The Cost of Late

Read an opinion about library fines and weigh its persuasive choices.

11-12.RI.6 "Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text in which the rhetoric is particularly effective, analyzing how style and content contribute to its overall rhetorical effectiveness. Evaluate a text for bias, misinformation..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the writer's policy claim and one concession, circle two phrases meant to stir emotion, and number two places where the writer admits evidence is missing so you can judge how persuasion and proof work together.

Opinion: Let Young Readers Borrow Without Daily Fines

(1) At the library checkout desk last Tuesday, a teenager turned a book over in her hands, then put it back. "I still owe a fine," she told the clerk. One moment cannot prove why people stop borrowing, but it shows what our town council should ask before voting next week: whom do overdue fines keep out? I want the council to end daily overdue fines for children's books. A library built to lend stories should not make a small debt the last line a young reader sees on the way out.

(2) Supporters of fines have a fair concern: when a book comes back late, the next reader must wait. Keeping books moving matters, especially when several students need the same title. But a daily charge is not the only possible response. The library could send reminders before due dates and still charge borrowers for books they lose or damage. Those steps might protect the collection without adding a cost for every late day. Would a reminder work as well as a fine? We should test it rather than assume. Meanwhile, the teenager at the desk remains my reason for asking.

(3) Before the council votes, it should ask the library to report how many children's accounts carry overdue fines and how often fined books come back late again. I do not have those numbers, and the scene I witnessed cannot stand in for them. Still, think of the message we send when a child reaches for a book and sees a bill instead. Our town can choose a policy that values both shared books and open access. End daily fines for children's books for one year, track returns and borrowing, then decide whether the change deserves to last.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What does the writer want the council to do, and how does the question in paragraph 1 direct readers toward that goal?

2. How does the teenager's experience make the argument persuasive, and what does the writer admit it cannot prove?

3. What concern does the writer concede to supporters of fines? Does the proposed response prove that fines are unnecessary? Explain from the passage.

4. How might the phrase "sees a bill instead" give readers a misleading impression, and why might the writer choose it?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a 75 to 100 word statement to the council opposing the writer's proposal. Concede one concern from the passage, challenge one weakness in the writer's evidence, and use a deliberate rhetorical choice to make your alternative persuasive.

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PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the writer's policy claim and one concession, circle two phrases meant to stir emotion, and number two places where the writer admits evidence is missing so you can judge how persuasion and proof work together. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What does the writer want the council to do, and how does the question in paragraph 1 direct readers toward that goal?	**The writer wants to end daily overdue fines for children's books. Asking whom fines keep out directs attention to possible barriers to borrowing rather than to the money fines collect.**
2	How does the teenager's experience make the argument persuasive, and what does the writer admit it cannot prove?	**The scene gives readers a concrete person to consider and may prompt concern for young borrowers. The writer admits that one encounter cannot show why people stop borrowing or stand in for town-wide data.**
3	What concern does the writer concede to supporters of fines? Does the proposed response prove that fines are unnecessary? Explain from the passage.	**The writer concedes that late books make the next reader wait. Reminders and charges for lost or damaged books are proposed alternatives, but the writer says reminders must be tested, so their effectiveness is not yet proved.**
4	How might the phrase "sees a bill instead" give readers a misleading impression, and why might the writer choose it?	**It may suggest that a fine replaces access to a book, though the passage does not establish that a fine prevents checkout. The contrast makes the cost feel like a barrier and encourages readers to favor the proposal.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Council members, a late return can make another child wait for a book she needs. The writer is right that even a small fine may discourage borrowing, and that concern deserves attention. But one teenager's comment does not show how many children face this problem, or whether reminders would bring books back as reliably as fines. Let us not trade one barrier for another. First, collect account and return data; then consider waiving fines for families who request help while keeping a clear plan for overdue books.

Accept responses that accurately distinguish the writer's stated position from what the passage establishes. For Part 3, accept different alternatives if the student concedes a passage-based concern, identifies an evidence gap, and uses a purposeful rhetorical choice.