Behind the Mask

How conditions shape different views of public health rules

USH.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 Underline factors that affect people's views, circle phrases that show a view, and give matching numbers to two factors that work together to shape one view.

Mask Rules, Then and Now

1 In October 1918, influenza spread through San Francisco as World War I was nearing its end. The city required people to wear gauze masks in public. Health officials hoped masks would slow infection, especially in crowded streetcars and workplaces. Nurses had seen how quickly patients became ill, so many supported the rule. A shop owner might also want customers to feel safe, yet worry that policing masks would drive some away. Wartime troop travel helped carry influenza between communities, while crowded city life gave it more chances to spread. Those conditions made a citywide rule seem urgent to some residents.

2 When cases fell, the city lifted its mask rule in November, then brought it back as cases rose again in January 1919. Some residents welcomed the return because they feared another wave of illness. Others formed the Anti-Mask League, arguing that the rule limited personal freedom and that masks were uncomfortable or ineffective. A shop clerk who met many customers could fear infection and still dislike wearing a mask for a long shift. The same person might value safety and freedom at once. Changing case numbers, uncertain evidence about masks, and the demands of daily work made views more complicated than a simple choice between caring and not caring.

3 In 2020, COVID-19 led many U.S. communities to adopt mask rules. Unlike in 1918, scientists could study a new virus with modern tests, and people could share claims quickly online, including false ones. A bus driver might support a rule after seeing crowded rides, but also worry about arguments with passengers over enforcement. A passenger who could not work from home might welcome protection while resenting the cost of buying masks. Local officials weighed infection risks against public resistance and the difficulty of enforcing rules. Across both eras, the same policy could look different depending on exposure, job duties, trust in evidence, and the burden of following it.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How could wartime travel and crowded workplaces together shape a San Francisco nurse's view of the 1918 mask rule?

2. Why could a shop clerk have mixed feelings about the return of the mask rule in 1919? Use two factors from the passage.

3. How might the bus driver's job in 2020 lead to both support for and concern about a mask rule?

4. How did evidence and information affect views of masks differently in 1919 and 2020?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine your town considers opening a school gym overnight as a cooling center during a heat wave. Write one paragraph explaining how two groups might view the plan differently, how at least two factors work together to shape their views, and how one change might shift a view.

ANSWER KEY

Behind the Mask

HIGH SCHOOL · USH.P.2.2.B

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline factors that affect people's views, circle phrases that show a view, and give matching numbers to two factors that work together to shape one view. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How could wartime travel and crowded workplaces together shape a San Francisco nurse's view of the 1918 mask rule?	**Troop travel helped spread influenza between communities, and crowded workplaces gave it more chances to spread locally. A nurse who saw patients become ill quickly could therefore see the rule as urgent.**
2	Why could a shop clerk have mixed feelings about the return of the mask rule in 1919? Use two factors from the passage.	**Meeting many customers could make the clerk fear infection, while wearing a mask for a long shift could feel uncomfortable.**
3	How might the bus driver's job in 2020 lead to both support for and concern about a mask rule?	**Crowded rides could make the driver support protection, but enforcing the rule could lead to arguments with passengers.**
4	How did evidence and information affect views of masks differently in 1919 and 2020?	**In 1919, uncertain evidence about masks contributed to disagreement. In 2020, modern tests could inform views, while quickly shared online claims, including false ones, could also influence them.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Families without air conditioning may support opening the gym because high indoor temperatures and the cost of cooling their homes put them at risk. School custodians may worry that the plan adds late shifts when staffing is already thin, even if they want neighbors to stay safe. If the town pays for extra overnight staff, custodians might support the center. Both groups care about safety, but their different needs and responsibilities shape how they view the plan.

Accept reasonable inferences grounded in the passage for Questions 1 through 4. For Part 3, look for two distinct perspectives, interacting factors, and a plausible change that could shift one view.