The Cost of Late

Read an argument about library fines and examine how it persuades.

9-10.RI.6 "Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text. Analyze how an author uses rhetoric to advance that point of view or purpose. Evaluate a text for bias and/or fallacies."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the writer's proposal, circle two phrases meant to stir feelings, and number the claim that presents only two choices.

Let Readers Return

(1) On Saturday, I watched a teenager stop at the library return slot and search every pocket for coins. She had brought back a book three days late, and she looked more worried about a fine than excited to borrow another. Our town library should end overdue fines for ordinary books. A library is supposed to invite people in, not make a missed deadline feel like a locked door. When a small charge follows a reader home, it can linger in that reader's mind long after the book is back on the shelf.

(2) Some neighbors say fines teach responsibility and help pay for library services. Those concerns deserve a hearing, but a fine is a poor teacher if it makes a reader too embarrassed to return. My neighbor once kept an overdue novel for weeks because she dreaded speaking to a librarian about the charge. After that, she avoided the library for months. If one fine can push someone away, imagine how many silent readers our current policy has lost. The library could send reminders by text or email instead, helping borrowers remember dates without charging them for mistakes.

(3) Ending overdue fines would not mean letting books disappear. Borrowers would still have to return them, and the library could charge for books that are lost or damaged. Yet every day we keep overdue fines, we tell forgetful readers that they are less welcome than everyone else. We face a simple choice: drop those fines or accept a library that shuts people out. At the next board meeting, ask for a policy that brings books back and brings people back, too. A return slot should be a path into the library, not a reason to stay away.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What change does the writer want, and what belief about libraries supports that position?

2. How does the phrase "a locked door" help the writer persuade readers?

3. How might the writer's choice of evidence give readers a one-sided view of overdue fines?

4. The writer says the library faces "a simple choice." Why is that reasoning questionable? Give one other possible choice.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a 75 to 100 word reply to the library board that challenges the writer's all-or-nothing choice. Propose a middle-ground policy, acknowledge a concern from the passage, and use one persuasive image or phrase of your own.

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PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the writer's proposal, circle two phrases meant to stir feelings, and number the claim that presents only two choices. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What change does the writer want, and what belief about libraries supports that position?	**The writer wants the library to end overdue fines for ordinary books because libraries should welcome readers rather than discourage them from returning.**
2	How does the phrase "a locked door" help the writer persuade readers?	**It makes a fine feel like a barrier to entering the library, appealing to readers' concern about access.**
3	How might the writer's choice of evidence give readers a one-sided view of overdue fines?	**The writer gives two stories about readers troubled by fines but no evidence about whether fines help books come back or how much money they provide.**
4	The writer says the library faces "a simple choice." Why is that reasoning questionable? Give one other possible choice.	**The claim ignores options between keeping all overdue fines and ending them all. The library could cap fines or waive them for borrowers facing hardship.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Dear board members, a library need not choose between ending every overdue fine and shutting readers out. Keep a small, capped fine for books borrowed by adults, but waive it for borrowers facing hardship. The writer's neighbor may have felt ashamed, and that matters. Still, one person's story cannot show how all borrowers react. Picture a reader who needs a popular book but finds it missing for weeks. A cap and a waiver could address both readers' needs without treating every late return the same way.

Accept other text-supported explanations of the writer's purpose, rhetoric, and bias. For the open task, look for a distinct middle-ground policy, a fair acknowledgment of the passage's concern, and a purposeful persuasive phrase or image.