Who Gets Access?

Investigate a public choice across time

USG.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 essential question, circle two competing proposals, and number two kinds of evidence that could help evaluate them.

The Library Budget

1. At the edge of a small town, a public library stays open after school. One student uses its internet to apply for a job; another borrows a book on local elections. Both services raise an essential question: Who should pay to make reliable information available to everyone? The question is older than the internet. In the early 1900s, Andrew Carnegie funded library buildings in many U.S. communities, but towns had to promise money to operate them. Public support did not guarantee equal access. In places with racial segregation, Black residents could be denied entry or directed to separate facilities.

2. Today, many libraries offer computers, internet access, and trained staff alongside books. Suppose a county must decide whether to extend evening hours at its main branch. A student without home internet could use those hours to complete assignments. A worker on a night shift might still be unable to visit. One resident argues that taxes should fund longer hours because access helps people participate in school and work. Another says the county should first repair school computers, which students use during the day. Neither proposal reaches everyone, and the county cannot spend the same funds twice.

3. To investigate the choice, a council could compare how many people use the library after 5 p.m. with how many students lack working computers at school. A historian might ask who was left out of earlier public libraries, while a geographer might study travel times from different neighborhoods. An economist could compare costs per person served, and a civics researcher could examine who speaks at budget hearings. Each kind of evidence reveals something different. High attendance alone would not prove fair access if people far from the main branch cannot get there. The best policy might change when new evidence appears.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Develop a plausible answer to the passage's essential question. Use one detail from the early 1900s and one from today to support it.

2. What two pieces of evidence could the council gather to investigate the choice between longer library hours and repaired school computers? Explain what each would help it learn.

3. Evaluate the proposal to extend evening library hours. Give one reason it could improve access and one reason it might not.

4. Which social studies discipline mentioned in the passage could reveal a weakness in using evening attendance alone to judge fair access? Explain.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Suppose your town must choose between adding a weekend bookmobile stop in an underserved neighborhood and adding more computers at its main library. In 5 to 6 sentences, state an essential question that applies across time, explain why each choice is plausible, name evidence you would gather, and evaluate a tradeoff using geography and economics.

ANSWER KEY

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HIGH SCHOOL · USG.P.1.2.A

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the essential question, circle two competing proposals, and number two kinds of evidence that could help evaluate them. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Develop a plausible answer to the passage's essential question. Use one detail from the early 1900s and one from today to support it.	**Communities should help pay for public libraries. Carnegie-funded buildings still needed towns to pay operating costs, and libraries today provide computers and internet access that residents may need.**
2	What two pieces of evidence could the council gather to investigate the choice between longer library hours and repaired school computers? Explain what each would help it learn.	**Library use after 5 p.m. could show demand for evening hours. The number of students without working school computers could show the need for repairs.**
3	Evaluate the proposal to extend evening library hours. Give one reason it could improve access and one reason it might not.	**Evening hours could help a student without home internet complete assignments. They might not help a night-shift worker who cannot visit then.**
4	Which social studies discipline mentioned in the passage could reveal a weakness in using evening attendance alone to judge fair access? Explain.	**Geography could reveal the weakness by examining travel times. People far from the main branch might be unable to attend, even if they need its services.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Who should have access to public information when distance or cost stands in the way? This question mattered when towns paid to run Carnegie libraries, and it matters now. A weekend bookmobile could reach families far from the main library. More computers at the main branch could serve people who need internet for work or school. I would gather neighborhood travel times and counts of residents without home internet. Geography would show which choice reduces distance barriers, while economics would compare costs per person served, so I would choose the bookmobile if its reach justifies its cost.

Accept either policy choice when the response gives a question relevant across time, treats both choices as plausible, identifies useful evidence, and evaluates distance and cost rather than assuming one measure settles the issue.