Who Pays for Access?

Investigate a question that connects libraries across time.

USH.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 evidence of who paid for libraries in 1901, circle evidence of costs today, and number the three research angles that could help test whether access was fair.

A Gift That Needed a Budget

1 In 1901, a New Yorker looking for a book could not assume there was a free library nearby. Some libraries required membership or served only certain readers. Meanwhile, cities were growing, and books could help people learn skills, follow public debates, or enjoy a story. This raised a question that reaches beyond one city: Who should pay so that everyone can use shared sources of information? A private donor might build a library, but a building also needs staff, books, heat, and repairs. Those continuing costs matter when judging any plan for access.

2 In 1901, steel magnate Andrew Carnegie offered New York City $5.2 million for 65 branch library buildings. The city had to provide sites and pay to operate them. Carnegie's gift made construction possible, while public funds supported the libraries after they opened. A historian could ask whose neighborhoods received branches and whose did not. An economist could compare the price of buildings with the yearly cost of workers and materials. A civics researcher could examine who had a voice when officials chose sites and set library rules. Each approach tests whether a partnership actually served the public.

3 Today, many public libraries offer computers and internet access alongside books. A donated building alone could not cover those services, because equipment, connections, and trained staff need ongoing support. Yet public budgets also pay for needs such as schools and roads. One possible answer is to rely mainly on taxes, which can spread costs across a community. Another is to combine taxes with private gifts, which may add resources but can vary by place. To compare these answers fairly, researchers would need evidence about who can reach a library, what services people use, and how steady the funding remains over time.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What two plausible answers to the passage's funding question could a community consider? Give one passage detail that supports each answer.

2. Does Carnegie's gift support the claim that private gifts alone can keep libraries open? Evaluate the claim using two details from the passage.

3. What would a historian investigate to judge whether the 1901 partnership gave neighborhoods fair access? Name a fact the historian would need to find.

4. How could an economist and a civics researcher evaluate the same library plan differently? Give one question each could ask based on the passage.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Your town is considering opening school gyms to residents after classes. Write an enduring question about who should support shared spaces, give two plausible answers, identify one past record and one present-day record you would investigate using history and economics or civics, and make a tentative judgment based on what those records might show.

ANSWER KEY

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HIGH SCHOOL · USH.P.1.2.A

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline evidence of who paid for libraries in 1901, circle evidence of costs today, and number the three research angles that could help test whether access was fair. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What two plausible answers to the passage's funding question could a community consider? Give one passage detail that supports each answer.	**A community could rely mainly on taxes, as public funds operated the Carnegie branches. It could combine taxes with private gifts, as Carnegie funded buildings while the city paid to operate them.**
2	Does Carnegie's gift support the claim that private gifts alone can keep libraries open? Evaluate the claim using two details from the passage.	**No. The city had to provide sites and pay to operate the branches, and libraries have continuing costs such as staff and repairs.**
3	What would a historian investigate to judge whether the 1901 partnership gave neighborhoods fair access? Name a fact the historian would need to find.	**A historian could investigate which neighborhoods received branches and which did not. The historian would need to find where the branches were built.**
4	How could an economist and a civics researcher evaluate the same library plan differently? Give one question each could ask based on the passage.	**An economist could ask how building costs compare with yearly operating costs. A civics researcher could ask who had a voice in choosing sites or setting rules.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Who should pay to keep shared recreation spaces open to everyone? One answer is that the town should use taxes to open school gyms after classes. Another is that local groups should pay, leaving more school funds for classes. A historian could examine past records showing who was allowed to use school gyms. An economist could examine present-day records of staffing costs. I tentatively favor town funding if the past records show broad access and the current costs are affordable.

Accept other plausible funding answers and research questions when students support them with passage details. For Your Turn, look for an enduring question, two distinct answers, records from two time periods, and a judgment tied to the proposed evidence.