Test the Claims

Examine assumptions and conflicting predictions in a public debate.

USG.P.1.2.C "Reinforce critical thinking by evaluating and challenging ideas and assumptions; analyzing and explaining inconsistencies in reasoning."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline three claims made at the meeting, circle an assumption behind one claim, and number the two predictions that conflict. Use your marks to examine how sound the arguments are.

Should the Library Open on Sundays?

1 At a public meeting in the fictional town of Briar Glen, council members debated opening the public library on Sundays. The library currently closes that day, and staff reported that weekday computers are often booked after school. A group of students brought a petition with 120 names. They argued that Sunday hours would help people who work during the week or need a quiet place to study. One student said, "Since 120 people signed, most residents want Sunday hours." The petition shows interest, but the town has thousands of residents, and no one checked whether the signers represent them.

2 Council member Vega opposed the plan. "No one would come on Sundays," she said. Later, she warned that "Sunday crowds would overwhelm the staff." Both predictions describe the same proposed hours, so they cannot both describe what Vega expects to happen without another explanation. Vega also said the library website is open every day, so a closed building cannot keep anyone from library services. Her claim assumes that every resident has reliable internet and that online materials can replace a computer, a meeting room, or a quiet desk. Those assumptions might be tested rather than accepted.

3 The library director suggested a six-week trial with four Sunday hours and a fixed staffing budget. Staff could record how many people visit, what services they use, and whether weekday service changes. But a trial would not settle every question. A rainy Sunday might bring more visitors than usual, while a holiday weekend might bring fewer. Council members would still need to ask whose needs the count misses, including people unable to travel to the library. Instead of treating a confident prediction as proof, they could compare evidence and explain what would change their minds.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Why does the petition not prove that most residents want Sunday hours?

2. Which two predictions by Vega conflict? Explain why they cannot both describe what she expects under the same plan.

3. What assumption about online services supports Vega's claim that closing the building keeps no one from library services? Use a detail from the passage to challenge it.

4. How could the six-week trial test a claim about Sunday visits, and why would its results still need careful interpretation?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a new argument about whether Briar Glen should try Sunday hours, using a concern or benefit not raised in the passage. State an assumption behind your argument, challenge it with a possible counterexample, and name evidence that could test it.

ANSWER KEY

Test the Claims

HIGH SCHOOL · USG.P.1.2.C

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline three claims made at the meeting, circle an assumption behind one claim, and number the two predictions that conflict. Use your marks to examine how sound the arguments are. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Why does the petition not prove that most residents want Sunday hours?	**The 120 signatures show interest, but the town has thousands of residents, and the signers may not represent them.**
2	Which two predictions by Vega conflict? Explain why they cannot both describe what she expects under the same plan.	**She predicts that no one would come and that crowds would overwhelm staff. The same Sunday hours cannot bring both no visitors and overwhelming crowds without another explanation.**
3	What assumption about online services supports Vega's claim that closing the building keeps no one from library services? Use a detail from the passage to challenge it.	**She assumes online services can replace what the building offers. The building also provides computers, meeting rooms, and quiet desks.**
4	How could the six-week trial test a claim about Sunday visits, and why would its results still need careful interpretation?	**Staff could count Sunday visitors. Rain or a holiday could change attendance, so the count might not show what a typical Sunday would be like.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Sunday library hours might bring customers to nearby cafés. This assumes visitors will also buy something nearby. Some visitors may go straight home instead. To test the idea, café owners could compare Sunday sales during the trial with sales on similar Sundays before it.

Accept other passage-based challenges that identify a specific assumption or inconsistency and explain it. For Part 3, the new argument must include an assumption, a plausible counterexample, and evidence that could test the assumption.