Claims Under Scrutiny

Test claims against evidence in a school debate.

9-10.RI.8.b "Identify false statements and fallacious reasoning."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline one statement that conflicts with the trial's numbers. Circle three claims with flawed reasoning, and number them 1 to 3 so you can discuss each flaw.

Should the Library Stay Open Late?

1 For three weeks in October, Westbrook High kept its library open until 6 p.m. on Tuesdays instead of closing at 4 p.m. The librarian recorded 60 after-school visits by 34 different students. Some students came more than once, and the count did not include anyone who stayed only during regular hours. At the end of the trial, 25 students who had used the later hours returned a survey: 15 wanted the schedule to continue, and 10 did not. The sign-in sheet and the survey describe a small trial, not the preferences of the whole school.

2 At a student council meeting, Maya argued for keeping the later hours. She said, "The trial brought in 60 different students, so the program already serves a huge group." Theo added, "Fifteen survey responses favor the change. That proves every student wants the library open late." He continued, "If we end the late hours, we are telling students that studying does not matter." The council had also discussed offering lunchtime study rooms and opening the library late twice a month. Several members liked the idea of more library time, but they questioned what the trial could actually show.

3 A third student, Imani, asked whether the school could afford staff time. Theo replied, "Imani plays soccer, so her question about the library budget is worthless." The librarian estimated that staying open each Tuesday required two extra paid staff hours, but the council had not checked the total cost. The principal asked the council to submit a recommendation that separated the trial's results from guesses about what might happen next. A vote was planned for the following week. Students could still send comments before the council made its recommendation.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Which part of Maya's claim is false? Use the sign-in numbers to correct it.

2. Why does Theo's claim about what every student wants go beyond the survey evidence?

3. What choice does Theo's statement about ending late hours leave out? Name one option from the passage.

4. Why does Theo's reply about Imani fail to answer her budget question? Include one detail that makes her question worth considering.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine a school is deciding whether to keep a new feature. In four sentences, invent a numerical fact about its trial, write a false statement that contradicts that fact, draw an overgeneralized conclusion from the fact, and explain both flaws.

ANSWER KEY

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HIGH SCHOOL · 9-10.RI.8.b

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline one statement that conflicts with the trial's numbers. Circle three claims with flawed reasoning, and number them 1 to 3 so you can discuss each flaw. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Which part of Maya's claim is false? Use the sign-in numbers to correct it.	**The library did not serve 60 different students. It recorded 60 visits by 34 different students.**
2	Why does Theo's claim about what every student wants go beyond the survey evidence?	**Only 25 students who used the later hours returned the survey, and 10 of them did not want the schedule to continue. The results cannot establish what every student wants.**
3	What choice does Theo's statement about ending late hours leave out? Name one option from the passage.	**It assumes ending the weekly late hours means the school does not care about studying. The council could offer lunchtime study rooms or open the library late twice a month.**
4	Why does Theo's reply about Imani fail to answer her budget question? Include one detail that makes her question worth considering.	**Playing soccer has no bearing on whether Imani's budget question is valid. Each late opening requires two extra paid staff hours, and the total cost has not been checked.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

During a one-week trial, 42 students used a new water fountain. No students used the fountain that week. Because 42 students used it, everyone at school prefers it to bottled water. The false statement contradicts the count, and the conclusion assumes those 42 students represent everyone's preferences.

Accept equivalent explanations grounded in the passage. For Part 3, check that the invented false statement directly contradicts the numerical fact and that the conclusion makes a broader claim than the fact supports.