Behind the Mask

Compare how work, evidence, and trust shape views across two eras.

USG.P.2.2.B "Analyze complex and interacting factors that influence multiple perspectives during different historical eras and contemporary events."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Circle groups with different views, underline conditions that shape those views, and write the same number beside two conditions that interact.

One Rule, Different Pressures

1 In October 1918, as influenza spread through San Francisco, city officials required people to wear masks in public. Streetcar riders, shopkeepers, and nurses did not face the rule from the same position. Health officials hoped masks would reduce transmission while hospitals struggled with patients. Some workers needed crowded streetcars to reach jobs and could not easily stay home. Others doubted whether a thin gauze mask offered enough protection to justify fines for breaking the rule. When the city renewed its mask order in January 1919, opponents formed an Anti-Mask League. Their protests reflected both disputes about public health and resistance to government power.

2 In 2020, COVID-19 brought a different mask debate to the United States. Early shortages of medical masks led officials to reserve them for health workers, while guidance for the public changed as scientists learned more about how the virus spread. For a grocery worker meeting customers all day, a mask rule could offer some protection but also bring tense confrontations with shoppers. A restaurant owner might worry about both employee safety and losing customers. Some people saw public mask requirements as a shared responsibility; others saw them as an intrusion on personal choice. Political messages and trust in health agencies shaped how people interpreted the same rule.

3 These debates did not divide neatly into people who cared about health and people who did not. In both eras, the need to earn wages made avoiding crowds difficult, yet a person's job also changed how necessary a mask rule felt. New information could strengthen a public health argument while making earlier advice seem unreliable to someone already skeptical of officials. Fines in 1919 and arguments with shoppers in 2020 added different pressures to the question of who should decide what happens in shared spaces. Comparing the eras requires asking how work, evidence, and trust combined for each group.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did the crowded conditions faced by health officials and workers in 1918 give them different reasons to consider a mask rule?

2. How could mask shortages and changing scientific guidance together affect trust in public health advice in 2020?

3. Compare a reason some people opposed mask rules in 1919 with a reason some opposed them in 2020. How did each era add its own pressure?

4. Why might a 2020 grocery worker and restaurant owner both care about safety but view a mask rule differently?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine that in 2020 a city considers requiring masks on crowded buses but offers no free masks. In 4 to 5 sentences, explain how a bus driver and a rider who cannot afford masks might view the rule differently, show how at least two factors interact for each person, and propose one change that addresses a concern without dismissing the other person's view.

ANSWER KEY

Behind the Mask

HIGH SCHOOL · USG.P.2.2.B

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Circle groups with different views, underline conditions that shape those views, and write the same number beside two conditions that interact. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did the crowded conditions faced by health officials and workers in 1918 give them different reasons to consider a mask rule?	**Health officials saw masks as a way to reduce transmission while hospitals struggled. Workers who had to ride crowded streetcars could not easily avoid exposure, but some questioned whether gauze masks offered enough protection to justify fines.**
2	How could mask shortages and changing scientific guidance together affect trust in public health advice in 2020?	**Officials initially reserved scarce medical masks for health workers, then public guidance changed as scientists learned more. Someone already skeptical of officials might see the change as a reason to distrust their advice.**
3	Compare a reason some people opposed mask rules in 1919 with a reason some opposed them in 2020. How did each era add its own pressure?	**Opponents in both eras could object to government limits on personal choice. In 1919, doubts about gauze masks and fines added pressure; in 2020, political messages and distrust of health agencies could shape opposition.**
4	Why might a 2020 grocery worker and restaurant owner both care about safety but view a mask rule differently?	**A grocery worker faced repeated contact with customers and possible confrontations over the rule. A restaurant owner had to consider employee safety alongside the possibility of losing customers.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

A bus driver may support the rule because repeated contact with riders raises the chance of exposure, especially if missing work means lost pay. The driver may also worry that enforcing it will cause confrontations while driving. A rider who cannot afford masks may want protection on a crowded bus but fear being denied a trip to work. That rider's low income and dependence on the bus make a rule without free masks especially costly. The city could provide free masks at bus stops and have staff, rather than drivers, explain the rule.

Accept other supported explanations of how conditions combine to shape a viewpoint. For Part 3, look for distinct perspectives, interacting factors for each person, and a proposed change that responds to a concern.