Two Cities, One Virus

Compare local events on parallel timelines

USG.P.2.2.C "Evaluate how multiple, complex events are shaped by unique circumstances of time and place; construct and interpret parallel timelines."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Circle time markers and underline one local condition for each city. Write 1, 2, or 3 beside events from late September, early October, and mid-October in each city so you can compare their timelines.

Influenza in Philadelphia and St. Louis

1 In autumn 1918, influenza spread across the United States. Philadelphia was a crowded port and wartime shipbuilding center, with workers and sailors moving through busy streets. On September 28, the city held a large Liberty Loan parade to raise money for World War I, even though influenza was already spreading. Thousands watched or marched close together. In late September, officials in St. Louis, farther inland, were watching reports of illness in eastern cities. Its health commissioner, Max Starkloff, prepared to limit gatherings if local cases increased. The cities faced the same virus, but not the same conditions or decisions.

2 By early October, Philadelphia hospitals were filling and reported cases were rising rapidly. On October 3, officials closed schools, theaters, and other gathering places, but the parade had occurred five days earlier. In St. Louis, influenza cases also appeared in early October. On October 7, its officials closed schools, theaters, and churches and restricted public gatherings. That order came near the start of the city's outbreak, rather than after a huge public event. Both cities acted within a few days of each other on the calendar. On the timeline of each local outbreak, however, the orders came at different moments.

3 By mid-October, Philadelphia recorded a steep rise in deaths, and its hospitals struggled to care for patients. St. Louis also suffered illness and deaths, but its death rate during the autumn wave was much lower. Earlier limits on gatherings likely helped St. Louis slow transmission, while the Philadelphia parade likely gave the virus more chances to spread. Still, a timeline cannot prove that one decision caused every difference. The cities differed in population, travel patterns, and the number of infections already present when officials acted. Reading the two timelines side by side reveals both a shared emergency and the importance of local timing.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did Philadelphia's role as a port and shipbuilding center make its late-September parade a concern during an outbreak?

2. Place the Philadelphia parade and each city's closure order in date order. What does that order show about the cities' responses?

3. The closure orders were only four days apart. Why did they occur at different moments in the two local outbreaks?

4. Why can the two timelines not prove that the closure orders alone caused the difference in death rates? Name two other factors from the passage.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write four sentences that work as parallel timelines. In the first three, pair one Philadelphia event with one St. Louis event from late September, early October, and mid-October, in that order. In the fourth, explain how timing and one local condition may have shaped their different outcomes.

ANSWER KEY

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HIGH SCHOOL · USG.P.2.2.C

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Circle time markers and underline one local condition for each city. Write 1, 2, or 3 beside events from late September, early October, and mid-October in each city so you can compare their timelines. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did Philadelphia's role as a port and shipbuilding center make its late-September parade a concern during an outbreak?	**Workers and sailors moved through crowded Philadelphia streets, and the parade brought thousands close together while influenza was spreading.**
2	Place the Philadelphia parade and each city's closure order in date order. What does that order show about the cities' responses?	**Philadelphia held its parade on September 28 and closed gathering places on October 3. St. Louis closed gathering places on October 7. Philadelphia's closure followed a large event, while St. Louis closed near the start of its outbreak.**
3	The closure orders were only four days apart. Why did they occur at different moments in the two local outbreaks?	**By October 3, Philadelphia's cases were rising rapidly and its hospitals were filling. St. Louis issued its October 7 order near the start of its outbreak.**
4	Why can the two timelines not prove that the closure orders alone caused the difference in death rates? Name two other factors from the passage.	**The cities also differed in population, travel patterns, and how many infections were already present when officials acted. Any two of these factors are acceptable.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

In late September, Philadelphia held a crowded parade while St. Louis officials watched reports of illness in eastern cities. In early October, Philadelphia closed gathering places on October 3, and St. Louis closed them on October 7. By mid-October, deaths had risen steeply in Philadelphia, while St. Louis had a much lower death rate during the autumn wave. Philadelphia's parade gave the virus chances to spread before its closure, while St. Louis restricted gatherings near the start of its outbreak.

Accept equivalent descriptions of each city's sequence and a cautious inference about timing, rather than a claim that one action fully explains the outcomes. For the marking job, students may number events in either city first if both sequences run from late September to mid-October.