

Check the Claim

Use research clues to separate facts from opinions about history.

SS.8.A.1.4 "Differentiate fact from opinion by utilizing appropriate historical research, including fiction and nonfiction support materials."

NAME _____

DATE _____

FACT

A fact is a claim that can be checked and supported with reliable evidence, such as a primary source or a nonfiction history source.

The first U.S. census was conducted in 1790.

OPINION

An opinion is a belief or judgment that cannot be proven true or false. Words such as *best*, *fair*, and *exciting* can signal an opinion.

The first U.S. census was a fascinating project.

1 SORT _____ 8 items

For each statement, circle FACT or OPINION, then choose two statements and explain what evidence or wording helped you decide.

- | | | | |
|----|--|-------------|----------------|
| 1. | The U.S. Constitution created three branches of government. | FACT | OPINION |
| 2. | The transcontinental railroad was the most impressive achievement of the 1800s. | FACT | OPINION |
| 3. | The transcontinental railroad was completed in 1869. | FACT | OPINION |
| 4. | The Nineteenth Amendment was ratified in 1920. | FACT | OPINION |
| 5. | The fight for women's suffrage was a fair cause. | FACT | OPINION |
| 6. | Lewis and Clark's expedition was an exciting journey. | FACT | OPINION |
| 7. | In 1954, the Supreme Court ruled school segregation unconstitutional in <i>Brown v. Board of Education</i> . | FACT | OPINION |
| 8. | The Homestead Act became law in 1862. | FACT | OPINION |

2

PROVE IT

Explain your thinking

Pick two items from Part 1. For each one, tell how you knew where it belonged.

ITEM # _____ HOW I KNEW _____

ITEM # _____ HOW I KNEW _____

3

MAKE YOUR OWN

One of each

Write one new FACT about U.S. history and one new OPINION about U.S. history.

FACT _____

OPINION _____

CHALLENGE

Research item 4 using this nonfiction excerpt from the National Archives, "19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution: Women's Right to Vote (1920)": "Passed by Congress June 4, 1919, and ratified on August 18, 1920". Identify the source and the date that supports item 4; explain why this is a checked fact, while "a fair cause" in item 5 is an opinion. Compare this invented historical-fiction line: "At last, I felt our long campaign was fair." Explain why that imagined feeling cannot verify the ratification date. Continue on separate paper if needed.

PART 1 • SORT

#	ITEM	CATEGORY	WHY
1	The U.S. Constitution created three branches of government.	FACT	The Constitution is a primary source that can verify this claim.
2	The transcontinental railroad was the most impressive achievement of the 1800s.	OPINION	"Most impressive" is a judgment that cannot be proven.
3	The transcontinental railroad was completed in 1869.	FACT	Reliable historical records can verify the completion year.
4	The Nineteenth Amendment was ratified in 1920.	FACT	The amendment's ratification date can be checked in government records.
5	The fight for women's suffrage was a fair cause.	OPINION	"Fair" expresses a personal judgment.
6	Lewis and Clark's expedition was an exciting journey.	OPINION	"Exciting" describes a personal reaction.
7	In 1954, the Supreme Court ruled school segregation unconstitutional in Brown v. Board of Education.	FACT	The Court decision and its date can be verified with primary and nonfiction sources.
8	The Homestead Act became law in 1862.	FACT	The law's date can be verified in government records.

PART 2 • PROVE IT

Accept any explanation that names the deciding feature from the rule box for the chosen item.

PART 3 • MAKE YOUR OWN (SAMPLE ANSWERS)

- **FACT:** The United States purchased the Louisiana Territory from France in 1803.
- **OPINION:** The Louisiana Purchase was the smartest decision the United States made in the early 1800s.

Challenge: The National Archives nonfiction account gives August 18, 1920 as the ratification date, supporting item 4's year. This is a fact supported by historical research; "fair" is a judgment about the cause, not a date that the record proves. The invented narrator's feeling illustrates a viewpoint but cannot establish when ratification occurred.

Facts are verifiable claims, while opinions contain judgments or personal reactions. Accept student-created facts when they are accurate and can be supported by a reliable source. Require actual use of the printed historical source excerpt: name the National Archives, distinguish ratification in 1920 from congressional passage in 1919, and link the found date to item 4. The fictional line is invented solely for this exercise, not authentic testimony. Source: <https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/19th-amendment> (checked October 9, 2026). The excerpt is from the Archives' modern explanatory account, not the amendment's original text. Preserve the eight classifications and original new-fact/new-opinion task.