question.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Why does Mara replace her first claim with a narrower thesis?

2. Which source could help test the drought part of Mara's thesis? Explain why it fits.

3. Which source could help test the land-use part of Mara's thesis? What connection would she look for?

4. What should Mara check before using the USDA materials to support a claim about Oklahoma specifically?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Investigate a different local issue: Which public spaces should receive shade first during hot weather? Write a provisional thesis that takes a specific position, then name two credible, relevant sources you would consult and explain what each could help you check.

ANSWER KEY

Test the Thesis

HIGH SCHOOL · OKH.P.4.2.A

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline Mara's first claim and her revised thesis. Circle the two sources she uses, then write 1 and 2 beside the parts of her revised thesis that those sources support. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Why does Mara replace her first claim with a narrower thesis?	**Her first claim says drought caused every dust storm, which reaches beyond the evidence and ignores land use.**
2	Which source could help test the drought part of Mara's thesis? Explain why it fits.	**NOAA's historical climate records fit because they document drought during the 1930s.**
3	Which source could help test the land-use part of Mara's thesis? What connection would she look for?	**USDA historical materials could help her examine the connection between farming practices, exposed soil, and erosion.**
4	What should Mara check before using the USDA materials to support a claim about Oklahoma specifically?	**She should check when each document was written and whether it discusses Oklahoma, rather than only the Great Plains in general.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Our town should prioritize adding shade to unsheltered bus stops during hot weather. I would check the city transit agency's stop inventory to identify stops without shelters. I would consult National Weather Service temperature records to assess how often extreme heat occurs locally.

Accept other defensible local priorities if the thesis is specific and both proposed sources are credible and relevant to checking it. Students should present the claim as provisional, not as a finding their sources have already proved.